



WORK DEMAND AND WORK-FAMILY CONFLICT: THE MODERATING ROLE OF EXTRAVERSION AND NEUROTICISM

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the moderating role of two of the personality traits out of (Big five factors), Extraversion and Neuroticism, on the relationship between work demand and work-family conflict (WFC). This research is done with a sample of 279 employees working in Information Technology (IT) and in Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) industries in Chennai city. Data were collected through questionnaire. Results show that extroversion and neuroticism moderates the relationship between work demand and WFC.

KEYWORDS Work-Family conflict, Work demand, Neuroticism and Extraversion.

INTRODUCTION

Work and family are the key domains of life to people (Whitely and England, 1977), and not surprisingly, work-family conflict (WFC) research has become a major area in the organizational research (Parasuraman and Greenhaus, 2002). Conflict is defined as the process in which an individual or group perceives an interdependent upon other individual or group to oppose one's own interests, beliefs, values, or perceptions of reality (Dreu *et al.*, 1997). Work-family conflicts have been empirically related to negative work attitudes (Frone *et al.*, 1992a; Yang *et al.*, 2000), stress related outcomes, low work engagement, commitment (Brett and Stroh, 2003; Bruck and Allen, 2003; Beauregard, 2006; Viswesvaran *et al.*, 2007; Ahuja *et al.* 2007) absenteeism (Goff *et al.*, 1990), tardiness (Hepburn and Barling, 1996), leaving work early (Boyar *et al.*, 2005), turnover intentions (Burke, 1988), and negative work behaviors (Frone *et al.*, 1996). Level of conflict is not only a function of work and family circumstances, but also individual contributions (Malekiha *et al.*, 2012). Thus, for both theoretical and applied reasons, a better understanding of the interrelations between conflict, and individual well-being is needed (Dijkstra *et al.*, 2005). Only a few studies addressed the relationship between the conflict and individual personality. This study is intended to find out the moderating effect of extraversion and neuroticism in the relationship between work demand and WFC.

Work-family conflict

Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) defined work-family conflict as “a form of inter-role conflict in which the role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually non compatible in some respect”. In other words, work-family conflict exists when the expectations related to a certain role do not meet the requirements of the other role, preventing the efficient performance of both the roles (Greenhaus *et al.*, 2006). There are three major forms of work-family conflicts: time-based, strain-based and behavior-based conflicts. Time-based conflict refers to overlapping schedules with pressures between work and family roles, due to which it may be impossible to be both physically as well as psychologically present within both roles as expected. Strain-based conflict refers to work and family related stressors that produce mental and emotional strain due to which the demands of other life domains are difficult to fulfill. Behavior-based conflict refers to different behavioral expectations within work and family domains and the inability to adjust one’s behavior according to these expectations within each life domain. (Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985; Fu and Shaffer, 2001).

Until last decade, employees in India are used to have fixed timings for work hours, with a clear distinction between work and family spaces. However, after globalization of the economy and with its gradual implementation, more and more multinational companies have made their inroads in the country. These companies have brought with them a different work patterns and culture. These have obliterated the traditional time boundary between work hours and family times. This degradation of the boundary has been accelerated with the availability of the modern technologies like cell phones, emails, video conferencing etc., all of which have enabled employees and their family members to communicate with each other nearly anywhere, anytime and also the flexible work arrangements under which employees can complete some of the work tasks from home are increasingly prevalent. As a result of this, “work-family conflict (WFC)” is increasingly happening. Conflict can occur in two ways such that WFC occurs when work role interferes with family role and family-work conflict (FWC) occurs when family role interferes with work role (Streich *et al.*, 2008). Personality traits that enable an individual to use his or her time more efficiently and to engage in roles with more energy; to perceive less stress; or to adopt coping mechanism that reduces stress, should be related to less work-family conflict (Wayne *et al.*, 2004).

Work demand

Demand is defined as “a global perception of the level and intensity of responsibility within the work (or family) domain” (Boyar *et al.*, 2007). Work demand is examined by several variables. The more number of working hours make individuals to have less time for other activities (Frone *et al.*, 1997b). As the income increases the level of responsibility is also increases and so work demand increases (Beutell and Witting-Berman, 1999). However the individual personality like extroversion and neuroticism may influence one’s ability to handle the work demand either efficiently or otherwise. Work demand in this study relates one’s ability to handle positively the intensity of responsibility and can face more work demands.

