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Work-home interference and work values in Greater China

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to investigate the mediating effects of work-home interference (WHI) on the relationships between work demand, work attitudes, and job performance, with a focus on the moderating effect of Chinese work values (CWV).

Design/methodology/approach – A self-administered survey method was used. The sample comprised 1,032 employees from Mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan. The moderated mediation framework was used to test the proposed model.

Findings – The results showed that WHI mediated the relationships among work demand, job satisfaction, and affective organizational commitment (AOC), but did not mediate the relationship between work demand and job performance. CWV moderated the mediated relationships and exacerbated the mediation effects of WHI on the relationships between work demand and job satisfaction and AOC.

Research limitations/implications – The use of a cross-sectional design prevented the drawing of causal inference. With the exception of job performance, the self-reported measures are all subject to the problem of common method bias.

Practical implications – Organizations in Greater China could implement stress management programs to reduce the negative effects of work demands. HR practitioners and managers should understand what values their employees hold to provide the proper interventions for them.

Originality/value – By integrating both the mediator (WHI) and a moderator (CWV), this study investigated how CWV, an individual-level cultural value, affects the influences of WHI. The results highlight the importance of incorporating culturally specific value constructs when examining the underlying mechanisms of WHI.

Keywords Stress, Confucianism, Work family issues, Job attitudes

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

Due to the pressure of rapid changes caused by social and industrial modernization in recent decades, Chinese employees are currently experiencing high levels of work stress (Lu *et al.*, 2011). However, they still place great importance on family responsibility and



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therefore face increasing demands in both the work and family domains (Luk and Shaffer, 2005; Yang *et al.*, 2000). Interference between work and family is inevitable and negatively affects both individuals and organizations (Allen *et al.*, 2000). There are inconsistencies in the term and measurements of work and family interference in the literature (Geurts and Demerouti, 2003; Tetrick and Buffardi, 2006). We focus on the home domain rather than the family domain, because the former label embraces various life roles beyond work roles. Work-home interference (WHI) refers to the experience of incompatibility between work and non-work roles (Geurts *et al.*, 2003; Greenhaus and Kossek, 2014; Ten Brummelhuis and Bakker, 2012), including WHI and home-to-work interference (HWI). In this study, we specifically focus on WHI because individuals tend to experience it more than HWI (Frone *et al.*, 1992; Eby *et al.*, 2005).

Over 95 percent of work-home research has been based on Western samples (Kossek *et al.*, 2011). Much less is known about whether these results are applicable to Eastern societies, because social norms and cultural values can play a key role in shaping WHI (Powell *et al.*, 2009). Among the few existing cross-cultural studies, the results are inconsistent. For example, the strength of the relationship between work demand and WHI for Chinese samples varies. The empirical findings suggest a stronger (e.g. Yang *et al.*, 2000), weaker (e.g. Lu *et al.*, 2006; Spector *et al.*, 2007), and similar (e.g. Hill *et al.*, 2004) positive relationship in Chinese society compared with Western societies. This suggests that there may be certain moderators that explain this variability in Chinese samples. Moreover, these studies also suggest that future work should consider specific cultural values in developing new models of WHI. We thus incorporate Chinese work values (CWV) as a culturally specific construct at the individual level into WHI. CWV are conceptualized as work-related Confucian values (Huang *et al.*, 2000) and remain deeply rooted in Chinese societies despite the changes that have taken place within them (Ralston *et al.*, 1999; Chia *et al.*, 2007). Thus, with more than 20 percent of the world's population and due to its unique social and cultural characteristics, Greater China provides an ideal setting to investigate how culturally specific individual values contribute to WHI. This research also answers the recent calls for the sampling of employees outside of Western societies and for taking societal and cultural influences into account in work and home research (Kossek *et al.*, 2011; Powell *et al.*, 2009; Ten Brummelhuis and Bakker, 2012).

The purposes of this study are twofold. First, we test the whole WHI model with its antecedent (work demand) and consequences (job satisfaction, affective organizational commitment (AOC), and job performance) in Chinese society, including Mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan. Empirically testing the whole model with diverse samples makes a significant contribution to the validation and generalization of the results obtained in Western societies. Second, we seek to further investigate how CWV affect the influences of WHI against the background of the current social and cultural changes that are taking place in Greater China. This investigation could cast light on how the cultural values held by individuals influence their reactions to WHI, and may help to explain the inconsistent findings in Chinese societies. Furthermore, we integrate both the mediator (WHI) and the moderator (CWV) to explain the complex mechanism underlying the links between work demand, WHI, and the consequences, which adds to the growing body of WHI research.

