

## Coping strategies used by lodging managers to balance work and personal lives.

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### **Abstract:**

The hospitality industry offers services to consumers around the clock, every day of the year. Lodging managers, in particular, are required to work long hours in a highly unpredictable and stressful environment. Consequently, a successful career in hotel management leaves little time for outside activities which often leads managers to leave such positions or the industry altogether. The purpose of this study is to explore the coping strategies used by lodging managers who have a successful balance between their work and personal lives. Eight coping strategies are identified by interviewing 15 lodging managers.

**Keywords:** work/personal life balance | coping strategies | life balance | role conflict | lodging managers | hospitality management | tourism industry

### **Article:**

#### INTRODUCTION

The hospitality industry, unlike most others, expects its employees and managers to provide products and services to consumers around the clock, every day of the year. Unlike employees in nonservice occupations, employees and managers in the lodging industry must work on weekends and holidays. Telecommuting or working from home is rarely possible. Lodging managers especially are required to work long hours in a highly unpredictable and stressful environment. Consequently, a successful career in hotel management leaves little time for outside activities, which often leads managers to leave the position or the industry altogether (Berta, 2002). For example, Marriott International experienced difficulties recruiting talented people in early 2000, and noticed that some of its best managers quit their jobs to spend more time with their families (Munck, 2001). The costs associated with this high turnover affect the industry's profitability and reduce its competitive advantages in the market. Many hotel companies invest excessive time and money to recruit and train qualified managers.

Hsieh's (2004) study of lodging managers' perceptions of the balance of their work and personal lives indicated that many lodging managers deem it difficult to achieve that balance. Managing challenging demands from the work and personal life domains represents a source of stress for many employees. Stress, in turn, can lead to health risks and other adverse outcomes (Rotondo, Carlson, & Kincaid, 2003). However, many managers still believe that they can balance their work and personal lives successfully. None of the studies regarding work-personal life strategies has investigated the coping skills or strategies that lodging managers use to balance the demands of their work and personal lives. In addition to examining the conflicts experienced by the lodging managers from work and nonwork domains, this study focuses upon the subjects' adaptations to these conflicts—that is, the coping strategies lodging managers use to strike a balance between their work and personal lives. The primary purposes of this study, therefore, are (a) to investigate how lodging managers define the concept of balance between their work and their personal lives; (b) to examine the types of conflicts that lodging managers experience in their daily lives; and (c) to identify the skills and strategies lodging managers use to cope with conflicts that arise between their work and their personal lives.

## THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

### Role Theory

Role theory provides a social context and structure for many of the work-family conceptual models. It was proposed in the 1950s by Parsons (1951) and Merton (1957), but was initially used in the context of work organization by Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn, Snoek, and Rosenthal (1964). Role theory is based upon the premise that an individual's life is comprised of a number of roles, both at work and outside of work. Role conflict occurs when two or more sets of pressures occur at the same time, so that compliance with one set makes it more difficult to comply with the other. Multiple roles may lead to psychological conflict if each role cannot be adequately fulfilled (Kahn et al., 1964). Conflict experienced between one's work role and one's role outside of work is a salient stressor.

### Work and Family Conflict

Work and family conflict has been defined as “a form of inter-role conflict in which the role pressure from the work and family domain are mutually incompatible in some respects” (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985, p. 77). While conflict is a normal part of life, an increase in the level of work and family conflict has been linked to negative consequences for each. Family-to-work conflict was found to be positively correlated with job stress and depression (Grandey & Cropanzano, 1999). Kossek and Ozeki's (1998) meta-analysis reported that work and family outcomes are correlated with job satisfaction and life satisfaction. Allen, Herst, Bruck, and Sutton (2000) reported that higher levels of conflict are associated with decreases in job satisfaction, career satisfaction, organizational commitment, and job performance, as well as increases in absenteeism and turnover intention. In addition, work and family conflict was

significantly correlated to nonwork-related outcomes, such as dissatisfaction with marriage, life, leisure, and family. Some stress-related outcomes, such as general psychological strain, somatic and physical complaints, depression, substance abuse, burnout, work-related stress, and family-related stress were also significantly associated with work and family conflict (Adams, King, & King, 1996; Allen et al., 2000; Burke, 1988; Frone, Russell, & Cooper, 1992; Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Netemeyer, Boles, & McMurrian, 1996).