H1: There is a relationship between work demand and WFC.

Role of personality

As Friede and Ryan (2005) noted, personality influence have been neglected in work-family research. Personality is the combination of emotional, attitudinal, and behavioral response patterns of an individual. Personality refers to the stable mentality and processes that influence how people interpret and react, emotionally and behaviorally, to their environment (James and Mazerolle 2002). The behavior of the individual is determined by the characteristics of his/her personality. Theoretically, personality traits can have direct as well as indirect effects on WFC. Conflict is not only a function of work and family circumstances, but also includes individual contribution (Wayne *et al.*, 2004). Personality traits serve primarily to either enhance or mitigate existing condition.

Researchers agree that almost all personality measures could be categorized according to the five –factor model of personality (also referred to as the “big five” personality dimensions) (Goldberg, 1990). The basic dimensions of the five factors have been shown to include hundreds of personality traits proposed by theorists to describe individual differences in behavior (Fleeson, 2001). Thus big five factor seems appropriate for capturing a broad picture of individual personality and their behavior patterns and interpretation of objective situations in variety of life domains (Judge and Higgins, 1999).

According to McCrae and John (1992), the big five personality traits are five broad domains or dimensions of personality that are used to describe human personality. The theory based on the big five factors is called the Five Factor Model (FFM). The big five factors are 1) *Extraversion*: kind of persons who are usually active, assertive, energetic, enthusiastic, outgoing and talkative (McCrae and John, 1992). Extroverts prefer to be around people most of the time. 2) *Agreeableness*: persons who are cooperative, likeability, forgiving, kind, sympathy for others and trusting (McCrae and John, 1992). Generally they are warm and trusting. 3) *Conscientiousness*: persons who are responsible, organized, achievement oriented, dependable, maintains orderliness, efficient, thoroughness and hardworking (Judge and Higgins, 1999; McCrae and John, 1992). These kinds of persons are generally have high standards and always strive to achieve goals. 4) *Neuroticism*: Individuals experience emotional instability like anxiety, insecurity, irritability, defensiveness, tension, worry and sadness (Judge and Higgins, 1999; McCrae and John, 1992; Stoeva *et al.*, 2002). 5) *Openness to experience*: persons with this trait exhibit intelligence, unconventionality, imagination, curiosity, creativity and originality (Judge and Higgins, 1999; McCrae and John, 1992). Generally they have broad interests and are very imaginative.

Among these five factors of personality traits, the moderating roles of extraversion and neuroticism on work demand and WFC are studied in this paper.

Extraversion One of the big five personality traits, extraversion can be defined by its six facet scales: warmth, gregariousness, assertiveness, activity, positive emotionality, and excitement seeking (Costa and McCrae, 1992). Thus, high extraverts tend to be outgoing and energetic, while individuals low on extraversion are more

introverted and reserved (McCrae and John, 1992). Because of the positivity and energy of extraverts likely results in less strain and fewer time pressures (Mischel and Shoda, 1999). Hence it is hypothesized that the extroverts can handle the work pressures and work demand effectively owing to their positive emotionality and also have minimum WFC owing to their warmth and positive approaches.

H2: Extraversion moderates the relationship between work demand and work family conflict.

Neuroticism Individuals high on neuroticism tend to be self-pitying, tense, and worrying, while individuals low on neuroticism are described as emotionally stable, relaxed, and even-tempered (McCrae and John, 1992). This is another personality variable in the five-factor model, and comprised of the following six facets: anxiety, hostility, self-consciousness, depression, vulnerability to stress, and impulsiveness (Costa and McCrae, 1992; Stoeva *et al*, 2002). Compared to other dispositional antecedents examined in the work-family conflict literature, neuroticism has received the most research attention and support. Across various samples and studies, neuroticism has been positively linked to negative spillover from work to family and family to work (Grzywacz and Marks, 2000). Hence it is hypothesized that the neurotics cannot handle their work pressures and work demand effectively due to their emotional instability and worrying nature.

H3: Neuroticism moderates the relationship between work demand and work family conflict.

