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Interrole Conflict, Organizational Commitment and

Perceived Support among Employed University Students

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Abstract

Interrole conflict between work and school roles, organizational commitment, and perceived support were investigated in a sample of 177 employed undergraduate students. It was hypothesized that interrole conflict would be positively related to continuance commitment, interrole conflict would be negatively related to affective and normative commitment, and perceived support would mediate the relationship between interrole conflict and organizational commitment. Correlation results determined a significant positive relationship between interrole conflict and continuance commitment, and no relationship was found to exist between interrole conflict and normative commitment, as well as between interrole conflict and affective commitment. Regression analyses, using Baron and Kenny's (1986) recommended method, were used to assess whether perceived support functioned as a mediator between interrole conflict and organizational commitment. Results indicated that perceived support and interrole conflict were found to act as independent predictors of organizational commitment.

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There is an abundance of research on some specific types of work and non-work

conflict, such as conflict between work and family roles, yet little or no research on other

types, such as conflict between work and school roles. This discrepancy reflects the fact

that the majority of this research has been focused on work and family conflict in the

context of married adults. For the average adult, work and family represent two primary

life domains (Markel & Frone, 1998). For young adults who do not have a family, or

older adults going back to university, however, work and school may represent two

important domains in one's life. With an increasing number of young adults entering

post secondary education, conflict in between work and school is becoming a bigger

issue. According to Statistics Canada, for the 2000/2001 school year, a record number of

students enrolled in undergraduate studies at Canadian universities. Undergraduate

enrolment among people aged 18 to 24 reached 518,800, the highest total ever for this

age group. The workforce participation rates for the age group of 16-24 reached a

historical high in 2003, with 68% of males and 66% of females holding part or full time

jobs (Statistics Canada, 2003). It is evident that an increasing number of young adults in

Canada are participating in the workforce and attending post secondary education.

This research looked at the relationships between organizational commitment

(OC), perceived support (PS), and interrole conflict (IC) among employed undergraduate

students at a Canadian university. The purpose of the current study was to determine

whether interrole (work-school) conflict was related to organizational commitment, and

to determine if perceived support in the work setting mediates the relationship between interrole conflict and organizational commitment.

Interrole Conflict

Generally, IC occurs when there are competing expectancies by two or more roles (Blanchard-Fields, Chen & Hebert, 1997). As previously mentioned, a wealth of knowledge exists regarding IC in work and family roles, yet few studies explore IC among work and school roles in any age sample. In their study on work and family stressors, Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) recognized three major types of IC. The first, time based conflict was the result of divergent roles competing for an individual's time. Time, which was supposed to be spent on one activity, was time away from another activity. The second major type of conflict identified was strain-based conflict. This type of conflict was resultant of work stressors, which produced tension, stress, fatigue and anxiety in the individual, in turn compromising the demands of either role. Lastly, behaviour-based conflict was identified, which consisted of in-role behaviours being incompatible with the behavioural expectations of the other role.

Aryee (1992) studied married professional women in Singapore, and revealed three types of work-family conflict: job-spouse, job-parent, and job-homemaker. Work-family conflict has important implications for psychological well-being and role performance. Aryee (1992) found a positive relation between role stressors (role conflict, role overload, role ambiguity) and each type of work-family conflict. Job-spouse and job-parent outcomes were negatively related to life satisfaction. Also, the married professional women in the study were found to experience moderate amounts of each type of conflict.

Blanchard-Fields et al., (1997) differentiated between gender roles in IC. Overall, there has been conflicting evidence for gender differences in work-family conflict. Blanchard-Fields et al., (1997) found six types of interrole conflict: professional vs. self, professional vs. spouse, professional vs. parent, parent vs. self, spouse vs. parent, and spouse vs. self. For women, non-work time spent on domestic responsibilities was an important correlate, whereas for men, non-work time spent on job responsibilities was an important correlate (Blachard-Fields et al., 1997). Women experienced more family demands while men were more vulnerable to work stress (Lai, 1995).