The number of work and family conflict studies focused on the hospitality industry are indeed very few. Ghiselli, La Lopa, and Bai (2001) investigated the relationship between job satisfaction, life satisfaction and turnover intent of 1,200 food-service managers. Inter-role conflict was not determined to be related significantly to manager's turnover intent. However, these managers indicated that long working hours created discord in their lives. Namasivayam and Mount's (2004) study of 555 hotel employees from seven hotels in Texas found that work-to-family conflict issues were related to lower job satisfaction, while family-to-work conflict issues were related to higher job satisfaction. Some employees who experienced conflict in the family-to-work area could consider work as a method of escape from domestic problems and therefore had higher job satisfaction. Hsieh and her colleagues' studies of the spillover between the work and personal lives of lodging managers in Taiwan and the U.S. were consistent. Both studies found that very few lodging managers had difficulty balancing their work and personal lives. The results suggested that work interfered with personal life more frequently than personal life interfered with work (Hsieh, Pearson, Chang, & Uen, 2004; Hsieh, Kline, & Pearson, 2008).

### Coping with Work-Family Conflict

The literature regarding the work and family conflict has established that the impact of effective coping styles is associated with lower levels of perceived work-family conflict. Aryee, Luk, Leung, and Lo (1999) studied the moderating influence of coping behaviors on employed parents in Hong Kong and reported that emotion and problem-focused coping were related to job and family satisfaction. Baltes and Heydens-Gahir (2003) investigated the relationships between selection, optimization, and compensation behaviors and work-family conflict and suggested that the use of these adaptive behaviors in both work and family domains is associated with lower job and family stressors and lower conflict between work and family. Rotondo, Carlson, and Kincaid (2003), in their study, "Coping with Multiple Dimensions of Work-Family Conflict," investigated the efficacy of four coping styles: direct action, help seeking, positive thinking, and avoidance or resignation. They found that employees who use help-seeking and direct action coping strategies at home tend to report lower stress levels with regard to conflict from family to work. Avoidance or resignation coping was associated with higher conflict levels of all types. A study of female married professionals in Hong Kong indicates that their major coping strategy is personal role redefinition and reactive role redefinition (Lo, Stone, & Ng, 2003). Somech and Drach-Zahavy (2007) identified eight coping styles that employed parents used to deal with work-family conflict, including super at home, good enough at home, delegation at home, priorities at home, super at work, good enough at work, delegation at work, and priorities at

work. All eight coping styles are negatively related to the level of work-family conflict. In addition, gender role ideology moderates the relationship between coping behaviors and work-family conflict.

### Refining Coping Theory for the Study

According to Lazarus and Folkman (1984), coping is defined as "... constantly changing cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person" (p. 141). Effective coping is believed to moderate the effects of a stressor on strain and can eliminate distress (Lazarus, 1991).

Lazarus and Folkman (1984) categorized stress coping strategies by the focus of the coping: emotion-focused coping and problem-focused coping. Emotion-focused coping refers to efforts to deal with one's emotional response to a stressor by managing feelings and emotions through cognitive manipulations, such as reframing or positive thinking efforts; while problem-focused coping refers to dealing with the stressor itself. For example, in some situations one might define the problem and formulate a plan of action to alter or eliminate the stressor (Folkman & Lazarus, 1980; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Research on coping with stress has generally found problem-focused coping to be the most effective than emotion-focused coping (Bernas & Major, 2000; Rotondo et al., 2003). Hall (1972) studied college-educated women's strategies for coping with role conflict and identified 16 strategies which were categorized into a three dimensional model:

1. **Structural role redefinition:** This strategy involves altering external, structurally imposed expectations relative to one's role. These approaches deal directly with the demands imposed structurally by environmental transmitters. According to Hall (1972), an example of this type of coping would be a female employee who negotiates with her employer to finish work at 3:00 pm so that she can be home when her children return from school. Six coping strategies generated from the study were: (a) elimination (or addition) of particular activities within roles; (b) role support from outside role set; (c) role support from member of role set; (d) problem solving with role senders; (e) integrating roles; and (f) changing general social expectations instead of the expectations of specific role senders.
2. **Personal role redefinition:** This strategy requires changing one's expectations and perception of one's behavior in a given role. Responses in this category include setting priorities and making sure that certain demands are always met; taking care of sick children would take priority over cleaning the house (Hall, 1972). Hall states that this strategy requires accepting that some role conflict is unavoidable. Seven coping strategies fall into this category: (a) establishing priorities for or within roles; (b) partitioning and separating roles; (c) overlooking role demands or reducing standards;

(d) changing attitudes toward roles or developing a new attitude which reduces conflicts; (e) eliminating roles; (f) rotating attention from one role to another; and (g) developing self and own interests.

3. Reactive role behavior: This strategy searches for ways to meet all role expectations. Reactive role behavior seeks to improve the quality of role performance to satisfy all of the demands of one's role senders. Examples of this type of coping are planning, scheduling, and organizing to increase the efficiency of role performance. Three coping strategies within this category were identified: (a) planning, scheduling, and organizing better; (b) not having a conscious strategy, not attempting to control role demands or one's responses; and (c) working harder to meet all role demands (Hall, 1972).

Hall's study on coping strategies is considered the genesis of coping model development. It continues to be widely respected and cited by researchers in the studies of coping theories. Therefore, the researchers adopted Hall's model to investigate the coping strategies used by lodging managers to resolve conflicts between their work and personal lives.

## METHODOLOGY

To address the research problem, a qualitative approach using an in-depth, semi-structured interview method was employed to collect data. This study adopted criterion sampling to locate lodging managers who were ultimately selected based upon the pre-established criteria (Paton, 1990). Potential interviewees were identified by a snowball method. Lodging managers that met the following criteria were included in the data analysis: (a) those who were parents; (b) those who were employed full time; and (c) those who were successful in balancing their work and personal lives. The initial interview list was recommended by the president of a local hotel and restaurant association as well as the interviewed managers. Potential lodging managers were asked to rank themselves on how successfully they were able to balance their work and personal lives by applying a balance success spectrum that ranged from 1 to 10 (the higher the score, the more successful in balancing work and personal life). Only those managers who achieved a score of 7 or higher were included in the data analysis.

Managers were asked five questions: (a) How would you rank your success in work and personal life balance on a scale from 1 to 10 (1 = very poor, 10 = outstanding)?; (b) If you have a balance between your work and personal life, how do you know? If not, why not?; (c) What kind of conflicts do you experience from work to your personal life, and vice versa?; (d) What strategies or methods have you used which have proven effective in balancing your work and personal life?; and (e) Do you have any other thoughts/comments about work/life balance? Data collection ended when no new information was collected during interviews (Esterberg, 2002). A sample size of 12 was considered adequate for generating themes in exploratory analysis (Esterberg, 2002; McCracken, 1988). This study questioned a total of seventeen lodging

managers. Each interview was conducted either in the manager's office or via telephone and lasted, on average, 30–40 minutes. Each interview was tape-recorded with the permission of the interviewee and transcribed verbatim. Of the 17 lodging managers interviewed, 2 attained balance success scores lower than 7 and were excluded from the study.

Two trained coders independently reviewed each transcription. The strategies generated from the interviews were compared to the 16 coping strategies identified by Hall (1972). Raw responses were analyzed for content and were inductively sorted into meaningful coping strategy categories following Hall's model. According to Miles and Huberman (1994), the reliability of coding equals the number of agreements between coders divided by the total number of agreements and disagreements. Based upon this criterion, 95% reliability of coding was achieved. The group consensus technique was employed to resolve inconsistencies.