Research hypotheses

The mediating effects of WHI

Work demand, such as having a great deal of work to do or having too much responsibility, is a primary work stressor (Spector and Jex, 1998). A high work demand requires personal sustained physical or psychological resources. According to the

conservation of resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll, 1989), a variety of stress actions (i.e. conflict, dissatisfaction, and withdrawal behavior) occur when resources are threatened or lost or when individuals invest resources and do not obtain the anticipated benefits. Thus, work demands may lead to negative work attitudes and reduced performance (e.g. Gilboa *et al.*, 2008). Several studies conducted in Mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan have verified that work demand is related to job satisfaction and performance (e.g. Lu and Kao, 2013; Siu, 2003; Spector *et al.*, 2007; Yang *et al.*, 2000). We test the generalization of these results by sampling from three regions simultaneously. We propose the following hypothesis:

- H1. (a) Work demand is negatively associated with job satisfaction; (b) AOC; and (c) job performance.

When individuals experience more demands in one domain, they have fewer resources available to fulfill their roles in another domain (Hobfoll, 1989). Thus, a high level of work demands that require most of an employee's resources leave fewer resources for home life, thus resulting in WHI (Grandey and Cropanzano, 1999; Bakker *et al.*, 2011).

As a major role stressor in the workplace, work demand has been identified as the strongest and most consistent predictor of WHI (e.g. Boyar *et al.*, 2008; Michel *et al.*, 2011). The COR theory proposes that WHI leads to negative work outcomes because individuals' valued resources are lost in the process of juggling both work and home lives (Grandey and Cropanzano, 1999; Hobfoll, 1989). The meta-analysis of Allen *et al.* (2000) showed that WHI was negatively related to job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and job performance. Several studies from collectivistic countries have found similar results (e.g. Aryee *et al.*, 1999; Luk and Shaffer, 2005). In line with the principle of loss spirals of the COR theory (Hobfoll, 1989), work demand evokes employees' WHI and consequently leads to the depletion of valuable resources in the workplace. A recent longitudinal study found unequivocal support for the flow from work demand to work-to-family conflict (as a mediator) in Chinese employees' job dissatisfaction (Lu and Kao, 2013). Thus, we anticipate:

- H2. (a) WHI mediates the relationships between work demand and an employee's job satisfaction; (b) AOC; and (c) job performance.

The moderating role of CWV: a moderated mediation model

Work and family issues are strongly connected to cultural values and norms (Powell *et al.*, 2009). Researchers have conducted few cross-cultural studies on WHI in accordance with Hofstede's country cluster of cultural values, and unfortunately, the findings are varied. Yang *et al.* (2000) found a stronger positive relationship between work demand and WHI in China than in a Western society (the USA), Lu *et al.* (2006) and Spector *et al.* (2007) found the opposite, and a 48-country study by Hill *et al.* (2004) showed a similar relationship across the East (including samples from Mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan) and West groups. These studies focussed on country-level analyses, with no attention paid to variability in individual-level cultural values within a single society. Aycan (2008) suggested that future cross-cultural research on WHI should "invest more in *emic* or indigenous perspectives in order to provide a more universal science and to unearth recessive characteristics in other cultures" (p. 367). CWV, conceptualized as work-related Confucian values, could be treated as one such culturally specific construct (Huang *et al.*, 2000).

CWV originated from the "Confucian dynamism" dimension of the Chinese values survey (Hofstede and Bond, 1988) and captures the extent to which individuals adhere

to traditional cultural values in the workplace. CWV is composed of eight dimensions: long-term orientation, collectivism, hard work, functionalism, endurance, authoritarianism, credentialism, and *Guanxi* (relationships or interpersonal connections) (Huang *et al.*, 2000), which can be treated as a continuum rather than an either-or variable. Traditional values are still favored in Chinese society, despite pressure from rapid economic and social developments (Ralston *et al.*, 1999). Moreover, it has also been reported that across Mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan, there are more similarities than differences in work-related values (Cheung and Chow, 1999; Chia *et al.*, 2007). There is evidence that employees with Confucian work values suffer more stressful situations in terms of health, work attitudes, and behavior (e.g. Lu *et al.*, 2011; Siu *et al.*, 2005; Xie *et al.*, 2008; Wang *et al.*, 2014).

