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# Impact of workplace characteristics on work-family conflict of dual career couples

**Article classification:** Research paper.

## Introduction

Over the past few decades, organizations have witnessed a major transformation in their workforce characteristics. Factors like equal employment opportunity, affirmative action legislation, and steady rise in count of female role models in corporate world have provided a big platform to women to think about their long-term career (Elloy and Smith, 2003). Consequently, this has fuelled the increase in number of individuals who have to bear the responsibility of managing both work as well as family namely dual-career couples, single parents, working women, and fathers profoundly involved in parenting (Carnicer *et al.*, 2004; Kossek, 2005). Out of these, dual-career couples are of particular importance as changes in societal trends and need for dual income to support life are on rise in developing economies (Hamid and Amin, 2014). Dual-career couples is a kind of family set-up where both partners chase their careers while occupying jobs that are best characterized by high psychological commitment, set performance standards, and a developmental chain (Rapoport and Rapoport, 1971). In words of Smith (1997), this segment will always require specific attention because career salience, strategies, and changed preferences of one partner undeniably affect those of the other, which in turn, affect their employers as well.

As number of these dual-career couples has increased, combined work hours for partners have also increased, though, time-consuming demands and roles for balancing work and family have remained same (Kossek, 2005). The question arises how best individuals and couples can balance both work and family while fulfilling the dual demands and responsibilities (Haddock *et al.*, 2006). The scarcity approach (Goode, 1960) suggests that time and energy of an individual are rather limited and employees playing dual roles surely experience conflict between work and family due to the unavailability of resources needed to fulfil these roles. Even Elloy and Smith (2003) argue that regardless of the mutual compensation benefits, the demands and roles arise due to two parallel careers cause conflict, overload, and stress in individuals which increase manifolds when coupled with children and other family responsibilities. Prior researchers have claimed this 'work-family conflict' as an

interesting variable to research since it has been found to have adverse relations with an array of other variables related to employee work and home life such as poor performance in parental role, heightened health risks for working parents, decreased productivity at workplace, reduced life satisfaction, and work stress (Allen *et al.*, 2000; Kossek and Ozeki, 1998). Considering these consequences, it becomes quite important to investigate the factors affecting work-family conflict of dual career couples.

Abstein and Spieth (2014) have commented that through a set of integrated HR practices, organizations contribute towards achieving work life balance and diminish the feelings of work-life conflict among employees. Researchers have realized that the nature of jobs, working atmosphere, and prevailing culture at workplace do have a significant impact on ability of employees in creating a sense of balance among their work and family lives (Kundu and Vora, 2004; Michel *et al.*, 2009). However, the concerning point is the awareness that these workplace characteristics carry possibility of both increasing or decreasing the ability of employees in fulfilling work-related responsibilities and family obligations (Berg *et al.*, 2003). The main focus of our study is to find out how work-family conflict is affected by various workplace characteristics in dual career couples but in context of a developing country. Years before, Poelmans (2001) has indicated the lack of empirical studies on work-family conflict in countries with cultures where family as an institution acquires a very strong position and where female participation at workplace is on rise. Till now, empirical evidences related to antecedents of work-family conflict in this context are limited. Moreover, research on dual-career couples is still considered as a new concept in Indian context (Jyothi and Neelakantan, 2014) which demands further exploration. Taking into consideration the scarcity of studies that have analysed work-family conflict in India, the primary aim of our study is to carry out an empirical analysis of antecedents of work-family conflict among Indian dual-career couples and investigate whether there exist differences in pattern of relationships among various workplace characteristics and work-family conflict. In addition, to get more comprehensive results, the study has attempted:

- (i) to assess the effects of workplace characteristics on work to family conflict and its three dimensions.
- (ii) to assess the effects of workplace characteristics on family to work conflict and its three dimensions.

## **Literature review and hypotheses**

Work-family conflict, in general, represents the goodness of fit or congruity between an employees' work and family domain (Frone *et al.*, 1994) with a postulation that participating in both work and family roles simultaneously is not possible since they are mutually incompatible (Parasuraman and Greenhaus, 2002). Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) have defined work-family conflict as a form of inter-role conflict which arises when role pressures from work and family domains are found to be mutually incompatible in some respect. In words of Grzywacz *et al.* (2002), work-family conflict is an outcome of spillover of work obligations by an employee into his or her personal life. In nutshell, work-family conflict is a kind of disagreement that occurs when contribution towards ones' work (family) role is made more complicated by virtue of contribution towards family (work) role (Kalliath *et al.*, 2012). In consistence with Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) work, Netemeyer *et al.* (1996) have suggested that work-family conflict can be categorized into three forms: time-based conflict, strain-based conflict, and behavior-based conflict. Time-based conflict arises when time devoted to one role makes it difficult to participate in another role, strain-based conflict suggests that strain experienced in one role intrudes into and interferes with participation in another role, and behavior-based conflict occurs when specific behaviors required in one role are incompatible with behavioral expectations in another role (Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985). Besides, Gutek *et al.* (1991) have argued that each of these three forms of work–family conflict has two directions: one is conflict due to work interfering with family (WIF) and other is conflict due to family interfering with work (FIW). When these three forms and two directions are intermixed, we get six dimensions of work–family conflict which are: time-based WIF, time-based FIW, strain-based WIF, strain-based FIW, behavior-based WIF, and behavior-based FIW. The present study has adopted all these six aspects of work-family conflict so as to explore the concerned subject in a more comprehensive manner.

Work-specific variables/characteristics as a source of work-family conflict have always been the focal point for academicians and practitioners since employees can exercise relatively less control over their work lives in comparison to family lives (Higgins and Duxbury, 1992). According to Parasuraman and Simmers (2001), workplace characteristics hold the capacity to affect the level of control employees can wield on confrontation with inconsistent role pressures and subsequently, to the degree of work family conflict experienced. Similarly, Berg *et al.* (2003) believe that workplace characteristics (whether organizational or job) along with individual and family variables are capable in influencing the support an organization can provide to help their employees in dealing with their work

and family lives. Haddock *et al.* (2006) have recommended a number of workplace strategies such as flexible work arrangements, autonomy, telecommuting, supportive peers and supervisors, and the freedom to set own work boundaries that can significantly facilitate the dual career couples in achieving work and family balance, consequently reducing the levels of work-family conflict. On the same line, Michel *et al.* (2009) have suggested several predictors of work-family conflict which are categorized as work role stressors including role ambiguity, role overload, and work time demands, work characteristics comprised of task variety, task significance, and job autonomy, work social support including organizational support, supervisor support, and co-worker support, and work role involvement.

