

## Spillover between work and personal life balance for lodging managers.

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### **Abstract:**

The hospitality and tourism industry is characterized by long and erratic work hours. Many jobs are unsuitable for working at home. The unique features of the lodging industry and the demands of lodging managers' jobs often have interfered with the personal lives and marital relationships of these managers. The situation may even lead to a decision to leave the specific occupation or the industry permanently. The primary goal of this research was to investigate the perspectives of Taiwan hotel managers' regarding work-personal life balance and its relationship to various demographic variables, such as gender, marital status, etc. Results indicate that very few of Taiwanese managers had difficulty balancing work and personal lives. Indeed, the majority of these managers reported their perception of success in balancing work and personal life as from neutral to very successful. No statistically significant differences were found between female and male managers in terms of perceived difficulty or success in work and personal life balance. Neither was there a significant difference among married or single female/male managers. Results also suggested that work interfered with personal life more frequently than personal life

**Keywords:** managers | conflict | work-personal life balance | hospitality industry | tourism industry | lodging managers

### **Article:**

#### INTRODUCTION

The lodging industry is an extremely challenging one, featuring a very fast-paced environment dealing regularly with demanding guests. The career requires long working hours, with many jobs being unsuitable for work home. The middlemanagers in the lodging industry are typically required to supervise employees, handle paperwork, and attend to customer needs. The hospitality creed that states that managers must be available to respond to guest needs and criticisms precludes scheduling these individual tasks into separate blocks of work at scheduled times (Sarabakhsh, Carson, & Lindgren, 1989). The stress and time devoted to the job are both huge. In the U.S., many managers do not have much time for themselves or their families; some

even change careers to other industries to seek a balance between work and personal life. It seems the unique features of the lodging industry and the demands of lodging managers' jobs have interfered with their social lives and marital relationships to the point that a large number of managers remain single or are divorced. This situation often leads to a decision to leave that specific occupation or the industry permanently. Management turnover has thus been a chronic problem in the hospitality industry which has been of increasing concern as the pool of available qualified employees shrinks.

Many societal and demographic changes have taken place in the current workplace over the last couple decades which have had great impacts on the lodging industry. These changes include the increasing numbers of women in the workplace. A study by Diaz and Umbreit (1995) indicated that 41% of hospitality managers were now women. As compared with men, women are more associated with domestic responsibility. For instance, to accommodate parenting and domestic obligations, women often favor jobs with built-in flexibility. Moreover, based on a report by the U.S. Department of Labor (1999), the structure of the American family has shifted to include an increasing number of dual-career and single parent households. The numbers of individuals thus dealing with the problems of balancing both a work and family life is on the rise.

Change in societal values is another pressure that presents a new challenge to the lodging industry. In 1990, a survey found that 41% of Americans rated leisure time as their highest priority, even higher than their job satisfactions. Only 36% of the respondents rated their job as the most important priority in their lives (Nelson-Horchler, 1991). Unlike their baby-boomer parents for whom work took precedence over leisure and family, Generation X'ers will put a premium on quality of life (Report, 1999). In other words, the new generation managers are more concerned about their non-work life.

Research regarding work and non-work conflict has been conducted in a number of professions, but very few of the studies have focused on jobs at hotels. Little is known about the work-personal life balance of lodging managers and the nature of their work and personal life conflict. The main purpose of this study is to investigate lodging managers' perceptions on how successful they are balancing work and personal life. Also, building on past efforts, the study examines both the form and direction of work and non-work pressures. In addition, the study examines the relationships between various demographic variables to see if any of these are related to work and personal life balance in the lodging industry.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Work/Family Conflict

Early research regarding work and life balance focused on work and family conflicts (Burke, 1988; Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn, & Snoek, 1964; Kanter, 1977; Kopelman, Greenhaus, & Connolly, 1983). Work and family conflict has been defined as a form of inter-role conflict where pressures from both domains are often incompatible in some respects (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985).