In the traditional Chinese philosophy of Confucianism, the values of work are strongly highly emphasized (Redding, 1993; Yang *et al.*, 2000). CWV reflect Confucian values in the work realm, which means that employees with higher levels of CWV place more emphasis on work. Meanwhile, family is the core unit of Chinese society, and family ritual and caring for the elderly are considered personal obligations by people in collectivistic societies (Hofstede, 2001). The conceptualization and components of CWV imply that individuals adhering to CWV greatly value the significance of working hard from a long-term perspective, as more involvement in work is necessarily thought to gain long-term economic and other important benefits for the whole family. According to the COR theory of stress, working hard in the workplace and contributing to the family are the salient resources that people are motivated to obtain, protect, and foster (Hobfoll, 2001), especially for those with high CWV. Logically, the threats of loss or actual loss of these salient resources are more sensitive for people with higher CWV. Once individuals' work interferes with home life rather than benefits it, their valued resources are inevitably be lost, and consequently further deplete resources in the workplace, with the loss spiral of resources taking place (work demand – WHI – negative work attitudes and performance). Individuals with higher CWV may be more sensitive to and more likely to experience the loss spiral of resources than those with lower CWV. This postulation reflects a moderated mediation pattern between the variables, which suggests that CWV influences the strength of the relationships between WHI, its antecedents, and its consequences. We therefore propose:

- H3.* (a) CWV moderates the strength of the mediated relationships between work demand and job satisfaction, (b) AOC; and (c) job performance via WHI, such that the mediated relationships are stronger under high CWV than under low CWV.

Method

Participants and procedure

The participants in our study included employees from Mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan to capture a wide range of data from which to evaluate Chinese societal conditions. Various service industry firms were randomly recruited to participate in the project. A total of 1,384 questionnaire packets, each consisting of an employee and a supervisor questionnaire, were distributed for the survey, participation in which was voluntary. A total of 1,032 valid questionnaires with matched supervisors' ratings for job performance were returned, resulting in a response rate of 74.57 percent. Approximately 46 percent of the total respondents were men, and 54.5 percent were married. The Mainland China sample consisted of 209 men and 182 women (11 unidentified), with a mean age of 31.85 years ($SD = 7.41$). Approximately 40 percent

of the respondents were managers, and the mean current job experience was 4.34 years (SD = 5.15). The Hong Kong sample consisted of 132 men and 192 women, with a mean age of 32.07 years (SD = 9.40). Approximately 82 percent of the respondents were managers, and the mean current job experience was 6.27 years (SD = 6.12). The Taiwan sample consisted of 134 men and 172 women, with a mean age of 32.85 years (SD = 6.62). Approximately 16 percent of the respondents were managers, and the mean current job experience was 6.31 years (SD = 6.31).

Measures

Work demand. The measure of work demand was assessed with the five-item Chinese version (Spector *et al.*, 2007) of Spector and Jex's (1998) scale (e.g. "How often is there a great deal to be done?"). Each item was assessed using a six-point scale ranging from 1 (less than once per month or never) to 6 (several times per day). The Cronbach's α was 0.92.

WHI. WHI was measured with the three-item Chinese version (Siu *et al.*, 2005) of the scale adapted from Cooper *et al.*'s (1988) occupational stress indicator (e.g. "Your work interferes with home and personal life"). Each item was assessed using a six-point scale ranging from 1 (less than once per month or never) to 6 (several times per day). The Cronbach's α was 0.80.

Job satisfaction. Job satisfaction was measured with the three-item Chinese version (Siu *et al.*, 2005) of Cammann *et al.*'s (1979) scale (e.g. "All in all, I am satisfied with my job"). Each item was rated on a six-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). The Cronbach's α was 0.74.

AOC. AOC was measured with the six-item Chinese version (Siu, 2003) of Meyer and Allen's (1997) scale (e.g. "I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career in this organization"). Each item was rated from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). The Cronbach's α was 0.76.

Job performance. The five-item Chinese version of the supervisory performance rating scale (Siu, 2003) was used, which rates quantity of work, quality of work, attendance, job knowledge, and getting along with others. Items were rated by the respondents' immediate supervisors using a six-point scale that ranged from 1 (poor) to 6 (excellent). The Cronbach's α was 0.76.