In opinion of Friedman and Greenhaus (2000), since each workplace characteristic covers a range of resources, they can effectively recognize the employee resources required to mitigate work-family conflict. One such characteristic is supportive work environment which captures resources related to time, flexibility, information, etc which are required for providing employees the necessary support to balance their work and family roles. Further, researchers have argued that by examining the effects of specific workplace characteristics on work-family conflict, a clear actionable link can be defined between empirical findings and likely targets for policy intervention (Friedman and Greenhaus, 2000; Geurts and Demerouti, 2003). Thus, on the basis of viewpoint of above researchers and in light of limited research on work family conflict in dual career couples, this study has attempted to investigate the effects of thirteen workplace characteristics on six dimensions of work-family conflict. These thirteen characteristics are: development and flexibility, work and organizational culture, rewards and financial benefits, co-worker support, supervisory support, job competence, self employee control, organizational employee control, job autonomy, overtime facility, practicing overtime, flexibility, and discrimination.

For a long time, researchers and theorists have tried to predict the relationship between diverse workplace characteristics and work-family conflict among employees (Berg *et al.*, 2003; Byron, 2005; Golden *et al.*, 2006; Thomas and Ganster, 1995; Voydanoff, 2004). According to Abstein and Spieth (2014), developments in HRM field through its four meta-features for employees i.e. individual orientation, discretion orientation, effort orientation, and expectancy orientation enable organizations in achieving work life balance and reducing work life conflict. In similar vein, Ng and Chiu (2001) have stated that development and flexibility are one of those organizational policies that assist employees in minimizing the hurdles in their progression within organizations and alleviating their intra- and inter-role

stress, thus, can be held responsible for reducing work-family conflict in couples. Dictating the importance of positive work-family culture, Premeaux *et al.* (2007) have opined that positive work and organizational culture has a much stronger impact in work-family conflict experience than mere application of family-friendly policies in organizations. On further elaboration, it has been found that utilization of available workplace arrangements or resources largely depends on organizational culture (Dijkers *et al.*, 2010). Some authors have stated that work and organizational culture alters employees behaviour by making them act consistently with the firm's desired corporate culture, thereby influencing employee retention (Becker and Huselid, 1999; Chew *et al.*, 2005; Kundu and Gahlawat, 2015) which directly or indirectly has potential to affect work-family conflict among working couples. According to Carnicer *et al.* (2004), financial incentives and social benefits are skilfully used by organizations to motivate employees and to reduce the pressures related to balancing of work and family especially in more physically and mentally demanding jobs.

Co-worker support is defined as the necessary assistance provided by co-workers to one another in completing the tasks through sharing of knowledge and expertise as well as providing encouragement and support when needed (Zhou and George, 2001). It can be assumed that increased co-worker support will help in reducing work-family conflict among couples. Edwards and Rothbard (2000) have suggested that support from supervisor helps in reducing work related concerns among employees which further encourages them to participate in family activities more efficiently. Providing supervisory support to employees helps in implementing policy and benefits that stress out the significance of work-family balance and confers opportunities for employees to use these benefits for reducing work-family conflict. Another characteristic is job competence which as a concept can be understood well from the viewpoint of job demands and personal qualifications of employees and their close interaction (Paloniemi, 2006). It has been found that employees assess work experience as the main source of their job competence (Paloniemi, 2006; Tikkanen and Kujala, 2000). So, it can be assumed that with increase in job competence, employees can handle the job stress well and that will help them in achieving work-family balance and reducing work-family conflict.

Batt and Valcour (2003) have revealed that perceived control over managing work and family demands is related to the idea of integrating work and family demands in a more controlled manner, which in turn, helps in controlling the work-family conflicts. Similarly, Golden *et al.* (2006) research on higher-level employees supports the influence of job control

on reducing work–family conflict by revealing that enhanced control over work duties may enable employees to craft their jobs more discreetly in an order to lessen the interference of work with family life. Similarly, Batt and Valcour (2003) have suggested that providing autonomy in decision-making to employees translate into greater employee ability to control decisions over when, where, and how to integrate work and family responsibilities as per their demands. In another study, Karambayya and Reilly (1992) have found that enhanced freedom in scheduling work facilitates the dual career couples in coping with time-based conflict in a better manner. Berg *et al.* (2003) have indicated that job demands such as long weekly hours and involuntary overtime hamper the employees' ability to balance work and family responsibilities and thereby, increase the work-to-family conflict. Marshall and Barnett (1994) have revealed that flexibility results in decreased work-family interference and increased time with family. Similarly, through a meta-analysis of eight studies, Byron (2005) has suggested that schedule flexibility is associated with reports of less work–family conflict among employees.

For another predictor i.e. discrimination or fairness, Gomez-Mejia *et al.* (2010) has stated that employees expect to be treated fairly and ethically in reciprocation for providing their fair and reasonable services to the employers. And in this reciprocate relationship, managers and supervisors are the intermediaries who can substantially influence the employees' perception of fairness and ethical behaviour in organizational procedures. Kroon *et al.* (2009) have found that employees who experience fairness in procedures face less emotional exhaustion. Gutek *et al.* (1996) have also established that perceived gender discrimination is positively associated with work conflict which further can be a cause for work-family conflict as well. Similarly, White *et al.* (2003) have reported that fairness of the supervisor results in reduction of negative job-to-home spillover and unfairness leads to increase in negative job-to-home spillover.

Thus, on the basis of relevant literature, following set of hypotheses can be raised:

- Hypothesis 1: Workplace characteristics significantly affect the work-family conflict in dual career couples.
- Hypothesis 2: Development and flexibility significantly reduce work-family conflict in dual career couples.
- Hypothesis 3: Work and organizational culture significantly reduce the work-family conflict in dual career couples.

