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Sources and Predictors of Work-Family Conflict: A Multidimensional Study across European Countries and Turkey

Ozge Demiral[a]

Abstract: *Addressing the lack of cross-national and multidimensional research in the relevant literature, this paper examines the relationships between two sources and various predictors of work-family conflict of employees by utilizing a three-year discreet dataset of 23 European countries and Turkey. Stress sources of work-family conflict are proxied by number and inflexibility of working hours whereas their predictors are represented by career advancement opportunity, business internationalization, paid parental leave scheme, governmental family support, and prevalence of employees' technology use. Additionally, cultural origins of social support are also controlled using both value and regional clusters of national cultures. Results from fixed-effect model estimation reveal that average annual hours worked per employee are negatively related to career advancement opportunity and technology adoption whereas business internationalization and paid parental leave opportunities cause longer working hours. Inflexible working is negatively associated with all variables except for the insignificant impact of technology adoption. The culture was found mattering for work-family conflict but explaining the variations in working hours and inflexible scheduling differently. The study concludes with suggestions for future research and implications based on findings and limitations.*

Keywords: Work-family conflict, Working hours, Inflexible working, Family domain, Border

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1. Introduction

Work-family conflicts of employees are strongly related to negative organizational outcomes (*e.g.*, job dissatisfaction, job boredom, burnout, absenteeism, and turnover) and psychological distress (*e.g.*, depression, aggression, and family tensions) resulting in a poor function of employees at both their workplaces and at homes (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Allen, Herst, Bruck, & Sutton, 2000; Kelly *et al*., 2008; Mihelic & Tekavcic, 2014). Work-family conflict, thus, has become one of the focal points of business professionals and scholars due to the changing work characteristics including growing numbers of dual-worker and dual-career families, the rapid rise in elder care demands because of aging workforce particularly in developed countries, increases in both men's involvement with family caregiving demands and women's participation in employment as well as the spread of globalization and technology adoption. Therefore, how to cope with the conflicts of intersecting work and family roles have become a flourishing concern in both management and psychology research (Barnett & Hyde, 2001; Kelly *et al*., 2008; Emslie & Hunt, 2009; Kalliath, Kalliath, & Chan, 2015; Kossek & Lee, 2016; SHRM, 2017). Consistently, human resource management

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[a] Asst. Prof., PhD., Nigde Omer Halisdemir University, Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences, Department of Business Administration, Nigde, Turkiye, odemiral@ohu.edu.tr (ORCID ID: 0000-0003-0165-2206)

departments of many business organizations have been trying to figure out effective ways for integrating the working and family lives of employees for various organizational purposes such as employee retention and productivity gains stimulated by higher family well-being and health as well as lower stress of employees (Kossek & Ozeki, 1998; White, Hill, McGovern, Mills, & Smeaton, 2003; Haar, Russo, Suñe, & Ollier-Malaterre, 2014). In compliance with this rise in the understanding and acknowledgment of the fact that the compatibility of working lives with family responsibilities may benefit both organizations and employees, many studies have been attempting to explore the sources and the predictors as well as antecedents and mediator/moderator variables of work-family conflict and/or work-life conflict (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Beutell & Wittig-Berman, 1999; Yang, Chen, Choi, & Zou, 2017).

As an interdisciplinary research domain, work-family conflict (henceforth referred to as WFC unless otherwise noted) and its extension, work-life conflict can be defined as "*forms of inter-role conflict that occur when the energy, time, or behavioral demands of the work role conflict with family or personal life roles*" (Kossek & Lee, 2016: 1)[1]. A considerable part of relevant literature suggests that long working hours and inflexibility of working time are the most prominent stress sources of employees in balancing work interferences with their family responsibilities and personal lives (Carlson, 1999; Clark, 2001; Wharton & Blair-Loy, 2006; Galea, Houkes, & De Rijk, 2013; Samad, Reaburn, & Milia, 2015).

Despite the inarguable consensus on the use of these stress sources as the proxies of WFC, the antecedents, and potential predictors of WFC are evidently ambiguous that findings in the vast literature underscore the importance and necessity of investigation of WFC in a multidimensional approach. In this context, one salient research group has focused on the individual determinants of WFC. These include employee characteristics such as dual-earner or dual-career family structures (Beutell & Wittig-Berman, 1999; Edwards & Rothbard, 2000; Clark, 2001), gender-related issues (Carlson, 1999; Barnett & Hyde, 2001) together with enthusiasm and workaholism (Russo & Waters, 2006). One other research strand investigates the impacts of globalization and technologic advancement within the context of ever-increasing multinational activities and the growing prevalence of the use of communication technologies (Boswell & Olson-Buchanan, 2007; Naor, Linderman, & Schroeder, 2010; Chandra, 2012; Bardoel, 2015). Additionally, there is an increasing interest in distinguishing between the directions of the conflicts from family-to-work and from work-to-family which results in separately measuring each of the conflict sources (Beutell & Wittig-Berman, 1999; Kalliath *et al.*, 2015). Moreover, alongside the organizational programs, external supports such as paid parental leave legislation of governments and social supports are among specific interests, as well (Chandra, 2012; Kalliath *et al.*, 2015; Samad *et al*., 2015; Annink, 2017). Even social support is built on cultural values of societies (Mortazavi *et al*., 2009; Naor *et al*., 2010), the existing evidence is seen incapable to reflect the all linkages between national culture and WFC. Especially this research gap points to the importance and necessity of the cross-cultural studies.