Chinese work value. The sixteen-item scale from Huang *et al.*'s (2000) study was adopted to measure work-related Confucian values in Chinese society. CWV includes eight dimensions: long-term orientation, collectivism, hard work, functionalism, endurance, authoritarianism, credentialism, and *Guanxi*. Each item was rated from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). Following Wong *et al.*'s (2008) suggestion, we performed a second-order factor analysis with the items as indicators. The results indicated that the model was acceptable ($\chi^2 = 704$, $df = 96$; CFI = 0.90; NFI = 0.89; RMSEA = 0.07), and the loadings of the eight dimensions of CWV ranged from 0.54 to 0.82. These results suggest that the eight dimensions reflect the overall construct. Thus, we treated CWV as one construct, as Lu *et al.* (2011), Siu (2003) and Siu *et al.* (2005) did. Their studies also indicated that the CWV measure was reliable and valid. The Cronbach's α in this study was 0.78.

Results

Table I shows the means, standard deviations, correlations for the variables, and the α coefficients. A multi-group SEM was conducted to examine the measurement equivalence of the six constructs across three subsamples. We formed item parcels to

Table I.
Means, standard deviations, Cronbach's α (on the diagonal), and correlations

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
(1) Gender												
(2) Age	32.23	0.79	-0.10**									
(3) Marital status			0.05	-0.54**								
(4) Job type			-0.06*	0.08*	-0.12*							
(5) WD	2.62	1.21	-0.02	-0.01	0.07*	-0.08**	(0.92)					
(6) WHI	2.30	1.11	-0.11**	0.01	0.05	-0.11**	0.62**	(0.78)				
(7) JS	4.15	0.96	0.01	0.08*	-0.07*	0.03	-0.22**	-0.20**	(0.74)			
(8) AOC	3.91	0.89	-0.01	0.18**	-0.16**	0.08**	-0.19**	-0.19**	0.62**	(0.76)		
(9) JP	4.76	0.61	-0.04	0.05	-0.10**	0.01	-0.01	-0.04	0.06*	0.07*	(0.76)	
(10) CWV	4.29	0.53	-0.01	0.07*	-0.06*	0.04	-0.03	-0.06*	0.17**	0.19**	0.06*	(0.78)

Notes: Gender: 0 = male, 1 = female; Marital status: 0 = married, 1 = single; Job type: 0 = non-manager, 1 = manager. WD, work demand; WHI, work-home interference; JS, job satisfaction; AOC, affective organizational commitment; JP, job performance rated by supervisors; CWV, Chinese work values. Figures in parentheses are Cronbach's α for scales. * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$

create three indicators for AOC, and treated the eight dimensions of CWV as eight indicators. Because the number of items for work demand, WHI, job satisfaction, and job performance is not more than five each, we used each item as a separate indicator for these four constructs. Items parcels could reduce the sample size to parameter ratio, because this ratio impacts the standard errors and stability of the estimates (Little *et al.*, 2002). We conducted an omnibus test in which the variances and covariances among the indicators of the six constructs were constrained to be identical across the three subsamples. This model provided an acceptable fit to the data ($\chi^2 = 2283.99$, $df = 1,011$; CFI = 0.93; NFI = 0.92; RMSEA = 0.06), which indicated that the measurement properties of our six constructs were equivalent across all three samples. Thus, the three samples were combined for data analysis. Further, the results of a confirmatory factor analysis for the whole sample showed that the proposed six-factor structure fit well ($\chi^2 = 1159.66$, $df = 309$; CFI = 0.96; NFI = 0.94; RMSEA = 0.05), which demonstrated the valid measures in our study.

To test *H1*, we conducted a series of hierarchical regression analyses. Any variable used as a component of an interaction term was centered to avoid multicollinearity (Aiken and West, 1991). In all of the regression analyses, we entered the control variables of gender, age, marital status, and job type (managerial role or not). The results in Table II show that work demand was negatively associated with job satisfaction ($\beta = -0.22$, $p < 0.001$) and AOC ($\beta = -0.19$, $p < 0.001$). However, the relationship between work demand and job performance rated by supervisors was non-significant ($\beta = -0.03$, ns). Therefore, *H1a* and *H1b* were supported, whereas *H1c* was not supported.

