WORK-HOME INTERFERENCE AMONG RECENTLY GRADUATED EMPLOYEES: 
DOES A CHANGE IN WORK CENTRALITY BETWEEN GRADUATION AND 
EMPLOYMENT MATTER

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This study examined the association of two work-related factors, namely working hours and fulfilment of expectations related to work-home balance, with work-home interference for two groups of recently graduated Belgian employees based on their change in work centrality between graduation (T1 = 2004) and current employment (T2 = 2007), i.e. employees with increasing work centrality (n = 43) and employees with decreasing work centrality (n = 75). In addition, the moderating effect of self-management as a coping skill is investigated for both associations. By means of hierarchical regression analyses, three main conclusions have been withdrawn. First, working longer hours leads to more work-home interference, independent of respondents’ change in work centrality. Second, respondents whose expectations regarding work-home balance have been fulfilled experience less work-home interference than those whose expectations have not been fulfilled. This association is, however, only found for respondents with decreasing work centrality. Finally, self-management as a coping mechanism only moderates the effect of expectation fulfilment on work-home interference for respondents with decreasing levels of work centrality, but does not influence the relationship between working hours and work-home interference.

**Key words:** work-home interference; work centrality; working hours; expectation fulfilment; self-management
WORK-HOME INTERFERENCE AMONG RECENTLY GRADUATED EMPLOYEES: DOES A CHANGE IN WORK CENTRALITY BETWEEN GRADUATION AND EMPLOYMENT MATTER?

Nowadays, many employees experience conflicts between their work and their private life leading to various negative consequences for employees and organizations, such as job dissatisfaction, turnover intentions and stress (e.g., Eby, Casper, Lockwood, Bordeaux, & Brinley, 2005; Mesmer-Magnus & Viswesvaran, 2005). Several categories of factors have been found to affect employees’ levels of work-home interference (Byron, 2005; Eby et al., 2005), or the process whereby one’s functioning and behavior in the home domain is negatively influenced by demands from the work domain (e.g., Geurts et al., 2005): i) work-related factors (e.g. schedule flexibility), ii) family-related factors (e.g. number of children) and iii) demographic and individual factors (e.g. income). Previous research has shown that work-related factors are most strongly related to work-home interference (e.g., Byron, 2005).

However, little is known about the impact of individual coping skills, such as self-management, on the association between work-related factors and work-home interference (e.g., Eby et al., 2005). A recent study by Rotondo and Kincaid (2008) suggests that not all coping styles are equally effective in reducing interference between work and home. While direct action (i.e., a form of problem-focused coping in which stressors are directly addressed) was related to lower interference from home to work, reappraisal (i.e., a form of emotion-focused coping in which one attempts to reduce stress by changing the way a situation is viewed or by lowering outcome-related expectations) and advice seeking were associated with higher levels of home-work interference. Moreover, the authors found that a higher level of home-work interference was strongly related to a higher level of work-home interference.

Furthermore, factors influencing work-home interference of employees during the early years of their career are rarely studied. As Eby et al (2005) phrased it in their review of work-family research: “… very little research has examined how experiences or circumstances such as … career experiences … shape the self as it relates to the work–family interface. This seems like a clear gap in the literature given research suggests early role modeling and relational experiences are important in developing subsequent work attitudes and decisions about one’s career” (p. 185).
Therefore, the question arises how work-related expectations of starters on the labor market will influence their work-home interference, and what will happen if these expectations are not fulfilled by their employer?

In order to overcome these limitations and extend previous work-home research, the current study aims at examining the association of two work-related factors, namely working hours and fulfilment of expectations regarding work-home balance, with work-home interference among recently graduated Belgian employees who were surveyed both before and after employment. In addition, the moderating role of the coping skill, career-related self-management (i.e., the extent to which employees are able to direct their own career) was investigated. Finally, these associations are studied for two groups of employees: 1) those for whom work has become more important since their employment (increase in work centrality, or the relative importance of the work role in one’s life; Super, 1982), and 2) those for whom work has become less central since their employment (decrease in work centrality). The research model is given in Figure 1.