- Hypothesis 4: Rewards and financial benefits significantly reduce work-family conflict in dual career couples.
- Hypothesis 5: Co-worker support significantly reduces the work-family conflict in dual career couples.
- Hypothesis 6: Supervisory support significantly reduces the work-family conflict in dual career couples.
- Hypothesis 7: Job competence significantly reduces the work-family conflict in dual career couples.
- Hypothesis 8: Self employee control significantly reduces the work-family conflict in dual career couples.
- Hypothesis 9: Organizational employee control significantly reduces the work-family conflict in dual career couples.
- Hypothesis 10: Job autonomy significantly reduces the work-family conflict in dual career couples.
- Hypothesis 11: Overtime facility significantly enhances the work-family conflict in dual career couples.
- Hypothesis 12: Practicing overtime significantly enhances the work-family conflict in dual career couples.
- Hypothesis 13: Flexibility practice significantly reduces the work-family conflict in dual career couples.
- Hypothesis 14: Discrimination significantly enhances the work-family conflict in dual career couples.

## **Research Methodology**

### *The sample*

Primary data based on 393 respondents (dual-career couples or part of dual career couples) working in organizations operating in India were used for testing the proposed hypotheses. Out of the total sample, 45.5% of the respondents belonged to MNCs and 54.5% belonged to Indian organizations. Further, 19.3% respondents were from Government sector companies and 80.7% were from private sector companies. The distribution of the sample can be seen through Table I.

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Take in Table I



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Considering the sample characteristics, male and female constituted 55% and 45% of total respondents, respectively (see Table II). 32.3% respondents were on managerial positions and remaining 67.7% were on non-managerial positions. Out of all respondents, 24.4% spouses were working in same organizations where their counterparts were working and 75.6% were working in different organization to their counterparts. As far as location of job was considered, 78.6% were working in same city and rest 21.4% were working in different city to their counterparts which meant that one of them had to travel on daily basis to other city for work. Regarding family background, 44.3% respondent couples were living in nuclear family and rest 55.7% were in joint families. Majority of the respondents i.e. 70.5% had child and 29.5% didn't. Further, 41% didn't have any elder at home, 18.6% had one elder, 39.2% percent had two elders, 0.5% had three elders and 0.7% had four elders at home.

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Take in Table II

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### *Measures*

*Workplace characteristics (independent variable):* Considering prior empirical studies (Berg *et al.*, 2003; Haddock *et al.*, 2006; Michel *et al.*, 2009), thirteen workplace characteristics were chosen as independent variables in this study. To determine the extent of these workplace characteristics, responses were measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (one) to strongly agree (five).

*Development and flexibility* was measured on a six item scale adopted from Ng and Chiu (2001) and Shih *et al.* (2010) study. The sample item is 'The organization facilitates mentor relationships, both formal and informal, in the workplace'.

*Work and organizational culture* was assessed by using four items adopted from Ng and Chiu (2001) and Shih *et al.* (2010) study. The sample item is 'The climate of our firm is very structured'.

*Rewards and financial benefits* was examined on three indicators given by Ng and Chiu (2001) and Shih *et al.* (2010) study. One sample indicator is 'I have seniority-based rewards'.

*Co-worker support* was assessed on three items adapted from Susskind *et al.* (2003). The sample item is 'I find my co-workers very helpful in performing my job duties'.

*Supervisory support* was assessed with four items used by Batt and Valcour (2003). The sample item is 'How frequently your supervisor had switched schedules to accommodate your family responsibilities'.

*Job competence* was measured with three items (Peccei and Rosenthal, 2001). The sample item is 'I know how to deal with most problems in my job'.

*Self employee control* was measured with the help of four items adapted from Batt and Valcour (2003) study. The sample item is 'How much choice you have over daily work schedule'.

*Organizational employee control* was again assessed with four items adapted from Batt and Valcour (2003) study. The sample item is 'How much choice you have over email at work'.

*Job autonomy* was measured with three items (Piccei and Rosenthal, 2001). The sample item is 'I can make my own decisions in carrying out my job'.

*Overtime facility* was assessed by one item (Bauer and Zimmermann, 1999) i.e. 'For earning more, work overtime facilities available in our organization'.

*Practicing overtime* was again measured by one indicator (Bauer and Zimmermann, 1999) i.e. 'I use the benefit of overtime to earn more'.

*Flexibility* was assessed by one indicator (Mennino *et al.*, 2005) i.e. 'How much flexibility you have when to start and finish the working day'.

*Discrimination* was also measured with one item taken from White *et al.* (2003) i.e. 'The manager/supervisor treats some people better than the others'.

*Work-family conflict (dependent variable)*: An eighteen-item scale developed by Carlson *et al.* (2000) was used to measure work-family conflict. Six dimensions of work-family conflict as derived by Carlson *et al.* (2000) i.e. time-based work to family conflict, time-based family to work conflict, strain-based work to family conflict, strain-based family to work conflict, behavior-based work to family conflict, and behavior-based family to work conflict were used for further analysis in this study. Each dimension contained three statements.

*Control variables*: Based on previous studies (Fu and Shaffer, 2001; White *et al.*, 2003), several variables were included in the analysis to control for aspects of workplace and of individual circumstances that could affect work-family conflict. Control variables that were

used for this study were: gender (1= male, 0= female), type of organization (1= MNCs, 0=Indian Company), spousal organization (1= same, 0= different), spousal working organization location (1= same city, 0= in different city), and family type (1=nuclear, 2= joint).

#### *Statistical tools*

Statistical tools like percentages, factor analyses, and multiple regressions were used to bring out the results. The data were also checked for reliability through calculation of Cronbach alpha values related to each subscale.

### **Results**

#### *Factor analyses*

To define the variables and to determine the unidimensional nature of the scales, six separate factor analyses were performed on the data. The very first factor analysis was performed on data related to supportive HR practices scale consisting of 13 items. Factor analysis brought out 3 factors in all, explaining 59.294% of total variance (see Table III). The extracted communalities ranged between 0.585 and 0.833. For clarity of the factor definitions, loadings more than 0.500 were considered. The factors were recognized as development and flexibility, work and organizational culture, and rewards and financial benefits. The first factor 'development and flexibility' was significantly loaded with six items. On second factor 'work and organizational culture', four variables were loaded significantly. Third factor was also significantly loaded with three items. The factor names, the items loaded on the respective factors, and related eigen values can be seen through Table III.