H2, that WHI mediates the relationships between work demand and work outcomes, was assessed through bootstrapping (Preacher *et al.*, 2007). Table III provides the 95 percent bootstrap confidence intervals for the indirect effect of WHI. When the interval does not include zero, this indicates that the indirect effect is significant. Except for job performance (indirect effect = -0.01, ns), the indirect effects of WHI on job satisfaction and AOC were significant (job satisfaction = -0.05; AOC = -0.05). Thus, *H2a* and *H2b* were supported, whereas *H2c* was not supported.

We used the macro of moderated mediation analyses by Preacher *et al.* (2007) to test *H3*. Preacher *et al.* (2007) used the exact standard error to compute a *Z* statistic for each indirect effect. The moderated mediation effect was assessed for each indirect effect of WHI, and we operationalized high and low CWV as one standard deviation above and

Predictors	JS		AOC		JP		Work-home interference and work values
	Step 1	Step 2	Step 1	Step 2	Step 1	Step 2	
<i>Step 1</i>							
Job type	0.01	0.01	0.06	0.05	0.01	0.01	807
Gender	0.02	0.01	0.01	0.01	-0.06	-0.06	
Age	0.07	0.08	0.13***	0.14***	-0.01	-0.01	
Marital status	-0.02	-0.01	-0.08*	-0.06	-0.10*	-0.09*	
<i>Step 2</i>							
WD		-0.22***		-0.19***		-0.03	Table II. Regression results for testing direct effects of work demand
R ²	0.01	0.05	0.04	0.07	0.01	0.01	
F	2.25	51.39***	10.95***	38.73***	3.27*	1.07	
ΔR ²		0.05***		0.03***		0.00	
Note: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$							

Independent variable	Dependent variable	Indirect effect: mediated by WHI	BC 95% CI	Table III. Mediation effect of work-home interference between work demand and work outcomes
Work demand	Job satisfaction	-0.05	[-0.09, -0.01]	
	Affective organizational commitment	-0.05	[-0.08, -0.01]	
	Job performance	-0.01	[-0.03, 0.01]	
Notes: BC, Bias corrected; CI, Confidence interval. CIs not containing zero are interpreted as significant. Moderator values are the sample mean ± 1 standard deviations. Results are based on 1,000 bootstrap samples.				

below the mean score. Table IV shows that the conditional indirect effects of work demand on job satisfaction and AOC via WHI, respectively, were significant at high CWV (job satisfaction = -0.08; AOC = -0.07) but became insignificant when CWV was low (job satisfaction = -0.01; AOC = -0.02). As a result, *H3a* and *H3b* were supported, and *H3c* was not supported, because the conditional indirect effect on job performance was non-significant regardless of whether CWV was high (indirect effect = -0.01) or low (indirect effect = -0.01). The indirect effect is plotted at several values of CWV with a 95 percent bias corrected and accelerated bootstrap confidence band.

Independent variable	Dependent variable	Mediator	Moderator: Chinese work value	Indirect effect	BC 95% CI	Table IV. Conditional mediation effect of chinese work value on work outcomes through work-home interference
Work demand	Job satisfaction	WHI	Low	-0.01	[-0.06, 0.04]	
			High	-0.08	[-0.14, -0.03]	
	Affective organizational commitment	WHI	Low	-0.02	[-0.07, 0.01]	
			High	-0.07	[-0.11, -0.03]	
	Job performance	WHI	Low	-0.01	[-0.04, 0.01]	
			High	-0.01	[-0.05, 0.01]	
Notes: BC, Bias corrected; CI, Confidence interval. CIs not containing zero are interpreted as significant. Moderator values are the sample mean ± 1 standard deviations. Results are based on 1,000 bootstrap samples						

The indirect effect is significant where the confidence band (dashed lines) does not contain zero (Preacher *et al.*, 2007; Stiglbauer *et al.*, 2012). As can be seen in Figure 1, the indirect effect of work demand on job satisfaction via WHI became stronger as CWV increased. The same pattern was observed for AOC, as shown in Figure 2.

