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Linking Interactional Justice to Work-to-Family Conflict: The Mediating Role of Emotional Exhaustion

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This study examined the effect of interactional justice on work–to-family conflict and whether emotional exhaustion was a mediator of this relationship. Field survey data were obtained from 141 employees from various organizations and occupations. The findings suggest that perceptions of interactional justice are related to work-to-family conflict and, as predicted, emotional exhaustion mediated the relationship between interactional justice and work-to-family conflict. Theoretical and practical implications are discussed. *Organization Management Journal*, 11: 74–83, 2014. doi: 10.1080/15416518.2014.929932

INTRODUCTION

Interactional justice, a dimension of organizational justice, represents the interpersonal aspect of fairness during the enactment of decision-making procedures (Bies & Moag, 1986). In the organizational justice literature, interactional justice facilitates the occurrence of positive organizational behaviors, such as organizational citizenship behavior (OCB), and more favorable work attitudes, such as organizational commitment (Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001; Colquitt, Conlon, Wesson, Porter, & Ng, 2001). Additionally, interactional justice has been negatively associated with behaviors that harm the organization or its members, such as workplace deviance (Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001; Colquitt et al., 2001; LePine, Erez, & Johnson, 2002). For example, when managers or supervisors adhere to specific rules of fair interpersonal communication, the process signals to employees that they are valuable members of the organization, and the employees reciprocate for these sources of fairness through behaviors that benefit the organization and withdraw from behaviors that are counterproductive.

Although extant research examining the effects of interactional justice has largely focused on the organization, the consequences of interactional justice on employee-relevant outcomes have begun to garner attention—including the areas of health (such as insomnia; e.g., Greenberg, 2006) and well-being (such as depression and perceived stress; e.g., Judge & Colquitt, 2004; Spell & Arnold, 2007; Tepper, 2000). This study adds to the growing number of studies by examining the relation between interactional justice and work–family conflict.

Work–family conflict is a form of interrole conflict that occurs when the demands of work and family roles conflict (Byron, 2005). There is now increasing consensus among researchers that work–family conflict consists of two distinct, although related, concepts: work interference with the family (work-to-family conflict: WIF) and family interference with work (family-to-work: FIW). This study focuses on WIF because more often the work environment, rather than the family environment, predicts WIF (Grandey, Cordeiro, & Judd, 2007).

WIF occurs when work obligations get in the way of family life. In particular, evidence has shown that when organizations are perceived as supportive of employees' family lives, employees report lower levels of WIF, and these relationships exist beyond demographics, work–family policies, and more general organizational climate variables (Allen, 2001; Behson, 2002). Moreover, although a great deal is known about the nature of WIF, its antecedents, and its consequences (Byron, 2005; Eby, Casper, Lockwood, Bordeaux, & Brinley, 2005), considerably less is known about how WIF can be alleviated and resolved (Major & Morganso, 2011).

Furthermore, organizational scholars investigating the justice-outcome relationships have largely ignored "the underlying process of how organization justice reactions motivate responses" (Gilliland, 2008, p. 271). A similar view was expressed by Ambrose and Schminke (2003), who asserted that many empirical studies focus on the direct effects of justice and do not examine more integrative models. Thus, the mechanisms through which perceptions of justice influence individuals' outcomes are still not fully understood (Judge & Colquitt, 2004; Masterson, Lewis, Goldman, & Taylor, 2000). Research on WIF also suggests that despite extensive research on spillover and crossover effects from the work to home environment (Eby et al., 2005), the mechanisms by which those effects are

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transmitted are rather elusive (Thompson & Cavallaro, 2007). For example, Edwards and Rothbards (2000) argued that workplace experiences exert indirect effects on family functioning through mechanisms such as mood and cognitive distraction. In an attempt to shed light on how interactional justice influences WIF, the present study examines emotional exhaustion as a mediator of the interactional justice-WIF relationship, and I draw on the conservation of resources (COR) theory to explain the process.

