



PAK Publishing Group
Growing Knowledge for Future

Proceedings Book of ICEFMO, 2013, Malaysia
Handbook on the Economic, Finance and Management Outlooks
ISBN: 978-969-9347-14-6

The Influence of Personality Traits on the Relationship between Work- Family Conflict and Job Satisfaction among Married Women

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Abstract

The role of women has changed dramatically. The claim has been supported by a general consensus among researchers that many married working women experience significant work-family conflict (WFC). However, the personality traits have been only minimally considered in the studies of WFC especially in Malaysia. To fill in this vacuum, this paper aims at investigating the influence of personality traits on the relationship between WFC and job satisfaction among employed married women by analyzing related published articles in the area. A conceptual framework is developed indicating that job satisfaction is influenced by WFC and is moderated by the Big Five personality traits. Hence, a conceptual framework is developed indicating that the dependent variable of job satisfaction is influenced by the work-family conflict. This relationship is moderated by the personality traits which taken from the framework of the Big Five Model, that is, emotional stability, extraversion, conscientiousness, agreeableness, and openness to experience. It is concluded that this paper is perhaps one of the earlier to propose that the different personality traits might have different influence on the way the married women employees manage their work-family conflict and job satisfaction in Malaysia.

Key words: Personality traits, Work-Family Conflict, Job satisfaction, Malaysia

1. Introduction

In recent times, the issue of work-family conflict (WFC) has become a growing topic of interest among researchers due to the emerging roles of work and family which gives implications to both

organization and employees. In last three decades, the percentage of women entering the labor force is expected to rise until today (Noor, 2002). It is a common belief that the role of women has changed dramatically since today women are entering and graduating from professional school at rates that are equal to or greater than men (National Centre for Educational Statistics, 2000; Hennesy, 2005). Despite most of the existing research on the relationship between work and family conflict has been aggressively conducted in Western societies compared to non-Western societies, understanding of the effects of work-family conflict on women's job satisfaction is critically important especially in Asian countries which women have recently made remarkable advance in the business world in many Asian countries such as Japan, India, Singapore and Malaysia.

Besides, Allen (2000) suggested that it would be valuable to include into future research of work-family conflict such possible moderators as organizational and personal characteristics. To date, the personality traits factors have been only minimally considered in studies of WFC especially in Malaysia. Since it is believed that personality traits might have significant influence on the intensity of work-family conflict, it is worthwhile to explore the influence of these traits on the mentioned variable. Hence, the purpose of this study is to investigate the influence of personality traits on the relationship between work-family conflict and job satisfaction among employed married women by analyzing related published articles in the area.

2. Work-family Conflict

Kahn (1964) has defined work-family conflict (WFC) as a form of inter-role conflict in which the role pressure from the work and family domains is mutually incompatible in some respects. Researchers has demonstrated that WFC is bi-directionally which means that the conflict arising when work roles interfere with family roles (WIF) and family related roles interfere with work related roles (FIW) (Jayaweera, 2005; Kossek and Ozeki, 1998; Kinnunen & Mauno, 1998; Frone, Yardley & Marshall, 1997; Frone, Rusell & Cooper, 1992). Consistent with the previous claim, Hammer (2003) noted that WIF and FIW have different antecedents and consequences. Antecedents of WIF include long hours, lack of supervision, and other work role stressors and characteristics which the consequences have been related to life satisfaction (Adams, King, & King, 1996), family satisfaction (Beutell & Witting-Berman, 1999), alcohol abuse, depression, and poor physical health (Mc Shane, 2010; Frone, Yardley, & Markel, 1997). On the other hand, antecedents of FIW are related to family role stressors such as elder care, or single parenting which leads to lower level of job satisfaction, higher level of absenteeism, tardiness of work, and intentions to quit (Mc Shane & Von Glinow, 2010; Boyar, 2005). Although these two forms of conflict – WIF and FIW are strongly correlated with each other, but individuals typically report more WIF rather than FIW (Kinnunen & Mauno, 1998; Frone, Rusell & Cooper, 1992).

Nevertheless, it must be noted that it is vital to reduce stressors mainly caused by family in order to embark on a better life at home and enhance productivity at work. Besides, the causes of stressors so-called WFC will lead to harmful not only physical and emotional demand of a person but also the environmental condition as a whole. Even though both men and women may experience work-family conflict, women report more conflict than men do (Hammer, Allen, & Grigsby, 1997; Lundberg, Mardberg, & Frankenhaeuser, 1994; Williams & Alliger, 1994) due to women experience an increase in conflict demands of work and family roles, and a decrease in control over home and household work, with more children at home (Noor, 2002). In other words, women spend more combined time on work and family activities than men do.