A comprehensive review of WFC literature reveals that the majority of studies has been mainly conducted within developed countries with a few considering an international comparison of developed and developing countries (Kelly *et al*., 2008). The reason for this concentration of research interest on developed countries can be linked to the post-industrial characteristics of business and labor markets in these advanced countries where the most of families are dual-earner or dual-career. Furthermore, these industrialized countries have been enforcing family-friendly welfare policies more pervasively (Wharton & Blair-Loy, 2006). The other fact is that mothers' participation in employment is high and getting higher and elder care demands of the aging population have been increasing in developed countries (Kossek & Lee, 2016). On the other hand, in developing countries, policies are mainly focusing on lowering the overall unemployment rate and enhancing the female participation in labor force, at the expense of ignoring work-family issues. Besides, the main technical reason for why empirical research tends to ignore multi-country comparison covering both developed and developing countries is the limited availability of related comparable data.

In today's global business environment, it is observed that there have been significant impacts of certain aspects of globalization on the work-family interface. One of the channels these influences spillover into WFC is the increasing embracement of the information and communication technology (ICT) in organizations. The widespread use of ICT devices at home and at work tends to change work design and to

make the work and family borders ambiguous since technology allows employees to bring work into the home and *vice versa* more easily (Batt & Valcour, 2003). All these have reduced the time- and location-dependencies of employees when they fulfill their job-related tasks. Nevertheless, the existing WFC studies have apparently paid little attention to these effects of globalization. Additionally, it is a priory argument that employees' priorities of work and family demands and their role satisfactions are related to their cultural beliefs, values, and norms that are also affected by globalization. Consequently, national cultures have influences on the operations of especially multinational businesses concerning the work and family issues (Lu *et al*., 2010; Yang *et al*., 2017). Notwithstanding the widely-premised cultural roots of WFC, it is again noted that the existing multi-county studies are unable to clearly explore the impacts of the cultural dynamics on WFC.

The current study addresses the shortages of the extant evidence which is still ambiguous to some degree and unable to capture the multifaceted influences of globalization, technological advancement, social support, and cultural dynamics on WFC. Aiming to contribute to the existing attempts to fill the research gaps in the vast WFC literature, this study purposes to examine the sources and predictors of WFC by adopting an integrative WFC model in a multidimensional perspective. In the empirical setting, the study uses a cross-section dominant panel framework based on a three-year (2005, 2010, 2015) discreet dataset of 23 European countries (Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, England, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden) and Turkey. In the rest of the study, first the theoretical discussion on the borders of work and family domains are outlined which is followed by the attempts for multidimensional and global measurements of WFC's proxies and predictors. After model construction, data and variables are introduced, methodology and results are presented within empirical framework. Finally, the study concludes with a discussion of findings and limitations which provides new insights for practitioners and further researchers in the field.

2. Theoretical Background: The Border Theory of Work and Family Roles

Even WFC phenomenon is widely examined in the related literature, it is rarely defined in a certain expression. Greenhaus and Beutell (1985: 77), for example, defined the term WFC as "*a form of inter-role conflict in which the role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect*". The descriptions of WFC center on 'work-family balance' which Clark (2000: 751) defined as "*the satisfaction and good functioning at work and at home, with a minimum of role conflict*". It is seen that both definitions emphasize the importance of integrating and balancing the conflicts resulting from coinciding demands in work and family domains of employees.

In the relevant literature, different approaches try to model and conceptualize the interrelationships between work and family spheres theoretically such as work-family conflict (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985), work and family demands (Yang *et al*., 2017), positive (Warner & Hausdorf, 2009) and negative spillovers (Grzywacz & Marks, 2000; Lourel, Ford, Gamassou, Guéguen, & Hartmann, 2009) between the domains, crossover of emotions and experiences (Westman, Brough, & Kalliath, 2009), work-family integration (Greenhaus, Collins, & Shaw, 2003), expansionist theory (Barnett & Hyde, 2001), role enhancement hypothesis (Grzywacz & Marks, 2000), work-family alliance and enrichment (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006), social support (Annink, 2017), need theory (Warner & Hausdorf, 2009) and role theory (Kossek & Lee, 2016). There are also studies such as those of Carlson, Kacmar, and Williams, (2000) and Kalliath *et al.* (2015) distinguishing work-family conflicts between two directions of work-family conflict (work interference with family) and family-work conflict (family interference with work).

Edwards and Rothbard (2000) organized these theoretical mechanisms linking work and family domains into six categories: i) spillover, ii) compensation, iii) segmentation, iv) resource drain, v) congruence and vi) WFC itself. Spillover perspective refers to mutual interactions of work and family supposing that experiences in one domain have consequential impacts on behaviors in the other domain. Since, temper, conduct, ethical values, and skills are transferred between the roles, domains resemble each other over time. Compensation represents the efforts for offsetting the dissatisfaction in one domain by seeking satisfaction

in another domain. Compensation concept assumes that deficits in one area are compensated by surpluses in the other area. Disquieting mental or emotional strain at work, therefore, can be recompensed by positive supports in the family area and *vice versa*. Segmentation is the separation of work and family domains in which family life and work do not systematically affect each other. Resource drain refers to the transfer of limited personal resources, such as time, attention, and energy, from one domain to another. Resource drain aspect states that resources used up for one domain are not available for the other domain anymore and thus, both areas compete for resources. Congruence refers to the similarity between work and family, owing to several common circumstances. Finally, WFC is "*a form of multiple-role conflict in which the demands of work and family roles are mutually incompatible so that meeting demands in one domain makes it difficult to meet demands in the other*". The relevant literature provides empirical evidence both confirming and contradicting these concepts. The most common conclusion is that substance and magnitude of WFC tend to vary over work and family characteristics.