Home (1998) looked at female adults with families attending university classes. The sample included many females struggling with family, school, and work roles. As noted by Home (1998, p. 86):

> Role theorists point to three distinct dimensions of role strain among women: a) role conflict from simultaneous, incompatible demands, b) role overload (insufficient time to meet all demands), and c) role contagion or preoccupation with one role while performing another.

Women are more vulnerable than men as a result of demanding life situations, and single parents of young children are at a high risk of work-family conflict. The results of the study indicated that family and student role demands were the best predictors of role strain (Home, 1998). The researcher also found that low-income female students with families increased IC between home and school roles because more energy was required as a result of financial barriers (Home, 1993).

IC in work and school roles has been defined as "the extent to which work interferes with an individual's ability to meet school related demands and

responsibilities" (Markel et al., 1998, p.278). The intention of the current research is to focus on undergraduate students at a Canadian university who are both, enrolled in undergraduate classes, and have paid employment. Since there is such an abundance of people from this group in Canada, many of whom are working in either part or full time settings, it is crucial that the conflict between work and school roles for this population be studied.

Individuals, who work and attend a post secondary institution, may experience conflict for a variety of reasons. According to Greenhaus et al., (1985, p.77), "interrole conflict is a form of role conflict in which a set of opposing pressures arise from participation in different roles." One main cause of IC within work and school domains can be from the amount of hours required to work or attend school. Often, two incompatible behaviours, which are required at the same time, cause behavioural demands, which can create conflict (O'Driscoll, Ilgen, & Hildreth, 1992). If one is required to study for an exam, for example, but must work at night in order to pay for tuition, opposing pressures will ensue and conflict may result.

O'Driscoll et al., (1992, p. 272) determined that, "time demands or pressures would induce feelings of interference or conflict between the job and off-job domains because these domains compete with each other for attention and energy." O'Driscoll et al. (1992) also examined the proposition that IC increased psychological strain, and this strain contributed to other affective responses such as dissatisfaction with job and off-job roles, and OC. In their study on work-school conflict in adolescents, Markel et al., (1998) found that work-school conflict was negatively and indirectly related to school performance, and indirectly related to school dissatisfaction. This research also

determined that job hours, job dissatisfaction, and workload were three primary predictors of work-school conflict.

Stress within a certain role may also cause conflict (Kopelman, Greenhaus & Connolly, 1983). For example, if a student is experiencing severe stress and frustration at school, then this excessive psychological strain may carryover into other roles, such as work. However, if a student does not need to work, and their tuition is being paid by some other means, then less IC between work and school roles may be present. Overall, the more roles one occupies, the more likely they are to experience stress and/or conflict within these roles. As a result of this stress, IC has important implications regarding psychological well-being (Blanchard- Fields et al., 1997).

Employers can have a significant influence on the level of IC and stress that employed students' experience. According to Markel and Frone (1998, p.285) those students "who work longer hours and are exposed to undesirable work environments are more likely to experience work-school conflict, which may in turn lead to poor academic outcomes." Some workplaces, however, may facilitate less interrole conflict and stress depending on the flexibility of work hours, and rate of pay. Distance education was found to reduce IC for students with families, since off-campus education increases a student's control of time and pace of learning (Home, 1998). Home (1998) also found that individualized time frames for students with families provided these students with a reduction of conflict by being able to put academic work aside when family crises erupted. Both distance education and individualized time frames could be successful for not only students with families, but students with full or part time demanding jobs as well, to reduce conflict and stress and increase overall psychological well-being.