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Insert Figure 1 About Here

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**Work-related factors and work-home interference**

The Effort-Reward Imbalance (ERI) model of occupational stress (Siegrist, 1996; Van Vegchel, De Jonge, Bosma, & Schaufeli, 2005) can be applied to the work-home interface in order to link work-related stressors to work-home interference. According to the ERI model, strain results from a perceived imbalance between the level of effort employees believe that they put into their work and the rewards that they receive in return. This imbalance is expected to be more apparent in employees who are extremely committed to their work. Effort can be conceptualized as extrinsic (i.e., situational factors that increase work demands) or intrinsic (i.e., individual differences in work-related commitment). Rewards are distributed by three transmitter elements, namely money, esteem, and security/career opportunities.
It is plausible that high levels of job-related effort result in reduced investment of time and energy spent at home leading to an increase in work-home interference. In addition, employees who believe that their efforts are insufficiently compensated by rewards may experience negative affective reactions (e.g., Van Vegchel et al., 2005) and, hence, experience more work-home interference. Kinman and Jones (2008) recently found that the components of the ERI model are indeed powerful predictors of work-home interference. Employees whose reward expectancies were not fully met reported a poorer balance than those working under equity conditions. This effort-reward imbalance was in particular damaging in terms of high levels of work-home interference for employees who were highly committed to their work.

When applied to the current study, one may expect employees who invest high levels of intrinsic job-related effort by working long hours to experience high levels of work-home interference. Several previous studies indeed show that working hours are positively related to work-home interference (e.g., Grzywacz & Marks, 2000; Sturges & Guest, 2004; Spector, et al., 2004). Moreover, based upon the previous study by Kinman and Jones (2008) and the ERI model (Siegrist, 1996), this association is expected to be stronger for committed employees to whom work has become more salient over time.

**Hypothesis 1a:** Working hours are positively related to work-home interference.

**Hypothesis 1b:** The association between working hours and work-home interference is stronger for respondents with increasing levels of work centrality.

A second work-related factor included in this study involved the fulfilment of expectations regarding work-home balance. In the current study, we address employees’ expectations about organizational initiatives related to work-home balance before employment, as well as their evaluation of the extent to which these expectations are fulfilled after employment. Fulfilling versus breaching employee expectations is relevant in terms of the psychological contract, which is comprised of employees’ beliefs regarding the terms and conditions of the exchange agreement between themselves and the organization (Rousseau, 1995).
When employees perceive their contract to be breached by their employer, they tend to reciprocate this with, among others, reduced levels of commitment or loyalty to their employer (e.g., Turnley & Feldman, 1998). As Bal, De Lange, Jansen, and Van der Velde (2008) recently showed in their meta-analysis, psychological contract breach may reduce trust and organizational commitment, in particular among young workers.

When applied to work-home interference, employees who feel that their employer is involved in a positive social exchange by assisting them in achieving work-home balance, will have favorable attitudes towards their employer. If employees, however, feel that their employer is not meeting their expectations related to work-home balance, they may have less favorable attitudes towards their employer. In terms of the ERI model, employees who believe that their efforts are insufficiently compensated by rewards may experience negative affective reactions resulting in high levels of work-home interference. In their study of recently graduated employees in their early careers, Sturges and Guest (2004) found that psychological contract breach was associated with an increase in work-home interference. Therefore, we expect that employees whose pre-employment expectations have been fulfilled will experience lower levels of work-home interference than employees whose expectations have not been fulfilled. In addition, we expect the impact of expectation fulfilment to be stronger for employees who have reported an increase in work centrality and, hence, attach greater value to psychological contract fulfilment by their employer.