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 Take in Table III  
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Further, when data related to employee control were subjected to factor analysis, it brought out two factors in all explaining 60.707% of total variance (see Table IV). The extracted communalities ranged between 0.573 and 0.838. For clarity of the factor definitions, loadings more than 0.500 were considered. The factor names, variables loaded on the respective factors and eigen values of the factors can be seen through Table IV. The two derived factors were self employee control and organizational employee control. The first factor 'self employee control' was significantly loaded with four variables and on second

factor 'organizational employee control', four items were loaded significantly. The factor names, the items loaded on the respective factors, and related eigen values can be seen through Table IV.

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Four other factor analyses were performed to test the unidimensionality of the scales related to workplace characteristics i.e. co-worker support, supervisory support, job competence, and job autonomy. Referring to Table V, eigen-values of the four extracted factors were greater than 1. The items of each construct had factor loadings greater than 0.700. These single factor scales were then termed as co-worker support, supervisory support, job competence and job autonomy. Co-worker support was significantly loaded with three items and the items were 'I find my co-workers very helpful in performing my job duties', 'When performing my duties, I rely heavily on my co-workers', and 'My co-workers provide me with important work-related information and advice that make my job easier'.

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Take in Table V  
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Four items were loaded significantly on supervisory support scale and these were: how frequently your supervisor had switched schedules to accommodate your family responsibilities, listened to your problems, shuffled/ juggled tasks or duties to accommodate your family responsibilities, and shared ideas or advice. On job competence, three items were loaded significantly including 'I know how to deal with most problems in my job', 'I have had enough training to do my job', and 'I am always comfortable in performing my job'. Job autonomy was also loaded with three items and these were 'I can make my own decisions in carrying out my job', 'I have the freedom to decide what I do on my job', and 'I can use my personal judgment in carrying out my job'.

In addition, Cronbach alpha values were calculated to check the reliability of the derived scales. Alpha values for the variables overtime facility, practicing overtime, flexibility, discrimination or fairness were not calculated as these contained single statements.

Factor wise alpha values ranged between 0.649 and 0.924 (see Table VI). All alpha values met the minimum criterion ( $\alpha > 0.60$ ) (Hair *et al.*, 1998).

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#### *Multiple regression analysis*

In order to test the proposed hypotheses, multiple regression analysis was performed. All regression models showing the effects of workplace characteristics on work-family conflict were found statistically significant according to F-statistics (see Table VII). The very first workplace characteristic 'development and flexibility' was found to have significant positive effects on family to work conflict ( $\beta=0.025$ ,  $p\leq 0.078$ ) and its dimension, time-based family to work conflict ( $\beta=0.117$ ,  $p\leq 0.087$ ) which meant development and flexibility accentuated family to work conflict and time-based family to work conflict. Hence, hypothesis 2 was rejected. In case of work and organizational culture, no significant effects were found on work-family conflict and its various aspects. So, the hypothesis 3 was not supported. Similarly, for another characteristic 'rewards and financial benefits', no significant effects were found on any kind work-family conflict. Therefore, hypothesis 4 was also rejected. Further, it was found that co-worker support had significant negative effects on strain-based family to work conflict ( $\beta= -0.119$ ,  $p\leq 0.046$ ) which intended that co-workers' support helped in reducing strain-based family to work conflict among dual career couples. Hence, hypothesis 5 was accepted. Considering another characteristic 'supervisory support', the results highlighted that supervisory support had significant negative effects on overall work-family conflict ( $\beta= -0.110$ ,  $p\leq 0.079$ ), family to work conflict ( $\beta= -0.104$ ,  $p\leq 0.094$ ), strain-based work to family conflict ( $\beta= -0.175$ ,  $p\leq 0.006$ ), and time-based family to work conflict ( $\beta= -0.133$ ,  $p\leq 0.040$ ). It depicted that supervisory support reduced work-family conflict, family to work conflict, strain-based work to family conflict, and time-based family to work conflict among dual career couples. So, the hypothesis 6 was accepted.

In case of job competence, the results highlighted its significant negative effects on overall work-family conflict ( $\beta= -0.121$ ,  $p\leq 0.039$ ), work to family conflict ( $\beta= -0.163$ ,  $p\leq 0.006$ ), time-based work to family conflict ( $\beta= -0.128$ ,  $p\leq 0.036$ ), strain-based work to family conflict ( $\beta= -0.149$ ,  $p\leq 0.013$ ), behavior-based work to family conflict ( $\beta= -0.110$ ,  $p\leq 0.061$ ), and strain-based family to work conflict ( $\beta= -0.115$ ,  $p\leq 0.043$ ) which clearly meant that job competence reduced work-family conflict, work to family conflict, time-based work

to family conflict, strain-based work to family conflict, behavior-based work to family conflict, and strain-based family to work conflict in dual career couples. Hence, hypothesis 7 was accepted. Further, the results revealed that self employee control had significant negative effects on overall work-family conflict ( $\beta = -0.136, p \leq 0.024$ ), work to family conflict ( $\beta = -0.175, p \leq 0.004$ ), time-based work to family conflict ( $\beta = -0.198, p \leq 0.002$ ), strain-based work to family conflict ( $\beta = -0.184, p \leq 0.003$ ), and time-based family to work conflict ( $\beta = -0.142, p \leq 0.023$ ). It depicted that 'self employee control' helped in decreasing work-family conflict, work to family conflict, time-based work to family conflict, strain-based work to family conflict, and time-based family to work conflict among dual career couples. So, hypothesis 8 was accepted. However, no significant effects on work-family conflict were found for 'organizational employee control'. Thus, hypothesis 9 was rejected (see Table VII).

