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20 A Review of Work–Family Research in Confucian Asia

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The objective of this chapter is to review work–family research conducted in Confucian Asia. Confucianism is a school of philosophy that is based on the ideas of Confucius, an ancient Chinese social philosopher. Confucianism has had profound impact on the culture in East and Southeast Asian societies (Neville, 2000). As a code of conduct, Confucian values have shaped various aspects of individual and social lives of people in the region. In this chapter, Confucian Asia refers to China, Hong Kong, Japan, Singapore, South Korea, and Taiwan.

We begin by highlighting some aspects of Confucianism that are deemed important for the work–family interface. First, Confucianism emphasizes five principal relationships that define the role and proper social position for each individual; fulfilling the responsibilities and duties for one's position is important to achieve social hierarchy and maintain harmony (Confucius, 1983). Of relevance, the husband and wife are prescribed to have separate functions in a family, such that the husband is primarily responsible for financial support whereas the wife is responsible for tending the home and children. Second, Confucianism views a family, rather than an individual, as the fundamental unit of society; family is an interdependent unit, in which members are highly involved with each other's life. The centrality of the family role makes fulfilling family responsibility at the center of everyone's social as well as economic roles. As a means to financially support family, work is often viewed as more important than leisure and as instrumental to family welfare (Redding, 1990). Lastly, Confucianism values diligence, persistence, and loyalty (Chan, 1996). The work ethic imbued with Confucianism is manifested in expectations for long work hours (Kang & Matusik, 2014) and performance evaluation practices that emphasize face-time (Won, 2005).

Other characteristics of the Confucian Asian countries that are relevant to the study of work and family deserve mentioning. First, previous research on cultural values has described these countries as highly collectivistic (Hofstede, 2001); group interests tend to supersede individual interests and interdependent self-construal is prevalent in Confucian Asian societies (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Also, with the exception of Singapore, these countries rank relatively low on gender egalitarianism, the degree to which individuals' biological sex determines their social roles (Emrich, Denmark, & Den Hartog, 2004; Hausmann, Tyson, & Zahidi, 2012). Second, the countries in this region experienced economic growth in past decades (Bloom & Finlay, 2009), which accompanied a rise in the number of women in the workforce and dual-earner couples (Jaumotte, 2004). Together with

the rapidly aging population that increases the eldercare needs (Chan, 2005), these changes have incited public and scholarly interest in work–family issues in the region. Finally, the governments of Confucian Asian countries have progressively introduced national initiatives to facilitate work–family reconciliation (e.g., legislation on labor conditions, leave policies, reward scheme for family-friendly organizations), although the type of policies and the degree of support available vary across the specific countries (Cho & Koh, 2015; Iwao, 2010).

In the following sections, we provide a critical synthesis of previous work–family research conducted in Confucian Asia. We first provide an overview of the development and methodology of work–family research in this region. Next, we review the key findings and compare them to the findings in the general work–family literature. We then discuss limitations of the extant literature and conclude with directions for future research.

Study of Work–Family in Confucian Asia

Development of Work–Family Research in Confucian Asia

Work–family research in Confucian Asia started in the 1990s. However, there were only a handful of studies published during this time. Studies at this nascent stage share several characteristics. First, the studies exclusively focused on work–family conflict (WFC; e.g., Matsui, Ohsawa, & Onglatco, 1995). Second, all the studies utilized cross-sectional designs and examined WFC in a single country. Lastly, cultural characteristics of Confucian Asia were not reflected in the hypotheses development, and no study included an explicit measure of cultural values or characteristics. This makes it difficult to attribute any observed discrepancies to cultural characteristics of the region because they could be from alternative sources, such as sampling error, differences in measures used, or other unmeasured variables. One exception is a study by Aryee, Fields, and Luk (1999a) that examined the cross-cultural generalizability of a model of WFC developed in the United States (Frone, Russell, & Cooper, 1992) using a sample of employees from Hong Kong; they hypothesized and found that the relative impact of work-to-family conflict versus family-to-work conflict on employee well-being differed across the two cultures. All in all, the theoretical contribution of the work–family research in the 1990s was somewhat limited. Although the studies documented evidence of WFC in Confucian Asia, they were essentially replications of existing work in the general work–family literature.