\textit{Hypothesis 2a: Work-home interference will be lower for respondents whose expectations regarding work-home balance have been fulfilled than for those whose expectations have not been fulfilled.}

\textit{Hypothesis 2b: The association between expectation fulfilment and work-home interference will be stronger for respondents with increasing levels of work centrality.}
Moderating role of self-management

Because there are few studies examining the role of coping skills in the association between work-related factors and work-home interference, we will use two theoretical models to underpin this relationship, namely Conservation of Resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll, 2001) and Selection, Optimization, and Compensation (SOC) theory (Freund & Baltes, 2002). Thereby, both theories state that people experiencing a shortage in or an (anticipated) reduction of resources needed to cope with life demands will actively try to increase or regain these resources. One behavioral mechanism through which employees may increase their resources is by using active, problem-focused coping styles, such as self-management.

In the current study, we address the role of career-related self-management in the relationship between work-related factors and work-home interference. According to King (2004), career-related self-management involves three categories of co-occurring behaviors: i) positioning behavior (i.e., ensuring that one has the contacts, skills, and experience to achieve desired career outcomes), ii) influence behavior (i.e., actively attempting to influence decisions of key persons towards desired outcomes), and iii) boundary management (i.e., balancing the demands of work and non-work domains).

Based upon COR and SOC theories, we expect that employees with high levels of self-management will be able to create or maintain the resources needed to cope with their long working hours or unfulfilled expectations regarding work-home balance. For example, an employee working long hours who engages in self-management may use his/her proactive mindset and ability to persuade to organize work according to his/her private needs. Therefore, these employees will experience lower levels of work-home interference compared to employees scoring low on self-management. We do not expect this association to differ according to the change in work centrality.

*Hypothesis 3a: The positive association between working hours and work-home interference is weakened by self-management, signifying that long working hours will lead to less work-home interference for those respondents with high levels of self-management than for those with low levels of self-management.*
Hypothesis 3b: The negative association between expectation fulfilment and work-home interference is strengthened by self-management, signifying that expectation fulfilment will lead to less work-home interference for those respondents with high levels of self-management than for those with low levels of self-management.

METHOD

Sample and Procedure

Longitudinal data were collected from a sample of 135 Belgian participants at two points in time three years apart. The first data collection took place in May 2004 (T1). Thereby, graduate students at three Belgian universities were asked to fill in a paper-and-pencil questionnaire distributed at the end of class. This questionnaire measured graduate students career expectations in the final weeks before entering the labor market. In total, 841 graduate students filled in this questionnaire of which 486 indicated that they were willing to participate in a follow-up study by enclosing their contact details. These contact details were linked to a personal code in order to match the data obtained at T1 and T2 while ensuring confidentiality to participants.

The second data collection took place in May 2007 (T2). Thereby, the previous 486 graduate students were contacted to participate in a follow-up study by filling in an online questionnaire concerning their current career of whom 137 returned the completed questionnaire leading to a response rate of 28%. Furthermore, a missing value analysis excluded two respondents on the base of having more than 10% missing values. As such, the final sample consisted of 135 participants. The majority of participants in our sample held a Masters degree in economics (40%); 27.4% of participants held a Masters degree in psychology; 19.3% of them held a Masters degree in engineering; and 12.6% of them held a Masters degree in management. The mean age of participants at T1 was 23 years old and 55.6% of participants was female.
Measures

Work centrality. Work centrality was measured using a self-assessment scale developed by Coetsier and Claes (1990) as part of the international “Meaning Of Work” study. In this scale, respondents were asked to divide 100 points over four life areas (work, family, leisure time and contribution to society) to reflect the relative importance they attach to each of these domains. Thereby, the points distributed to work are considered as an indication of work centrality.

To assess change in work centrality, this measure was adopted in the first survey (T1) as well as in the second survey (T2). As such, the difference between work centrality at T2 and T1 gives an indication of change in work centrality which is described by using three categories, namely an increasing work centrality (T2 > T1), a decreasing work centrality (T2 < T1) and no change in work centrality (T2 = T1).

Working hours. Working hours were assessed using a subjective single item measurement in which respondents were asked to write down their estimation of their average working hours in one week. More specifically, respondents were asked at T2 how many hours they weekly work in reality. This measure is similar to the measure used in previous studies to assess working hours (e.g., Spector, et al., 2004; Sturges & Guest, 2004).

Expectation fulfilment regarding work-home balance. To measure the degree to which expectations regarding work-home balance have been met by the current employer, two different measures were used at T1 and T2.