2.1. Direct Effects of WFC on Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction is defined as a person's evaluation of his or her job and work context (McShane & Von Glinow, 2010). In other words, job satisfaction relates to the emotional state resulting from appraising one's job (Locke, 1969). A number of antecedents to job satisfaction have been proposed and investigated which identified individual level demographic and dispositional variables, role perceptions, supervisory behaviors, and job characteristics that predict employees' job satisfaction (Brown & Peterson, 1993). A number of studies have examined the relationship between work-family conflict and job satisfaction and found that work-family conflict was negatively related to job

satisfaction (Aryee, 1993; Noor, 2002; Aminah, 1996). Furthermore, more research has explored the effects of WFC to the women's job satisfaction which reported that work-family conflict was negatively related to married women's job satisfaction (Aryee, 1993; Parasuraman, Greenhaus, Rabinowitz, Bedeian, & Mossholder, 1989; Kinnunen, & Mauno, 1998).

Aminah (1996) reported that most of the existing research on the relationship between work and family conflict has been conducted in Western societies, but as more women in non-Western societies join the work force, understanding the effects of WFC on these women's satisfaction has become increasingly important. Moreover, taken a sample of employed married women in Malaysia, the findings showed that negative relationship has been found between work-family conflict and job satisfaction (Noor, 2002; Aminah, 1996; Mohd. Kamil, 1993), which are similar to previous studies (Greenhaus & Parasuraman, 1986; Kopelman, 1983; Parasuraman, 1989; Sekaran, 1985). However, when the relationship was explored in a longitudinal model, the result showed that WIF predicted women's job satisfaction whereas FIW had no relationship with women's job satisfaction (Grandey, Cordeiro, & Crouter, 2005). Accordingly, the following hypothesis is proposed:

P1: Work-family conflict has a significant negative influence on job satisfaction.

2.2. Moderating Effects of Personality Traits on the Relationship between WFC and Job Satisfaction

In recent years, a five-factor model has emerged to be a useful and meaningful taxonomy for organizing personality traits (Bruck & Allen, 2003). Daft (2008) argued that personality can be defined as the set of unseen characteristics and processes which reflects a stable pattern of behaviour in response to ideas, objects, or people in the environment. Personality was approached according to the framework of the Big Five which consist of conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, emotional stability and openness to experience (Goldberg, 1992). Expected relationships are discussed below.

2.2.1. Conscientiousness

According to Costa and McCrae (1991), the basis of this personality dimension lies within individual differences among planning, organizing, and carrying out tasks. Specifically, conscientiousness refers to people who are careful, dependable, and self-disciplined. In contrast, people with low conscientiousness tend to be careless, less thorough, more disorganized, and even irresponsible (McShane & Von Glinow, 2010). Miller (1999) reported that conscientiousness moderates the impact of role clarity and ambiguity on individual well-being as role ambiguity in the work environment has less harmful effects on the conscientious individuals. It seems that conscientious individuals who are more effective at managing their time, responsibilities, tasks, and conflicts that arise at work and home are less likely to report WFC (Aryee, 1993). Furthermore, Bruck and Allen (2003) found that more conscientious individuals were experiencing less WFC indicating that they are well-planned and well-organized thus help them prevent work and family conflicts from occurring. Hence, conscientiousness individuals tend to reduce WFC which lead to increased job satisfaction.

2.2.2. Extraversion

According to McShane and Glinow (2010), extraversion characterizes people as outgoing, talkative, sociable, and assertive. In addition, extroverts are cheerful, energetic and optimistic. Conversely, people who score low on this personality dimension are referred to introverts who can be described as reserved, independent, and quiet (Costa & McCrae, 1991). Based on the Lounsbury's (2003) study, the research reported that extraversion tends to correlate significantly with career satisfaction with job satisfaction. The results suggested that introverts individuals would be more likely to be satisfied with working in IT rather than extroverts individuals because extroverts tend to be dissatisfied working in an occupation that requires less social interaction. However, most studies found that extraversion is not significantly related to WFC (Watson, 1988; Stoeva, 2002; Bruck & Allen, 2003; Rantanen, 2005; Wayne, 2004). Therefore, extraversion is hypothesised not to moderate the relationship between WFC and job satisfaction.