The study contributes to interactional justice and WIF literatures in the following two ways. First, although interactional justice is relevant to work motivation in that it governs the direction and energy of work behaviors (Cropanzano Byrne, Bobocel, & Rupp, 2001), perceptions of fair managerial actions (i.e., interactional justice) might be relevant to the lessening of WIF levels because supervisors are the most proximal representatives of the workplace environment and most involved in the employees' daily work life. To my knowledge, no research has assessed how perceptions of interactionally just managerial actions impact employees' WIF. Second, although prior research has indirectly linked interactional justice to WIF (e.g., Judge & Colquitt, 2004), this study, to my knowledge, is the first to theorize and empirically test the process through which interactional justice influences WIF. Moreover, previous research has noted the association between interactional justice and emotional exhaustion (e.g., Cole, Bernerth, Walter, & Holt, 2010); thus, this present study explores emotional exhaustion as an intervening mechanism that links interactionally fair treatment to WIF.

Hypothesis Development

Bies and Moag (1986) introduced the concept of interactional justice, which refers to how fairly employees are treated at work, both interpersonally and informationally. Interactions are considered interpersonally fair when employers treat employees with dignity and respect, refraining from prejudicial statements and personal attacks. Interactions are seen as informationally just when communications with employees are truthful and decisions are justified (Colquitt, 2001; Colquitt et al., 2001). Polite, respectful, and dignified treatment from employees' supervisors (i.e., interactional justice) has been linked to outcomes such as a strong sense of belonging and self-esteem (e.g., Ferris, Spence, Brown & Heller, 2012), high employee productivity, and other related work outcomes (e.g., Cropanzano, Paddoock, Rupp, Bagger, & Baldwin, 2008). These studies have shown interactional (in)justice to be either a potential source of stress or a buffer to stressful conditions for employees (e.g., Judge & Colquitt, 2004; Tepper, 2001). In addition, justice-based stress theories—for example, equity theory—have suggested that supervisors are potentially important in the stress process; organizational leaders or supervisors might be responsible for the occurrence of the stressor, such as when supervisors are perceived as unjustly distributing resources (i.e., distributive injustice; Vermunt &

Steensma, 2005). Although interactional justice represents an important determinant of organizational outcomes, interactionally just managers might also benefit from outcomes that are important to employees. Fair organizational leaders could help reduce the negative effects of WIF.

INTERACTIONAL JUSTICE AND WIF

Interactional justice speaks to the perceived fairness of the interpersonal treatment received during an authority's enactment of procedures (Bies & Moag, 1986). Interactional justice is promoted when supervisors adhere to specific rules of fair interpersonal communication—rules resulting from studies of communication during recruitment efforts (Bies & Moag, 1986). Bies and Moag (1986) argued that managers should treat their subordinates with respect and consideration, and should abstain from making improper statements. Additionally, employees perceive interactional justice when the information they receive from organizational authorities is adequate, truthful, timely, and honest (Colquitt, 2001). Managers or supervisors who engage in open, trustworthy, and honest communication and are courteous during interactions might encourage a climate in which employees are able to share their work and family concerns and get support rather than sacrifice family matters for work. For example, a study by Kossek, Colquitt, and Noe (2001) showed that employee performance and well-being, including WIF, were lowest in work climates that discouraged the sharing of family concerns.

Moreover, organizational scholars have asserted that fair treatment reinforces an employee's self-esteem and belongingness and also increases the perceived legitimacy of management and supervisors (e.g., Cropanzano et al., 2001; Ferris et al., 2012). Such managers might be willing to be flexible with work schedules and accommodate other strategies, such as telecommuting, which could help lower the risk of spillover from work to family (i.e., WIF). The experience of WIF by employees might be related, in part, to the responsiveness of managers. Furthermore, besides offering informal support, fair managers could provide formal support to employees by utilizing resources and family-friendly policies existing within the organization to help their employees achieve work–life balance, which will be related to lower levels of WIF.

Likewise, COR theory suggests that people "seek to obtain, retain, and protect resources and that stress occurs when resources are threatened with loss or are lost or when individuals fail to gain resources after substantive resource investment" (Hobfoll, 2002, p. 312). COR theory recognizes and emphasizes both a means and an end—a means for achieving success and an end that includes adaptation, coping, and well-being (Avey, Luthans, Smith, & Palmer, 2010. Thus, COR theory implies that perceived fair interaction allows employees to obtain, maintain, and protect resources, but that unfair and degrading supervisory communication inconsistent with fair interaction (Colquitt, 2001) might represent events that lessen trust in mangers and evoke perceptions of ambiguity and helplessness.