Because of conflicting demands and the difficulty in performing each different role successfully, multiple roles can lead to personal conflict (Grandey & Cropanzano, 1999)

### Negative Consequences of Work/Family Conflict

The problem of balancing work and personal life arises from an incompatibility between the actual roles, especially when family roles are included. Work and family life represent two major domains of adult life. While conflict is a normal part of life, an increase in the level of work/family conflict has been linked to negative consequences for both work and non-work domains. For example, family-to-work conflict was found to be positively related to job stress and depression, although work-to-family conflict did not predict either depression or family distress (Grandey & Cropanzano, 1999). Kossek and Ozeki's (1998) meta-analysis reported that work/family outcomes are related to job satisfaction and life satisfaction. Allen et al. (2000a) reported that higher levels of work/family conflict are associated with decreased job satisfaction, decreased career satisfaction, decreased organizational commitment, increased absenteeism and turnover intention, and decreased job performance. Work and family conflict was found to be significantly related to non-work 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/family conflict (Adams, King, & King, 1996; Allen et al., 2000a; Allen, Herst, Bruck, & Sutton, 2000b; Boles & Babin, 1996; Burke, 1988; Frone & Russell, 1992; Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Netemeyer, Boles, & McMurrian, 1996). Therefore, work/family conflict has become a growing topic of interest among researchers due to its implications for both organizations and employees (Allen et al., 2000a).

### Antecedents of Work/Family Conflict

In addition to outcomes of work-family conflict, researchers further examined the antecedents of work and family conflict (Frone & Russell, 1992; Frone, Russell, & Cooper, 1997; Grandey & Cropanzano, 1999; Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985), including the following: number of children, control and autonomy, coping strategies, cultural background, gender, job type and job characteristics, multiple roles, role ambiguity, conflict, overload, role expectations and perceptions, social and organizational support, spouse support and time spent on family responsibilities.

### Work and Family Interaction

Among the many models used to explain the relationships between work and family, the widely used spillover model denotes the extent to which participation in one domain (e.g., work) impacts participation in another domain (e.g., family). The spillover model proposed that what occurs at work corresponds to what occurs in life outside of work (Staines, 1980). It indicates that what happens at work "spills over" and affects non-work life, and also that personal life events can spill over and affect work. Spillover has been conceptualized both positively and

negatively (Grzywacz, Almeida, & McDonald, 2002). Positive spillover refers to enhancement that results from one domain affecting another domain; for example, the happiness at work would lead to happiness at home. Negative spillover refers to conflict between work and non-work and is most frequently characterized by various types of conflict or interference; for example, when work is boring or monotonous, workers become “lazy,” which in turn leads to unwillingness to do things at home or with family members (Zedeck, 1992).

Frone et al. (1992) expanded the work/family conflict research by empirically demonstrating that work/family interface is bi-directional, meaning work interferes with family, and family interferes with work. Conflict can originate in the work place and then interfere with the personal life (WIF), or conflict can originate in the personal life and interfere with work (PIW). Moreover, Frone et al.’s study (1992) of the prevalence of work-family conflict revealed that both genders reported work-to-family conflict experiences nearly three times more often than family to work. Williams and Alliger’s research had identical findings (Williams & Alliger, 1994). Eagle et al. (1997) also found that work to family conflict was significantly more prevalent than family to work.

### Forms of Work/Family Conflict

Researchers have found that work/family conflict can take a number of different forms. One of the most common typologies is proposed by Geenhaus and Beutell (1985), who recognized three forms of conflict: time-based, strain-based, and behavior-based. Time-based conflict occurs when time spent in one role leads to difficulty in fulfilling another role. Strain-based conflict occurs when strain experienced in one role intrudes into or interferes with the other role. Behavior-based conflict is exhibited when certain behaviors are inappropriately transferred from one role to the other role.

Fisher (2001) incorporated the theory of conservation of resources and suggested including energy as one of the inter-role conflict sources. According to this theory, stress is a reaction to an environment in which one is threatened by a potential loss in resources, experiences and actual resource loss, or fails to gain expected resources (Hobfoll, 1988, 1989). Resources are supplies that can help or support an individual, and can be conceptualized into four distinct categories of energies, including time, knowledge, and physical energy. This latter category includes particularly salient resources with regard to meeting the multiple demands of work and non-work life (Fisher & Hemingway, 2000).

### Demographics and the Work/Family Conflict

Another area of focus has been on demographic factors such as gender, marital status, and number of children (Greenhaus, Collins, Singh, & Parasuraman, 1997; Gutek, Searle, & Klepa, 1991), and the number of hours worked per week (Frone, Yardley, & Markel, 1997; Gutek et al., 1991). The presence of children and the ages of the children in the family were significantly related to work and family conflict (Carlson, 1999; Grandey & Cropanzano, 1999); however,