Discussion

The purpose of our study was to examine the mediating effect of WHI on the relationships between work demand and employees' work outcomes, namely, job satisfaction, AOC, and job performance in the Chinese setting. We also examined an integrated moderated mediation model to address individual cultural values, specifically CWV, as a moderator of the proposed mediating relationships. The findings of our study, which were based on data from three regions of Chinese society, contribute to existing knowledge in two ways. First, we found support for the hypothesized mediating effect of WHI, except for the relationship between work demand and job performance. The effect of work demand on an individual's well-being via WHI has been thoroughly studied in Western countries

Figure 1.
Moderated indirect effect of work demand on job satisfaction through WHI with a 95 percent confidence band

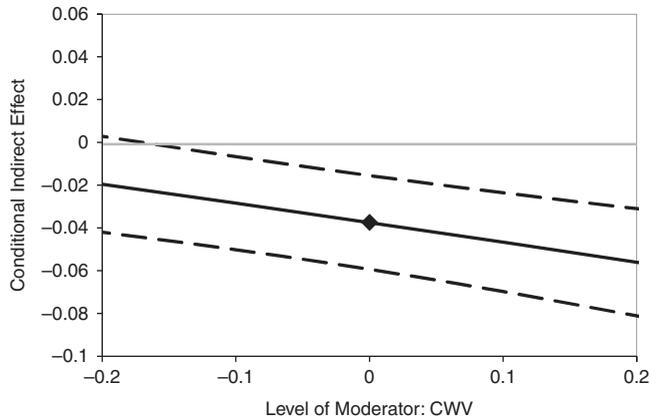
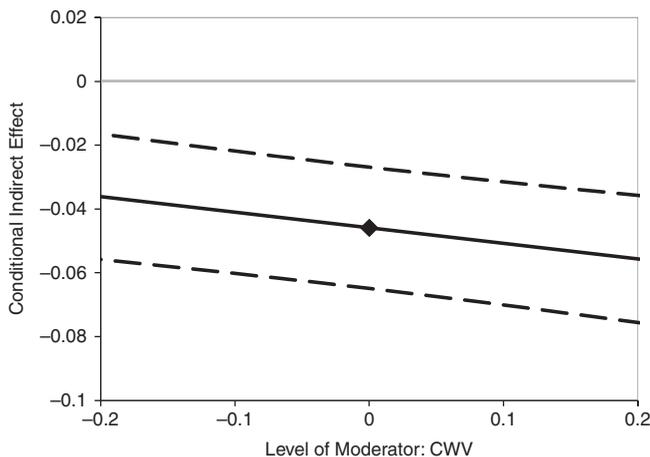


Figure 2.
Moderated indirect effect of work demand on AOC through WHI with a 95 percent confidence band



(e.g. Boyar *et al.*, 2008; Geurts *et al.*, 2003), and the model was also supported by a recent study in Mainland China (Choi, 2008). The present study was extended to focus on work outcomes by drawing a more representative sample from Greater China (including Mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan). In particular, the results demonstrate that work demand interferes with Chinese employees' home lives, which in turn negatively influences their attitudes toward their jobs and organizations. These findings are consistent with the loss spiral of resources (Hobfoll, 1989) and also suggest that all Chinese employees in the three regions have to struggle with work and home lives under the pressures of increasing work demand.

Contrary to our expectations, the results failed to support a mediating effect on the relationship between work demand and job performance: the main effect was non-significant. A recent meta-analysis study by Gilboa *et al.* (2008) also found that the relationship between work demand and job performance was weak and non-significant. As suggested by Crawford *et al.* (2010), work demands should be differentiated into challenge demands and hindrance demands. Future studies should investigate their differential effects on work outcomes through WHI.

Second, and more importantly, our integrated moderated mediation analyses provided partial support for our third hypothesis. We found that WHI mediated the effects of work demand on job satisfaction and AOC only for employees who had higher CWV. For employees with lower CWV, work demand directly related to the outcomes mentioned above, without going through the mediator of WHI. These results demonstrated that employees with higher CWV suffered more under the situation of WHI. Hobfoll (2001) indicated that how resources are valued is a reflection of what constitutes culture. Employees with high CWV tend to value hard work and supporting the welfare of the family more than their counterparts. Once this does not happen, their valued resources are lost. They are more sensitive to WHI, and eventually have more negative work attitudes, consistent with the loss spiral of resources (Hobfoll, 2001). Our findings are similar to those of the Carlson and Kacmar (2000), who found that for people who strongly value both work and family roles, the negative effect of role conflict on their job satisfaction is more serious. These findings are also consistent with the studies of Siu (2003), Siu *et al.* (2005) and Lu *et al.* (2011), which found that CWV could exacerbate the negative effects of work stressors and employee well-being.