Employees who feel helpless might lack the control needed to acquire, maintain, and foster the necessary resources (i.e., manager responsiveness) to meet their WIF demands. Therefore I hypothesize:

Hypothesis 1: Interactional justice is negatively related to WIF.

The Mediating Role of Emotional Exhaustion

Emotional exhaustion is a psychological strain symptom and describes the extent to which employees feel drained and overwhelmed at work (Maslach & Leiter, 2008). It constitutes the first of the three components of burnout. The second component of burnout is depersonalization, which refers to a type of interpersonal distancing or detachment; the third component, reduced personal accomplishment, refers to a negative evaluation of self with regards to one's effectiveness in working with co-workers and in accomplishing job responsibilities (Lee & Ashforth, 1990). In relation to the other two burnout dimensions, emotional exhaustion reflects a type of strain brought on by workplace stressors (Aryee, Sun, Chen, & Debrah, 2008) and it "serves as a unique quality of work life indicator with the potential to estimate the cumulative effect of work stress" (Gaines & Jermier, 1983, p. 568). Emotional exhaustion is considered by many researchers to be the key to the experience of the burnout phenomenon. Emotional exhaustion was therefore chosen for this study as a component of burnout that mediates the relationship between interactionally fair experiences and WIF.

Previous research has shown that interactional justice is related to lower levels of emotional exhaustion (e.g., Tepper, 2000). Interactional justice represents a possible form of resource gain in terms of supervisory support that could help individuals understand, predict, and control the stressors that confront them, including lowering emotional fatigue (i.e., emotional exhaustion). According to Lee and Ashforth (1996), emotional exhaustion is experienced when individuals feel they do not have adequate resources to handle the stressors confronting them. However, under a fair manager, an employee's emotional levels might be lowered as a result of the employee being able to predict the manager's behaviors. The sense of certainty about the manager's behavior creates a work environment that enables an employee to seek managerial help. In contrast, an employee who cannot predict future outcomes from interactions with the manager would be less likely to invest remaining resources in trying to seek help from that supervisor. This is consistent with the tenets of COR stating that individuals have a certain number of valued resources, including emotional energy, in their possession and that they strive to obtain, retain, and protect such resources. Moreover, the demands individuals face require them to tap into available resources. When the valued resources are lost or when the investment of resources does not lead to resource gain, individuals are likely to experience negative consequences that include emotional exhaustion

(Tepper, 2000, 2001). I therefore expect interactional justice to be negatively related to emotional exhaustion.

I predict that emotional exhaustion mediates the interactional justice–WIF relationship. From a COR perspective, interactionally fair managers can both widen an individual's pool of available resources and replace or reinforce other resources that have been lacking, resulting in lower levels of emotional exhaustion. Lower levels of emotional exhaustion represent resource surpluses that engender feelings of well-being (Whitman, Halbesleben, & Holmes, 2014) likely to be reflected in reports of WIF. Stated differently, lower levels of emotional exhaustion might provide employees with emotional provisions to balance work and family demands or engage in family-enriching activities, and hence perceive less WIF.

An alternative conceptualization of this relationship is that experiencing WIF leads to emotional exhaustion. In other words, emotional exhaustion is an outcome rather than a mediator. This study relied on an established theory, COR, to guide the direction of proposed causality and support the causal order of the posited variables. Moreover, the direction of causality is consistent with other previous research that has demonstrated support for emotional exhaustion as a mediator (e.g., Aryee et al., 2008; Cole et al., 2010; Mulki, Jaramillo, & Locander, 2006; Whitman et al., 2014). For example, Whitman et al. (2014) used emotional exhaustion as a mediator to examine the link between perceptions of supervisory abuse and feedback avoidance in a sample of registered nurses. Utilizing a cross-lagged panel design, their findings indicated that supervisor abuse was positively related to emotional exhaustion, which in turn was positively associated with feedback avoidance. Another study by Aryee et al. (2008) examined the mediating effect of emotional exhaustion in the relationship between abusive supervision and employee contextual performance. Data collected from subordinate–supervisor dyads from three manufacturing organizations in China showed that emotional exhaustion mediated the relationships between abusive supervision and two dimensions of contextual performance–interpersonal facilitation and job dedication. As such, I hypothesize:

Hypothesis 2: Emotional exhaustion mediates the relationship between interactional justice and WIF.