Organizational Commitment

The concept of OC is complex, and this term has been defined and measured in a number of ways. Becker (1960) believed the term commitment was used to explain consistent behaviour. He theorized that, "commitments come into being when a person, by making a side bet, links extraneous interests with a consistent line of activity. Side bets are often a consequence of the person's participation in social organizations" (Becker, 1960, p. 32). Becker identified calculative commitment, which was defined as "a structural phenomenon, which occurs as a result of individual-organizational transactions and alterations in side-bets or investments over time" (Hrebiniak & Alutto, 1972, p. 556 as cited in Mathieu & Zajac, 1990). Becker (1960) theorized that investments in the organization bind the employee to that organization. Therefore, attachment to the organization arises through the accumulation of a series of small side bets (Shore & Tetrick, 1991). Since Becker's original research, many others have continued to study the side-bet theory of organizational commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1984; Shore, Tetrick, Shore & Barksdale, 2000; Powell & Meyer, 2004).

Buchanan (1974) defined three aspects of OC: identification, involvement and loyalty. Identification involved honouring the organizations goals and values, involvement was the incorporation of the organization's activities into one's life, and loyalty was feelings of affection, attachment and belongingness to the organization. The concepts of identification and loyalty were also incorporated into the work of Mowday, Steers and Porter (1979), whose Organizational Commitment Questionnaire was widely used at the time. Mowday and his colleagues (1979) also included the term affective commitment, which they defined as a strong commitment to the organization, acceptance

of the organization's values and a desire to remain with the organization. In 1982,

Mowday and colleagues included the term attitudinal commitment in their definition

which was defined as, "a) a strong belief in and acceptance of the organization's goals

and values, b) a willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organization, and

c) a strong desire to maintain membership in the organization" (Mowday, Porter &

Steers, 1982, p.27). The researchers also suggested that gaining knowledge of

organizational commitment has implications for employees, organizations, and society as

a whole (Mowday et al., 1982).

In their study, Mathieu et al., (1990) noted that an employee's level of

commitment to their workplace makes them more eligible to receive both extrinsic

(wages, benefits) and intrinsic (job satisfaction) rewards. Mathieu et al., (1990) defined

OC in terms of attitudinal and calculative commitment, which they believed were the

most popular forms of OC. However, Mathieu et al., (1990) also identified normative

commitment as another type of OC, which they defined as a process where organizational

actions and individual's predispositions lead to the development of OC.

Most recently, Meyer and Allen's Three Component Model of Commitment

(1991) has "identified three distinct themes in the definition of commitment: commitment

as an affective attachment to the organization, commitment as a perceived cost of leaving

the organization, and commitment as an obligation to remain in the organization" (Meyer,

Allen & Smith 1993, p.539). These three components are referred to as affective

commitment (AC), continuance commitment (CC) and normative commitment (NC),

respectively. These three dimensions were found to be related, yet distinguishable from

one another as well as from variables such as job satisfaction and occupational

commitment (Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch & Topolnytsky, 2002). An employee's reason

for staying or leaving the organization relies heavily on the type of commitment an

employee has to the organization. For example, "employees with strong affective

commitment to the organization remain with the organization because they want to, those

with strong continuance commitment remain because they need to, and those with strong

normative commitment remain because they feel they ought too" (Meyer, et al., 1993,

p.539). Workers can experience various degrees of all three forms of commitment.

An employee with a high level of AC cares deeply about the organization they

work for, and is willing to exert effort on its behalf. AC is the strength of an individual's

identification with an organization (Mowday, Porter & Steers, 1982). Previous research

has found associations with AC and absenteeism, performance and turnover (Rhoades,

Eisenberger & Armeli, 2001). According to Meyer et al., (1993) employees that tend to

develop the strongest affective attachment are those whose experiences within the

organization are consistent with their expectations and satisfy their basic needs.

According to McGee and Ford (1987) CC can be divided into two dimensions:

commitment due to a lack of employment alternatives and commitment based on a high

sacrifice associated with leaving. In this component, an employee decides to remain with

an organization depending on the amount of time, expense and effort they have already

invested in the organization. If the investment is large, the employee may feel they

would be at a loss if they were to leave the organization. They may also be continuing

employment because no superior jobs are available at the time.