By using CWV, a specific Chinese individual-level work value construct in the model of WHI, our results provide a possible reason for the inconsistent findings obtained from the associations between work demand and WHI in Chinese societies. As mentioned earlier, Lu *et al.* (2006) and Spector *et al.* (2007) also found that the positive association between work demand and WHI was weaker in a Chinese sample. The majority of their sample consisted of young managers (mean age, 35.5-38.13 years). These young managers tend to have a relatively low commitment to traditional cultural values (Ralston *et al.*, 1999). Thus, they might experience less WHI when facing higher work demands. Our results corroborate the study of Yang *et al.* (2000), which also found that the effect of work demand on WHI was salient in Chinese society. Nevertheless, these previous studies merely theorize the effect of cultural influence on WHI but do not include cultural values measures in their design. In contrast, we chose an individual-level, culturally specific value, CWV, to further explore WHI in Chinese societies from a microcosmic angle. There is empirical evidence supporting the notion that within-country (individual-level) variation in cultural values may be larger than country-level cultural differences (Au, 1999; Hofstede, 2001). Thus, to investigate the effects of cultural value difference on WHI at the individual level of analysis is

meaningful (Cohen, 2009; Wang *et al.*, 2004). By doing so, we provided evidence that culturally specific or indigenous constructs play a large role in WHI (Aycaan, 2008), which also supports the recent call to develop a culture-sensitive model of work-home inference (Powell *et al.*, 2009).

Our moderated mediation model provides insight into the possible influence of individual-level cultural values, especially work- or family-related values, on the WHI processes in Chinese societies (Ling and Powell, 2001). As our data were gathered at the individual level in Chinese society, they could not allow for a cross-cultural/national comparative analysis, but they did allow for assessing whether individual differences in CWV moderate the relationships that link work demand, WHI, and work attitudes in a Chinese sample from Mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan. Research on work stress tends to emphasize that people's cognitive appraisal of a stressor is influenced by individual and cultural factors (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984). More recently, scholars have called for an increased understanding of cultural influences on WHI (e.g. Kossek *et al.*, 2011; Powell *et al.*, 2009; Ten Brummelhuis and Bakker, 2012). This present study is an initial attempt to fill that gap in the literature.

Practical implications

Our findings have several practical implications for companies operating in Chinese society. Given that work demands give rise to role conflict among employees, which may further exert a deteriorating influence on their attitudes toward their jobs and organizations, stress management programs such as time management training and planning for work-home balance should be implemented (Hall and Richter, 1988; Ten Brummelhuis and Bakker, 2012). With the rapid economic growth occurring in Greater China, attracting and retaining the best talent in the local labor market has become the primary objective of HR practitioners. Therefore, providing employees with stress management programs to tackle high work demands will serve as an effective operation and practice.

The main contribution of this study is its demonstration of the important role of individual cultural value differences in the WHI process. This result implies that the practices for reducing WHI that are widely effective in Western societies may not be as effective in Chinese societies. Our result highlights the importance of the fit between employees and the intervention program that they receive. For employees with high CWV, the company should provide training on work-home balance to alleviate home demands, thus diminishing the possible vicious cycle of inter-role conflict experienced by these employees. For employees with lower CWV, the company should offer other effective intervention programs to reduce work demand. In practical terms, HR practitioners and managers in Chinese organizations should be in a position to understand what values employees hold about work and family so that employees receive proper treatment when confronting challenging demands.

Limitations and future directions

This study is not without limitations. First, it is merely an exploratory study. We admit that theories generated and tested in one culture cannot be simply applied to another culture. Hence, it is necessary to examine the cross-cultural generalizability of our findings in future research. Second, our measures of the variables, except for job performance, were self-reported, which may raise questions about common method bias. Nonetheless, the interaction effect may be less affected by this bias (Spector, 2006). The confirmatory factor analysis results showed that the constructs could be

empirically discriminated. Third, our cross-sectional design prevents the drawing of causal inferences between work demand, WHI, and work outcomes. In future research, a longitudinal study design would be preferable so that causality can be inferred, which would enhance our understanding of cultural influences in work and home research in the context of continuing social and economic changes.

Conclusion

By recruiting samples from Greater China (Mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan), the current study has extended previous studies by demonstrating the important role of CWV, a specific cultural value construct, in the WHI process. This study helps to establish a culturally sensitive model of WHI. It is hoped that these contributions will facilitate more studies in the future to enhance the understanding of cultural influences on work and home research.

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