Despite the increasing number of these different approaches to define and model WFC, the majority of them underlines that the optimal level of conflicts between work and family lives can only be attained when some degree of satisfaction exists in each sphere simultaneously. Thus, it is important to analyze the interaction of the work and the family environments which centers upon the border theory of work and family roles (Lambert, Kass, Piotrowski, & Vodanovich, 2006: 66-67). The central focus of this theory introduced and conceptualized by Clark (2000) is that the relationship between work and family borders must be managed appropriately to create and maintain work-family balance. In this premise, Lambert *et al*. (2006: 67) indicate that family boundaries appear to be much more permeable to work conflict than *vice versa*. This also explains why most of the extant research about WFC is interested in the conflicts flowing from work to family. Clark's (2000) border theory implies that employees experiencing greater WFC are less satisfied with their lives in general. Thus, as the demands of work and family increase, role conflict arises and life satisfaction decreases. The idea behind this theory is that work and family are different domains that interact reciprocally. Work and family domains with isolated borders generally differ in purpose and in culture as in the case of two different countries with different patterns of common culture, acceptable behaviors, task accomplishment, motivation, success, goal, and outcomes (Clark, 2000: 750-751).

In the border theory, borders are lines determining the limits of domains at which domain-relevant behaviors or roles begin or end. These borders can be i) physical (*e.g.,* work at workplace and live at home that what happens in each stays there), ii) temporal (*e.g.,* work during working hours and live after work) and iii) psychological (*e.g.,* after work, do not think about the job until worktime restarts). Clark (2000: 756-758) specified four characteristics that determine the strengths of these physical, temporal, psychological borders as i) permeability, ii) flexible time, iii) blending and iv) border strength itself. Permeability is the extent to which elements from the work domain may spill over into the family domain, or *vice versa*. Flexibility is the extent to which a border may contract or expand depending on the demands of domains. Blending means that borders are started to disappear. In blended borders employees frequently travel between the domains with and without intention. The last factor, border strength, depends on the permeability, flexibility and blending: As the borders become more permeable, flexible, and blended, the domain borders tend to be weaker. Finally, Clark (2000: 758-759) proposes some premises on the border-WFC nexus as follows: As the domains become similar (dissimilar), weak (strong) borders ease WFC. When the border is strong to protect one domain but is weak for the other domain, employees tend to have lesser (higher) WFC as they involve with the strongly (weakly) bordered domain. Again, since work border tends to be stronger than that of the family in common, WFC perceptions of the workaholic and enthusiastic employees are relatively lower than those of that who devote themselves to their family priorities.

3. Multidimensional Measurement of Work-Family Conflict

3.1. Proxies and Predictors

The aspects of balancing WFC can be grouped into three components (Greenhaus *et al*., 2003): Time balance (equal time devoted to work and family), involvement balance (equal involvement in work and

family), and satisfaction balance (equal satisfaction with work and family). In this regard, there are key aspects considered while gauging the level of WFC. The measurements that have been salient in the literature are long working hours, work inflexibility, and as a result of both, job strain (Carlson, 1999; Carlson *et al.,* 2000; SHRM, 2017). These multidimensional measurements that are also useful for multi-country and cross-cultural comparisons, focus on job satisfaction or more broadly life satisfaction addressing the stress and mental health of employees (Kossek & Ozeki, 1998; Lourel *et al.*, 2009; Haar *et al*., 2014; SHRM, 2017). Given the links between these measurements and employees' family responsibilities, most commonly used proxy of WFC is the number of working hours (Wharton & Blair-Loy, 2006; Galea & De Rijk, 2013; Kossek & Lee, 2016).

One challenge stemmed from the use of working hours as a proxy for WFC is its incapability to capture the real link between working time and work-family spillover since working long hours can also benefit employees from different channels including learning and innovation, career advancement, premium and promotion (Leslie *et al*., 2012; James, 2014). Moreover, even though working long hours is significantly related to greater WFC and less gratification with leisure for especially relaxed and uninvolved employees, for some employees particularly for those who are workaholics, performance-oriented and career-motivated, overtime working rewarded by extra payment and promotion does not necessarily mean high WFC (Russo & Waters, 2006; Brady *et al*., 2008). To be able to capture these contradicting situations of the workaholic and enthusiastic employees who may require different support mechanisms, another proxy for WFC is the inflexibility of working hours (Russo & Waters, 2006; SHRM, 2017). Flexible working schedule in which some working hours are determined by the convenience of employees, can be provided by organization, society, or government for all employees but differently depending on their demographics again such as gender, family size and family structure (with/without children, dual-earner, dual-career) to be able to ease WFC.