women have not always reported more conflict than men. The findings were, thus, not consistent. Some researchers reported no evidence of significant gender difference in work and family interface and conflict levels (Eagle et al., 1997; Kinnunen & Mauno, 1998; Yang, Chen, Choi, & Zou, 2000). Other researchers found females had greater interferences from family to work than males because of home life responsibilities; and alternatively, men would have greater interferences from work to family because of strong work allegiance (Duxbury, Higgins & Lee, 1994; Hammer, Allen, & Grigsby, 1997; Pleck, 1979). Many researchers have noted that time commitments and expectations, as well as actual number of hours spent working, were significantly related to work interference with family and family interference with work (Duxbury, Higgins, & Lee, 1994; Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Gutek et al., 1991). Frone et al. (1992) found that job stressors predicted work-to-family conflict, and family stressors predicted family-to-work conflict. Based on a survey among university professors, Grandey and Cropanzano (1999) found that age and tenure predicted work-to-family conflict and younger individuals reported more work-to-family conflict.

### Work and Personal Life Balance

The majority of the studies focused on “family” in the domain of non-work. The term work/life balance gained popularity from its use in trade journal articles. Messmer (1999), in a trade journal called “Business Credit,” highlighted work/life balance as a tool that organizations can use to attract quality job candidates. He recommended that employers accommodate a “healthy work and life balance” because “employees are interested in making their careers compatible with what is important in their personal lives” (Messer, 1999; Messmer, 1999). No one wants a career that promises inadequate time with family and friends. Casner-Lotto and Hickey (1999) indicated recent shifts in employee values such as workers exhibiting an increased desire for a higher quality of life. They found that in the past few years, employees have reported that they want more time to do volunteer work, pursue hobbies, and take part in leisure activities. Additionally, the same researchers reported that workers want more time to spend with family, and fewer employees seemed willing to sacrifice family or personal time in order to advance their careers (Casner-Lotto & Hickey, 1999).

Hill and his colleagues (1998) first published their findings on work and life balance in an empirical research journal. They investigated the influence of work and work/life balances within a virtual office environment. The results showed that a virtual office was more supportive of a work and life balance. Compared to work and family conflicts, the term of work and life balance holds promise for a more inclusive approach to the study of work versus non-work conflicts.

### Work and Family Conflict Study in the Lodging Industry

Few empirical studies on work/non-work conflict have been done in the lodging industry. Namasisvayanm and Mount (2003) studied the relationship of work-family conflict and work-

conflict to job satisfaction on 555 employees at seven hotels in South Texas. They suggested that work-to family conflict issues were related to lower job satisfaction, while family-to-work conflict issues were related to higher job satisfaction. Work was revealed as a release from family conflict issues (Namasivayam & Mount, 2003).

## RESEARCH PROPOSITIONS

Expanding previous studies, this study incorporates the positive spillover between work and non-work domains into the model and further tests those relationships with the perceptions of balance and demographic variables. Based on the literature review, several propositions were proposed:

Proposition 1: Most lodging managers will encounter difficulty in balancing work and personal life.

Proposition 2: Most lodging managers will perceive low success in balancing work and personal life.

Proposition 3: Lodging managers will perceive more negative spillover from work to personal life (WIP) than from personal life to work (PIW).

Proposition 4: Lodging managers will perceive more positive spillover from personal life to work (PEW) than from work to personal life (WEP).

Proposition 5: A higher level of work and personal life interference (negative spillover) perceived by lodging managers would be associated with greater work/personal life balance difficulty.

Proposition 6: A higher level of interference (negative spillover) between work and personal lives perceived by lodging managers would be associated with less success in work and personal life balance.

Proposition 7: A higher level of enhancement (positive spillover) between work and personal lives perceived by lodging managers would be associated with less balance difficulty.

Proposition 8: A higher level of enhancement (positive spillover) between work and personal lives perceived by lodging managers would be associated with greater success in work and personal life balance.

## METHODOLOGY

### Sample

Data for this study were collected at 63 international tourism hotels in Taiwan. The respondents were employees who are holding top or middle-level managerial positions: General Manager, Director, Resident Manager/Assistant Manager, Front Office Manager/Assistant Manager,