Lastly, NC "develops as a result of socialization experiences that emphasize the

appropriateness of remaining loyal to one's employer" (Wiener, 1982). The employee

may weigh the amount of benefits (e.g. payment of tuition, child care, vacation time, bonuses) that create within the employee a sense of obligation to reciprocate (Scholl, 1981). A significant overlap has been found to exist between NC and AC (Allen & Meyer, 1996).

Dunham, Grube & Castaneda (1994) studied the antecedents of affective commitment. They found AC to be positively related to organizational dependability (the extent to which employees feel the organization can be counted on to look after their interests), and participatory management practices (the extent to which employees feel that they can influence decisions regarding the work environment and other issues of concern to them). All three dimensions have been found to relate negatively to turnover (Meyer et al., 2002). However, each dimension relates differently to other work behaviours such as attendance and organizational citizenship behaviour. For example, affective commitment has the strongest positive relation, followed by normative commitment. Continuance commitment is unrelated or negatively related to these work behaviours (Meyer et al., 2002). The normative, continuance and affective commitment scales are slowly being used in countries outside North America.

Hypothesis 1:

Interrole conflict will be positively related to continuance commitment.

Hypothesis 2:

a) Interrole conflict will be negatively related to affective commitment.

b) Interrole conflict will be negatively related to normative commitment.

Perceived Support

Organizational Support Theory (Eisenberger, Cummings, Armeli & Lynch, 1997) states that employees develop ideas concerning the extent to which they believe the organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being (perceived organizational support or POS). POS is an attitudinal response to the organization (Shore et al., 1991). Perceptions of organizational support have been found to be associated with, or form the basis for employee organizational commitment (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchinson & Sowa, 1986). It has been suggested in research that POS is an antecedent of OC (Eisenberger et al., 1986). Past research has found POS to be positively related to AC (Eisenberger, Fasolo & Davis-LaMastro, 1990) and both positively (Eisenberger et al., 1990) and negatively (Gudanowski, 1995) related to CC. POS results in employee reciprocation, which causes an increase in OC (Eisenberger et al., 1986). Casper, Martin, Buffardi and Erdwinds (2002) found that POS weakens the negative effect of work-family conflict on CC, under conditions where this conflict is high. POS was negatively related to both work to family conflict and family to work conflict (Foley, Hang-Yue & Lui, 2005).

POS and OC can be viewed as reciprocal yet closely related counterparts (Yoon & Thye, 2002). The basic premise is that employees who are supported by their organization will in turn show commitment toward that organization (Eisenberger et al., 1990; Shore et al., 1991; Yoon et al., 2002). Previous research supports the social exchange view that, "employee's commitment to the organization is strongly influenced by their perception of the organization's commitment to them" (Eisenberger et al., 1986, p.500). Research has also found that POS is related to absenteeism, (Eisenberger et al.,

1986) and conscientiousness in completing job duties and responsibilities (Eisenberger et al., 1990). Although previous research exists on the relationship between OC and POS, no studies have provided evidence for the relationship between IC, OC and POS.

Eisenberger et al., (1986) created the Survey of Perceived Organizational Support (SPOS) to measure perceived employer commitment. Measures of OC (organizational commitment questionnaire, organizational commitment scale) tend to focus on employee's attitudes toward the organization while the SPOS focuses on the employees' perceptions of the organization's attitude toward them (Shore et al., 1991). Past research has suggested that POS involves a social exchange between employees and their employers, and that POS helps provide employees with confidence that their organization is a responsible exchange partner (Gakovic & Tetrick, 2003). POS is also associated with employee obligations to the organization. An increased level of POS may cause an employee to feel that they are responsible for reciprocating by helping their organization achieve its goals and objectives (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002).

Perceived supervisor support (PSS) is the perception of an employee that their supervisor values their contribution to the organization and is committed to them. According to the organizational support theory, research has indicated that a positive relationship exists between PSS and POS, such that PSS leads to POS (Rhoades et al., 2002). The strength of the POS-PSS relationship is dependant on the employee's perception of the supervisor and the degree to which they identify with the supervisor. According to Rhoades et al., (p. 566) "supervisors who appear to be highly valued and well treated by the organization would be highly identified with the organization's basic

character and would therefore strongly influence POS." There is a belief by employees that supervisor support also represents organizational support.