## RESULTS

Of the 15 lodging managers, 60% were male and 40% female. Their ages ranged from 28 to 65. Typically, they worked 53 hours per week. This sample included 7 general managers, 2 directors of sales and marketing, 1 assistant general manager and director of food and beverage, 1 director of operations, 1 director of services, 1 sales manager, 1 human resource coordinator, and 1 executive house keeper. Each of them had at least one child and some had as many as three children. Approximately 67% of the managers had at least one child living with them. The average age of the children was 18. All of the interviewees reported an acceptable balance level between 7 and 9 on a 10-point Likert scale, where 1 = very poor balance and 10 = outstanding balance, indicating their belief that they are successful in balancing their work and personal lives.

### Indicators of Work-Personal Life Balance

The interviewees reported that their indicators of a balance between work and personal life included:

1. Having quality time with families where family members are happy (60%);
2. Having time for self and family after work (54%), which includes participating in nonwork activities, such as going to church, community service, exercising, coaching child's basketball team, and having a social life;
3. Not feeling stressed (20%). "I am free of stress. I do not go home drinking alcoholic beverages every night"; and
4. Being able to accomplish personal goals (7%). "I was able to accomplish a triathlon a

month.”

### Conflicts Between Work and Personal Life

With regard to conflicts that affect work and personal life balance, the interviewees indicated that they experienced conflicts either from work or from their personal lives. Conflicts arising from work to personal life included: (a) long working hours (40%); (b) unpredictable schedules (e.g., last-minute issues occurring at workplace, 33%); (c) relocation, business travel (20%); and (d) work consuming too much energy (6.7%). Conflicts arising from family to work included: (a) young children to care for (20%); (b) household work responsibilities (13%); and (c) illness at home (6.7%).

### Lodging Managers' Coping Strategies to Balance Work and Personal Lives

When asked which coping strategies used at work and home help them handle the conflicts between work and personal life, respondents cited eight strategies that are consistent with eight of the strategies from Hall's model: (a) role support from inside role set; (b) role support from outside role set; (c) role integration; (d) establishing priorities; (e) partitioning and separating roles; (f) changing attitudes toward roles; (g) developing self and own interests; and (h) planning, scheduling, and organizing better. Of the eight strategies, role support from inside role set, including support from family (80%) and employees (60%), establishing priorities (73%), and planning, scheduling, and organizing better (53%) were the most frequent coping strategies used by the lodging managers. Tables 1, 2, and 3 show the statements and coping strategies used by the lodging managers based on Hall's coping model.

TABLE 1 Coping Strategies: Structural Role Redefinition

Coping strategies	Frequency	Gender Female:Male	Percentage	Statements
1. Role support from inside role set.	12	5:7	80%	<p>Support from family members:“The biggest thing is to have family support so that you can concentrate on your job.” “I am fortunate enough to have a husband who is agreeable and willing to help a lot with the household chores that you do not want to do.”“I do divide out chores at home. My children do chores on the weekend, because homework is more important to me during the week, but hey, if they don't have homework, get in there, take the trash out, wash dishes, help mom out.”“She (13-month-old daughter) stays at our parents' ... I am very fortunate for the childcare that I have. I don't have to pay for it, so that helps. My husband is supportive.”“I am fortunate because my mother does live with us. She does all the laundry and keeps all the dishes done. I do primarily, I will tell you 98% of the cooking, but it is a big help to have her here.”“My husband is a great househusband. He really is. He helps with household responsibilities.”“She (my wife) is a stay at home mom. She is very understanding. We both had careers when we first started, we got married. We went to college together, so came out of college and got jobs. Then we started to plan for a family, and we positioned our finances and things like that because we wanted her to be a stay at home mom. That's how we wanted to raise our son, at least until he started school.”“My wife does not work. She is able to help out a lot at home ... best advice to any man is to take care of your wife. Keep her happy, everything is happy.”“My wife is also in catering, so we are both in very time intensive jobs ... we support each other.”</p>
				<p>“When my son was young, my wife did not work. We made the commitment to be a one income family, so we could raise our son not in a nursery home or daycare.”“... that your family understands what some of the challenges will be. You know, as far as work life balance goes and if you are in a situation and you can't get the support you need from your partner, then it is time to consider something else in terms of relationship. My wife works and she is very supportive of what I do.”“She (my wife) is very supportive ... She had a real good idea of what was going on with my job. And my kids understand, they grew up in it, they need to know.”“I gave her (my wife) all the credit. She is great. She has dinner ready on the table almost every night at 6:30 and wants to have the entire family sit down together.”</p>
Role support from inside	9	1:8	60%	<p>Support from trained colleagues:“Having the right training in place, so that staff working for you can help you. I have well trained staff and that helps with balance.”“The more you train the managers around you, the more time</p>