The work–family literature in Confucian Asia grew threefold in the 2000s. Some meaningful developments are worth mentioning. First, the positive side of work–family interface started gaining attention (e.g., Lu, Siu, Spector, & Shi, 2009). Second, comparative research that examined different antecedents of WFC in the Western and Confucian Asian countries was published (e.g., Yang, Chen, Choi, & Zou, 2000). Also, several multi-national studies (e.g., Hill, Yang, Hawkins, & Ferris, 2004; Spector et al., 2004, 2007) that explored potential

differences in the work–family interface in Confucian Asia versus other cultural clusters appeared. Third, a unique theoretical model that takes into account a cultural characteristic of Confucian Asia (i.e., the specificity-diffusion dimension of culture; Hampden-Turner & Trompenaars, 2000) was tested, demonstrating that within- as well as cross-domain variables may play an important role in WFC in Confucian Asia where the boundaries between work and family domains are often blurred (Luk & Shaffer, 2005).

In the 2010s, the work–family literature in Confucian Asia started to blossom. First, the number of studies examining positive work–family experiences steadily increased, and a novel theoretical model that includes both WFC and work–family enrichment (WFE) was proposed and tested (Chen & Powell, 2012). Second, the scope of the literature expanded with a number of studies on crossover that examined the process through which employees' work experiences affect their family members (e.g., Liu & Cheung, 2015; Song, Foo, Uy, & Sun, 2011). Third, studies in the 2010s are marked by their advanced methodology. More studies utilized longitudinal designs (e.g., Ng & Feldman, 2012), experience sampling methods (e.g., Wang, Liu, Zhan, & Shih, 2010), and multi-source data (e.g., Lau, 2010).

In summary, the study of work and family in Confucian Asia has continued to evolve. Specifically, the literature moved from the replication of existing studies to the examination of the unique conceptual and theoretical issues in the region. Given the trends in the region that more employees are engaged in a dual-earner lifestyle, have caregiving responsibilities, and pursue balance between life domains, the work–family literature in Confucian Asia is likely to flourish in coming decades.

Methodology of Work–Family Research in Confucian Asia

The work–family literature in Confucian Asia is similar to the general work–family literature in methodology (see Casper, Eby, Bordeaux, Lockwood, & Lambert, 2007 for a review). First, most studies to date used cross-sectional designs in field settings, and no known study has used an experimental or quasi-experimental design. Also, the majority of studies relied on single-source data collected from surveys, although an increasing number of studies on crossover between spouses gathered multi-source data. Lastly, the type of families and employees studied were rather homogeneous, and work–family experiences among non-traditional families (e.g., homosexual couples, single parents) were neglected. It is also interesting to note that despite the importance placed on the strong ties with extended family in Confucian Asia, the role of extended families in the nexus of work and family has rarely been studied.

Most work–family research in Confucian Asia used previously validated measures. Scales for the key constructs have been made available in local languages (Chinese, Japanese, and Korean), either by the back-translation method (Brislin, 1970) or local development. For the negative interface, two measures of WFC (Carlson, Kacmar, & Williams, 2000; Netemeyer, Boles, & McMurrian, 1996) have been frequently used (e.g., Aryee, Luk, Leung, & Lo, 1999b; Fu & Shaffer,

2001; Lim, Morris, & McMillan, 2011). For the positive interface, measures of WFE (Carlson, Kacmar, Wayne, & Grzywacz, 2006) and positive work–family spillover (Grzywacz & Marks, 2000) have been used (e.g., Jin, Ford, & Chen, 2013; Lim, Choi, & Song, 2012; Siu et al., 2010).