Hypothesis 3:

Perceived support will mediate the relationship between interrole conflict and organizational commitment.

Method

Sample and Procedure

177 participants were recruited from the University of Windsor research participant pool, which included students enrolled in undergraduate psychology courses. The only criterion for participation was that each respondent currently held a paid full or part time job. Students involved in either work-study or co-operative education programs were also allowed to participate in the study, as long as their employment was paid. All participants were enrolled in either full or part time studies at the University of Windsor. Possible respondents were either contacted by the researcher, or signed up for a research appointment in the psychology department. Therefore, a convenience sample was obtained.

Respondents were given a letter of information prior to beginning the study. This letter described the title, purpose and procedure of the study, confidentiality and ethical guidelines, and debriefing information regarding feedback of the results. The letter was signed and dated by the researcher. The letter explained that there were no potential risks or discomforts associated with the study, but that participants were allowed to withdraw at any time without penalty if they felt uncomfortable. By reading this letter, completing

the survey, and returning it to the researcher, implicit consent was given to be a

participant in this study. The respondents were invited to retain the letter of information,

as researcher contact information was available on it.

Participants were handed an 83-item questionnaire. The first section addressed

demographics, and the following three sections included questions that were answered on

a Likert-scale, ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree). As a motivation

to participate in the study, respondents were awarded one bonus mark for an

undergraduate psychology course of their choice.

<u>Measures</u>

Interrole Conflict

IC was assessed in section 2 of the questionnaire by using two scales. Items 1

through 14 were taken from the Interrole Conflict Scales, developed by O'Driscoll, Ilgen,

and Hildreth (1992). This scale included both job and off-job interference items. For the

majority of the questions, "*off-job"* terms were changed to "*school"* terms. For example,

"Worry or concern over things *at school* affects my work" instead of "Worry or concern

over things *outside my job* affects my work." Items 15 through 19 of section 2 were

adapted from Markel and Frone's (1998) Work-School Conflict Items.

Organizational Commitment

Items 1 through 24 of section 3 measured OC. AC, NC, and CC were measured

using the 24-item Organizational Commitment Scale (OCS) (Meyer & Allen, 1990).

This scale included three 8-item subscales for each commitment facet (ACS, NCS, and

CCS). Sample items assessing AC included, "I really feel as if this organization's

problems are my own." A sample item used to assess NC was, "If I got another offer for a better job elsewhere, I would not feel it was right to leave my organization." A statement from the CCS was, "It wouldn't be too costly for me to leave my organization in the near future," which was reverse scored.

Perceived Organizational and Supervisor Support

Items 1 through 32 of section 4 assessed the students' perception that the organization valued their contributions. POS and PSS were measured using the short version of the Survey of Perceived Organizational Support (SPOS) (Eisenberger et al., 1986). The short form, 16-item inventory was used instead of the original 36-item scale, which was adequate for the purpose of the current study. A sample item from the scale used to assess POS was, "the organization tries to make my job as interesting as possible."

To assess employees' perception of supervisor support within their current place of work, the SPOS was adapted by changing the word "*organization*" to "*supervisor*" in the same manner as Rhoades et al., (2002). A sample statement used to measure PSS was, "Even if I did the best job possible, my supervisor would fail to notice," which was reverse scored.

Results

There were 177 participants in the study, including 50 males (28.2%) and 127 females (71.8%). The mean age of the participants was 21.83 years. The youngest participant was 18 and the oldest was 40. As previously mentioned, the Interrole Conflict Scale (O'Driscoll et al., 1992) and the Work-School Conflict Scale (Markel et al., 1998) were combined to assess IC (combined coefficient alpha was .904). OC was assessed

through the NCS, ACS, and CCS (Meyer et al., 1990). PS was measured by using the

SPOS (Eisenberger et al., 1986). The reliability coefficients of all the individual scales

used were decent. Refer to Table 1 for reliability coefficients.