Reservation Manager/Assistant Manager, Controller/Assistant Controller, Executive Housekeeper/Assistant Executive Housekeeper, Chief Engineer, Sales and Marketing Manager, Catering Manager/Assistant Manager, Security Manager/Assistant Manager, Personnel Manager/Assistant Manager, Food and Beverage Manager/Assistant Manager, Executive Chef, Sous Chef, Banquet Chef, Executive Steward, Restaurant Manager/Assistant Manager. Before the survey was conducted, the researchers contacted the human resources departments at the target hotels to seek their support in providing the name list of their middle-level managers. Unfortunately, for reasons of privacy the majority of the hotels were not able to provide the information and their heavy workload made it impossible for them to assist in distributing the questionnaire. Hence, a snowballing sampling method was adopted to complete survey. The researchers contacted acquaintances at the target hotels and asked them to identify other middle-level managers for the sample, then asked those new persons participating in the sample to identify additional middle-level managers to identify additional persons, etc. Participants were asked to mail the completed questionnaires directly to the researchers within one week, using a preaddressed, stamped envelope. A total of 670 questionnaires were distributed and 354 questionnaires were returned, of which 305 were usable.

## Measurement

Data was collected using a 39-item survey instrument. The first part of the survey included 22 question items regarding lodging managers' work and personal life balance. The second part of the survey consisted of 17 demographic questions. All of the items in the first part were adopted from the Measure of Work/Life Tension recommended by the Virtual Think Tank Panel (MacDermid et al., 2000) which consisted of distinguished work-family researchers. All of these questions selected by the panel were originally from the previous work and family conflict research and have been tested repeatedly with acceptable reliability and validity. Modifications to the wording of several items were made, so that the questions would fit into the broader view of the balance of work and personal life in the current study. The revised questionnaire was designed to be a multidimensional measurement that captured the bi-directional and positive and negative spillovers of work and personal life interaction by measuring the degree to which respondents' jobs interfere with their personal life (WIP), the degree to which their personal life interferes with their jobs (PIW), the degree to which their jobs enhance their personal life (WEP), and the extent to which their personal life enhances their job (PEW). Respondents were asked to indicate, using a five-point Likert scale, the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with a number of statements (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). Four statements were used to measure the levels of work interference with personal life. Each pinpointed the sources of conflict identified by researchers. For example: (a) The amount of time my job took up made it difficult to fulfill personal goals (time-based conflict); (b) I was preoccupied with my work while I was not at work (strain-based conflict); (c) Because of my job, I didn't have the energy to do things with my family or other important people in my life (energy-based conflict); (d) My job made me behave in ways that are unacceptable at home (behavior-based conflict). The four items

were added and averaged to represent the degree to which work intruded into personal life. A higher score indicated a higher level of interference. The next four statements with the same four dimensions were used to measure the interference of personal life upon work. With regard to the positive spillover between work and personal life, another five statements were used to measure the level that work enhanced personal life based on time, strain, energy, behavior and support. Examples of this question set were (a) My work provided enough time to attend to my personal responsibilities (time-based positive spillover); (b) Because of my job, I was in a better mood at home (strain-based positive spillover); (c) My job gave me energy to do things with my family or other important people in my life (energy-based positive spillover); (d) Skills I used on my job helped me deal with personal and practical issues at home (behavior-based positive spillover); (e) Talking with someone at work helped me deal with problems at home (support-based spillover). Another five statements based on the same five dimensions of positive spillover were used to measure the levels of enhancement of personal life to work. Thus, the overall work interference with personal life (WIP), personal life interference with work (PIW), work enhancement of personal life (WEP), and personal life enhancement of work (PEW) variables determined by averaging their respective items for each and scoring the answers, so that a high score indicated higher levels of each type of interference or enhancement.

Managers' perceptions of the balance between work and personal life were measured by two items; "How easy or difficult is it for you to balance the demands of your work and your personal life?" (based on a 5-point scale from 1 = very difficult to 5 = very easy), and "All in all, how successful do you feel in balancing your work and personal life?" (based on a 5 point scale from 1 = very unsuccessful to 5 = very successful).

Demographic variables included respondent's gender, age, education, tenure with present hotel, and tenure in current position, annual salary, marital status, presence of children under 18, presence of elders in family environment, presence of ill, special care dependents, hours spent on work per week, and hours spent on non-work activities, such as household chores, child/elder care, community activities, self-development, and personal relaxation.

Since the survey was conducted in Taiwan, the survey was translated into Chinese. A panel consisting of three language experts was formed to evaluate the accuracy of the translation. Discrepancies were resolved by agreement of all three panel experts. The version was then pretested before the final version was distributed. Reliability for the adjusted instrument was established with coefficient alpha with satisfactory scale reliabilities ranging from .69 to .81.

## Data Analysis

T-tests were conducted to examine the difference between positive and negative spillover factors. Zero order correlations were computed to examine the general relationships among the study variables. Multiple regression analysis was administered to investigate the relationships between spillover factors and perceived balance difficulty and success.

Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to determine if there were any statistically significant differences among single male managers, married male managers, single female managers, and married female managers with regard to their perceptions of the relative difficulty and success of balancing work and personal life. ANOVA was also employed to see whether these four groups of managers reported any differences in positive and negative spillover between work and personal life, as well as their time spent on work and non-work activities.

## RESULTS

Of the 345 returned questionnaires, 305 were usable and were included in the study results. Approximately 61% of the respondents were males; 38% were females. The average age of the respondents was 52.5 years ( $SD = 7.74$ ); 5.7% were 39 years old and under, 31% were 40-49; 40% were 50-59, and 23% were 60 years old and over. Thirty-five percent of the respondents had college experience. The proportion of those receiving income of more than NT\$70,000 annually was 11.7%, while 61% were between NT\$40,000 and NT\$70,000. Respondents' average employment tenure with their present hotels was 9.8 years ( $SD = 8.06$ ) and the average numbers of years in their present job was 4.0 years ( $SD = 1.05$ ). Sixty-four percent of the respondents were married or living as married, and 76% of these married respondents reported that their spouse was also employed. Approximately 52% of the respondents had at least one child under 18 living in their home and more than half of the respondents (68%) lived with their parents or other relatives. Only a very small percentage of the respondents (13.5%) were responsible for ill/special care dependents.

The average workweek during the high seasons was 59.56 hours ( $SD = 11.44$ ), and 52.75 hours per week ( $SD = 12.17$ ) during low seasons. On the average, the respondents also spent about five hours per week on house chores ( $SD = 5.22$ ), 7.66 hours per week on children/elder care ( $SD = 9.84$ ), 1.0 hour per week on community activities ( $SD = 2.49$ ), 5.94 hours per week on self-development ( $SD = 5.06$ ), and 6.46 hours per week on personal relaxation ( $SD = 5.62$ ).

### Perceived Difficulty/Success in Balancing Work and Personal Life

Descriptive statistics revealed that the majority of the respondents (49%) felt neutral about the difficulty of maintaining work and life balance. Only 17% of the respondents had difficulty with work-life balance and 27% felt it was easy for them to balance work and life. Proposition 1 was not supported.

When asked about how successful they were in balancing work and personal/family life, overall 51% of the respondents felt neutral, 27% of them felt they were successful in balancing work and life, while 16% felt they were not successful. Proposition 2 was not supported.

### Spillover Between Work and Personal Life

The respective items of WIP, PIW, WEP, and PEW were averaged and the scores were used to represent the levels of each type of interference or enhancement. The mean was 3.25 for WIP, 1.9 for PIW, 3.01 for WEP, and 3.65 for PEW.

T-tests (see Table 1) indicated that respondents reported more interference from work to personal life than from personal life to work. Work interfered with personal life more than it enhanced personal life.

TABLE 1. Interference and Enhancement Between Work and Personal Life

	Mean	SD	T	p-value
WIP	3.25	.707	79.84	.00
PIW	1.90	.694	47.38	.00
WEP	3.01	.588	90.87	.00
PEW	<b>3.65</b>	.597	106.06	.00

\*p < .05

Personal life enhanced work more than it interfered with work. In terms of positive spillover, the respondents reported that the enhancement of personal life through work was more than from work to personal life. Proposition 3 and 4 were supported.

#### Tension Source Comparison

One sample t-test was conducted to examine which conflict source contributed more to the interference of work upon personal life. The results of the t-test showed that “strain” was reported as having the strongest effect on intervening in work and personal life (See Table 2). Work interfered with personal life more by producing strain upon personal life, followed by effects on time, energy and behavior. As shown in Table 3, the results of the t-test on the interference variables from personal life to work indicated that there were statistically significant differences among these variables, and strain-based conflict from personal life had the highest interference on work (Mean = 2.21). Based on the scale 2 = disagree, the means of the strain-based conflict and other interference variables were all below 2.5, indicating that the respondents did not consider any of these four variables as interfering with their work.

With regard to positive spillover between work and personal life, the work behavior-based variable was found to have more impact on enhancing personal life, followed by colleagues’ support and energy (See Table 4). Support from family was found to have a stronger impact on enhancing work, followed by behavior, energy, and strain (See Table 5).

