

THE IMPACT OF WORK-FAMILY CONFLICT ON JOB PERFORMANCE OF CHINESE GRASSROOTS CIVIL SERVANTS THE CASE OF QINGZHOU CITY

Jia Li^{1*}, Chaithanaskorn Phawitpiriyakliti², Sid Terason³

^{1,2}*College of Innovation and Management, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, Bangkok, Thailand*

³*College of Sports Science, Kasetsart University, Thailand*

E-Mail: s63484945171@ssru.ac.th^{1*}, chaithanaskorn.ph@ssru.ac.th², fsssid@ku.ac.th³

ABSTRACT

Grassroots civil servants constitute the fundamental workforce for administrative management in China, shouldering the majority of tasks related to serving the grassroots population and directly engaging with various aspects of local society. The implementation of various policies in China relies heavily on grassroots civil servants, as they translate policy tasks into specific activities and practices, directly influencing the effectiveness of policy execution. Consequently, higher demands are placed on the qualifications and capabilities of grassroots civil servants, requiring them to invest more time and energy into their work, which can exacerbate work-family conflict. Work-family conflict prevents grassroots civil servants from fully dedicating themselves to their work, thereby affecting job performance. This study examines work-family conflict as an independent variable and job performance as the dependent variable, analyzing the impact of the independent variable on the dependent variable. Based on previous research on the relationship between work-family conflict and job performance, this paper presents research hypotheses and establishes a theoretical model. Data analysis was conducted through surveys and interviews. Investigating the levels of work-family conflict and job performance among grassroots civil servants contributes to predicting and understanding the levels of work-family conflict within the workforce, enabling better engagement in work and enhancing job performance.

Keywords: work-family conflict, job performance, grassroots civil servants.

INTRODUCTION

1. Background

Grassroots governance is the cornerstone of national governance, coordinating the promotion of township and community governance in both urban and rural areas, and it serves as the fundamental project for achieving modernization of the national governance system and governance capacity. General Secretary Xi Jinping emphasized the need to "strengthen grassroots foundation work and enhance grassroots governance capacity" (Xi Jinping, 2020) [1]. Grassroots public servants constitute the

fundamental workforce for administrative management in China, handling the majority of tasks related to serving the grassroots population and directly engaging with various aspects of local society. The levels of work-family conflict and job performance among grassroots public servants require our attention and research.

As grassroots public servants dedicate more time and energy to their work, work pressures increase, and work starts to dominate a significant portion of their time. With the development of internet information technology, the boundaries between work and family have become increasingly blurred, as work demands encroach upon personal time and energy, while domestic responsibilities also influence work engagements. Improper allocation of time between work and family domains and inadequate handling of affairs in both areas have led to an increasingly severe conflict between work and family (Lei Hu, 2021) [2]. Grassroots public servants often find themselves in situations characterized by role conflicts, work overload, resource scarcity, and high expectations without sufficient support. Consequently, physiological and psychological exhaustion, emotional burnout, and other negative reactions have gradually emerged.

The conflicts arising from work and family have significant implications for grassroots public servants, families, and government agencies. On an individual level, when work and family conflict, individuals become fatigued due to the need to deal with various tasks in both domains, leading to increased stress that severely affects their mental and physical health. For some families, work-family conflict hinders individuals from fulfilling their family responsibilities, resulting in conflicts within the family and significantly impacting the internal dynamics of the household. For government agencies, work-family conflict prevents grassroots public servants from fully dedicating themselves to their work, thereby affecting job performance. In severe cases, it may even reduce job satisfaction and lead to a tendency to leave the job. Therefore, reducing the negative impact of work-family conflict has become a hot topic in current academic research.

Most studies on job performance have focused on professions such as doctors and teachers, and the conclusions may not necessarily apply to public servants. Moreover, existing research mainly examines the influence of organizational contextual factors, such as organizational fairness and commitment, or the role of external factors such as promotion opportunities and salaries. There is limited research on work-family conflict among public servants.