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Similarly, job autonomy and overtime facility were found to have no significant effects on work-family conflict or any of its aspects. Hence, hypothesis 10 and 11 were rejected. But for practicing overtime, the results highlighted that it had significantly positive effects on overall work-family conflict ( $\beta = 0.106, p \leq 0.073$ ), family to work conflict ( $\beta = 0.107, p \leq 0.069$ ), and behavior-based work to family conflict ( $\beta = 0.151, p \leq 0.011$ ). It indicated that practicing overtime was responsible for increase in overall work-family conflict, family to work conflict, and behavior-based work to family conflict in dual career couples. So, hypothesis 12 was accepted. Further, it was found that 'flexibility to start and finish the working day' had significant negative effects on family to work conflict ( $\beta = -0.104, p \leq 0.053$ ), and behavior-based family to work conflict ( $\beta = -0.179, p \leq 0.001$ ) which meant 'flexibility to start and finish the working day' reduced family to work conflict and behavior-based family to work conflict among dual career couples. Therefore, hypothesis 13 was accepted.

And for last workplace characteristic i.e. Discrimination, the results revealed that it had significant positive effects on overall work-family conflict ( $\beta = 0.174, p \leq 0.001$ ), work-to family conflict ( $\beta = 0.150, p \leq 0.004$ ), family to work conflict ( $\beta = 0.177, p \leq 0.000$ ), time-based work to family conflict ( $\beta = 0.134, p \leq 0.011$ ), behavior-based work to family conflict ( $\beta = 0.141, p \leq 0.006$ ), time-based family to work conflict ( $\beta = 0.106, p \leq 0.043$ ), strain-based family to work conflict ( $\beta = 0.175, p \leq 0.000$ ) and behaviour-based family to work conflict ( $\beta = 0.150, p \leq 0.004$ ).

It indicated that discrimination or unfair treatment increased overall work-family conflict, work-to family conflict, family to work conflict, time-based work to family conflict, behavior-based work to family conflict, time-based family to work conflict, strain-based family to work conflict, and behaviour-based family to work conflict among dual career couples. Hence, hypothesis 14 was accepted.

On the basis of above results, hypothesis 1 could only be partially accepted as out of 13 workplace characteristics, five were not found to have any effect on work-family conflict. These five characteristics were work and organizational culture, rewards and financial benefits, organizational employee control, job autonomy, and overtime facility.

Taking into consideration the control variables, the results revealed that respondents who were employed in MNCs faced comparatively more overall work-family conflict ( $\beta=0.101$ ,  $p\leq0.052$ ), work to family conflict ( $\beta=0.091$ ,  $p\leq0.082$ ), family to work conflict ( $\beta=0.097$ ,  $p\leq0.058$ ), behavior-based work to family conflict ( $\beta=0.108$ ,  $p\leq0.039$ ), strain-based family to work conflict ( $\beta=0.094$ ,  $p\leq0.061$ ), and behavior-based family to work conflict ( $\beta=0.095$ ,  $p\leq0.072$ ) than those who were employed in Indian organizations. Couples who worked in same organization reported more overall work to family conflict ( $\beta=0.102$ ,  $p\leq0.048$ ), family to work conflict ( $\beta=0.132$ ,  $p\leq0.011$ ), strain-based work to family conflict ( $\beta=0.095$ ,  $p\leq0.075$ ), and strain-based family to work conflict ( $\beta=0.177$ ,  $p\leq0.000$ ) in comparison to those who were working in different organizations. Respondents whose spouses were working in different city faced more overall work-family conflict ( $\beta=-0.093$ ,  $p\leq0.074$ ), work to family conflict ( $\beta=-0.097$ ,  $p\leq0.002$ ), and behaviour-based work to family conflict ( $\beta=-0.150$ ,  $p\leq0.002$ ) than those who were working in the same city. Couples who lived in nuclear family suffered more family to work ( $\beta=0.086$ ,  $p\leq0.076$ ) and behaviour-based family to work conflict ( $\beta=0.093$ ,  $p\leq0.064$ ) as compared to those who lived in joint family.

## Discussion

The present study has taken a step towards better understanding of antecedents of work-family conflict and its various dimensions by examining a range of workplace characteristics. Using multiple regression on a representative sample of dual-career couples, the study indicates that workplace characteristics exert a noticeable influence on work-family conflict in dual career couples. Out of all thirteen workplace characteristics, eight characteristics namely development and flexibility, co-worker support, supervisory support, job competence,

self employee control, practicing overtime, flexibility, and discrimination have shown significant impact on work-family conflict. Remaining five i.e. work and organizational culture, rewards and financial benefits, organizational employee control, job autonomy, and overtime facility are not found influencing work-family conflict in dual career couples. By highlighting differential impact of specific workplace characteristics, the results have established that all workplace strategies or policies do not have same impact on various forms of conflict. The findings of our study are in contrast with Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) suggestion that the similar antecedents are shared by various forms of work-family conflict. Each of the characteristics are found to have unique magnitude in relation to various forms of work-family conflict. Different pattern of relationships across work-family conflict has confirmed that various forms of work-family conflict exist, as suggested by Fu and Shaffer (2001).

Considering particular characteristics, the results have highlighted that dual career couples who make use of development and flexibility facilities face family to work and time-based family to work conflicts. Contrary to our finding, Gajendran and Harrison (2007) have confirmed that availability of development and flexibility policies in an organization helps in reducing work family conflict among employees. Another interesting finding is that organizational culture and rewards are not found to have any effect on work-family conflict among dual career couples. However, Peeters *et al.* (2009) have opined that supportive work culture results in less work-family conflict and more engagement in employees. It may be due to the reason that dual career couples consider supportive work culture and financial benefits only as a necessity on the part of their organization, not as a way sufficient enough to have an impact on their work-family conflicts. Though, in consistency with Batt and Valcour (2003) findings, the results have indicated that having supportive co-workers and supervisors help dual career couples in balancing work life and therefore, reducing work-family conflicts. Further, it has been found that job competence significantly assist dual career couples in reducing work-family conflict and its few other forms such as work to family conflict, time-based work to family conflict, strain-based work to family conflict, behavior-based work to family conflict, and strain-based family to work conflict. It can be said that more an employee learns how to tackle the work related problems, how to handle the job proficiently; more he/she enables himself/herself in striking the balance between work and family domains, thereby, reducing the work-family conflicts.



Another appealing result is that providing self employee control to dual career couples in terms of choice over weekly and daily work schedules, use of vacations, and control on personal time has been found to lessen various conflicts like overall work-family conflict, work to family conflict, time-based work to family conflict, strain-based work to family conflict, and time-based family to work conflict but organizational employee control has no effects on work-family conflict in couples. The possible reason behind this finding is that employees perceive 'organizational employee control' only as a mean to manage workforce by the organizations not as a resource to stabilize their work and family lives. So, organizational employee control does not make any difference but self employee control does, specifically reducing.