TABLE 1 Coping Strategies: Structural Role Redefinition

Coping strategies	Frequency	Gender Female:Male	Percentage	Statements
the role set				<p>you have away from there. That is the whole trick.”“Try to train everybody around to do what they need to do in case of emergency.”“I would say training, training your staff and subordinates properly. Make them responsible and empower them. So you don't have to worry about everything.”“Having the proper staff that is trained well really helps maintain a balance.”“My goal is to always, the people I hire to be trained well and for them to be strong. They can help me if I get in a bind and vice versa. If they all the sudden have a larger than normal workload, I can take some of them. And they can do that for me.”“I have a strict empowerment policy with my guys. That we have compensation guide lines where they know they can handle situations up to a certain point.”</p>
				<p>“I have got a very good staff here. You know you are only as good as the people around you. And I have developed some people, where I don't have to be here.”“I think part of the whole balance is to make sure you have enough support not only from the managers you train, but from the hourly workers as well.”“The key is to have the right people working for you. If you have the right people working for you, a lot of that stress goes away.”</p>
Role support from outside role set	3	2:1	20%	<p>“I hired a gardener to help with gardening.”“I did have a house cleaner. I might be getting one now because I don't have time to clean, well maybe I don't like to or I am lazy.”“Sometimes you have to rely on other parents for pick-ups and drops. That is just a matter of building that network and having those people.”</p>
Role integration	3	1:2	20%	<p>“My husband and I communicate. I communicate with my family. I may call them once or twice a day here just to make sure baby is good, husband is good, mothers or fathers are good.”“We have a calendar in the kitchen that has what all five of us are doing each day. And we do, we hang it up in the kitchen. Like you fill out your day planner, we fill out our calendar, and that's the way it works.”“When my children were younger and didn't have cell phones, the training was to call me or my wife at work to let us know they were home safely. They had to call both of us. We had pagers, and they could enter in a code to let us know everything was fine, and that was that.”</p>

TABLE 2 Coping Strategies: Personal Role Redefinition

Coping strategies	Frequency	Gender Female:Male	Percentage	Statements
Establish priorities for roles or within roles	11	4:7	73%	<p>“You do have to set priorities and know what is important to you. I did have to learn, and sometimes it was hard ... sometimes when I am stressed I take a half day off and go shopping. I spend too much money but it is relaxed. It is just something I do.” “You have to be able to prioritize ... to just stand up, turn off the lights and walk away because I could work on and on and on.” “You have to understand where your priorities are, and with most people it is family which I agree 100%.” “If you have kids in your life, make sure to give them that quality time. Spend time with them because you know, that is what you live for.” “I think the key in balance is to set your priorities. Your career has to be a high priority because that is your income.” “I am still learning the ropes on how to prioritize ... I still have my day timer and at the end of the day I check them off and it gives me a sense of accomplishment ... I do know what not to stress out about that I didn't finish that day.” “I always have dinner with my kids. That is top priority ... I get up around 4 am. I look at the newspaper and look at the TV, you know. Then I come to work and do my paperwork in the morning because once the day starts you get customers and go on the floor and can't do your paperwork. That is my habit, and that is my top priority to get back home to have dinner with the family.” “I have been with [my spouse] for 20 years and let's see, the first half I was single and had no issues with spending lots and lots of time at work ... now my priorities are just a little bit different. It can be more challenging at times, and it is something I like to do and it is something my family supports me in doing. It works out.” “I have been in the business so long. You get to a point where your experience level helps you not to stress about certain things.”</p>
				<p>“My theory is that I am not a doctor, and I am not dealing with life or death, so I know which situations to stress about and which ones not.”</p>
				<p>“You also have to know that this industry can be consuming, so you can't work too hard or get consumed ... experience helps. When you first start out it is harder to achieve that balance, it gets better though. Also, knowing in the long run that if you get wrapped up on one thing, you will get tunnel vision.”</p>
Partition and separating roles	2	0:2	13%	<p>“Never take work home, rather stay an extra 2–3 hours to get things done at work ... Home is a place to relax ... I haven't brought work home for 10 years.” “When I am not at work, I am not at work. I don't bring work to</p>