Qingzhou City is located in the central part of Shandong Province, with a total area of 1,569 square kilometers. It comprises four streets, eight towns, and one provincial-level economic development zone. As of the end of 2022, the registered population of Qingzhou City was 954,400. This study aims to provide a true reflection of the situation regarding work-family conflict and job performance among grassroots public servants in a specific region, contributing to a better understanding of the conditions of grassroots public servants in China. It will help the government comprehensively grasp the work, family, and living conditions of public servants and provide a basis for formulating relevant public servant management policies.

2. Research Questions

The study aims solve two major problems:

- (1) What are the levels of work-family conflict and job performance of grassroots civil servants in Qingzhou?
- (2) How does work-family conflict affect job performance?

3. Research Hypothesis

H1: Work family conflict of grassroots civil servants has a negative impact on work performance.

4. Scope of the Research

Scope of Content: To study how work-family conflict affects job performance of grassroots civil servants.

Scope of Population: Grassroots civil servant, Qingzhou City, Shandong Province, China. About 2500. (According to statistics from relevant departments of the Qingzhou Government in March 2023)

Scope of Location: Qingzhou City in Shandong Province, China.

Scope of Variables: This study encompasses two variables, consisting of one independent variable and one dependent variable.

Dependent variable: job performance.

Independent variable: work-family conflict.

Scope of Time: November 2022 to October 2023.

5. Limitations of the Study

This study inevitably has some limitations and shortcomings.

Firstly, all variables in this study are based on the self-perception of the participants during the same time period, which may introduce a certain degree of common method bias. In future research, it is recommended to incorporate multiple time points and collect data in a phased manner or utilize measurement methods based on evaluations from others.

Secondly, as the main focus of this study is township civil servants, despite clarifying beforehand that the questionnaire is an anonymous survey specifically for scientific research purposes, the participants may have a high sensitivity and a strong bias towards self-protection, making it difficult to completely avoid the introduction of some subjective factors during the questionnaire response process. In future investigations and research, I will allocate sufficient research time, expand the scope of the survey, and strive to obtain more survey data to the maximum extent possible, ensuring the authenticity and effectiveness of the data.

Thirdly, regarding the research sample, due to inevitable differences among different regions' civil servant populations, the scope location of this study is limited to Qingzhou City, Shandong Province. Future research should focus on expanding the coverage and applicability of the conclusions.

6. Significance of the Study

Practical Significance : Grassroots civil servants play a fundamental role in the vast workforce of public officials. As the implementation of any public policy and the resolution of public affairs ultimately rest in the hands of grassroots civil servants, the daily work status displayed by grassroots civil servants and the resulting work quality directly determine the public's satisfaction with government services, the credibility and reputation of government departments, as well as the policy formulation by the central party leadership. It also determines whether a service-oriented government can truly succeed. Therefore, studying the impact mechanism of common work-family conflicts, work-family support, job burnout and work engagement that can affect the job performance of grassroots civil servants has significant implications for the management of Qingzhou City and the national grassroots public servant workforce.

Firstly, for grassroots civil servants as individuals, the feedback and relevant suggestions from the research questionnaire can guide them in correctly understanding and handling work-family conflicts, reducing the occurrence of job burnout among grassroots civil servants, and ensuring maximum work enthusiasm and dedication. This can not only improve job performance but also guarantee individual sense of accomplishment and life satisfaction. Secondly, for public sectors, research data can help government departments understand the current work situation of grassroots civil servants, provide suggestions and guidance for the management of grassroots civil servants, promptly address work-family

conflicts and job burnout issues among grassroots workers, and safeguard the interests of the people and the construction of a service-oriented government.

Theoretical Significance : By validating the interrelationships between work-family conflict and job performance, based on previous research findings, this study can provide empirical support for understanding the current situation of grassroots civil servants and expand related research on the management of grassroots civil servants.

7. Definitions of Terms

(1) Job Performance

Job performance is defined as a comprehensive measure of behavior and results, encompassing the efforts individuals put into achieving organizational goals as well as the outcomes they achieve. Both aspects are indispensable (Borman & Motowidlo, 1993) [2].

The level of perception on task performance and contextual performance [2].