Proceeding further, contrary to what was predicted, job autonomy has shown no effects on work-family conflicts in dual career couples. Similar to our results, Dinger *et al.* (2010) study has also not found any significant effect of autonomy on work-family conflict. However, Batt and Valcour (2003) believe that providing autonomy to employees means enhancing their ability to control the decisions related to when, where, and how to integrate work and family tasks as per their demands, it should result in less work-family conflicts. One more striking result is that overtime facility has no significant effect on work-family conflict but practicing overtime is found to enhance overall work-family conflict, family to work conflict, and behavior-based work to family conflict in dual career couples. It can be said that unless employees are forced to exercise the overtime facility, its mere presence does not have any effect on them.

Clarkberg and Moen (2001) have rightly elucidated that working hours allotted by employers tend to raise work demands above the optimal choice level for employees and when they are pressurized to spend more time at work, it reduces their family time and consequently, increases work-family conflict. The results further reveal that providing flexibility to start and finish the working day facilitate dual career couples in reducing their family to work conflict and behavior-based family to work conflict. On the same line, Albertsen *et al.* (2014) have found that implementation of self-rostering i.e. choice of scheduling the work hours has a positive impact on work-life balance of IT professionals.

Another important issue is that across all the workplace characteristics, 'discrimination' is regarded as the most important characteristic among dual career couples since it has been found responsible for accentuating work-family conflict and its all forms except one i.e. strain based work-to-family conflict. It can be posited that unfair treatment or

discrimination at workplace causes much higher distress levels in employees as compared to other workplace policies, that it become impossible to suppress the negative feelings, hence, causes all types of work-family conflicts. White *et al.* (2003) have also regarded fairness of the supervisor as an important factor since it is found to be responsible for reduction in negative job-to-home spillover. On the same line, Schminke *et al.* (2000) have revealed that employees' perception of fairness in organizational procedures has structural effects on reduced levels of stress.

Considering demographics, organization type, spousal working organization, location of spousal working organization, and family type are found to have significant effects on work-family conflict in dual career couples. The results have specified that employees working in MNCs face more conflicts than those who work in Indian organizations. The reason behind this finding may be the cultural variations as a number of studies have indicated that the individualistic-versus-collectivistic dimension of culture plays a important role in work-family domain of individuals (Masuda *et al.*, 2008; Spector *et al.*, 2004). Majority of MNCs, being descendents of individualistic cultures, expect their employees to value the needs of self improvement and to separate their experiences of the work and family roles (Lu *et al.*, 2006; Yang, 2005). MNCs thrive to create and maintain their unique global position and competitive advantage so may demand their managers and executives to invest most of their time and energy in their work. And therefore, employees in MNCs when work for long hours increase the possibility of diffusion of work into family life and hence, more work-family conflicts (Blair-Loy, 2009; Chesley, 2005). However, India is characterised by a culture where strong family relationships and networks are given due importance and people are less individualistic in nature (Hofstede, 2001). Being part of collectivist societies, employees in Indian organizations do not perceive work as a source of threat towards the fulfilment of their family responsibilities, instead they perceive work as a means to improve the family's well-being (Rathi and Barath, 2013).

Further, the findings indicate that spouses who work in same organizations have reported comparatively more conflicts than those who work in different organizations. It may be the result of competitive posture of the couple. In addition, if spouse of the couple works in different city, they tend to face more conflicts than those whose spouse works in same city. In contrast, Batt and Valcour (2003) have not found any impact of working in different city/travel on work-family conflict. In addition, the results have established that couples living in nuclear families have reported more conflicts than those who live in joint families. It

can be said that couples living in joint families have to face lesser family responsibilities due to availability of additional family members and help and thus can balance work and family life more easily than couples living in nuclear families. In our study, gender is not found to have any significant impact on conflicts. However, Hofäcker and König (2013) have confirmed that for men, autonomy and flexibility in work trigger work-family conflict while the same characteristics reduce conflicts for women.

### **Conclusions**

Using multiple regression analysis on a sample of 393 employees belonging to dual career couple category, the present study has sought to evaluate the effects of various workplace characteristics on work-family conflict and its various forms. The empirical results have highlighted that out of thirteen workplace characteristics, eight characteristics specifically development and flexibility, co-worker support, supervisory support, job competence, self employee control, practicing overtime, flexibility, and discrimination have shown significant impact on work-family conflict. However, remaining five characteristics i.e. work and organizational culture, rewards and financial benefits, organizational employee control, job autonomy, and overtime facility are not found in any relation with work-family conflict in dual career couples. For demographic variables, all chosen demographics such as organization type, spousal working organization, location of spousal working organization, and family type have shown significant effects on work-family conflict in dual career couples except one i.e. gender of the employees. Overall, the study concludes that workplace characteristics are important antecedents of work-family conflicts in dual career couples.

The current study offers some noteworthy implications for organizations, policy makers, HR managers, and dual career couples. Since, most of the workplace characteristics chosen for our study fall under the control of the individual, the partner in the relationship, co-workers, the immediate supervisor, and the organization. The findings, therefore, can be used for reduction of work-family conflict at multiple levels. HR practitioners need to follow proper communication channels to bring out the positive perception in employees regarding 'development and flexibility' as organizations adopt these kind of practices in order to reap benefits of employees' enhanced development not to increase employees' family to work conflicts. Organizations must create a work environment where co-workers and supervisors are encouraged to support employees since it helps in reducing conflicts at various levels. Managers need to seek ways to increase the job competency levels in employees since

heightened job competency in employees is found to reduce work-family conflicts. In addition, employees should be provided with choice over weekly and daily work schedules, use of vacations, and control of personal time. More an organization boosts the self control in employees, less will be the imbalance in work and family life.