#### The Relationships Between Spillover and Perceived Balance Difficulty/Success

As shown in Table 6, either positive spillover (work enhancement of personal life, and personal life enhancement of work) or negative spillover (work interference with personal life, personal life interference with work) were significantly correlated with managers' perceptions of difficulty in balancing their work and personal life. These spillover variables (WIP, PIW, WEP, PEW) were also significantly correlated with managers' perceptions of success in balancing work and personal life. Negative spillover variables (WIP, PIW) had negative relationships with the perceived balance difficulty and success. Positive spillover variables (WEP, PEW) had positive relationships with perceived balance difficulty. Therefore, proposition 5, 6, 7, and 8 were supported. Multiple regression analysis was then conducted to see the predictability of these variables on perceived difficulty and success in balancing work and personal life. Results of multiple regressions analysis showed that those spillover variables could explain 32% of the variability on perceived difficulty in balancing work and personal life. Among the spillover variables, only work interference with personal life and personal life enhancing work were found to contribute significantly to the perceived difficulty. The spillover variables could explain 30% of the variability on the perceived success of work and personal life balance. Three spillover variables were found to be statistically significant: work interference with personal life, work's enhancement of personal life, and personal life's enhancement of work.

TABLE 2. Work Interference with Personal Life (WIP)

WIP Questions	Mean	SD	T	p-value
Time-based conflict	3.53	1.03	59.78	.00
Strain-based conflict	<b>3.60</b>	.98	64.46	.00
Energy-based conflict	3.36	.96	61.15	.00
Behavior-based conflict	2.51	.96	45.53	.00

\*P < .05

TABLE 3. Personal Life Interference with Work (PIW)

PIW Questions	Mean	SD	T	p-value
Time-based conflict	1.94	.933	36.20	.00
Strain-based conflict	<b>2.21</b>	.913	42.22	.00
Energy-based conflict	1.75	.828	36.76	.00
Behavior-based <b>conflict</b>	1.70	.810	36.46	.00

\*P < .05

TABLE 4. Work Enhancement of Personal Life (WEP)

WEP Questions	Mean	SD	T	p-value
Time-based enhancement	2.54	.96	46.00	.00
Strain-based enhancement	3.09	.86	62.60	.00
Energy-based enhancement	3.14	.89	61.26	.00
Behavior-based enhancement	<b>3.57</b>	.83	74.88	.00
Support-based enhancement	3.16	.83	66.18	.00

\*p < .05

TABLE 5. Personal Life Enhancement of Work (PEW)

PEW Questions	Mean	SD	T	p-value
Time-based enhancement	3.22	.83	67.21	.00
Strain-based enhancement	3.46	.83	72.78	.00
Energy-based enhancement	3.86	.84	80.43	.00
Behavior-based enhancement	3.65	.84	76.05	.00
Support-based enhancement	<b>4.03</b>	.77	91.78	.00

\*p < .05

TABLE 6. The Correlations

	WIF	FIW	WEF	FEW	Difficulty	Success
WIF	1					
FIW	.104	1				
WEF	-.328**	-.039	1			
FEW	-.147*	-.178**	.430**	1		
Difficulty	-.465**	-.151*	.348**	.367**	1	
Success	-.422**	-.162**	.370**	.365**	.769**	1

\*\*p < .01, \*p < .05

## Relationships Among Demographic Variables and Perceptions of Difficulty and Success

**Gender.** The average mean of perceived success in balancing work and personal life was 3.06 for female managers, and 3.12 for male managers. Both the levels of perceived difficulty in balancing work and personal life tended to skew to “easy” (= 4). However, no significant differences in perceived difficulty were found between female and male managers ( $P = .203$ ). The average of perceived success in balancing work and personal life was 3.09 for females and 3.15 for males, which was close to 3 (3 = “neutral” on the scale). No significant differences in perceived success were found between female and male managers ( $P = .134$ ). With regard to the positive and negative spillover from work to personal life or from personal life to work, female managers and male managers perceived equal levels of interference and enhancement of work and non-work domains. Male managers were found to spend more time on community activities (1.3 hours/week vs. 0.6 hours/week) and self-development (6.4 hours vs. 5.2 hours) than female managers per week. No significant differences in time spent on work, house chores, children/elder care were found between female and male managers.