(2) Work-Family conflict

Work-family conflict is a bidirectional concept that can be divided into two dimensions: work to family conflict and family to work conflict. When issues and responsibilities in the work domain interfere with the fulfillment of family obligations, these unmet family obligations, in turn, can disrupt one's work situation. Similarly, when problems and responsibilities in the family domain interfere with the completion of work tasks, these uncompleted work tasks can also disturb one's family life (Frone, Russell & Cooper, 1992) [3]. Based on the definition provided by Frone et al., this study investigates work-family conflict among frontline public servants by examining the dimensions of both work to family conflict and family to work conflict.

The level of perception on time time-based conflict, strain-based conflict, and behavior-based conflict [3].

Grassroots civil servants: The term "Grassroots civil servants" is not specifically defined in the "Civil Servant Law" of China. Based on the definition of "civil servant" in the law, Grassroots civil servants can be understood as employees who are included in the local administrative establishment, whose salaries and benefits are fully covered by local finances, and who exercise jurisdiction over public administration and undertake public service responsibilities within grassroots-level government departments. In this study, grassroots civil servants refer to employees at or below the county (division) level, including county (division) level officials and deputies, township (section) level officials and deputies, as well as clerks and lower-ranked employees. The characteristics of Grassroots civil servants primarily include being at the grassroots level, undertaking significant tasks, and facing difficulties in promotion.

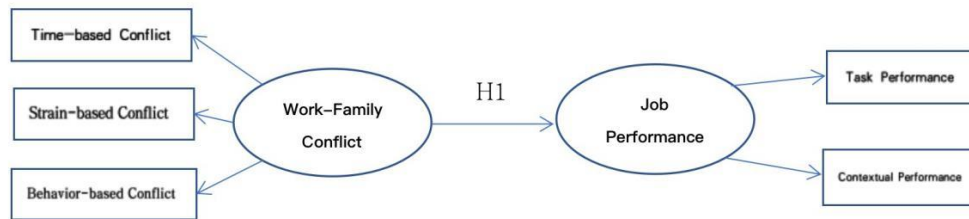
OBJECTIVE

To assess the levels of work-family conflict and job performance among grassroots civil servants in Qingzhou.

To explore the relationships between work-family conflict and job performance across different dimensions.

To test the model including work-family conflict and job performance.

Research Theoretical Model:



METHODOLOGY

Chinese and international scholars have recognized the mixed research method as a valuable approach in empirical research. This methodological tool combines both quantitative and qualitative research methods, driven by a pragmatic perspective and a focus on addressing research issues.

Consequently, the mixed research method emerged as the third empirical research paradigm in the mid to late 1990s. This study will employ an explanatory sequential design, a two-phase approach that combines quantitative and qualitative methods. In the first phase, quantitative data will be collected and analyzed to establish initial findings. This phase focuses on the numerical aspects of the research by examining relationships and patterns among variables. In the second phase, qualitative data will be gathered, building upon the quantitative results. The qualitative data will provide a deeper understanding and explanation of the quantitative findings. By integrating both quantitative and qualitative data, a more comprehensive and nuanced interpretation of the research results will be achieved.

1. Quantitative Methodological Approach

According to the research design, the initial stage of this study involves conducting quantitative research. This phase focuses on the collection and analysis of numerical data and is dedicated to providing a description of the quantitative research approach.

(1) Population and Sample

Population:

The population of this study is the grassroots civil servants working in Qingzhou City, China, which consists of about 2,500 people. (According to statistics from relevant departments of the Qingzhou Government in March 2023) Qingzhou City is my hometown, as well as the place where I work and live. I used to be a grassroots civil servant in Qingzhou City, so I chose this population as the object of my data collection.

1) Unit of analysis

The unit of analysis is an individual.

2) Sampling Frame

In this study, the sample will be selected from grassroots civil servants working in Qingzhou City in the year 2023.

Sample:

There are a total of about 2,500 grass-roots civil servants in Qingzhou City, and it is impossible to study all of them. Depending on the geographical location of the grassroots civil servants' work units, the content of their work, and the functions of the units, it is possible to categorize all the work units into three types: street offices, townships, and bureau. Samples are taken from these three types of units. The specific stages are as follows.

The first stage includes all government units in the city of Qingzhou.

The second stage is to divide all the units into three types: street offices, townships, and bureaus.