Organizations would definitely be benefitted if they, in particular, focus on providing fair treatment to employees. Ensuring that employees get fair treatment by their supervisors in each and every work related activity can help organizations in reducing the extent to which their employees' work lives conflict with their family lives. Another implication is for dual career couples that instead of working in same organization, it would be of more beneficial for dual career couples to seek jobs in different organizations but may be in the same city. Also, dual career couples in nuclear families should avail additional help in form of maids for child, caretaker for elders, helper for household tasks etc as it will help them in fulfilment of some family responsibilities without their much involvement and subsequently will reduce work-family conflicts. And for MNCs operating in India, the implication is that to get better hold of employees' work and family lives, they should learn Indian cultural ethos first. MNCs need to understand precisely the mechanics of the environment prevailing in Indian organizations as employees in Indian organizations face less work-family conflicts. In conclusion, it's high time for organizations to grasp that certain workplace characteristics provide appropriate choices, freedom, and environment for dual-career employees, which encourage them to build effective amalgamation of work and family roles suiting their individual circumstances.

While this research is limited to a small sample, the findings of the study are nevertheless important. No doubt, this study is important and almost first study on dual career couples in India on such issues, especially on such extensive basis. Further research can be pursued on a larger representative sample to get more validated results. Another potential limitation is that the study has focussed on dual career couples only. In future, research can be conducted by adding few more facets to this dimension or separately such as single career families, self-employed member of couples, etc. Further, the study has particularly covered thirteen workplace characteristics. In consistency with the related literature, future researchers may consider other practices as well. One more limitation is that data have been collected from mainly north India, it could have been collected from wider area. The study could, however, be extended cross culturally in order to have more generalized conclusions.

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**Table I. Distribution of the sample**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Categories</b>	<b>Respondents</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Type</b>	MNCs	179	45.5
	Indian	214	54.5
	<b>Total</b>	<b>393</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Sector</b>	Govt.	76	19.3
	Private	317	80.7

<b>Total</b>	<b>426</b>	<b>100.0</b>
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**Table II. Characteristics of the sample**

Variables	Categories	Respondents	%
<b>1. Gender</b>	Male	216	55.0
	Female	177	45.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>393</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>2. Managerial category</b>	Managerial	127	32.3
	Others	266	67.7
	<b>Total</b>	<b>393</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>3. Spousal working organization</b>	Same	96	24.4
	Different	297	75.6
	<b>Total</b>	<b>393</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>4. Spousal working organization location</b>	Same City	309	78.6
	Different City	84	21.4
	<b>Total</b>	<b>393</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>5. Family</b>	Nuclear	174	44.3
	Joint	219	55.7
	<b>Total</b>	<b>393</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>6. Child</b>	Yes	277	70.5
	No	116	29.5
	<b>Total</b>	<b>393</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>7. Elder</b>	None	161	41.0
	One	73	18.6
	Two	154	39.2
	Three	02	0.5
	Four	03	0.7
	<b>Total</b>	<b>393</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table III. Factor loadings of varimax rotated principal components**

Factors	Loadings	Eigen value	% of variance
<b>Development and flexibility</b>		4.958	38.141
The organization facilitates mentor relationships, both formal and informal, in the workplace.	0.833		
The organization has special committees for handling	0.756		

sex discrimination and sexual harassment grievances.			
Formal job sharing (i.e., two or more employees sharing one job) is permitted.	0.753		
The organization renders advice to or counsel employees on how to combine family and work.	0.685		
I feel the employee/manager selection process for a given job is very extensive in our firm.	0.656		
Flexible working hours are allowed for employees who desires such arrangements; e.g., working only three days a week or so.	0.585		
<b>Work and organizational culture</b>		1.660	12.766
The climate of our firm is very structured.	0.825		
The climate of our firm is very cooperative	0.811		
My organization/firm provides me job security.	0.597		
My pay raises and promotions are closely tied to performance appraisal.	0.580		
<b>Rewards and financial benefits</b>		1.090	8.387
I have seniority-based rewards.	0.781		
I extensively participate in financial benefits (e.g., gain sharing, profit sharing, or employee ownership, etc.)	0.654		
The organization practices cafeteria benefit plan (i.e., the employees can pick and choose from available options to develop their own benefit plans).	0.586		
<hr/>			
Notes: Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy = 0.869			
Barlett's test of Sphericity		Approx. Chi-Square = 1843.060	
		df = 78	
		Significance = 0.000	

**Table IV. Factor loadings of varimax rotated principal components**

<b>Factors</b>	<b>Loadings</b>	<b>Eigen value</b>	<b>% of variance</b>
<b>Self employee control</b>		3.784	47.306
How much choice you have over weekly work schedule	0.835		
How much choice you have over daily work schedule	0.806		

How much choice you have over use of vacations	0.782		
How much choice you have over personal time	0.669		
<b>Organizational employee control</b>		1.072	13.401
How much choice you have over email at work	0.838		
How much choice you have over the amount and timing of work that must be done at home in order to meet work demands	0.654		
How much choice you have over ability to receive personal phone calls.	0.645		
How much choice you have over the place where you work (home versus regular work place).	0.573		
Notes: Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy = 0.777			
Barlett's test of Sphericity		Approx. Chi-Square = 1266.051	
		df = 28	
		Significance = 0.000	

**Table V. Factor loadings of varimax rotated principal components**

Variables	No. of items	Factor no.	KMO	Chi-square	Eigen values	Factor loadings		
						Item 1	Item 2	Item 3
CS	3	1	0.638	274.405	1.954	0.867	0.825	0.722
SS	4	1	0.811	980.388	3.049	0.908	0.891	0.849
JC	3	1	0.716	446.904	2.240	0.885	0.858	0.848
JA	3	1	0.727	604.027	2.388	0.913	0.900	0.863

Notes: CS= Coworker support; SS= Supervisory support; JC=Job competence; JA=Job autonomy and here KMO represents Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy and Chi-square represents values of Barlett's test of Sphericity.