At graduation (T1), graduate students’ expectations concerning work-home balance were assessed using the subdimension on work-home balance of the psychological contract scale developed by De Vos, Buyens and Schalk (2003). Thereby, respondents indicated on a five-point Likert scale (1 = not important at all; 5 = important to a large extent) how important they found it that their employer would promise them a good work-home balance using four items, namely “Opportunities for flexible working hours depending on your personal needs”, “The opportunity to determine yourself when you take your vacation”, “Respect for your personal situation” and “A flexible attitude regarding the balance between your work and private life”. Cronbach’s Alpha for this subdimension was .79.
At employment (T2), the fulfillment of these psychological contract expectations was measured by asking respondents to indicate on a five-point Likert scale (1=not at all; 5=to a large extent) to which extent their employer delivers on these four promises stated in the anticipatory psychological contract at T1. Cronbach’s Alpha for this scale was .81.

Finally, the degree of expectation fulfilment regarding work-home balance was assessed by determining the gap between participants’ expectations at T1 and the actual fulfilment of the expectations at T2.

**Self-management.** Self-management was measured at T2 using a self-assessment scale developed by Sturges, Guest, Conway and Davey (2002). This scale consists of 16 items addressing four dimensions of self-management, namely networking (e.g. I have built contacts with people in areas where I would like to work), mobility oriented behavior (e.g. I have made plans to leave this organization once I have the skills and experience to move on), practical things (e.g. I have kept my CV up to date) and drawing attention (e.g. I have made sure I get credit for the work I do). For each item, respondents had to indicate their agreement with the activity using a five-point Likert scale (1= completely disagree; 5= completely agree). According to the standards of Nunnally and Bernstein (1994), the dimensions of networking ($\alpha = .71$) and drawing attention ($\alpha = .73$) have a high internal consistency reliability, while the dimensions of mobility oriented behavior ($\alpha = .65$) and practical things ($\alpha = .60$) have a moderate internal consistency reliability. Therefore, the choice was made to aggregate the four dimensions leading to a single score for self-management. Cronbach’s Alpha for this single score was .76 indicating a high internal consistency reliability.

**Work-Home Interference.** Work-home interference was measured at T2 using a self-assessment scale developed by Gutek, Searle and Klepa (1991). Given that the interest of the current study is limited to the effect of work-related determinants on work-home interference, we only use the four items of the original scale describing the negative interference of work on family life. Thereby, respondents are asked to indicate on a five-point Likert scale (1= completely disagree; 5= completely agree) the extent to which they agree with four different items, namely “After work, I come home too tired to do some of the things I’d like to do”, “On the job I have so much work to do that it takes away from my personal interests”, “My family/friends dislike how often I am preoccupied with my work while I am at home” and “My work takes up time that I’d like to spend with my family/friends”. Cronbach’s Alpha for this scale was .87.
Control variables. In our study, we statistically controlled for gender (0 = male; 1 = female) and study type (1= economy; 2 = psychology; 3 = management; 4 = engineering). Based on a preliminary regression analysis, we could, however, conclude that gender nor study type had a significant effect on work-home interference for participants with an increasing work-centrality ($F= .26, p > .05, R^2= -.08$) as well as for participants with a decreasing work centrality ($F = .62, p > .05, R^2= -.03$). Therefore, we decided to exclude study type from our hierarchical regression analyses to reduce complexity and enhance power. Gender, however, was kept as a control variable, since it plays such a salient role in the field of work-home interference.

Data Analyses

First, a number of statistical comparisons were performed between respondents participating in both surveys and respondents participating only in the first survey to ensure that the drop-out in our study did not bias the results. Chi-square tests indicated that T2 respondents and T2 non-respondents do not differ significantly on gender ($\chi^2 = .97, p > .05$) and study type ($\chi^2 = 15.76, p > .05$). Furthermore, t-tests also confirm that no significant difference was found between T2 respondents and T2 non-respondents in terms of their average age ($t = -.12, p > .05$), the importance they attach to work at T1 ($t = -.23, p > .05$) and their expectations regarding work-home balance at T1 ($t = -.40, p > .05$). Therefore, we can conclude that the results found in the current study do not suffer from an attrition bias caused by a selective drop-out between T1 and T2.