Descriptive statistics for the demographics confirmed that a vast majority of

participants were full time students at the University of Windsor taking 4 or more classes

(87.6%). The majority of the participants worked part time hours with 42.4% working an

average of 5 to 15 hours a week and 33.9% working an average of 16 to 24 hours a week.

Respondents were asked whether their current job(s) was their only source of income.

67.2% responded that is was which indicated that the student's job(s) funded their

education for the most part. When asked reasons for working, most students responded

that they worked to pay for tuition (36.2%).

In order to test the first two hypotheses, Pearson Correlations were obtained to

evaluate the relationships between IC and the three components of OC (AC, NC, and

CC). The first hypothesis, that IC would be positively related to CC, was supported by

the data. IC and CC had a significant positive correlation of .337, which was significant

at an alpha level of .01. Therefore, increased levels of IC were associated with increased

levels of CC.

The second hypothesis, that IC would be negatively related to AC and NC was

not supported by the data. IC was found to be positively but not significantly related to

NC (.066) and AC (.002). It should also be noted that IC and the total measure of OC

(including all three components) was also significantly positively correlated (.216).

Complete correlation data can be found in Table 2.

To test the third hypothesis, three separate linear regressions were computed following Baron and Kenny's (1986) path diagram to depict a causal chain between the independent variable, mediator and outcome variable. See Figure 1 for a layout of this diagram. The first of three regressions tested path "a". A regression was carried out with IC as the independent variable and PS as the dependent (mediator) variable. The results of the first linear regression were $F (1, 175) = 3.18$, $p > .05$. Since path "a" was not significant, the third hypothesis was not supported and perceived support did not mediate a relationship between IC and OC.

The next two regressions following Baron and Kenny's (1986) model were carried out to determine if PS and IC functioned as independent predictors of OC. The second regression tested path "c", where IC was the independent variable and OC was the dependent (outcome) variable. The results of this regression were $F (1, 175) = 8.54$, $p < .01$. The R Square value was .047. Therefore, this variable accounted for a significant amount of the variance. The standardized Beta coefficient was .216.

The final regression looked at the complete path diagram (paths a, b, and c), where IC was the independent variable, PS was the mediator variable and OC was the outcome variable. A significant relationship was found $F (2, 174) = 21.35$, $p < .01$. The R Square value was .197 indicating that together, these variables accounted for nearly 20% of the variance. The standardized Beta coefficients were .268 and .391 for interrole conflict and perceived support, respectively. Therefore, although PS did not function as a mediator between IC and OC according to Baron and Kenny's model, PS and IC were found to act as independent predictors of OC. Regression coefficients can be found in Table 3.

Discussion

The purpose of the current study was to determine whether interrole (work-school) conflict was related to organizational commitment, and to determine if perceived support mediated a relationship between interrole conflict and organizational commitment. This research tested IC, OC, and PS in a sample of undergraduate university students with part or full time paid employment. It was hypothesized that IC would be positively related to CC, and IC would be negatively related to both AC and NC. The third hypothesis stated that PS would mediate the relationship between IC and OC.

The first hypothesis, that IC would be positively related to CC, was supported in this research. There have been very few studies that have focused on IC among university students. The majority of research on IC has been conducted regarding work and family roles in samples of employed adults. There have been a few studies that have looked at IC in work-school roles, but none have looked at OC and PS as well (Kopelman et al., 1983; Hammer, Grigsby & Woods 1998; Markel et al., 1998). Therefore, no supporting evidence has been found regarding the relationship of OC and IC in past studies. However, Casper et al., (2002) found a positive correlation between work-family conflict (work interfering with family) and CC.

The second hypothesis, that IC would be negatively related to AC and NC, was not supported in this research. Similarly, Casper et al., (2002) found that work-family conflict was unrelated to AC. The fact that IC increases as CC increases, is logical. If an individual is committed to their organization because they feel they have to be for financial reasons, or due to costs associated with leaving, then it makes sense that they

may also be experiencing a high level of conflict between work and school roles. If a student has exams to prepare for at school, but they are scheduled to work, they may have to choose work over school, not because they want to, but because they need to work to afford tuition.