METHOD

Sample and Procedure

The sample for this study comprises 141 full-time employees who were recruited from a variety of organizations and occupations: education, training, and library services (23%); public administration (18%); retail and hospitality services (15%); financial and insurance services (13%); professional, scientific, and technical services (9%); agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting (8%); health care and social assistance (5%); military and armed forces (2%); and other (7%). Six hundred surveys

were distributed and provided a 26% return rate. The average age of subordinates was 36.4 years ($SD = 11.4$); 67% of them were females; and the group had a mean job tenure of 5.7 years ($SD = 6.9$) and organizational tenure of 8.6 years ($SD = 9.1$).

To recruit participants, I followed the example of Diefendorff and Richard (2003) and Gosserand and Diefendorff (2005), reimbursing trained university students with a $2 coffee card for every survey packet they distributed. I met with these students and gave them verbal and written instructions on recruiting full-time working adults who were not themselves students. The packet included a survey for the participant to fill out, and employees also received instructions to return the surveys directly to me in separate, postage-paid envelopes. I also followed the recommendations of Miller, Cardinal, and Glick (1997) in informing employees that their participation was voluntary and that—because the results would be kept confidential—they should answer honestly. Additionally, I gave the participants my contact information for direct access to me.

Several studies show that using trained university students to collect data gives findings comparable with data collected in more traditional ways (e.g., researchers recruit and distribute surveys in organizations). In particular, Reeve and Smith (2000) demonstrated that results of data administered by students to employees in a variety of jobs and organizations were consistent with those collected by researchers in organizations. Moreover, recent studies by Diefendorff and Richard (2003) and Gosserand and Diefendorff (2005) collected data via trained university students.

Measures

Dependent variable. WIF was assessed with a five-item measure from Netemeyer, Boles, and McMurrian's (1996) work–family conflict scale. A sample item is "The demands of my work interfere with my home and family life." The reliability estimate was $\alpha = .95$.

Independent variables. The interactional justice measure consisted of nine items drawn from Colquitt (2001). Five items were used to gauge the interpersonal component of interactional fairness. A sample item is "My supervisor treats me with dignity and respect." Four items were used to measure informational justice, a sample measure of informational fairness being: "My supervisor does a good job explaining the reasons for determining rewards in your organization." Internal consistency or reliability estimate was .94.

Mediating variable. Emotional exhaustion was assessed using a five-item modified version of the Maslach Burnout Inventory–General Survey (MMBI-GS; Barnett, Brennan, & Gareis, 1999). Respondents rated how frequently they felt they experienced symptoms of exhaustion on the job ($\alpha = .94$).

Control variables. Gender is related to WIF (van Daalen, Willemsen, & Sanders, 2006); research suggests that male employees tend to experience slightly more WIF than females. Thus, I controlled for the effects of gender. Gender was coded as follows: female = 1 and male = 2. Additionally, research

suggests that workplace social support is related to WIF (Kossek, Pichler, Bodner, & Hammer, 2011). Also, because of the conceptual and operational similarities between interactional justice and perceived organizational support (POS; Eisenberger, Cummings, Armeli, & Lynch, 1997), I deemed it prudent to control for POS. POS is defined as the extent to which the organization values, contributes to, and cares about employees' well-being (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). POS was measured with the Eisenberger et al. (1997) eight-item shortened version of the Survey of Perceived Organizational Support (SPOS, sample item: "My organization values my contribution to its well-being," $\alpha = .92$).