The third stage was to select three units from each of the three types of units for the study. In total, nine units were selected.

The fourth stage was to find the number of grassroots civil servants working in these nine units.

The fifth stage is to determine the sample size of each work unit. The same sample size can be taken from each of these nine work units. Based on the previous calculations, we need a total of 300 sample sizes. Finally, taking into account the partial sample recovery rate and quality issues, the initially set sample capacity of 300 was appropriately increased by 11 percent, which was finally determined to be 333, in order to obtain sufficient data. In this way, the sample capacity of each unit is 37.

(2) Data Collection Instruments (Questionnaire)

The study employs a questionnaire survey as a popular research method in the field of social sciences to collect relevant data.

- 1) Review related literature
- 2) Create the questionnaire
- 3) Examine Tool Quality

(3) Get Target Samples' Responses to a Questionnaire

Once the validity and reliability of the questionnaire has been confirmed, the researchers will proceed to organize and finalize it. Following this, the electronic version of the questionnaire will be distributed to the sample participants, who will be given a two-week period to complete it. After the designated time frame, the researchers will collect the questionnaires for further analysis.

(4) Dealing with Data

Ensure the prompt collection and organization of questionnaires following the designated deadline. Begin by reviewing and excluding any invalid questionnaires, such as those that remain incomplete as required or consistently selecting the same response option. This process guarantees the questionnaire's quality. Subsequently, assess the adequacy of the collected valid questionnaires, and if necessary, procure additional samples of the same nature to redistribute the questionnaire. By following these steps, the research's integrity and precision are upheld, ensuring comprehensive and accurate results.

(5) Statistical Technique for Data Analysis

PLS-SEM (Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling) is a statistical technique used to estimate the relationships and strengths between latent variables. It evaluates how effectively the model explains the target constructs of interest. One of the advantages of PLS-SEM is its ability to handle complex models that involve multiple constructs, indicator variables, and structural paths without assuming specific distributions for the data. This flexibility allows researchers to analyze data without strict distributional requirements, making PLS-SEM a valuable tool in various research contexts.

2. Qualitative Methodological Approach

Following the completion of the quantitative analysis, the research design stipulates that the next step involves qualitative analysis. Qualitative analysis serves as a valuable supplement to quantitative analysis, offering a higher-level examination that builds upon the findings of the quantitative analysis.

(1) Population and Informants:

In the case of the sequential explanatory mixed method research model, the criteria for selecting a group of qualitative informants are as follows: The research must purposively select informants from a quantitative study sample. In addition, there is a criterion to select representative informants from each questionnaire section (Creswell & Clark, 2018).

As a result, purposive sampling will be used to select 20 research informants. The criteria for selection will be established by the researcher; they must be representative of each social background item and have the lowest, middle, and highest scores from the independent variables. Furthermore, they must be from the lowest and highest outliers.

(2) Data Collection Instruments:

Qualitative research methods, such as in-depth interviews and focus group discussions, are commonly employed to gather first-hand information that cannot be easily quantified. In this study, both in-depth interviews and focus group discussions will be utilized to collect data. All the information and data obtained from the interviews will be summarized and analyzed. Researchers will encode and classify the data, which may lead to the discovery of new themes or patterns. Ultimately, the researcher will utilize these findings to provide explanations for the quantitative results.

(3) Examine Tool quality

- 1) Check Validity by knowledge owners
- 2) Verify reliability via a parallel check

Validate the information by sharing it with the interviewees and focus group participants, requesting them to carefully review and provide timely feedback. Acceptance, confirmation, and correction are all valuable forms of feedback.

(4) Data analysis

The researcher begins by transcribing all interview materials into written text and subsequently encoding them by providing simple and direct descriptions for each segment of the text. To ensure coding consistency, NVivo is employed as a data analysis tool for verification purposes.

(5) Data Integration

Researchers typically employ three methods to incorporate data for the purpose of enhancing themes, models, and theories. The initial approach involves leveraging the insights gathered from informants during the quantitative stage. The second method entails seeking explanations from these informants regarding the research findings. Lastly, the integration process should be an integral part of the research discussion and subsequent recommendations.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my sincere thanks to Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University for invaluable help throughout this research.

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