Despite the critical importance of establishing measurement equivalence in cross-cultural research (van de Vijver & Leung, 1997), limited evidence is available regarding measurement equivalence of key work–family constructs in Confucian Asia. A small number of multi-country studies have been conducted, most of which examined WFC (e.g., Spector et al., 2007; Yang et al., 2000). Furthermore, not all multi-country studies tested measurement invariance. Available evidence (e.g., Ng & Feldman, 2012; Wang, Lawler, Walumbwa, & Shi, 2004) provides full support for the two-factor structure of WFC (i.e., work-to-family and family-to-work) in Confucian Asia (i.e., configural invariance) and partial support for the equivalent strength of item-construct relationships (i.e., factorial invariance) as well as the equivalent intercept of each item (i.e., scalar invariance). For more information on issues of measurement invariance across cultures, please refer to Chapter 8 of this Handbook (Korabik & Rhijn).

et al., 1999a), and health-related outcomes (e.g., alcohol use; Wang et al., 2010). On the other hand, positive work–family experiences tend to be associated with enhanced outcomes (Lu et al., 2009). The crossover literature indicated that employees' work–family experiences also affect their spouses (Liu & Cheung, 2015; Song et al., 2011) and children (Lau, 2010).

Finally, the abovementioned relations among antecedents, work–family experiences, and outcomes were qualified by individual, organizational, and family factors. For example, studies have found that the positive relationship between work demands and work-to-family conflict was mitigated by perceived organizational support, domestic support, and family-friendly policies (Foley et al., 2005; Luk & Shaffer, 2005). In terms of individual difference variables, the relationship between WFC and outcomes were weaker among individuals who score higher on proactive personality (Lau, Wong, & Chow, 2013), but stronger among employees with higher Chinese work values (i.e., eight work-related values that are rooted in Confucianism, such as collectivism and hard work; Lu, Chang, Kao, & Cooper, 2015).

Comparisons to the Broader Work–Family Literature

Work–family studies in Confucian Asia have provided evidence for the generalizability of fundamental theoretical frameworks in the work–family literature. First, the four-fold conceptualization of work–family interface, conflict and facilitation in two directions (i.e., work-to-family and family-to-work; Frone, 2003), was empirically supported in Confucian Asia (Lu et al., 2009). Second, research on antecedents of WFC provided support for the domain specificity model, which posits that predictors of conflict reside in the originating domain whereas consequences of conflict are in the receiving domain (Frone et al., 1992). That is, most studies examined and demonstrated work-related and family-related factors as antecedent of work-to-family conflict and family-to-work conflict, respectively (e.g., Fu & Shaffer, 2001), although few studies showed the effect of cross-domain antecedents on WFC (e.g., Luk et al., 2005; Foley et al., 2005). Concerning outcomes of WFC, some studies (e.g., Zhao & Namasivayam, 2012) supported the source attribution model, which argues that conflict influences affective outcomes in the originating domain via the cognitive appraisal process (e.g., work-to-family conflict impacts work satisfaction; Shockley & Singla, 2011), but the results were more consistent for the domain specificity model (e.g., Aryee et al., 1999a, 1999b). Notably, two recent studies that explicitly tested the appropriateness of the two models (domain specificity and source attribution) in Confucian Asia (Li, Lu, & Zhang, 2013; Zhang, Griffeth, & Fried, 2012) favored the domain specificity model. The source attribution model was deemed less applicable in Confucian Asia due to the prevailing view of work as a critical tool for family welfare, which likely prevents workers from attributing work-to-family conflict to work.

Key antecedents and outcomes of WFC in the broader work–family literature were also examined in Confucian Asia. Overall, results about the antecedents of WFC (e.g., Aryee et al., 1999b; Foley et al., 2005; Kato & Yamazaki, 2009; Luk & Shaffer,

Key Findings

In this section, we first summarize academic findings reported in the work–family literature based on samples drawn from Confucian Asia. Then, we discuss the work–family literature in Confucian Asia in relation to the general work–family literature. Finally, we review findings from multi-country studies.

Summary of Findings in Confucian Asia

Several themes emerged from the review of the work–family literature in Confucian Asia. First, work is a source of demands as well as resources. A number of studies underscored that various aspects of work (e.g., role stressors, incivility, unsupportive organizational culture) are a chief contributor to WFC (Aryee et al., 1999b; Kato & Yamazaki, 2009; Lim & Lee, 2011). Work has also been shown to provide important resources (e.g., supervisor support, perceived organizational support) that can reduce WFC, alleviate the impact of the work demands on WFC, and facilitate WFE (Foley, Hang-Yue, & Lui, 2005; Lu et al., 2009). Similarly, family is a source of demands as well as resources for the work–family interface. In parallel with research on the work domain, studies identified various demands (e.g., number of children, family time commitment) and resources (e.g., spouse support, elderly parents' help) residing in the family domain that influence positive and negative work–family experiences (Aryee et al., 1999b; Lu et al., 2009; Luk & Shaffer, 2005).