3.2. Impacts of Globalization and Technological Advancement

Along with these proxies and predictors of WFC, there are two inevitable and irreversible phenomena: Globalization and technological advancement. It is argued that these phenomena have been removing the temporal and spatial boundaries of not only countries and organizations but also of work and family domains of employees (Perrons, 2003). The globalization of businesses spurred by technological development has been gradually reshaping social values, demographics, and living standards of societies. More specifically, many organizations have expanded their global operations and herewith, more employees have started to travel or work abroad. These assignments can strain family relationships and increase the stress of employees. Thereby, many dual-earner and dual-career families have been negotiating with their managers or employers to implement family-friendly policies. Clarifying the relationship between work and family constructs, these policies help ease family demands and reduce employee absenteeism and turnover (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000: 178).

The second phenomenon, which is also one of the key pillars of the globalization, is the ever-increasing use of the ICT devices such as smartphones, tablets and laptops that keep employees constantly connected to work and family concerns through networking components and applications. For employees, being reachable by managers and employers at any time (even in off time) can cause a higher WFC.

Addressing these challenges, Shapiro (2014) lists several suggestions for managers and employers that they should: i) allow employees to work away from the workplaces (teleworking) when needed, ii) give their employees the necessary tech tools to get their jobs done, iii) let employees use office computers and phones for personal/family purposes as well, iv) be aware of the fact that new devices and apps can enhance productivity, v) not contact employees when they are on vacation, unless really necessary, vi) be always reachable since some emergencies can arise any time that employees cannot solve without managerial support, vii) keep in mind that contacting employees at night and on weekends can break family arrangements of employees, viii) not be involved in employees' social networks with work-related matters, ix) keep technology away from face-to-face business meetings, and x) respect that employees are different: Some employees, for example, can prefer to work alone or at night, whereas some others like discussing with

others and working in the afternoon. As seen, these suggestions include both benefits and harms of increasing use of ICT for WFC. Additionally, new generation jobs that are characterized by high technology are expected to be more convenient for telecommuting (teleworking) which may lessen WFC of employees by decreasing space dependency. Coherently, global rankings of best jobs with least WFC usually include those in high-tech service industries (Glassdoor, 2016; Indeed Blog, 2018).

3.3. Cultural Roots of Work-Family Conflict

Given the antecedents and consequences of WFC, there is yet a significant part of the differences in WFC that the previously premised predictors are unable to explain. This gap, especially in cross-national comparisons, points to the national culture that also forms the organizational culture (Mortazavi *et al*., 2009; Yang *et al*., 2017; Peretz *et al*., 2018). Regarding the WFC-national culture nexus, particularly individualism/collectivism and femininity/masculinity distinctions based on the pioneering research of Hofstede (2001, 2011) and the GLOBE project (House *et al*. 2004) yield meaningful implications.

In Hofstede's (2011: 11) study, the individualist cultures are found to be with weak ties between individuals and thus everyone was expected to look after only him/herself and his/her immediate family (father, mother, and siblings). On the other hand, in a collectivist society, people are loyal to their extended families (uncles, aunts and grandparents) and each member also needs to care about the other members. Therefore, it can be intuitively inferred that both employees and organizations in individualistic societies pay less attention to the family demands since the family sizes are smaller than those of in the collectivistic societies. On the leisure time connection, however, individualistic employees may require more off time for their leisure and personal care. Yet, these predicted relationships can vary over societal-, organizational- and individual-level considerations. Regarding the dimensions of Hofstede (2011: 11-12), feminine societies tend to pay more attention to WFC than masculine societies that in the latter, work domain predominates over family. Since the distinction between gender roles differ in feminine and masculine societies, gender-based research initiatives about WFC need to consider this distinction. In the classification of Hofstede (2001, 2011) individualism tends to prevail in developed and western countries. Given differences in values about work and family time, it can be hypothesized that in individualistic (collectivistic) societies more non-work time is needed for personal (family) demands whereas in feminine (masculine) societies more time is needed for family (work) demands that all circumstances in any way lead to a greater WFC. These multi-directional impacts, therefore, have resulted in an ambiguous evidence in the relevant literature on WFC-culture nexus. These unclear results become more salient when countries are grouped by their national cultures. Culture-based regional clusters of Gupta *et al.* (2002) and House *et al*. (2004) within the *Project of Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness* (GLOBE, 2018), validated the existence of ten cultural clusters: South Asia, Anglo, Arab, Germanic Europe, Latin Europe, Eastern Europe, Nordic Europe, Confucian Asia, Latin America, and Sub-Sahara Africa. In case of this study's sample, relevant six clusters are seen in Table 1.

Table 1. The GLOBE Project's Regional Clusters of Cultures

Clusters		Countries
Anglo		Australia, Canada, *England*, *Ireland*, New Zealand, South Africa (white sample), and the USA.
Europe	Germanic Europe	*Austria*, *Germany*, *Netherlands,* Switzerland.
	Latin Europe	*Spain, Portugal, Italy,* French Switzerland, *France,* Israel.
	Eastern Europe	Albania, Georgia, *Greece, Hungary*, Kazakhstan, *Poland,* Russia, *Slovenia*
	Nordic Europe	*Finland, Sweden, Denmark*
Arab		Egypt, Morocco, *Turkey*, Kuwait, and Qatar

Note: Countries included in our sample are *italicized.*
Sources: Gupta *et al.,* 2002; House *et al.* 2004; GLOBE, 2018.