Second, to perform a comparative analysis of work-home interference based on change in work centrality, the participants in our study ($n =135$) were divided into three different categories, namely an increasing work centrality ($n = 43$), a decreasing work centrality ($n = 75$), and no change in work centrality ($n = 17$). Since the sample size of the third category describing no change in work centrality is too small to perform statistical analyses, respondents in this category were excluded from further analyses. For the two remaining categories, two separate hierarchical regression analyses were performed for each of the two independent variables, namely working hours and expectation fulfilment. In these hierarchical regression analyses, we defined three different blocks of standardized measures to explain the effect on work-home interference.
First, we controlled for gender in step 1. In step 2, we inserted the independent variable and self-management and in step 3, we included the interaction between the independent variable and self-management. Changes in $R^2$ are used to indicate the contribution of each model in explaining the variance in work-home interference, while the standardized beta weights give further insight in the impact of each variable separately on work-home interference. Finally, the power of each model in our hierarchical regression analyses was measured to ensure that the small sample sizes of both groups does not prevail us from detecting a significant effect when encountered in the population (Cohen, 1988). For this purpose, we used the statistical program G-Power (Faul & Erdfelder, 1992) in which the power of a regression model is calculated based on the effect size, the Type I-error ‘α ’, the number of predictors and the total sample size.

RESULTS

Descriptive statistics

Table 1 shows the means, standard deviations and correlations between all variables used in the current study.

Insert Table 1 About Here

As can be seen in Table 1, work takes up an important role in participants’ lives. When asked to rate the relative importance of work compared to other life domains, participants attach nearly fifty percent of importance to their work role (T1: $M = 46.27\%$, $SD = 1.15$; T2: $M = 40.11\%$, $SD = 13.57$). Furthermore, participants also indicate that they work more than the presumed 38 hours per week. On average, a working week for participants consists of 44 hours. With mean scores near the top of the range ($M = 4.13$, $SD = .61$), participants clearly have high expectations regarding work-home balance when entering the labor market. In addition, these expectations on work-home balance are also quite frequently met ($M = 3.90$, $SD = .81$). Finally, participants report rather moderate mean scores for self-management ($M = 3.14$, $SD = .51$) as well as for work-home interference ($M = 2.97$, $SD = 1.01$).
Working hours and work-home interference

First, the impact of working hours on work-home interference was determined for two groups of participants differing in change of work centrality: participants with increasing work centrality \((n = 43)\), and participants with decreasing work centrality \((n = 75)\). As presented in Table 2, the power of the regression models investigating the impact of the independent variable (increasing work centrality: \(f^2 = .28\), power = .80; decreasing work centrality: \(f^2 = .52\), power = .90) and the interaction effect (increasing work centrality: \(f^2 = .28\), power = .80; decreasing work centrality: \(f^2 = .52\), power = .99) meet the standard of Cohen (1988) stating that the minimal power of a statistical test is 0.80. The power of the regression model investigating the impact of the control variable, gender, however, does not fulfill this standard due to the small effect size of gender for participants with increasing work centrality \(f^2 = .01\), power = .07), as well as for participants with decreasing work centrality \(f^2 = .01\), power = .10).