The fact that no significant relationship was found to exist between IC and AC or NC was an interesting result. Originally, it was thought that if a student was working for an organization that they intrinsically enjoyed working for, or felt obligated to work for, then they would have a less IC. Possibly, if an individual really enjoys their place of work and wants to work more hours, this may cause an increase in conflict with school. Instead of the individual studying for exams, they may choose to work instead, since they enjoy their job so much, which may result in lower grades.

Similar correlational results were obtained in both the current study and previous studies in regards to OC and PS. Eisenberger et al., (1990) found POS to be positively related to AC. The current study also found POS and AC to be significantly positively related (.628). Gudanowski (1995) found POS to be negatively related to CC, whereas Eisenberger et al., (1990) found them to be positively related. The current research supports Gudanowski's findings that POS and CC are negatively related (-.136).

POS was not found to be a mediator of IC and OC. Therefore, the third hypothesis was not supported. However, both IC and OC were found to be strongly significant independent predictors of PS. Both IC and OC are significantly related to PS, but PS does not mediate the two.

The concept of IC between work and school roles, and its relationship to PS and OC is important to study because undergraduate enrolment and workforce participation

for young people today is very high. Research is carried out on work and family conflict because work life and home life represent two primary life domains for the average adult (Markel et al., 1998). So it is important then, for research to be carried out on work and school conflict, since work life and school life are two primary life domains for average young adults.

This study has several interesting theoretical implications. In this day and age, university students are exposed to violence, stress, crucial life decisions, and major responsibilities during their time as an undergraduate student. For some students, the conflict and stress between school and competing responsibilities is so strong, that they drop out of school altogether, or quit work and go into severe indebtedness. A large amount of undergraduate students are responsible for paying for tuition, books, transportation, housing, etc. Some of these students rely on lines of credit, or OSAP (Ontario Student Assistance Program), and many others work to pay for school.

According to Statistics Canada (2003), "four in ten high school graduates delay post-secondary studies by at least one year. By age 20, two in ten high school graduates have still not enrolled in a post-secondary program." This delay in post-secondary education could be due in part to financial burdens. If a student wants to attend university, and they are responsible for paying their tuition, books, or both, they may have to take years off school to work and make money.

With tuition costs on the rise all over Ontario, it is becoming increasingly difficult for students to attend post secondary education if they do not have OSAP or scholarships and bursaries. Unfortunately, the amount of OSAP funding you receive is based on your

parents' income, unless you have been out of high school for 4 years, have dependent children living with you, or are married, separated, divorced, or widowed (Ontario Student Assistance Program, 2004). The main objective of OSAP is to help students from lower income families meet the costs of post-secondary education. OSAP helps students from lower income families attend post secondary education, where they otherwise might not have been able to attend. Unfortunately, OSAP is not available to help every student, and therefore, many have to work in order to help defray the costs of tuition. Many students that have OSAP also choose to work during university to help decrease their level of indebtedness after graduation. Since so many students are working and attending university, it is important to study the stress and conflict, which may arise from these competing roles.

As a possible solution to the stress and conflict associated with the competing roles of work and school, some employers are beginning to offer flexible work arrangements, where time off from work is granted during high-stress times at school. The intention of flexible work arrangements is to alleviate scarcity of time and interrole conflict (Rau & Hyland, 2002). According to Rau et al., (2002, p. 111) "given the negative outcomes associated with it's various forms, it seems reasonable to assume that job seekers will indeed be motivated to find jobs that allow them to minimize role conflict." Since students exposed to undesirable work environments are more likely to experience work-school conflict, this seems like a realistic solution for students struggling with interrole conflict (Markel et al., 1998).