In Table 1, the Anglo cluster is characterized by an individualistic performance orientation. Further, although they value gender equality, the Anglo cluster countries tend to be male-dominated in practice. Arabic cluster including Turkey which is considered as a bridge between East and West is attributed to highly group-oriented, hierarchical, masculine, and low on future orientation. European culture was distinguished between Germanic Europe, Latin Europe, and Eastern Europe clusters (Gupta *et al.,* 2002; House *et al.* 2004; GLOBE, 2018). Despite the significant differences among these three European clusters, there is an isomorphic process observed in doing business and human resource management practices in these countries. Likewise, longstanding membership negotiations and historical interactions, as well as the ever-increasing business collaboration between the European Union and Turkey, have created a converged process of Turkish and European culture, at least in business and management contexts. However, starting from the suggestion that this convergence process has not been that distinctive as much as that of within European countries, in the study we finally have two region-based cultural clusters such as 'European' and 'the rest of the sample' that each is presented by a dummy proxy in the model. This two-track distinction is applied because it can be clearly noticed from a global comparison of working hours and paid vacation days that European countries tend to pay more attention to WFC as seen in Table 2 where all the top-ten countries with the shortest working hours are those from Europe. On the other hand, it is hard to group the other countries into one specific category regionally since they irregularly span the world across Asia, Africa, Balkans, and South America.

Table 2. Top and Bottom Countries in WFC by Working Hours and Vacation Time**,** 2017

Country	Mean weekly hours practically worked per employee	Share of employees working less than 30 hours per week *(%)*	Share of employees working more than 48 hours per week *(%)*	Paid annual leave* (*working days)*	Minimum length of maternity leave *(calendar days)*	100% of wages on maternity leave
10 countries with the shortest working hours						
Netherlands	*32.41*	*33.32*	*5.15*	*20*	*112*	*Yes*
Norway	*34.47*	*21.37*	*4.29*	*21*	*343*	*No*
Denmark	*34.55*	*22.10*	*5.30*	*25*	*126*	*No*
Germany	*35.25*	*21.67*	*5.60*	*24*	*98*	*Yes*
Austria	*35.42*	*22.59*	*5.91*	*25*	*112*	*Yes*
Sweden	*35.93*	*19.36*	*4.68*	*25*	*480*	*No*
England	*35.95*	*22.59*	*10.23*	*28*	*14*	*No*
Ireland	*36.09*	*22.75*	*5.92*	*20*	*182*	*No*
Finland	*36.11*	*16.89*	*5.16*	*30*	*105*	*No*
France	*36.29*	*18.99*	*6.34*	*30.3*	*112*	*Yes*
10 countries with the longest working hours						
Viet Nam	*40.31*	*8.00*	*27.88*	*13*	*180*	*Yes*
Serbia	*41.34*	*4.49*	*8.60*	*20*	*135*	*Yes*
Philippines	*41.40*	*15.73*	*18.35*	*5*	*60*	*Yes*
Macedonia	*42.22*	*1.78*	*3.77*	*20*	*270*	*Yes*
South Africa	*42.99*	*9.00*	*18.59*	*18.3*	*120*	*No*
Costa Rica	*43.24*	*12.83*	*27.61*	*12*	*120*	*Yes*
Colombia	*43.40*	*8.30*	*27.84*	*15*	*126*	*Yes*
Turkey	*45.91*	*6.65*	*32.06*	*18*	*112*	*No*
Mexico	*46.33*	*12.28*	*28.15*	*12*	*84*	*Yes*
Bangladesh	*46.93*	*3.38*	*58.75*	*17*	*112*	*Yes*

Notes: Countries are ranked by the mean of weekly hours worked per employee. In the ranking, around 100 countries from all around the world were considered. *Paid annual leave days are average of all employees with different job tenures that employees with longer job tenure usually have more leave days.
Sources: ILO's (2018) Labor Force Surveys and Doing Business's (2018) Labor Market Regulation Data.

4. Empirical Framework

4.1. Hypothetical Model, Data, and Variables

In the study, with a broad perspective, the main premise is that "*a set of various predictors including societal, country-level, organizational, and individual factors affect work-family conflict of employees*". Since the study deals with two causes (long working hours and inflexibility of working hours) of WFC, the following two hypotheses are constructed:

Hypothesis 1: *Number of working hours of employees is significantly affected by career advancement, business internationalization, paid parental leave availability, governmental family support, ICT adoption, and cultural traits.*

Hypothesis 2: *Inflexibility of working hours of employees is significantly affected by career advancement, business internationalization, paid parental leave availability, governmental family support, ICT adoption, and cultural traits.*

Consistently, in the theoretical model, *WFC* sources proxied by average annual working hours *(AWH)* and inflexibility of working hours *(IFWH)* are associated with multidimensional determinants represented by opportunity for career advancement *(CAO),* business internationalization *(BINT),* paid parental leave availabilities *(PPL),* family support of governments *(FAMS),* ICT adoption of organizations *(ICTAD),* and dummy variables of cultural difference *(CD) based on* Hofstede's (2001, 2011) *(CD_H) and* GLOBE Project's (Gupta *et al.,* 2002; House *et al*., 2004) *(CD_G)* clusters. Explanations for all variables are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Variables, Descriptions, and Data Sources