As shown in Table 2, a significant positive relationship was found between working hours and work-home interference for participants with increasing work centrality \((\beta = .45, p < .01)\), as well as for participants with decreasing work centrality \((\beta = .52, p < .001)\). As such, Hypothesis 1a is fully supported. In addition, Hypothesis 1b stated that the association between working hours and work-home interference will be stronger for participants with increasing work centrality. The data reported in this study, however, contradict this hypothesis. According to Table 2, working hours have a moderate significant relationship with work-home interference for participants with increasing work centrality \((f^2 = .28)\), but have a large significant relationship with work-home interference for participants with decreasing work centrality \((f^2 = .52)\). Moreover, the variance in work-home interference explained by working hours is larger for participants with decreasing work centrality \((R^2=.34)\) than for participants with increasing work centrality \((R^2=.22)\). These findings indicate that the effect of working hours on work-home interference is stronger for participants with decreasing work centrality.
Second, the impact of expectation fulfilment regarding work-home balance on work-home interference was determined for both groups of participants differing in change of work centrality (see Table 3). A power analysis of the models used in our hierarchical regression analysis shows that only the predictor model ($f^2 = .16$, power = .82) and the interaction model ($f^2 = .23$, power = .94) for participants with decreasing work centrality exceed the power standard of Cohen (1988). The other regression models do not fulfill this standard due to small effect sizes ($f^2 = .01$ to .11, power = .07 to .38). As such, we can only rightfully interpret the results presented for participants with decreasing work centrality.

Hypothesis 2a predicted that work-home interference will be lower for participants whose expectations have been fulfilled than for participants whose expectations have not been fulfilled. As can be seen in Table 3, this predicted negative relationship between expectation fulfilment and work-home interference was found for participants with decreasing work centrality ($\beta = -.26$, $p < .05$). Hypothesis 2a is thus supported for participants with decreasing work centrality. In addition, Hypothesis 2b stated that the association between expectation fulfilment and work-home interference will be stronger for participants with increasing levels of work centrality. Due to a shortcoming in the power of the regression models for participants with increasing work centrality, this hypothesis can neither be confirmed nor contradicted. However, our data presented in Table 3 does suggest that it is unlikely for this hypothesis to be supported in future research, since the effect of expectation fulfilment on work-home interference was bigger for participants with decreasing work centrality ($F= 3.78$, $p < .05$, $R^2= .14$, $f^2= .16$) than for participants with increasing work centrality ($F= .57$, $p > .05$, $R^2= .04$, $f^2= .04$). However, future research is needed to confirm this statement.
Moderating role of self-management

Hypothesis 3a assumed a moderating effect of self-management on the relationship between working hours and work-home interference, stating that participants with high levels of self-management will experience less work-home interference due to an increase in working hours than participants with low levels of self-management. To test this moderating effect, we determined the impact of the interaction between working hours and self-management on the dependent variable, work-home interference. Table 2 shows, however, that no significant relationship was found between the interaction effect and work-home interference for participants with decreasing work centrality ($\beta = .02, p > .05$), as well as for participants with increasing work centrality ($\beta = -.01, p > .05$). Hypothesis 3a is thus not supported signifying that self-management does not moderate the relationship between working hours and work-home interference in the early career.

Finally, Hypothesis 3b presumed a moderating effect of self-management on the relationship between expectation fulfilment and work-home interference. Accordingly, for respondents with high levels of self-management, the fulfilment of expectations is expected to lead to lower levels of work-home interference than for respondents with low levels of self-management. To test this moderating effect, we measured the impact of the interaction between expectation fulfilment and self-management on work-home interference for participants with decreasing work centrality. As shown in Table 3, a significant negative relationship was found between the interaction and work-home interference ($\beta = -.24, p < .05, f^2 = .23$), indicating that self-management indeed moderates the relationship between expectation fulfilment and work-home interference. To gain further insight in the direction of the interaction effect between expectation fulfilment and work-home interference, we plotted the interaction effect using the median split technique. Figure 2 presents the interaction effect.

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Insert Figure 2 about here

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As can be seen in Figure 2, there is a clear interaction effect between self-management and expectation fulfilment in explaining the dependent variable, work-home interference. More specifically, participants with low levels of self-management experience almost no effect of expectation fulfilment on work-home interference, while participants with high levels of self-management experience a clear decline in work-home interference when their expectations are fulfilled by their employer. Because the negative association between expectation fulfilment and work-home interference is stronger for participants with high levels of self-management than for those with lower levels of self-management, Hypothesis 3b is supported for participants with decreasing work centrality.

**DISCUSSION**

This study set out to examine the association of working hours and fulfilment of expectations related to work-home balance with experienced work-home interference among recently graduated employees in their early careers. Moreover, the moderating role of self-management as well as the effect of changes in work centrality (either increasing or decreasing since employment) were investigated.