**Marital Status.** The results of ANOVA indicated that there were no significant differences in managers’ perceptions on levels of balance difficulty or balance success among the four groups (single male managers, married male managers, single female managers, and married female managers). These four groups also had no significant differences in their perceived levels of interference between work and personal life, as well as enhancement between work and personal life. The only significant differences identified were in the amount of time spent on house chores, children/elder care, self-development, and personal relaxation. Married female managers were found to spend more time on house chores (7.4 hours/week), followed by single male managers (5.2 hours/week), married male managers (4.7 hours/week), and single female managers (3.9 hours/week). In terms of time spent on children/elder care, married female managers spent 13.3 hours/week, 4 times more than single female managers (3.4 hours/week). Single male managers were found to spend more time (7.1 hours/week) on self-development than the other three groups, while married female managers spent the least time (4.2 hours/week) on self-development. In terms of time spent on personal relaxation, single male managers (9.1 hours/week) and single female managers (7 hours/week) spent more time than the other two groups. Married female managers spent the least amount of time on personal relaxation (5.4 hours/week).

Demographic variables that were significantly related to perceived difficulty and success included “tenure with present hotel,” “hours spent on self-development,” and “hours spent on personal relaxation.”

In terms of positive and negative spillover variables, tenure with present hotel was found to be positively correlated with WEP. The longer the managers stayed with the present hotel, the more they perceived the enhancement of work to their personal lives. The number of elder/relatives

living at home and hours spent on children/elder care were found to be significant related to the level of enhancement from personal life (PEW). These relationships were all positive.

Other demographic variables, such as education, tenure on current position, presence of children under 18 living at home, presence of ill/special care dependents, weekly work hours during high or low seasons, and hours spent on children/elder care, had no significant relationships to the perceived balance of difficulty or success, neither to positive/negative spillover variables.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study found that very few of the respondents (17%) had difficulty balancing their work and personal lives, even though the data indicated that they agreed that work interfered with their personal lives (Mean = 3.53). In addition, about 49% of the respondents felt neutral about the difficulty of maintaining work and personal life balance. There are some possible explanations for that view. First, these respondents may have good coping skills, so they can deal with work interference with their personal lives. Secondly, these respondents may have supports from their environment to assist them in lessening work interference. Third, unlike many American workers, Asian people tend to consider work as the primary focus of their lives. Hofstede (1980) found that Western individualist societies value family and personal time more strongly than do Eastern collectivist societies. Shenkar and Ronen (1987) also found that Asian managers assigned low importance to family and personal time. Schein (1984) proposed that Eastern societies give greater priority to work than Western societies. Eastern societies do not put too much emphasis or too much thought on their personal lives. Therefore, sacrificing those personal lives to accomplish their work is acceptable. Eastern individuals' values regarding work and personal life may explain why the majority of the respondents in this study did not perceive any difficulty regarding the balance of work and personal life. It is possible that Taiwanese lodging managers may have greater tolerances for interference of work responsibilities on family responsibilities.

With regard to these Taiwanese lodging managers' perception of success, more than half of the respondents reported a neutral view (51%); 27% reported perception from successful to very successful, and only 16% reported unsuccessful to very unsuccessful. Even working in such a challenging industry as the lodging industry, the majority of the respondents felt they were successful in balancing work and personal life. This result suggested that middle managers had the capabilities to manage multiple role conflict. Considering the high proportion of respondents reporting neutral perceptions, it was suspected that maybe these respondents were reluctant to disclose their opinions or they were actually not so sure if they were successful or not in balancing their work and personal lives. What deserves our attention was that respondents might not be successful in work and personal life balance but they simply did not want to admit that fact. In order to avoid judgment, they tended to choose neutral as their answer.

Overall, the perception of personal life interference with work was lower than work interference with personal life. This finding was consistent with previous studies and suggested that work interfered with personal life more frequently than personal life interfered with work (Aryee, Luk, Leung, & Lo, 1999; Eagle et al., 1997; Frone & Russell, 1992; Yang et al., 2000). Perhaps because respondents put more priorities on work and tried not to let their personal lives intrude on their work. In addition, no significant relationship was found between the hours spent on work and the perceived balance of difficulty and success. This finding could be a result of the common concept that in Chinese societies, work's purpose is seen as being the welfare of the family (Redding & Wong, 1986). Redding indicated that the Chinese strive to bring honor and prosperity to their families through their work. According to this family-based work ethic, extra work after official hours or on weekends is a self-sacrifice that is made for the benefit of the family. Such self-sacrificial, long-term orientation and activity legitimizes and even encourages the assumption of extra work responsibilities and assignments. These, although temporarily disruptive to family life, are always expected to bring future benefits.