In terms of consequences, work–family experiences have been associated with a variety of factors in the domains of work, family, and health. On the one hand, WFC has been associated with suboptimal work (e.g., job dissatisfaction, poor job performance; Lu, Wang, Siu, Lu, & Du, 2015), family (e.g., low family satisfaction; Aryee

2005) were similar to findings from the general work–family literature as reported in meta-analyses (Byron, 2005; Michel, Young, Mitchelson, Clark, & Baltes, 2011). In contrast, the relationships between WFC and outcomes were less consistent in Confucian Asia than has been found in broad meta-analyses (e.g., Amstad, Meier, Fasel, Elfering, & Semmer, 2011). For instance, some studies reported a null relationship (Aryee & Luk, 1996; Aryee et al., 1999b) or even a positive relationship (Lu et al., 2009) between WFC and affective outcomes (e.g., job satisfaction, family satisfaction, organizational commitment), which contradicts the typical negative relationships cited in prior meta-analyses.

Next, findings from the crossover literature were in line with results reported in the general work–family literature. Most studies examined crossover among dual-earner couples and showed that experiences of one partner (e.g., WFC, WFE, emotional exhaustion) affected another partner's outcomes (e.g., psychological strain, WFC, life satisfaction; Liu et al., 2015; Shimazu et al., 2013; Zhang et al., 2013). Several studies (Song et al., 2011; Shimazu et al., 2013) reported evidence for the three mechanisms of crossover (Westman, 2001): the direct crossover that refers to the transfer of affective experiences between individuals via empathic process and emotion contagion, the indirect crossover that refers to the transmission of experiences via interpersonal exchanges between individuals, and the common stressors mechanism that occurs when characteristics in a shared environment synchronize affective experiences of individuals. Some studies found moderators of the crossover mechanisms (e.g., empathy, family identity salience; Liu et al., 2015; Lu, Lu, Du, & Brough, 2016). Results on the role of gender were mixed, such that some studies found gender asymmetry in the crossover effect (e.g., Shimazu et al., 2013; Zhang et al., 2013), while others did not (e.g., Lu et al., 2016).

Finally, findings from a few studies on the positive work–family interface were comparable to those reported in the general work–family studies. First, the prevalence of family-to-work enrichment was higher than work-to-family enrichment (Lu et al., 2015; Lu et al., 2009; Siu et al., 2010). Second, resources in work and family (e.g., family-friendly organizational policies, social support; Lu et al., 2009; Siu et al., 2010) promoted WFE. Third, WFE was associated with favorable outcomes (cf. McNall, Nicklin, & Masuda, 2010), such as job performance and life satisfaction (Lu et al., 2009; Lu et al., 2015).

Findings from Multi-Country Studies

The majority of multi-country studies to date have contrasted collectivistic Confucian Asian countries with individualistic Anglo countries (e.g., Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, the United States), with particular focus on WFC. Culture as a predictor of mean levels of WFC as well as culture as a moderator of the relationships between antecedents and WFC and WFC and outcomes has been the topic of interest in this literature. In Confucian Asia, work is perceived as a critical tool that serves the family (Redding, 1990) and the boundaries between the two domains tend to be blurred (Luk & Shaffer, 2005). On the contrary, work is viewed as independent of and competing against family in the individualistic societies. Also, individuals in collectivistic Confucian Asia tend to have a close network of extended family in which they can seek support from (Hofstede, 2001). Due to these fundamental differences across the two cultures, lower prevalence of WFC and weaker relations among antecedents and WFC as well as WFC and outcomes are typically hypothesized in collectivistic Confucian Asia compared to individualistic Anglo countries.