Variable	Description	Source
	Independent variables: WFC Proxies	
AWH	Average annual hours a regular employee really works. The total number of hours worked over the given year divided by the average number of total employees including both men and women and both part-time and full-time employees. Higher values refer to higher WFC.	OECD's (2018) Labour database.
IFWH	The inflexibility of working hours. The extent to which jobs restrict employees to arrange time between work and family life. The percentage of employees who face inflexibility pressure. Higher values refer to higher WFC.	OECD's (2018) calculations from European Working Conditions Surveys and International Social Survey Programme.
	Explanatory variables: Potential predictors of WFC	
CAO	Opportunity for career advancement. The percentage share of employees that expect advancement in their job. Higher values refer to more career opportunities.	
BINT	Business internationalization. The intensity of inward activity of multinationals in all sectors. The number of the multinational enterprises under foreign control. As the share of those in Germany which has the highest number. Higher values refer to a more pervasive internationalization of national business environment.	OECD's (2018) Globalization database.

Table 3. Variables, Descriptions, and Data Sources (Continue)

PPL	Paid parental leave opportunities. Length of paid paternity (fathers) and maternity (mothers) leaves reserved for employees. As the number of the week.	OECD's (2018) Family database.
FAMS	Family support of governments. The extent to which public services and in-kind benefits are available for families. Public expenditure as a percentage of national income (gross domestic product).	
ICTAD	Information and communication technology (ICT) adoption of organizations. The extent to which businesses embrace ICTs. The percentage share of employees using an internet-enabled portable device.	OECD's (2018) Information and Communication Technology database.
Control variables: Cultural differences (dummy variables)		
CD_H	*1* if the country has either individualistic or masculinist culture, *2* when both and *0* otherwise (collectivism and/or femininity) in common.	Hofstede (2001, 2011).
CD_G	*1* if the country regionally belongs to European culture and *0* otherwise (Arab and Anglo regions)	House *et al.* (2004); GLOBE (2018) Project.

The study uses a three-year (2005, 2010, 2015) dataset of 23 European countries and Turkey. As any other applied research, this study faced data unavailability. When there was a year with missing data, it was replaced by the nearest year's available data. Consequently, in a cross-section dominant panel framework, the regression models for two WFC sources, namely the number of annual working hours *(AWH)* and inflexibility of working hours *(IFWH)*, are as follows:

$$\ln(AWH)_{i,t} = \alpha_0 + \alpha_1 \ln(CAO)_{i,t} + \alpha_2 \ln(BINT)_{i,t} + \alpha_3 \ln(PPL)_{i,t} + \alpha_4 \ln(FAMS)_{i,t} + \alpha_5 \ln(ICTAD)_{i,t} + \alpha_6 (CD\_H)_i + \alpha_7 (CD\_G)_i + u_{0i,t} \quad (1)$$

$$\ln(IFWH)_{i,t} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \ln(CAO)_{i,t} + \beta_2 \ln(BINT)_{i,t} + \beta_3 \ln(PPL)_{i,t} + \beta_4 \ln(FAMS)_{i,t} + \beta_5 \ln(ICTAD)_{i,t} + \beta_6 (CD\_H)_i + \beta_7 (CD\_G)_i + u_{1i,t} \quad (2)$$
$$(i = 1,...,24; \quad t = 2005, 2010, 2015)$$

where all the variables are the same as previously defined in Table 3. In the equations, *i* and *t* stand for the cross-section units (24 countries) and temporal units (three discontinuous years), respectively, while α_0 and β_0 are country-specific intercepts. The composite error terms, u_0, and u_1, comprise cross-sectional and temporal influences of all other predictors not included in the model. Finally, all α and β parameters $(\alpha_1, \alpha_2, ..., \alpha_7; \beta_1, \beta_2, ... \beta_7)$ are the coefficients to be estimated. All the variables except for culture dummies are converted into the natural logarithmic forms *(ln)*.

4.2. Methodology and Results

For having efficient regression estimation, several robustness controls were applied. First, we checked each series for normality through kurtosis and skewness statistics together with the *Jarque-Bera (J-B)* test. As seen in Table 4, *J-B* statistics indicate that all the series, except for *ln(AWH),* are normally distributed.

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics and Correlations Matrix (N:72)

	lnAWH	*lnIFWH*	*lnCAO*	*lnBINT*	*lnPPL*	*lnFAMS*	*lnICTAD*
Mean	1.42	3.58	2.08	-1.27	4.04	-0.34	2.87
Median	1.39	3.62	2.06	-1.18	3.99	-0.36	2.75
Maximum	3.73	4.06	3.33	0.32	5.14	0.79	3.83
Minimum	-0.10	3.05	0.72	-3.35	2.77	-2.30	1.70
Std. dev.	0.74	0.22	0.56	0.93	0.74	0.66	0.51
Skewness	0.87	-0.43	-0.21	-0.35	-0.21	-0.38	0.29
Kurtosis	4.62	2.82	2.64	2.31	2.15	3.01	2.49
Jarque-Bera	*17.00**	2.26	0.92	2.90	2.72	1.71	1.78
J-B probability	*0.00*	0.32	0.63	0.23	0.26	0.43	0.41
	lnAWH	*lnIFWH*	*lnCAO*	*lnBINT*	*lnPPL*	*lnFAMS*	*lnICTAD*
lnAWH	1						
lnIFWH	*0.33*	1					
lnCAO	-0.11	-0.27	1				
lnBINT	*-0.34*	0.07	0.02	1			
lnPPL	*-0.31*	-0.24	-0.21	0.03	1		
lnFAMS	*-0.58*	*-0.34*	*0.32*	*0.41*	0.16	1	
lnICTAD	*-0.50*	*-0.49*	*0.41*	0.13	0.10	*0.73*	1

Note: *Normality hypothesis cannot be accepted at 1% (p<0.01) significance level.