Coping strategies	Frequency	Gender Female:Male	Percentage	Statements
				family stuff.”
Change attitudes toward roles	3	2:1	20%	“I am a perfectionist at heart. So, no one does anything correct unless I do it ... haha ... which is not a good trait to have. I think you finally have to learn better and early on, which I did not, that you have to let some things go. The house being spotless and clean and everything is in place, is maybe not your top priority.” “Think about doctors and nurses. At least in this industry (hospitality) we are not dealing with people's lives. So I know which situations to stress about and which ones not to.” “I know what goal I am trying to accomplish and know that I am on a skew and it will be done at the end of the year. I have accepted the balance and change and once it is open I will push the balance back down or maybe even further the other way.”
Develop self and own interests	3	1:2	20%	“I tried to keep myself active as well as come goal to reach. I have been able to, even including this summer, I have signed up and accomplished a triathlon in a month. Other things are goals I accomplish at home; housework or repairing or gardening.”“... by keeping other things going on in your life you don't get bored ... I play adult hockey ... My passion is fly fishing.” “I am working to get more of a balance with exercise. I do triathlons.”

TABLE 1 Coping Strategies: Reactive Role Behavior

Coping strategies	Frequency	Gender Female:Male	Percentage
Plan, schedule, and organize better	8	3:5	53%

Statements

“I use my calendar wisely. I look at a week ahead and I let my family know that here are at least 3 days that I won't be home until at least 7 o'clock, and this is what I need from you guys....” “I do a pretty good job of working my schedule to accommodate that (attending his son's sports) ... I carry a tight schedule and I expect my people to abide by schedule commitment and things like that.”

“I mean if you don't manage your time or set your priorities straight or the goals that you want to set are not reachable, you are spinning your wheels.” “I came in early so that I can leave around 5 or 6 pm each day.” “I get up around 4 am. I look at the newspaper and look at the TV, you know. Then I come to work and do my paperwork early in the morning because once the day starts you get customers and go on the floor, and can't do your paperwork.” “I try to stay busy with things other than just work ... I also try to engage in pleasant experiences like recreation and other community involvement... With discipline and time management I am able to balance all these things.” “I still have my day timer and at the end of the day I check them off and it gives me a sense of accomplishment ... I keep track of my strategy in my day timer and e-mails.” “I do a lot of cooking on the weekends so that we have food during the week. That way, I don't have to go home and try to make dinner.”

Even though Hall's 16 strategies were developed based on a sample of women, male lodging managers adopted strategies similar to females in handling conflicts between work and personal life. Male managers tend to use more of the following five strategies than female managers: (a) seeking support from their family members; (b) seeking support from employees by training and empowering their subordinates; (c) establishing priorities; (d) partitioning and separating their roles; and (e) planning, organizing, and scheduling better. One possible explanation might be that 90% of the male managers held a position of general manager or assistant general manager. Due to the nature of their jobs, they seemed to be involved in employee training and practiced delegation more than those female managers who held just a manager position. In addition, 47% of these male managers credited their wives for taking care of the children and household responsibilities. This could make it easier for the male managers to partition and separate their roles.