Studies have reported mixed evidence regarding mean differences in WFC across cultures. For the work-to-family direction, some studies found no significant differences (e.g., Jin et al., 2013), while others found small effect sizes indicating a higher prevalence in the individualistic Anglo countries than the collectivistic Confucian Asian countries (e.g., Spector et al., 2007) or vice versa (e.g., Yang, 2005). Similarly for family-to-work conflict, Jin et al. (2013) observed a greater frequency in China than in the United States, whereas Yang (2005) did not find a significant difference between the same two countries. A recent meta-analytic investigation of mean differences in WFC demonstrated that the level of family-to-work conflict was greater among individuals from the collectivistic Asian countries than among those from the individualistic countries, whereas the degree of work-to-family conflict did not differ across the two cultures (Allen, French, Dumani, & Shockley, 2015).

Next, several studies indicated that relationships among demands (e.g., work hours) and WFC are weaker in Confucian Asian countries than in Anglo countries (Jin et al., 2013; Spector et al., 2004, 2007; Yang, 2005; but see Hill et al., 2004 and Yang et al., 2000 for exceptions to this pattern). Fewer studies examined whether the strength of relationships between resources and WFC differed across the cultures, and the results are mixed (Jin et al., 2013; Lu et al., 2010). Interestingly, research on flexible work arrangements suggests that the availability of flexible work arrangements has negative associations with WFC in the United States, but have null or positive associations with WFC in Confucian Asia (Galovan et al., 2010; Masuda et al., 2012). The negative consequences of WFC in terms of domain satisfaction, withdrawal (e.g., absenteeism, turnover intention), and health outcomes (e.g., depression) appeared to be universal, but studies demonstrated a stronger impact of work-to-family conflict in Anglo countries than in Confucian Asian countries (e.g., Galovan et al., 2010; Lu et al., 2010; Spector et al., 2007; Yang, 2005).

Limitation and Future Research Ideas

In this section, we discuss limitations of the current work–family literature in Confucian Asia and highlight fruitful avenues for future research. Commonly criticized limitations of the general work–family literature was also found in the work–family literature in Confucian Asia. Studies of WFC have been dominant, despite the growing body of research on the positive work–family interface. Work–family researchers have paid more attention to factors in the workplace, with less focus on factors in the family domain. Methodologically, most previous research relied on cross-sectional designs, which limits our ability to draw causal

conclusion. Data were collected from a single-source, typically in convenience samples.

Some limitations concern the transfer of theories and measurements developed in the general work–family literature to Confucian Asia. Most studies used measures developed in English for the non-English speaking local population, but many of them did not provide information regarding the translation process and evidence of measurement equivalence. This is a critical limitation in that equivalent measurements for key constructs are essential for meaningful cross-cultural comparison of work–family experiences. Next, most studies utilized existing theoretical frameworks developed from a Western perspective, while unique characteristics of Confucian Asia were not taken into consideration in the theory development and study design. A small number of studies based their argument on a cultural value of 'individualism-collectivism' in explaining work–family experiences in Confucian Asia (e.g., Jin et al., 2013; Spector et al., 2007), but other characteristics that are potentially important for the nexus of work and family (e.g., gender equality, power distance, strong familial ties) have rarely been studied.

Previous work–family research tended to overlook the uniqueness of each country in Confucian Asia while emphasizing their similarities. Although countries in Confucian Asia share many similarities, notable differences exist across the countries that are relevant to work–family experiences. For example, paid domestic help is much more common in Hong Kong and Singapore than in Korea (Tsujimoto, 2014). As the work–family literature in Confucian Asia becomes more mature, researchers may want to delve into these differences across the countries in the region to better understand diverse work–family experiences within Confucian Asia.

There are several promising avenues for future work–family research in Confucian Asia. The first is to explore the unique characteristics of the workplace and aspects of family relationships in Confucian Asia. In the work domain, values that employees in Confucian Asia adhere to might be worth further investigation. Confucian work values refer to work-specific values that are tied to Confucianism and include authoritarianism, endurance, hardworking, collectivism, credentialism, functionalism, interpersonal connections, and long-term orientation (Huang, Eveleth, & Huo, 2000). Although benefits of Confucian work values for various organizational outcomes such as organizational commitment, job performance, and transformational leadership have been recognized (Chao, 1990; Lin, Ho, & Lin, 2013; Siu, 2003), scholars have only recently begun to examine the role of Confucian work values in the work–family interface (e.g., Lu, Xu, & Caughlin, 2015; Wong & O'Driscoll, 2016). Given that Confucian work values are still prevalent in modern organizations in Confucian Asia (Chao, 1990; Lu, Kao, Siu, & Lu, 2011), more research is warranted to understand the role these values play in employees' work–family experiences.