With regard to the association between working hours and work-home interference, we found – as expected – that employees with long working hours reported high levels of work-home interference. This association was found for participants with increasing as well as decreasing work centrality. Based upon the ERI-model (Siegrist, 1996) and previous studies, we had anticipated working hours to be stronger related to work-home interference among employees for whom work had become more central over time. In contrast, we found that the positive association between working hours and work-home interference was stronger among participants with decreasing work centrality. Possibly, these employees experience cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957) when they make long work weeks while work has become less salient for them since their employment. This discrepancy between beliefs and behavior may cause them to experience high levels of strain which may spill over into the home domain thereby causing work-home interference.
As hypothesized, we found a negative association between fulfilment of expectations regarding work-home balance and work-home interference. However, this relationship was only found for participants with decreasing work centrality. Possibly, the employees for whom work has become more central to their lives since their employment are more focused on work-related issues, and therefore attach less value to fulfilment of work-home balance related expectations compared to those for whom work has become less important. Nowadays, it is generally acknowledged that the psychological contract is a multi-dimensional construct (e.g., De Vos et al., 2003). For example, a distinction can be made between socio-emotional and developmental expectations (e.g., Bal, De Lange, Jansen, & Van der Velde, under review; Freund, 2006). Research shows that younger employees are more focused on the latter type of obligations whereas older workers are more focused on the first type (Ebner, Freund, & Baltes, 2006; Ng & Feldman, 2007). Since fulfilment of work-home balance expectations is part of the socio-emotional contract, it is not surprising that employees in their early career who attach great value to their work are not affected by their employer not fulfilling their work-home balance expectations.

Finally, we expected self-management to moderate the associations between these two work-related factors and work-home interference. We found that self-management did not moderate the relationship between working hours and work-home interference for employees in the early career. Possibly, young employees expect to work long hours during the starting phase of their career and do not want to change anything about this situation because in their mind it is only a short-term option (Sturges & Guest, 2004). The necessity of using self-management strategies to reduce the impact of long working hours on work-home interference may, therefore, become less urgent. Moreover, most young employees may employ career-related self-management for planning their career instead of balancing their work with their responsibilities at home.
As expected, self-management did moderate the association of expectation fulfilment with work-home interference for employees with decreasing levels of work centrality. The negative association between expectation fulfilment and work-home interference was found to be stronger for employees with high levels of self-management than for those with lower levels of self-management. This may point to an additive effect of work-related resources (fulfilment of expectations regarding work-home balance) and personal resources (self-management) in reducing work-home interference.

Limitations and future research

As mentioned earlier, the psychological contract is comprised of multiple dimensions. In the current study, we only examined one type of psychological contract dimension (i.e., expectations regarding work-home balance) based upon its relevance for the outcome measure (work-home interference). Young employees may, however, attach more value to developmental conditions than to the support their employer gives them in balancing work with home (Ebner et al., 2006; Ng & Feldman, 2007), in particular when they have not got any family responsibilities. Therefore, future research should study the effects of fulfilment of other types of expectations (e.g., developmental) on work-home interference among employees in their early career.

A second limitation of this study is its focus on work-related factors in examining work-home interference. In restraining ourselves to working hours and expectations regarding work-home balance, we may have missed out on other relevant predictors of work-home interference originating from the home domain. Unfortunately, we did not have any information related to the employees’ family situation, such as marital status or number of children. Although this information would have been important in studying work-home interference, research consistently shows that work-related factors are more strongly related to interference originating in the work domain than family-related factors (e.g., Byron, 2005).

