
How Are Copreneurs Different from Noncopreneurs in Work-Family Balance and Business Outcomes?

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Work-family balance is an increasingly important consideration, especially in our world where technology often invites work to invade personal and family time. *Copreneurship*, or romantic partners who co-own and operate a business together (Harris et al., 2010; Othman et al., 2016), is a more and more common business model in which the intertwined nature of personal and professional domains creates unique challenges and benefits for couples and businesses (Venter et al., 2012). Thus, it is timely to examine how copreneurs differ from noncopreneurs with respect to work-family balance characteristics and business outcomes. The findings of this study could be helpful in increasing our understanding of copreneurial small business owners.

Using data from the 2019 Small Business Values Survey, this study focused on small businesses with 500 or fewer employees. The sample for the study included 498 small business owners, and the two subgroups were copreneurs ($n=195$) and noncopreneurs ($n=303$). As for business and owner characteristics, copreneurs had significantly larger businesses (i.e., about 32 employees) than noncopreneurs (i.e., about 17 employees), and copreneurs were significantly less likely to have a sole proprietorship than noncopreneurs. Copreneurs were significantly younger than noncopreneurs and were more likely to be college graduates than noncopreneurs.

The goal of this study was to compare copreneurial and noncopreneurial small business owners in terms of work-family balance and business outcomes. This comparison produced a number of interesting results and important implications as follows:

First, copreneurs reported higher levels of *work-family decision conflicts* and reported higher levels of *work-to-family spillover* and *family-to-work spillover* than noncopreneurs. Potential explanation of this higher levels of decision conflicts and spillovers between family and business can stem from the highly integrated personal and business relationship that exists between copreneurial couples. This finding suggests the need for future research to continue looking at various facets of the work-family boundaries when striving to further study the experiences of copreneurs.

Second, copreneurs were more likely to perceive their business as being *successful* and *profitable* than noncopreneurs. Despite this, copreneurs also reported significantly higher levels of *work-family decision conflicts* than noncopreneurs. These findings suggest that a copreneurial business model may be worth the decreases in work-family balance for those who place value on the business's success and profitability. However, it may not be a worthwhile tradeoff for those who place more value on the balance between their professional and personal lives. Alternatively, for those who place high value on both business success and profitability as well as their work-family balance, this finding may suggest that such copreneurs should seek help with managing the boundaries between their work and family lives (Zody et al., 2006).

Third, looking only at the copreneur sample, further insights into the work-family balance factors associated with business success and profitability were gained. *Work-family decision conflicts* significantly decreased the likelihood of perceiving their business as being *successful*; however, *separating work and family time* significantly increased the likelihood of perceiving their business as being *profitable*. These findings reiterate the need for establishing clear and professional guidelines for copreneurial couples. Additionally, the findings imply that practitioners should help copreneurial business owners establish boundaries between family and business.

In *conclusion*, the results of this study are beneficial in understanding the difference in work-family balance and business outcomes between copreneurial and noncopreneurial small businesses. *Copreneurship* is an important business model for the United States economy, and it appears to foster greater perceptions of *business success* and *profitability* among copreneurial small business owners. However, the well-being of individuals and families may be impacted by the demands that accompany running a copreneurial business. Copreneurs may want to delineate how their roles may differ in the home and in the business to help define work-family boundaries. Continued research and practice focused on helping these copreneurial couples and families better balance and separate their professional (*work*) and personal (*family*) lives is needed.

References

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