**Table VI. Reliability analysis**

Variable	No. of items	Alpha value
<i>Workplace characteristics</i>		

Development and flexibility	6	0.849
Work and organizational culture	4	0.724
Reward and financial benefits	3	0.649
Co-worker support	3	0.725
Supervisory support	4	0.895
Job competency	3	0.829
Self employee control	4	0.830
Organizational employee control	4	0.703
Job autonomy	3	0.871
<b><i>Work-family conflict</i></b>		
Overall work-family conflict	18	0.924
Work to family conflict	9	0.857
Family to work conflict	9	0.886
Time-based work to family conflict	3	0.814
Strain-based work to family conflict	3	0.838
Behaviour-based work to family conflict	3	0.833
Time-based family to work conflict	3	0.837
Strain-based family to work conflict	3	0.903
Behaviour-based family to work conflict	3	0.830
<b><i>Other practices (single statements)</i></b>		
Overtime facility	1	---
Practicing overtime	1	---
Flexibility	1	---
Discrimination or fairness	1	---

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Table VII. Summary results of multiple regression (N=393) showing the effects of workplace characteristics on work-family conflict

Independent Variables	Dependent variables								
	WFC (Model 1)	WF (Model 2)	FW (Model 3)	T_WF (Model 4)	S_WF (Model 5)	B_WF (Model 6)	T_FW (Model 7)	S_FW (Model 8)	B_FW (Model 9)
DF	0.012	-0.003	0.025*	0.021	0.048	-0.074	0.117*	0.047	-0.111
WOC	-0.027	-0.040	-0.013	-0.038	0.008	-0.065	-0.002	0.015	-0.048
RFB	0.085	0.060	0.099	0.013	0.039	0.089	0.086	0.085	0.071
CS	-0.028	0.049	-0.097	0.086	0.059	-0.025	-0.100	-0.119**	-0.012
SS	-0.110*	-0.102	-0.104*	-0.029	-0.175**	-0.035	-0.133**	-0.074	-0.048
JC	-0.121**	-0.163**	-0.067	-0.128**	-0.149**	-0.110*	-0.091	-0.115**	0.052
SEC	-0.136**	-0.175***	-0.085	-0.198***	-0.184***	-0.036	-0.142**	-0.062	-0.004
OEC	-0.032	-0.020	-0.039	0.081	-0.050	-0.074	-0.015	-0.054	-0.055
JA	-0.007	-0.007	-0.006	-0.017	0.026	-0.027	0.053	-0.039	-0.023
OF	0.022	-0.021	0.059	0.034	-0.052	-0.030	0.032	0.027	0.091
PO	0.106*	0.092	0.107*	-0.015	0.076	0.151**	0.090	0.093	0.078
Flexibility	-0.069	-0.021	-0.104**	-0.062	0.039	-0.031	-0.046	-0.041	-0.179***
Discri	0.174***	0.150***	0.177***	0.134**	0.081	0.141**	0.106**	0.175***	0.150***
Gender	0.016	0.027	0.004	0.065	-0.028	0.029	-0.022	0.039	-0.011
Type	0.101**	0.091*	0.097**	0.060	0.048	0.108**	0.048	0.094*	0.095*
Org_S	0.102**	0.057	0.132**	-0.042	0.095*	0.078	0.060	0.177***	0.076
Org_diff	-0.093*	-0.097*	-0.079	-0.046	-0.032	-0.150***	-0.066	-0.047	-0.085
Family	0.064	0.032	0.086*	-0.020	0.018	0.075	0.024	0.092	0.093*
Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	0.122	0.096	0.136	0.044	0.069	0.103	0.059	0.170	0.076
Total F	4.036	3.315***	4.431***	1.993**	2.618***	3.492***	2.364***	5.450***	2.788***
N	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.010)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.001)	(0.000)	(0.000)
	393	393	393	393	393	393	393	393	393

Notes: DF= Development and Flexibility; WOC= Work and Organizational Culture; RF B= Rewards and Financial Benefits; CS= Co-worker support; SS= Supervisory Support; JC=Job Competence; SEC= Self Employee Control; OEC= Organizational Employee Control; JA=Job Autonomy; OF= Overtime Facility; PO = Practicing Overtime; Discri= Discrimination ;Type= Type of Company; Org\_S=Spousal Working Organization; Org\_Diff= Spousal Working Organization Location; Family=family type WFC= Work Family Conflict; WF= Work to Family Conflict; FW= Family to Work Conflict; T\_WF= Time based Work to Family Conflict; S\_WF= Strain based Work to Family Conflict; B\_WF=Behaviour based Work to Family Conflict; T\_FW= Time based Family to Work Conflict; S\_FW=Strain based Family to Work Conflict; B\_FW= Behaviour based Family to Work Conflict

- \*\*\*p≤ .01, \*\* p≤ .05, \* p≤ .10
- Figures in the first eighteen rows are standardized beta coefficients

### Exhibit I. Summary of results and hypotheses (H1 to H14)

Hypothesis	Brief results/ significant impacts	Accepted/ Rejected
<i>H1</i>	Yes, in case of development and flexibility, co-worker support, supervisory support, job competence, self employee control, practicing overtime, flexibility, and discrimination	Partially accepted
<i>H2</i>	Yes, on FW and T_FW	Rejected
<i>H3</i>	No, not reducing or increasing significantly work-family conflict.	Rejected
<i>H4</i>	No, not reducing or increasing significantly work-family conflict	Rejected
<i>H5</i>	Yes on S_FW	Accepted
<i>H6</i>	Yes on WFC, FW, S_WF, and T_FW	Accepted
<i>H7</i>	Yes on WFC, WF, T_WF, S_WF, B_WF, and S_FW	Accepted
<i>H8</i>	Yes on WFC, WF, T_WF, S_WF, and T_FW	Accepted
<i>H9</i>	No, not reducing or increasing significantly work-family conflict	Rejected
<i>H10</i>	No, not reducing or increasing significantly work-family conflict	Rejected
<i>H11</i>	No, not reducing or increasing significantly work-family conflict	Rejected
<i>H12</i>	Yes on WFC, FW, and B_WF	Accepted
<i>H13</i>	Yes on FW and B_FW	Accepted
<i>H14</i>	Yes on WFC, WF, FW, T_WF, B_WF, T_FW, S_FW, and B_FW	Accepted

Note: WFC= Work Family Conflict; WF= Work to Family Conflict; FW=Family to Work Conflict; T\_WF= Time based Work to Family Conflict; S\_WF= Strain based Work to Family Conflict; B\_WF=Behaviour based Work to Family Conflict; T\_FW= Time based Family to Work Conflict; S\_FW=Strain based Family to Work Conflict; B\_FW= Behaviour based Family to Work Conflict.