Of the eight strategies identified in this study, none of the female managers adopted the strategy of role partition and separating. The reason could be attributed to traditional gender roles associated with women. Women, even with a career, are expected to take on more family and household responsibilities than men. Therefore, it might be difficult for female managers to go to work without thinking of their children or things unfinished at home, and vice versa.

With regard to the three dimensions of Hall's model, female and male managers tended to use more of the strategies related to redefining structural roles, followed by redefining personal roles and adopting reactive role behavior. Of the six strategies identified in Hall's first dimension (structural role definition), lodging managers did not use strategies such as eliminating role activities, problem solving with role senders, and changing general social expectations. This could be because the managerial positions they hold in the company permit them access to more resources to deal with problems arising from work or their personal lives. Therefore, they tended not to alleviate the work-family conflict by eliminating their role activities. Moreover, these managers were more or less involved in decision making, which might give them the advantage of resolving conflicts between their work and personal lives by using their authority without seeking help from their role senders. With regard to Hall's second dimension (personal role

redefinition), lodging managers did not use strategies such as overlooking role demands, withdrawing from an entire role, or rotating attention among roles. They faced the conflicts and dealt with them. As to the third dimension of Hall's model (reactive role behavior), none of the lodging managers adopted the no conscious strategy. In other words, they rejected the belief that there was no way to cope with the conflicts; instead, they would prefer to take the initiative to solve the problems. In addition, none of the lodging managers adopted the strategy of working harder to meet all role demands. This was because many of them had learned from their past experience the importance of maintaining a balance between their work and personal lives. Therefore, they set limits at work to avoid burnout instead of working harder to meet all role demands.

## CONCLUSION

A further analysis of the role of lodging managers' coping strategies using Hall's model revealed that the interviewees deployed mixed strategies to cope with role conflicts. The lodging managers seemed to use more coping strategies that require the redefinition of structural roles. They were not afraid to alter their external structures. They empowered their subordinates and authorized them to make decisions. They communicated with their family to help them understand the characteristics of the hospitality industry and won their support. They trained their children to help with household chores. Few of them hired gardeners or house cleaners. They integrated roles so that each could contribute to the other. As a result, managers were released from some work, which allowed them extra time to spend on their personal lives. With regard to personal role redefinition, several interviewees established priorities for roles. Some partitioned roles and separated their work and personal lives to maintain balance. Some developed hobbies to relieve stress. By redefining their personal roles, these lodging managers were able to maintain an effective balance between their work and nonwork domains. In terms of reactive role behavior, most of the managers understood that conflicts between work and personal lives are unavoidable. They tackled this fact aggressively. For example, they planned, scheduled, and organized to increase efficiency in performing their roles.

Through the interviews, the researchers also discovered that most of the lodging managers have a strong personal belief in work and personal life balance, and they do not want to sacrifice their family or personal lives for work. Examples from the interviewees were:

A long time ago, I said to myself that it wasn't worth the disruption of that balance.

Keeping things going on in life is more important than making more money.

I know what goal I am trying to accomplish and know that I am on a skew, and it will be done at the end of the year. I have accepted the balance and change, and, once it (new hotel) is open, it is open. I will push the balance back down or maybe even further the other way.

In addition to their work and personal life mindset, they also encourage their subordinates to have a balanced life:

I take my vacation and I encourage all my people to take theirs, too. Because I know what burnout can do, and I don't want that. We all have friends and family and have things we want to do; whether it be a project at home, a family reunion or wedding or whatever, I want them ... you know this is our life, and I want them to enjoy that.

I even try to monitor those people, so they don't work too many hours, because you get tired when you work that many hours. They get stressed from being tired and start barking at the employees, and that is when you have a problem. In my job, you know, I have to make sure not only that I find that balance, but my managers find that balance, so the employees don't get abused.

I have to set a standard for my employees. They are going to watch my work habits, and adopt my same habits, especially my managers. I encourage them to leave sometimes. At the same time, I know people. I can't speak for them, but to me it seems they work too much and don't have a personal life.

Another interesting finding from this study is that many managers indicated that the support from their company with regard to work and personal life balance issues enhances the balance.

