

COPING WITH WORK-FAMILY CONFLICT:
AN EXAMINATION OF WORK-FAMILY HELP-SEEKING BEHAVIOR
IN BOTH ORGANIZATIONAL AND RELATIONAL CONTEXTS

Christopher C. Bradshaw

Dr. Thomas Dougherty, Dissertation Supervisor

ABSTRACT

This study explores employee coping behaviors in a work-family context. Though a considerable amount of research has been conducted that focuses on work-family conflict's relationship with both social support and formal organizational family supports (e.g., flexible scheduling, flexplace, child care support, elder care support), the behaviors employees enact when seeking either form of support have not been studied. This study defined the construct of work-family help-seeking behavior and then examined employee help-seeking behavior within a work-family conflict context. A sample of 400 full-time workers with children was surveyed at two points in time. Confirmatory factor analyses supported the convergent and discriminant validity of the work-family help-seeking behavior scale developed within this study. An initial theoretical model which predicted that increased work-family help-seeking behavior would lead to less work-family conflict was not supported. Analyses based on a revised model suggest that work-family help-seeking behavior is a response to experienced work-family conflict and that workers experiencing work-family conflict are more likely to engage in work-family help-seeking behavior when working within supportive organizational contexts and supportive relational contexts. More specifically, employees with children are more likely to engage in work-family help-seeking behavior as a response to work-family conflict when reporting high perceived organizational family support, a greater number of formal organizational family supports, high family supportive supervision, and high leader-member exchange.