The majority of the respondents lived with their parents. Chinese parents often help their adult and married children with household chores and child rearing. The significant positive relationship that occurred between the presence of elder/relatives living at home and the level of enhancement on work further proved our point. Instead of increasing the family responsibilities of the respondents or a perception of more responsibilities, these elder/relatives living at home turned into a positive support factor for the respondents and enhanced the respondents' work. The respondents may have an advantage in coping with the conflict between work and personal life. Therefore, they perceived less difficulty and more success in balancing both work and personal life.

This study found no significant differences between females and males in terms of the perceived balance of difficulty and success. Neither was there a significant difference among married or single female/male managers. These respondents perceived similar levels of interference and enhancement between work and personal life. This finding revealed that today women are becoming more involved in work outside the home and men are more likely to be involved in demanding family roles.

The tenure at the present hotel was found to have significant connections to the perceived difficulty and success regarding work and personal life balance. The longer the tenure, the easier and more successful the respondents felt in balancing their work and personal lives. This finding implied that the higher the level of work and personal life balance a worker perceived, the less intention he or she had to quit their jobs. The lodging industry has suffered from a high turnover rate for many years. The costs associated with such turnover are hard to approximate. Hogan reports estimations of the cost of an individual case of turnover in the hospitality industry as \$17,000-\$20,000 for a manager (Hogan, 1992). No matter how much the cost of a high turnover rate, it is believed that these costs have severe impact on the industry's profitability. The finding

suggests that hotel companies can more easily retain their employees by helping them balance their work and personal lives.

No gender differences were found in terms of WIP, PIW, WEP, PEW. The study revealed that with the greater participation of women in today's workforce and the increasing numbers of single parents and dual career family, the expectations of roles of males and females have changed. Men are not the only breadwinners of the family, and they are expected to share family responsibilities with females. Women are becoming more involved in work outside the home, and men are correspondingly more likely to be involved in demanding family roles (Baruch & Barnett, 1986; Frone & Rice, 1987). This point was supported by the finding that female and male respondents in this study communicated no significant differences in the amount of time spent on house chores and children/elder care. It may appear that the dynamic interaction between work and personal life may operate similarly among men and women today.

## IMPLICATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

Although this research contributed to increasing the understanding of lodging managers' perspectives in terms of work and personal life balance by examining the interaction between work and non-work domains, there remain several limitations:

First, the data was collected by through snowballing sampling, a non-probability sampling technique. That technique affected the validation of the test due to the non-randomly chosen samples and also limited the generalization of the results.

Second, the research used a self-report questionnaire. The respondents were asked to check off appropriate positions that best reflected their feelings; however, people seemed more concerned about giving an "appropriate" or a "desirable" answer (Petty&Cacioppo, 1981) It's possible the respondents were sensitive about such questions as "How successful are you in balancing work and personal life?" and were reluctant to select a true answer even though the study was anonymous. Therefore, the results could be biased and not really reflect lodging managers' perceptions of work and personal life balance. Further research by using a forced scale without providing any neutral ranking may improve the accuracy of the data. In addition, integrating qualitative methods, such as in-depth interviews to future study will certainly generate more information which could be useful to explore the balance issues.

In terms of the interaction between work and personal lives, work was perceived more as a negative spillover on personal life, while personal life was perceived more as a positive spillover on work. It was surprising to discover that even though work was perceived to intrude into their personal lives to a certain extent, the majority of the Taiwanese lodging managers did not acknowledge finding it difficult to balance their work and personal lives; and only a few considered themselves unsuccessful with work and personal life balance. It is possible that these managers had more control of their jobs due to their managerial positions and thus perceived less difficulty balancing work and personal life. Another explanation is that Asian employees have

higher tolerances of work interference with personal life, and have more resources present and accepted in their environment to cope with the conflict. Therefore, they did not perceive it difficult to find a balance between work and personal life. Another possibility might be that due to Asian culture and values, these Taiwanese lodging managers may not consider it important to seek a balance between work and personal life. Further research is needed to uncover all the factors and to realize how lodging managers manage to balance the inter-role conflict they have indicated. It is also recommended to further investigate whether different strategies are needed to reduce exposure to interferences and to increase enhancement between work and personal life. It would be wise to duplicate the study on operations level employees who do not have a lot of control in their job so as to understand their perspectives of work and personal life balance for a comparison.

This research indicates that culture has a strong influence on perceptions of work and personal life balance. Further study to compare lodging managers' work/personal life perceptions across cultures will contribute to both theory development and theory testing and add to the body of knowledge regarding the work and personal life balance issues.

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