I examined POS with the idea that employees who perceive organizational support might experience less WIF, as well as reporting lower emotional exhaustion levels. This line of reasoning is consistent with other research that suggests that the effects of work-based support are negatively related to the family environment (e.g., Thompson, Kirk, & Brown, 2005). Thus, more confidence is provided concerning the unique contribution of interactional justice when POS is controlled for. Differently stated, interactional justice predicts emotional exhaustion and WIF over and above a previously suggested antecedent (i.e., POS). Additionally, controlling for POS ensures that the observed relation of interactional justice with WIF is not due to shared variance with POS. POS was modeled as an antecedent of emotional exhaustion and WIF in the analysis.

The results indicated that POS had a significant effect on emotional exhaustion; however, it had no effect on WIF. Thus, I retained that path between POS and emotional exhaustion but not between POS and WIF. Moreover, gender had no effect on emotional exhaustion and WIF, so I preceded analysis by excluding them as control variables, consistent with Becker's (2005) recommendations against unnecessary variables that can yield biased parameter estimates and reduce power for the statistical tests.

Analysis

Ringle, Wende, and Will's (2005) two-step, partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) was used to test the hypotheses using SmartPLS. This approach has been used across a broad set of business research domains, including strategy (e.g., Hulland, 1999), marketing (e.g., Fornell & Bookstein, 1982), leadership studies (e.g., Bass, Jung, Avolio, & Berson, 2003), and organization studies (e.g., Goldberg & Waldman, 2000). PLS-SEM was used owing to the small sample size. PLS tends to generate more robust estimates when the sample size is small (Qureshi & Campeau, 2009).

RESULTS

Assessment of Measurement Model

Table 1 shows the means, standard deviations, and correlations among the study variables. The results were the same with and without controlling for gender, so, as per Becker's (2005)

TABLE 1
Descriptive statistics, square root of AVE, and correlations of latent variables

Latent variables	Items	Mean	Std. dev.	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Gender	1	1.33	0.47						
2. Age	1	36.42	11.37	0.13					
3. Interactional justice	9	5.31	1.31	−0.01	0.07	**0.81**			
4. Emotional exhaustion	5	3.29	1.58	−0.00	−0.03	−0.39**	**0.88**		
5. Work-to-family conflict	5	3.27	1.59	0.05	−0.02	−0.28**	0.65**	**0.89**	
6. POS	8	4.74	1.15	−0.05	−0.09	0.61**	−0.38**	−0.15	**0.75**

Note. Gender was coded 1 = female, 2 = male. Bold-faced elements on the diagonal represent the square root of AVE. Off-diagonal elements are correlations between constructs. For adequate discriminant validity, diagonal elements should be greater than corresponding off-diagonal correlation elements. All items included in the analyses were configured as reflective indicators (Fornell & Larcker, 1981); $N = 141$. Significance: $^*p < .05$; $^{**}p < .01$; two-tailed.

recommendation, gender was dropped from further analysis. However, POS had an effect on emotional exhaustion and so was retained for analysis (Becker, 2005).

PLS requires assessment of the measurement model by examining the individual item reliability, construct internal consistency, and discriminant validity (e.g., Hulland, 1999). Before examining the measurement model, I used Amos Graphics to run confirmatory factor analysis, providing support for the construct validity. The results of the proposed four-factor structure (interactional fairness, emotional exhaustion, work-to-family conflict, and POS as the control variable) demonstrated a good fit to the data and were as follows: $\chi = 453$, $df = 224$, incremental fit index (IFI) = 0.92, root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = 0.08. Acceptable model fit typically is inferred when IFI is above 0.90, RMSEA is 0.08 or lower, and the ratio of chi-squared to degrees of freedom is below 3 (Kline, 2005). The comparative fit index (CFI) assesses the relative improvement in the model compared to a baseline model. A value of 0.90 or greater indicates a good fit. I obtained a value of 0.91.

Hulland (1999) suggested that, before assessing the structural model, the measurement model be assessed for the following: individual item reliability, construct internal consistency, and discriminant validity.

Internal item reliability. Individual item reliability was assessed by evaluating the loadings of the measures with their respective construct. The standard is to accept items with loadings of 0.7 or more, implying more shared variance between a construct and measures than error variance (Barclay, Higgins, & Thompson, 1995). All items of the focal constructs loaded above the 0.7 threshold (see Table 2 for the factor structure or individual loadings of the constructs).