The current study had some limitations that could have attributed to the results. The sample was a decent size for this type of study, but of course, an increased sample

size could have yielded different results. There were also an abundant number of female

participants (71.8%) compared to male participants (28.2%) this discrepancy could have

also affected the results. It was increasingly difficult to obtain male participants for this

study, as the participant pool was used, and the majority of students in undergraduate

psychology courses are female. If more time was allotted for this study, then more

participants could have been gathered, and there would not have been such a discrepancy

between male and female respondents.

A limitation associated with the measurement and evaluation of IC, is that it is

very time specific. One's level of IC may fluctuate throughout the school year, semester,

or even the day. Data collection began for this study in November and ended in March.

Therefore, many students participated in the research during both high stress periods

(midterms, final examinations) and low stress periods (before spring break). An

individual who had evidence of high IC at the time they took the questionnaire may have

reported lower IC on another day or later in the semester. Therefore, one must be

cautious when interpreting IC.

Future research should continue exploring the relationships between IC, OC, and

PS. There is something at work here that Baron and Kenny's path diagram cannot

explain because it is not a mediator relationship. Future research should be conducted on

work and school IC, instead of only on work and family IC. An abundance of research

exists regarding IC, but none of these studies have focused on IC, OC, and PS among a

sample of employed undergraduate university students. Therefore, the current study is

crucial in determining the inter-correlations of conflict between work and school roles, as

it relates to the three components of organizational commitment.

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Table I

Descriptive Statistics and Reliability Coefficients of Conflict, Commitment and Support

Variables	M	SD	α
IC	3.15	0.73	0.90
AC	3.15	0.76	0.78

NC	3.16	0.57	0.68
CC	2.83	0.77	0.75
OC	3.05	0.46	0.76
POS	2.57	0.84	0.95
PSS	2.40	0.86	0.90
PS	2.48	0.81	0.96

Note. IC = interrole conflict, AC = affective commitment, NC = normative commitment, CC = continuance commitment, OC = organizational commitment, POS = perceived organizational support, PSS = perceived supervisor support, PS = perceived support.

Table II

Pearson Correlations of Conflict, Commitment and Support

	IC	AC	NC	CC	OC	POS	PSS
IC							
AC	.002						
NC	.066	.396**					
CC	.337**	-.240	.108				
OC	.216	.701**	.693**	.588**			
POS	-.139*	.637**	.228**	-.152*	.361**		
PSS	-.117	.564**	.168*	-.109	.320**	.826**	
PS	-.133	.628**	.207**	-.136	.356**	.954**	.957**

Note. IC = interrole conflict, AC = affective commitment, NC = normative commitment, CC = continuance commitment, OC = organizational commitment, POS = perceived organizational support, PSS = perceived supervisor support.
*p < .05. **p < .01.
Table III

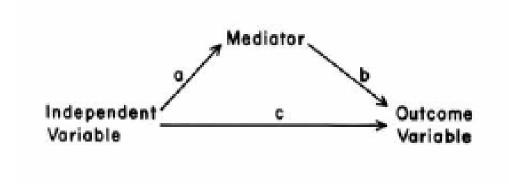Regression Coefficients of Conflict, Commitment and Support

	B	SE	β	R^2
Equation 1				
IV = IC	-0.149	0.084	-0.133	0.018

Equation 2

IV = IC	0.136**	0.046**	0.216**	0.047**

Equation 3

IV 1 = IC	0.169**	0.043**	0.268**	0.197**
IV 2 = PS	0.221**	0.039**	0.391**	0.197**

**p < .01.

Figure Caption

Figure 1. Baron and Kenny's (1986) path diagram depicting two causal paths from the independent variable to the outcome variable (path c), and from the mediator to the outcome variable (path b). A path from the independent variable to the mediator (path a) is also depicted.

Mediator

a   b

Independent   c   Outcome
Variable   Variable

From "The Moderator-Mediator Variable Distinction in Social Psychological Research: Conceptual, Strategic, and Statistical Considerations" by R. M. Baron, and D. A. Kenny, 1986, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 51* (6), p. 1176.