Examples of the responses included:

I love this company. They are very understanding. I can call and say that it is 2 o'clock and I am leaving, they say "good for you."

I am very active in church and a political party, those along with my grandkids are very important to me. I am also on different boards here. The company does approve of these things and wants us to be involved and have a life outside the hotel.

[the company] places a lot of emphasis on having a balance with life and work. I have been with the company seven and a half years. I have grown with the company. I have had a management position. I have taken that next step. I have gotten married with the company. I have had a child with the company, and I am still here. I think it is great.

Three managers indicated that the low employee turn-over rate of the company also contributes to their work and personal life balance:

Whenever you have a low turn-over ratio in a hotel, you have a stable staff. You aren't going to find a lot of stressful managers here.

If you have a stable workforce that understands the complexities of our business, then it is a lot less to worry about.

In addition to the support from the company in work and personal life balance, support from the family also plays an important role in helping these lodging managers have a successful balance. All of the interviewees credited their spouses and children for their support and understanding. Examples of the responses were:

My wife is also in catering, and we have a good understanding between the two of us on what we are going to do, and be on the same page, as far as home life goes.

My kids understand, they grew up in it. And the biggest thing is, going into it, they need to know, because it is going to change (the unpredictable work schedule of their father).

It is worth noting that some of the managers believed that employees might have different priorities at different stages of their lives. When they were younger, they were willing to sacrifice their personal lives to develop their careers. Only when they reached a managerial position did they have more control of their schedule. To a certain extent, they began to realize that their personal lives had suffered and that the quality of life had been damaged. They learned to balance their work and personal lives the hard way.

Another interesting observation from the interviews is that, when asked about the strategies used at home to deal with the work-personal life conflict, all of the married interviewees, regardless of gender, credited their spouses for their support and for taking care of children and household chores. It seems that the support from spouses helps to relieve the tension between work and personal life and helps these managers to achieve a better balance. When asked about the conflicts from work and home, female interviewees appeared to face more conflicts from home to work than male interviewees. They seem to assume more family responsibilities than the male interviewees.

The eight coping strategies identified in this study can serve as a reference to help those lodging managers who are still striving to maintain a balance between work and personal lives. The conflicts identified in this study can help hotel companies and human resources directors develop work-life balance policies or cultures to enhance their managers' quality of life and increase the retention and loyalty of their managers.

## LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY AND FUTURE STUDIES

Although this study discovers the coping strategies used by lodging managers to deal with their work and personal lives, some limitations are inherent in the design of the present study. First, since this was an exploratory study focused upon managers working in a small sample of hotels, the results cannot easily be generalized. Second, this study used only one global self-report question to determine how successfully the managers balanced their work and personal lives. This question was related to the self-identity of these managers, and they might have been reluctant to answer truthfully unless there was a serious imbalance present. Sometimes, the managers' families may sense an imbalance that the managers themselves do not notice. A

stakeholder analysis that includes the perceptions of the respondents' spouses or family might more accurately reflect the presence of the balance or imbalance. Third, even though Hall's coping models were widely used by researchers in the field of coping theories, the models were based on a group of married women who were college graduates. Due to the small sample size, this study was not able to establish coping models, especially for the lodging managers in the hospitality industry. Future studies can use the findings of this exploratory study to validate Hall's coping models and develop those suitable for the managers working in the hospitality industry. Fourth, due to the focus of collecting responses from the lodging managers who were successful in balancing their work and personal lives, we were not able to test empirically the causal relationship among the variables, such as company work and personal life policy, company culture, autonomy, seniority, and demographic factors, and the level of work and personal life balance. Fifth, due to the design of the study, we were not able to conclude which coping strategies are more effective for which type of work and personal life conflict. Future studies should consider adapting a qualitative approach to answer these questions. Sixth, we observed that all the interviewees had a strong belief in the value of a balanced life. They loved their work and valued the time with their family. However, we could not determine the extent to which their outlooks were related to their personal characteristics or other variables. Further studies might explore this area and add knowledge to the body of coping theories and work-personal life literature.

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