For the perfect normality, the values of skewness and kurtosis are required to be zero. However, in the literature, there are loose approaches that consider the absolute values *2* (for skewness) and *7* (for kurtosis) acceptable maximum thresholds for normal distribution (West *et al*., 1995: 74). In our sample, the skewness values are ranging between *-0.43* and *0.87* while kurtosis values differ between *2.15* and *4.62* meaning that there are not serious deviations from the normality which is also apparently confirmed by the histograms of the series. Multicollinearity problem was checked for all variables through variance inflation factor calculations those reveal that there is no crucial multicollinearity problem, either. Stationarity control for variables was not conducted because of the very short period of the series.[2] Additionally, correlations matrix in Table 4 illustrates that there is a strong and positive correlation (*0.73*) between *FAMS* and *ICTAD* whereas *AWH* is moderately and negatively correlated with *FAMS* (*0.58*) and *ICTAD* (*0.50*).

Since the study sample consists of only European countries, including Turkey to some extent, and time-section dimension is both short and discrete, the estimation model was expected to embody cross-section fixed effects. This expectation was strongly confirmed by the Hausman test at 1% level. Consequently, the linear models in the equations 1 and 2 were estimated through cross-section fixed effects and results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Estimated Relationships between Potential Predictors and Sources of WFC

Explanatory variables *(predictors)*	Estimated coefficients	
	Model 1 (explained variable: *AWH)*	Model 2 (explained variable: *IFWH)*
CAO	*-0.09* [0.01] (0.00)***	*-0.05* [0.02] (0.04)**
BINT	*0.09* [0.05] (0.07)*	*-0.04* [0.02] (0.10)*
PPL	*0.25* [0.09] (0.01)***	*-0.07* [0.03] (0.01)***
FAMS	*0.08* [0.08] (0.36)	*-0.20* [0.02] (0.00)***
ICTAD	*-0.47* [0.05] (0.00)***	*-0.06* [0.08] (0.43)
CD_H	*-0.18* [0.09] (0.06)*	*0.10* [0.03] (0.00)***
CD_G	*-1.15* [0.21] (0.00)***	*-0.02* [0.08] (0.75)
Constant	*2.12* [0.30] (0.00)***	*4.02* [0.13] (0.00)***
R-squared	*0.92*	*0.84*
Adjusted R-squared	*0.86*	*0.74*
F-statistic	*16.91* (0.00)***	*8.28* (0.00)***
Durbin-Watson stat.	*2.59*	*3.10*
Residuals Jarque-Bera	*3.65* (0.16)	*0.00* (0.53)

Notes: ***, ** and * respectively indicate statistical significance at 1% (p<0.01), 5% (p<0.05), and 10% (p<0.10) levels. Cross-section standard errors are in [brackets] and probabilities are in (parentheses).

Significant (*p<0.10*) coefficients shown in Table 5 demonstrate that average annual hours worked per employee *(AWH)* is negatively associated with opportunity for career advancement (*CAO)* and ICT adoption of organizations (*ICTAD)* whereas there are positive influences of business internationalization *(BINT)* and paid parental leave opportunities (*PPL)* on *AWH.* There is no significant relationship found between *AWH* and family support of governments (*FAMS*). When inflexibility of working hours (*IFWH*) is considered as a source of WFC, it is found having negative associations with *CAO*, *BINT*, *PPL,* and *FAMS*. There is no significant relationship found between *IFWH* and *ICTAD*. The estimated coefficients of the dummy variables reveal that long hour employment is less pervasive in the organizations operating in individualistic and/or masculine nations. These countries, however, tend to have inflexible working hours. Again, countries with European culture have fewer working hours, whereas there is no significant spatial difference found between European and other cultures.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

WFC refers to mutual incompatibilities between work and family roles of employees. Perceived imbalance between the role demands and the capabilities to cope with these demands may put employees in a great deal of stress which results in many undesired consequences for organizations, families, and employees/individuals. Therefore, WFC has become a growing challenge for all business agents in modern societies due to the changing work dynamics. In line with the rise in the understanding and acknowledgment of the fact that the compatibility of working life with family responsibilities may benefit both organizations and employees, many studies have been attempting to explore both the sources and the predictors of WFC. A considerable part of relevant literature suggests that long working hours and inflexibility of working time are the most prominent stress sources of employees in balancing work interferences with their family responsibilities and personal lives.

The comprehensive review of WFC literature revealed that the majority of relevant research was confined to developed countries due to the prevalence of dual-working families and relevant welfare policies in these post-industrial countries. The technical reason for why empirical research tend to ignore multi-country comparisons is the restriction of data availability. Addressing the lack of cross-cultural and multidimensional research on WFC of employees, this paper examined the relationships between two

sources and miscellaneous predictors of WFC by utilizing a three-year discreet dataset of 23 European nations and Turkey with different societal development stages. Following the extant evidence, stress sources of WFC were proxied by number and inflexibility of working hours whereas their predictors were represented by career advancement opportunity, business internationalization, paid parental leave scheme, governmental family support, and technology use of employees. Additionally, relationships were controlled for cultural distinction using both value and regional clusters of national cultures.