METHOD

Sample and procedure

The study participants are the employees of IT and BPO companies. Out of 100 employees to whom the questionnaire was distributed through snowball sampling technique, 279 returned the questionnaire among 156 male and 123 female

Measures

To measure the work demand of employees a four item scale was used. Questions were rated on five-point Likert scale, with the higher score indicating the ability to handle higher work demand. Extraversion and neuroticism were measured using the Big Five Inventory (BFI) with five-point Likert scale. WFC was measured using an eight item scale and were rated on a five point Likert scale with the higher score indicating the higher WFC.

Respondents indicated the extent to which statements characterized their behavior using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Statistics

The data obtained were analyzed using IBM SPSS statistical package. Correlation and regression analysis were used to analyze the data to find out the relations between the two personality traits and work demand / WFC.

RESULT

Descriptive statistics

The mean, standard deviation and correlation is shown in table (i), as can be seen that the work demand is positively correlated with WFC and highly significant. The correlation between WFC and neuroticism was positively correlated and highly significant. Table (ii) contains the regression analyses of work demand and WFC before and after introducing moderating variables

Scale	Mean	Std. Deviation	work demand	extraversion	neuroticism	WFC
work demand	3.80	.649	-			
Extraversion	3.49	.486	-.001	-		
Neuroticism	3.27	.439	.155	-.001	-	
WFC	3.21	.399	.615*	.042	.375*	

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table (i): Descriptive statistics and inter-correlation between WFC, work demand, extraversion and neuroticism

Scale	WFC	WFC after introducing moderating variable	WFC & work demand after introducing moderating variable
work demand	.378*	-	.571*
Extraversion	-	.042	.043
Neuroticism	-	.375*	.286*
r^2	.370	.120	.439
F	46.880	6.298	21.322

Table (ii): Regression analyses between WFC, work demand and moderating variables

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The aim of the study was to find out extraversion, neuroticism moderates the relationship between work demand and WFC. The result supports the hypotheses, that shows extraversion and neuroticism moderates the relationship between work demand and WFC. With this result we know that people who are neurotic experience more WFC.

The predictive strength of work demand on WFC is assessed by β coefficient. It is seen that work demand positively influences WFC whose direction is as hypothesized. The strength is examined by the magnitude of the β coefficient ($=.378$). The moderating variables entered the regression model. Regression results show that the amount of variance explained by the moderating variables on WFC is .120, which is significant ($F= 6.298$); $P= .000$.

On the entry of moderating variables along with the independent variable work demand, it is seen that adjusted r^2 value .439. So entry of the moderating variables has increased the r^2 value and also had increased the predictive strength of work demand on WFC. However out of the two moderating variables that entered the regression model only one which is neuroticism has a moderating ability. So it is true personality dimensions, though not all, few mediate the relationship between work demand and WFC.

With regards to extraversion, due to their high energy level they accomplish more task in given time which may reduce their incompatible time pressures and able to cope with their work demands. They focus on positive aspects of the situation and feel less stressful. Because of their positive nature and energy, they are likely to develop less strain and time pressures (Mischel and Shoda, 1999). It reveals that people with extraversion will experience less WFC and handle their work demands well.

Individuals who have shown neurotic trait in their response to questionnaire experience more job and family stress, which in turn increases their degree of conflict experience. They are mostly less efficient time users, preoccupied with their role demands and experience more stress. The study reveals that people with neuroticism will experience more WFC and struggle to handle their work demands.

IMPLICATION

The results of this study show that the relationship between work demand and WFC is mediated by personality variables. The employee level of conflict is not only a function of work and family demands, but also individual's way of approaching the situation. The results indicated that neuroticism approach was related to conflict and extraversion approach was not related to conflict.

Indeed low extraverted and neurotic persons will suffer from WFC and cannot handle their work demands well. Organizations should provide various programmes and initiatives to train their employees on how to cope their

work demands and family expectations. By knowing their personality trait, different training should be given tailoring to the personality trait of the individual.

LIMITATIONS

This study utilized samples from only Chennai city, thus restricting the generalizability of the finding. Despite these limitations, the current study successfully establishes the importance of including the personality traits in the study of WFC. In this study, the moderating effects of two of the personality dimensions among many other factors have been studied. Future research should include other personality dimensions such as conscientiousness, agreeableness and openness to experience. Further this study has not considered other work domain and family domain characteristics such as work conflict, supervisory support, family conflict, family support etc. Researchers may develop a model that includes work domain and family domain characteristics.

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