Internal consistency and convergent validity. The subsequent step was to assess the reliability of the measurement scales or the internal consistency.[1] Internal consistency

developed by Fonell and Larcker (1981) is similar to that of Cronbach's alpha; thus, the interpretation of both Cronbach's alpha and internal consistency are similar (Barclay et al., 1995). For comparison purposes, both measures of internal consistency are presented for all relevant latent variables in Table 3. Internal consistency or reliability follows the guidelines suggested by Nunnally (1978), which state that constructs with 0.7 or greater are considered acceptable. All scales met this acceptable threshold, thus demonstrating adequate reliability. Cronbach's α scores were also acceptable. Convergent validity was assessed using the average extracted variance measure[2] (AVE). The standard is that AVE values of 0.5 or higher are considered acceptable (Barclay et al., 1995). That was the case for the constructs in this study. Table 3 also provides the convergent validity scores.

Discriminant validity. Discriminant validity is evaluated through the average variance shared, which is termed AVE in a PLS context between the latent variables and their indicators. To assess this criterion, Fornell and Larcker (1981) suggested the use of the square root of the AVE for each of the reflective constructs. These measures should be greater than the intercorrelations with any other constructs in the model. This is demonstrated in a correlation matrix that includes the correlations between the constructs in the off-diagonal elements and the square roots of AVE for each construct along the diagonal. AVE values of 0.5 or higher are considered acceptable (Barclay et al., 1995). As illustrated in Table 1, all of the square roots of the AVEs are greater than their corresponding intercorrelations. A second criterion for assessing discriminant validity is that no item should load more highly on another construct than the one it intended to measure (Barclay et al., 1995). Such was the case for this study. Overall, the assessments of reliability and validity suggest that the measures demonstrate good convergent and discriminant validities; also, all scales behaved reliably and thus exhibited good psychometric properties.

[1] Internal consistency $= \frac{(\sum \lambda_{y_i})^2}{(\sum \lambda_{y_i})^2 + \sum \text{Var}(\epsilon_i)}$ where $\text{Var}(\epsilon_i) = -\lambda_{y_i}^2$.

[2] Average variance extracted $= \frac{\sum \lambda_{y_{i2}}}{\sum \lambda_{y_1}^2 + \sum \text{Var}(\epsilon_i)}$ where $\text{Var}(\epsilon_i) = 1 - \lambda_{y_i}^2$.

TABLE 2
Factor structure and discriminant validity of model

	Individual item loadings								
Latent variables (construct)	Item 1	Item 2	Item 3	Item 4	Item 5	Item 6	Item 7	Item 8	Item 9
Interactional justice	0.77	0.75	0.87	0.76	0.80	0.87	0.75	0.87	0.81
Emotional exhaustion	0.92	0.88	0.86	0.87	0.87				
Work-to-family conflict	0.91	0.90	0.80	0.93	0.91				
Perceived organizational support	0.71	0.82	0.81	0.80	0.80	0.77	0.71	0.74	

TABLE 3
Composite reliability, Cronbach's α, and AVE measures (hypothesized model)

Latent variables (construct)	Internal consistency	Cronbach's alpha	Convergent validity (AVE)
Interactional justice	0.94	0.94	0.65
Emotional exhaustion	0.94	0.93	0.77
Work-to-family conflict	0.95	0.93	0.80
Perceived organizational support	0.92	0.90	0.60

Assessment of Structural Model

Consistent with Hypothesis 1, interactional justice negatively predicted WFC ($\beta = -0.33$, $p < .001$). Results for testing hypotheses are displayed in Table 4. Hypothesis 2 proposed that emotional exhaustion would mediate the relationship between interactional justice and WIF. Hypothesized mediation or indirect effect was examined in accordance with the standards put forth by Baron and Kenny (1986). According to them, mediation can be inferred when the following three conditions are satisfied: (a) Interactional justice must be significantly related to WFC ($\beta = -0.33$, $p < .001$); (b) interactional justice must be significantly related to emotional exhaustion ($\beta = -0.29$, $p < .05$); and (c) when both interactional justice and emotional exhaustion are considered concurrently, the direct effect between interactional justice and WIF should either decrease significantly or become non-significant. The direct effect between interactional justice and WIF became nonsignificant when emotional exhaustion was introduced ($\beta = -0.06$, $p > .05$), indicating full mediation.