In the family domain, individuals in Confucian Asia tend to have high expectations for family obligations and responsibility to care for elderly family members because they perceive themselves as an interdependent part of a family unit (Zhan & Montgomery, 2003). Parents are emotionally involved with their children, such that they take pride in their children's success or blame themselves for their children's failure (Park & Chesla, 2007). Although these strong familial ties can be a source of

demands as well as support for employees, how they shape the work–family interface among individuals in Confucian Asia is not well understood. Relatedly, as it is not uncommon for employees in Confucian Asia to seek help from their extended family members, especially from their elderly parents, to take care of their family demands, implications of such practices warrant greater research. Expanding prior research reporting that employees who live with extended family members experienced less family-to-work conflict (Lu et al., 2009), future research may inquire into the impact on well-being of elderly parents or children.

Next, future research might want to explore the work–family interface among employees in family businesses. Because most companies are family businesses in East Asia (Ahlstrom, Young, Chan, & Bruton, 2004) and family business exemplifies a case in which work and family are extremely integrated, this could provide an interesting context to investigate work–family experiences in Confucian Asia. Previous research found that the impact of family-to-work conflict on job satisfaction was weaker among family business owners' than owners of non-family business due to support from family members and coping strategies (Kwan, Lau, & Au, 2012). Aspects of family business that are conducive to positive and negative work–family experiences, conditions in which the family business creates more demands than resources (or vice versa), and strategies that people who work in family businesses employ to manage boundaries between work and family are topics worthy of future research.

Finally, Confucian Asia consists of societies that are rapidly changing. Several changes are deemed particularly relevant for future work–family research. The first concerns the changing perspectives toward gender roles. With the cultural change to embrace gender equality (Inglehart & Norris, 2003), younger generations worldwide are known to be more gender egalitarian, and those in Confucian Asia are no exception. However, due to the close familial ties and interdependencies among family members, more traditional gender ideologies held by older generations may still influence younger workers' work–family experiences. Generational differences in the endorsement of prevailing gender role ideologies, its impact on younger workers' work–family experiences, and how individuals reconcile these potential discrepancies deserve further attention.

Second, individualism is becoming popular in Confucian Asia, especially among the younger generations (Wang et al., 2004). Accordingly, proposed cultural differences between Western and Confucian Asian countries (e.g., individualism-collectivism) may be less salient in the current and future workforce. With this in mind, perhaps assessing cultural values at the individual-level may provide us with insights into the role of this value in work–family experiences. Previous research showed that individualism-collectivism at the individual-level (i.e., idiocentrism-allocentrism) moderates the relation between work–family conflict and turnover intention, such that the link was stronger among individuals scoring high on idiocentrism (Wang et al., 2004), which resembles findings at the national-level.

Lastly, career attitudes and family structures are diversifying in Confucian Asia. Younger generations are proactive in making career-related changes (e.g., seeking a new employer), value a balance between their work and non-work lives, and

capitalize on entrepreneurial opportunities (Wong, 2007; Yi, Ribbens, & Morgan, 2010). Many young people choose to live alone, to not have children (Jones, 2007), and to live apart from their extended family for various reasons (e.g., a better job, better education for children; Goulbourne, Reynolds, Solomos, & Zontini, 2010). As the diversity in the work and family domain becomes the new normal, further research is needed to better understand work–family experiences among individuals who make these "atypical" choices.

Conclusion

In this chapter we reviewed work–family research in Confucian Asia. The study of work and family in Confucian Asia has continued to grow at an exponential rate, moving from the replication of existing work–family studies to the examination of the unique conceptual and theoretical issues in the region. Our review revealed that the work–family literature in Confucian Asia is similar to the general work–family literature in terms of research questions and methodology. Theoretical frameworks and measurements for key constructs developed in the general work–family literature appeared applicable in this region. Intriguing differences have been detected in the relationships among antecedents, work–family experiences, and outcomes, but more research is needed to illuminate underlying mechanisms.

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