A final shortcoming of the current study is that it did not employ a full-panel longitudinal design. We only examined the development of work centrality and fulfilment of expectations regarding work-home balance over time. This is, however, inherent to the sample chosen for this study. Unemployed graduates could not have answered questions related to working hours, career-related self-management, or work-home interference. Future research should, therefore, follow a cohort of graduates during several consecutive years (see Sturges & Guest, 2004).
Only then can changes in work-home interference be causally connected to changes in work- or family-related factors. Alternatively, diary studies with daily surveys could be employed to examine daily fluctuations in interference between work and home and its predictors. Ilies et al. (2007), for example, examined antecedents and outcomes of work-to-family conflict among 106 employees in an experience-sampling study. Among others, they found that employees’ perceptions of workload and number of hours spent at work predicted work-to-family conflict over time.

Contributions and practical implications

Despite these limitations, we believe that this study has made three important contributions to the work-home literature. First, we have examined the association between work-related factors and work-home interference among employees in the early years of their career. This group of employees has not been studied frequently before. The study by Sturges and Guest (2004) forms an exception, and the current study supports their finding that working hours and fulfilment of expectations are associated with work-home interference among young employees.

A second important contribution of this study is its inclusion of self-management as a moderator of the association between these work-related factors and work-home interference. We found that employees with high levels of self-management profited more from expectation fulfilment in terms of lower levels of work-home interference than those with lower self-management. Personal resources or coping skills are, therefore, important in studying work-home interference and its antecedents among employees in the early career.

Thirdly, this study contributes to the work-home literature by examining the role of work centrality in these associations. In the study of Sturges and Guest (2004), work involvement was not related to work-home interference. We found, however, that working hours, the fulfilment of expectations regarding work-home balance, and the moderating role of self-management were more strongly related to work-home interference among employees for whom work had become less central since their employment. Apparently, work salience of young employees is important in examining the impact of psychological contract fulfilment on work-home interference, in particular for employees in their early career.
One practical implication of the current study is that employers should take care not to strain employees too much in their early career years, since long working hours are positively related to work-home interference. Although employees may expect to work long hours during the first phase of their career, this may pose a problem for them in terms of balancing work with responsibilities at home. In addition, employers are advised to support newcomers in combining work and private life, since employees who feel that their employer has fulfilled their pre-employment expectations regarding work-home balance report lower levels of work-home interference. This is particularly relevant for employees for whom their work has become less central since their employment. Employers could support their employees by issuing Human Resource practices or arrangements targeted at facilitating work-home balance, such as part-time work, flexible working hours or parental leave.

Furthermore, employers could take advantage of the psychological contract by employing idiosyncratic deals (‘i-deals’), in which individual employees negotiate with an employer in order to adapt work arrangements to better meet their personal needs (Rousseau, 2005). A recent study by Hornung, Rousseau, and Glaser (2008) among 887 employees in a German government agency showed that work arrangements promoting the individualization of employment conditions (e.g., part-time work and telecommuting), were positively related to the negotiation of i-deals. In addition, i-deals aimed at flexibility in hours of work were negatively related to work–family conflict and working unpaid overtime. This reinforces the case for both formal and informal organizational arrangements that support employees in integrating the work and home domains.
REFERENCES


TABLE 1

Means, Standard deviations and Correlations between variables included in the study (N = 135)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>M</th>
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<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
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<td>-.04</td>
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<td>.01</td>
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Note. 'p < .05, "p < .01
## TABLE 2.

Hierarchical regression analyses for the impact of working hours and self-management on work-home interference for both groups of work centrality (N = 135)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictors</th>
<th>Group 1: Increasing work centrality</th>
<th>Group 2: Decreasing work centrality</th>
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Note. \(^*\) \( p < .05\), \(^**\) \( p < .01\), \(^***\) \( p < .001\). Standardized beta coefficients are reported. Standardized values are used for all predictors; \(^a\) 0 = male, 1 = female
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictors</th>
<th>Group 1: Increasing work centrality</th>
<th>Group 2: Decreasing work centrality</th>
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</thead>
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Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$. Standardized beta coefficients are reported. Standardized values are used for all predictors; $^0$ = male, 1 = female.
FIGURE CAPTIONS

Figure 1. Research model

- Working hours
- Expectation fulfilment

Self-management

Work-home interference
Figure 2. Moderating effect of self-management on the relationship between expectation fulfilment and work-home interference for participants with decreasing work centrality.