TABLE 4
Regression results for simple mediation

Latent variables			β	se	t	p
WFC regressed on interactional justice			−0.33	0.07	4.67	<.001
Emotional exhaustion regressed on interactional justice			−0.29	0.16	2.56	<.05
Emotional exhaustion regressed on POS			−0.22	0.10	2.18	<.05
WFC regressed on interactional justice with emotional exhaustion in the equation			−.06	0.08	0.81	>.05
	Value	SE	L 95% CI	U 95% CI	Z	p
	Indirect effect and significance using normal distribution					
Sobel (emotional exhaustion)	−0.30	0.07	−0.44	−0.17	−4.32	.0000
	M	SE	L 95%CI	U 95% CI		
	Bootstrap results for indirect effect					
Effect	−0.30	0.08	−0.48	−0.15		

Note. $N = 141$. Unstandardized regression coefficients are reported. Bootstrap sample size = 5000. L, lower limit; U, upper limit; CI, confidence interval; SE, standard error.

Further, a Sobel (1982) two-tailed test was conducted to identify the magnitude and significance of the mediation effects in the relationship. This method was used for the following reasons. First, Baron and Kenny's (1986) traditional multistep procedure for testing mediation has drawbacks (MacKinnon, Lockwood, Hoffman, West, & Sheets, 2002; Shrout & Bolger, 2002). Second, the data set for testing the indirect effects is nonnormal (Bollen & Stine, 1990), which compromises the statistical power of traditional parametric tests (Shrout & Bolger, 2002). Bootstrapping procedures make no assumptions with regard to sample distribution, thus avoiding this problem (Shrout & Bolger, 2002). Third, the procedure offers a better estimate of the standard error in a population by resampling from the present data set. Finally, the technique has more power than the well-known Baron and Kenny (1986) method.

Regarding emotional exhaustion mediating interactional fairness and WIF, the Sobel (1982) two-tailed test, which assumes a normal distribution under the null hypothesis, showed that the (unstandardized) indirect effect (–0.30) was significant (Sobel $z = -4.32$, $p < .001$). Bootstrapping, which makes no assumptions about the shape of a sampling distribution, confirmed this finding (yielding an identical indirect value, 0.30), as bootstrapped 95% confidence intervals around the indirect effect ab did not contain zero (–0.48, –0.15). The result supported the aforementioned findings of full mediation. The results are also shown in Table 4.

Common Method Bias

Because data were collected from the same source, I took some precautions to minimize common method biases (CMB) by adhering to both the procedural and statistical remedies suggested by Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). Regarding procedure, I provided detailed information about the precautions taken to ensure confidentiality of respondents; this measure should lessen socially desirable responding, and increase honesty of respondents. Also, to reduce evaluation apprehension, I assured respondents that there were no right or wrong answers to the items in the survey (Podsakoff et al., 2003), thus minimizing the potential impact of CMB. A statistical test, the Harman's single-factor test, was conducted to test the presence of common method effect (Podsakoff et al., 2003; Podsakoff & Organ, 1986). All construct items of interactional fairness, emotional exhaustion, work-to-family conflict, and POS were incorporated in a single-factor analysis. This factor analysis yielded six factors and accounted for 74% of the variance. Factor 1 accounted for 17% of the variance. The underlying assumption of this factor test is that if a substantial amount of common method variance exists in the data, either a single factor will emerge or one general factor will account for the majority of the variance among the variables (Andersson & Bateman, 1997; Podsakoff & Organ, 1986). Because a single factor did not emerge and one general factor did not account for most of the variance, common method variance is unlikely to be a serious problem in the data.

DISCUSSION

I drew upon COR theory to examine how perceptions of interactionally just actions from managers influence subordinates' WIF. The findings of the study showed support for the hypotheses that interactional justice was negatively related to WIF. Emotional exhaustion mediated the relations between interactional justice and WIF. Although previous research findings have indirectly linked interactional justice to WIF (Judge & Colquitt, 2004) and an association between interactional justice and emotional exhaustion has been noted (Cole et al., 2010), this study further demonstrates a direct relation between interactional justice and WIF. Additionally, emotional exhaustion serves as a psychological mechanism in the interactional justice–WIF relationship.

