

Multiple Team Membership and Work-Family Conflict

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B.Sc. Business Administration

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Purpose/Motivation: The organizational practice of multiple team membership (MTM) is becoming highly relevant in today's organizations. Research has so far focused primarily on outcomes of MTM at work. However, changes in work design oftentimes influence employees' personal lives. This work theorizes in how far this new organizational trend can lead to work-family conflict (WFC) for employees, both on a consolidated (between) and on a day-to-day (within) level.

Theories/Propositions:

Ford, Heinen and Langkamer (2007) found that the work-domain variable job stress is the main antecedent of WFC. Job stress can be captured through different variables such as role conflict, role ambiguity, and boundary spanning activities (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). Those variables are likely impacted by MTM. Resource-drain theory, role theory and boundary theory can explain the underlying mechanisms. Specifically, MTM increases employee's resource consumption at work through cognitive load and role strain. Moreover, cognitive exhaustion and negative emotions can likely spill over to family life as the boundaries between work and family are increasingly permeable. Hence, the proposed effects are as follows:

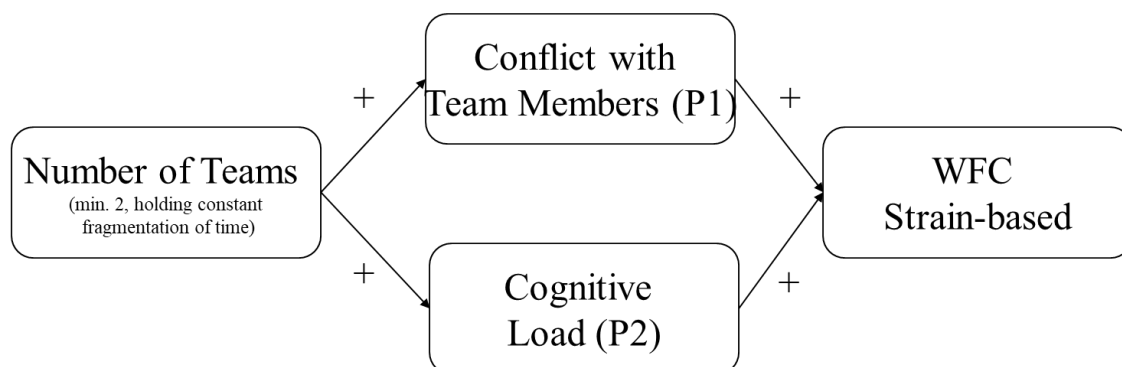


Figure 1: Proposed Model of Relationships, own illustration

Proposition 1: The number of teams an individual belongs to is positively related to strain-based WFC indirectly through conflict with team members.

Proposition 2: The number of teams an individual belongs to is positively related to strain-based WFC indirectly through cognitive load.

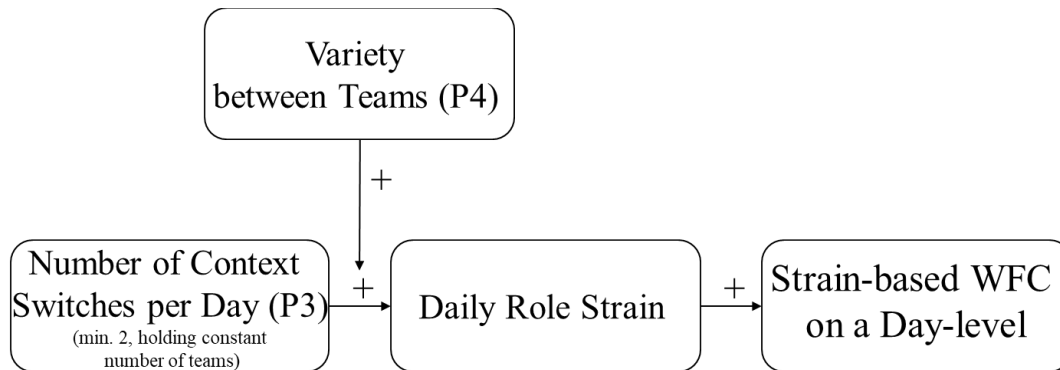


Figure 2: Proposed Model of Day-level Relationships, own illustration

Proposition 3: The number of context switches per day an individual performs is positively related to strain-based WFC on a day-level indirectly through daily role strain.

Proposition 4: Variety between teams moderates the relationship between context switches per day and daily role strain and, thereby, positively relates to strain-based WFC on a day-level.

Approach/Methodology: This work is conceptual. It relied on a literature review to put forward testable propositions consistent with both the levels and the episodes views of WFC.

Research Limitations: This work only recognizes WFC in the direction of work interference with family. The direction of family interference with work in MTM contexts has not been investigated.

Research Implications: Contemporary work design features should not be investigated within the work domain only but with regard to cross-domain effects. The propositions suggest different effects of MTM on WFC that should be empirically tested. Propositions 1 and 2 can be tested in the traditional between-person study design, where WFC is measured on a consolidated level (levels approach). Recently, scholars have advocated for a within-person measurement on a day-level (episodes approach) that approximates conflict dynamics to reality (Maertz & Boyar, 2011). In MTM settings, not only the consolidated number of team memberships but also the number of context switches per day potentially affect employee's experienced WFC, as suggested by propositions 3 and 4.

Practical Implications: If the propositions of the work were to receive empirical support, practitioners should aim to change the design of MTM in order to reduce its stressful nature for employees. Such managerial efforts could result in formulating a maximum number of team memberships, reducing the number of context switches and interruptions per day and diminishing variety between different teams.

Contribution: The within-work perspective of a new work design feature was extended and fused with the research area of WFC. Thereby several potential connections could be uncovered under the consideration of different level of analysis.

Paper type: conceptual

Further readings:

O’Leary, M. B., Mortensen, M., & Woolley, A. W. (2011). Multiple Team Membership: a Theoretical Model of its Effects on Productivity and Learning for Individuals and Teams. *Academy of Management Review*, 36(3), 461–478.

Margolis, J. (2020). Multiple Team Membership: An Integrative Review. *Small Group Research*, 51(1), 48–86.

Maertz, C. P., & Boyar, S. L. (2011). Work-Family Conflict, Enrichment, and Balance under “Levels” and “Episodes” Approaches. *Journal of Management*, 37(1), 68–98.