Key findings of the study can be summarized as follows: i) Working hours are relatively fewer in countries where organizations provide more career advancement opportunities to their employees. This evidence is consistent with the premise that career jobs offer more nonwork time to their employees for enabling them to take advantages of available self-development opportunities such as education and training. ii) Flourishing ICT adoption of employees within organizations seems to be saving their time which results in fewer working hours. iii) Business internationalization proxied by the intensity of multinational activities tend to increase the working time which points out to more complicated and time-consuming international business practices. iv) The evidence that paid parental leave opportunities lead to an increase in working hours implies that organizations under a strict binding of paid parental leave legislation tend to offset this so-called loss by making their employees working relatively longer hours. v) In the cultural context, long hour employment was found less pervasive in the organizations operating in countries where individualism or masculinity are more common. Again, countries with European culture tend to have fewer working hours compared to those with Arab and Anglo cultures. About the inflexible working, vi) opportunity for career advancement have a negative influence on inflexible working. This seems to be consistent with the negative relationship between working hours and career advancement opportunity. Therefore, it can be inferred that organizations with more career opportunities not only offer fewer working hours but they also provide flexible working arrangements for their employees. These programs likely make these businesses ideal workplaces for employees to work for. vii) Business internationalization reduces the inflexibility of working time. The flexible scheduling is, in fact, a necessity for multinational businesses since they need to organize tasks in various countries with different time zones. viii) The findings that paid parental leaves and family supports were negatively associated with inflexible working, are almost self-evident since these family-friendly practices help employees in coping with the simultaneous demands of both work and family domains. ix) Cultural differences were found mattering for WFC that organizations in countries where individualist and/or masculinist cultures prevail tend to have inflexible working hours. When this is considered together with the negative impacts of individualism and/or masculinism on working hours, it can be inferred that organizations, or countries in a broader approach, tend to compensate fewer working hours by enforcing inflexible working arrangements and *vice versa*. However, there was no significant spatial difference found across European and other cultures in inflexible working aspect.

6. Practical Implications and Study Limitations

Overall evidence of the study provides different motivations for both future research and professional implications in the business and management field. Given the bidirectional importance and benefits of minimizing WFC, managers and/or employers of business organizations need to consider coping with WFC of employees with a broader perspective including both internal (family-friendly workplaces, management support for child/elder cares, education/training services on technology adoption, teleworking/telecommuting alternatives, *etc*.) and external (cultural roots, advances in communication technologies, globalization process, internationalization of local business environment, *etc*.) factors. All these necessities emphasize the importance of having the strategic human resource management specialized in effective time planning customized for employees with different family-related challenges. These requirements are more important for the managers of multinational business organizations who need to be aware of cultural differences that the study found mattering for WFC. The other actors in business environment are government institutions. Governmental initiatives and legislation on work and family issues of employees affect organizational practices directly and indirectly. Therefore, the regulations including paid/unpaid parental leaves, working hours, overtime working, *etc*. should be adjusted for today's employment structures and employees' needs that have been changing with the aspects of globalization and

technological progress. Combining the evidence of the extant literature and our study, it is noted that governmental institutions should be aware that family-friendly and business-friendly work practices not always compete. For getting more benefits of this positive-sum strategic collaboration, governmental institutions also need to focus on inciting the use of time-saving ICT devices/applications with teleworking alternate in organizations. Consistently, future studies are recommended to adopt a multidimensional perspective and consider both the internal and the external factors when analyzing the sources and consequences of WFC of employees. This require the use of administrative data together with survey measurements that will provide more useful specific initiatives for business professionals and governmental institutions.

As any other applied research, this study lacked in the availability and reliability of data that compelled the study to make a tradeoff between expanding cross-section units by shortening the time units and *vice versa*. Because of its purposes, the first alternative was more useful for the study. Moreover, data sets used in the study were not obtained from a single source which limits the generalizability and comparability of data. Even the main data source, the OECD, harmonizes the data meticulously, yet the results are required to be interpreted cautiously. Moreover, demographics such as gender, family size, and family structure together with ever-changing work conditions that the study has not considered, might embody important implications. Therefore, researchers who are interested in contributing to the ongoing WFC debate are suggested to control for these ever-changing demographics of employees and workplaces. Additionally, because the study had a multi-country empirical setting, the real perceptions of employees on WFC have not been captured. On this challenge, large-sample survey data based on certain scales would yield more specific results. Finally, representing the WFC sources by only two proxies (this was because of the limited availability of multi-country harmonized data) limits the contribution of the study to the attempts in filling the huge gap in the global WFC literature. Thus, future researchers are recommended to distinguish between sub-dimensions of working hours and inflexible working schedules based on the magnitudes of their proxy robustness.

End Notes

1. *Despite the prevalent use of the term 'work-life conflict' to capture individuals' additional lives that are not restricted to the family, in this study, the term 'work-family conflict' is preferred due to fact that even individuals who are single or do not have children are also a family member themselves since they are sons, daughters, sisters, brothers, or living with friends functioning as a family.*
2. *Unreported results are available from the author upon request.*

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