Theoretical and Management Implications

This study is part of a growing body of knowledge revealing the importance of employee perceptions of organizational justice and its relation to employee-related outcomes. However, this study is the first to investigate subordinate WIF reactions to the experiences of interactional justice by exploring emotional exhaustion as a mediator. From a COR perspective, individuals are motivated to protect and enhance the self as well as create an atmosphere that offers them pleasure and success (Whitman et al., 2014). Thus, the finding that interactional justice indirectly influences WIF through emotional exhaustion suggests that fair managers provide emotional and environmental resources (e.g., understanding and flexibility) or reinforce other resources that have been lacking (e.g., emotional provision). The availability of resources is likely to enhance feelings of well-being (Whitman et al., 2014), resulting in lower levels of emotional exhaustion. When levels of emotional fatigue are lowered, employees might have energy and emotional provisions left to balance work and family demands (Chueng & Tang, 2009).

Second, I add to the literature on interactional justice and WIF by linking the two through the process of emotional well-being. Finally, the study provides further support for COR theory suggesting that support, that is, managers who treat employees with dignity and respect, and who are truthful and thorough in explaining procedures and processes, widens an employee's pool of available resources (Hobfoll, 1989). These managers also replace or reinforce other resources that have been lacking (Hobfoll, 1989). Resources of support lower subordinate emotional exhaustion levels and consequently provide employees with energy to balance WIF.

This study provides important managerial implications. The results illustrate the importance of training managers to be fair. Fair managers are supportive and in addition might use their organizational skills, connection, and social capital to get and convene resources to help all their employees meet their organizational goals, as well as helping them have a balance of work–family life. Fortunately, past research has shown that

managers can be trained to act in a more just manner (e.g., Skarlicki & Latham, 1997). Because leaders and leadership can be situated at different levels of the organization, it is prudent for organizations to organize these training sessions for leaders at various levels in the organization. Moreover, in cases where formal work–family benefits are difficult to use, fair managers might act as a mechanism for negotiating idiosyncratic arrangements that satisfy employees' work and family balance needs.

Second, WIF continues to become a key source of stress as most families now include two wage earners who must balance work and family roles (Judge & Colquitt, 2004). Organizations and leaders helping their employees reduce levels of emotional exhaustion, and WIF should gain a competitive edge by reducing claims such as medical expenses and by lowering absenteeism while maintaining high levels of job performance such as extra and in-role behaviors (Judge & Colquitt, 2004).

Limitations and Future Research

This research is not without limitations, with one being that the data for the study are cross-sectional in nature, making it difficult to fully substantiate causal inferences. As a result, alternative models (including reverse causality) might exist. However, I drew on COR, a robust theory, to examine the causal status of the relationship. Also, the combination of measurement quality and the use of PLS-SEM techniques provides confidence in the mediational inferences drawn (Mathieu, Deshon, & Bergh, 2008). I acknowledge, however, that future research using a longitudinal research design would be appropriate to defend the proposed pattern of causation.

A second limitation is that all variables of the study were self-reported, which according to Greenhaus and Powell (2006) is the most valid way of measuring personal experiences between the work and family, although self-report is susceptible to CMB. I took a number of steps to minimize CMB; for example, in order to facilitate honest responses, I provided information about the precautions taken in ensuring confidentiality. Additionally, I administered Harman's single-factor test to detect the presence of common method effects (Podsakoff et al., 2003). The test suggests that CMB was not a serious concern for this study, because no single factor emerged as a dominant factor accounting for most of the variance.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that interactional justice has a direct effect on work-to-family conflict. Further, the relationship is mediated by emotional exhaustion. The findings of this research highlight the motivationally positive effects of interactional justice. Interactional justice facilitates resource gains and resource preservation that provide employees with emotional support and assistance in alleviating WIF. The reduction of both emotional exhaustion and WIF could eventually lead to higher performance at the workplace, and those organizations would gain a competitive advantage. The study further underscores the need for organizational leaders to incorporate fairness training in their programs for the longer term health of their employees and their organizations.

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