2.2.3. Agreeableness

This personality dimension refers to people who are courteous, good-natured, empathic, and caring. Some scholars prefer to label this person as “friendly compliance” rather than with its opposite being “hostile non-compliance” (McShane & Von Glinow, 2010). In addition, Costa and McCrae (1991) describe the individual with high level of agreeableness as helpful, sympathetic to others, soft-hearted, cooperative and good-natured. In contrast, an individual who scores low on agreeableness is characterized as being egocentric, competitive, irritable, and sceptical of other’s intentions. The study of Bruck and Allen (2003) discovered that less agreeable individuals tends to experience WFC because people with less agreeableness are less inclined to seek others a source of support whereas agreeableness may foster cooperative exchanges between spouse or significant others which prevent conflict from developing. In addition, Kinnunen et al. (2003) argued that it is possible that agreeableness is related to well-being. Accordingly, agreeable individuals tend to reduce WFC which lead to increase their job satisfaction.

2.2.4. Emotional Stability

Emotional stability which refers to low neuroticism characterizes people as poise, secure, and calm whereas people with neuroticism (low emotional stability) tend to experience high levels of anxiety, hostility, depression, and self-consciousness (McShane & Von Glinow, 2010). According to Costa and McCrae (1991), individuals with high emotional stability (low neuroticism) are more likely to handle stressful situations without getting upset, whilst individuals with high neuroticism are less likely to control their impulses neither be able to cope with stress. In the study of Ahmas and Razzack (1983), emotional stability was positively related to job satisfaction. In addition, emotional stability (low neuroticism) has positive effects on an individual’s psychological well-being (Kinnunen, 2003). According to Bruck and Allen (2003), individuals with emotional stability or low neuroticism tends reduce WFC because they are more likely to handle stressful situations without getting upset, whereas individuals with low emotional stability are less likely to control their impulses or even cope with stress. Furthermore, individuals who are emotional instability are less likely to deal with pressures at work and home domains, and thus more likely to report high levels of WFC than individuals who are low on neuroticism. Therefore, individuals with emotional stability are able to reduce WFC and increase job satisfaction.

2.2.5. Openness to Experience

According to McShane and Von Glinow (2010), this dimension is the most complex as it generally refers to the extent to which people are imaginative, creative, curious, and aesthetically sensitive. In contrast, people with low openness to experience tend to be more resistant to change, less open to new ideas, and more conventional and fixed in their ways (McShane & Von Glinow, 2010). In addition, individuals characterized as high on this dimension demonstrate curiosity for both inner and outer worlds and are willing to entertain new and original ideas and values whereas individuals in contrast prefer familiarity to novel and usually have muted emotional responses (Costa & McCrae, 1991). Lounsbury (2003) identified that openness individuals are likely to accept change, learn and gain new experience hence result in positive correlation with job satisfaction. However, previous studies consistently found that openness to experience is not significantly related to with WFC (Watson, 1988; Stoeva, 2002; Bruck & Allen, 2003; Rantanen, 2005; Wayne, 2004). Therefore, openness to experience is hypothesized not to moderate the relationship between WFC and job satisfaction.

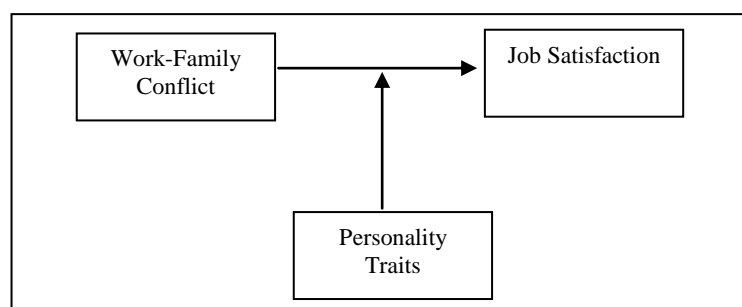
As stated earlier, the study of personality traits have not been extensively explored in the context of work-family conflict. Nevertheless, stress researchers have given special attention to the role of personality factors in stressors-strain relationship where actually work-family conflict is considered as a potential stressor that leads to various form of stress reactions (McShane & Von Glinow, 2010). Nevertheless, there are findings referring to the possibility that lack of emotional stability could intensify the relationship between work-family conflict and well being (Stoeva, Chiu, & Greenhaus, 2002) and the effects of inter-role conflict on positive mood were moderated by negative affectivity in women (Williams, 1991).

The result of Kinnunen’s (2003) study indicates that personality traits moderate the relationship between work-family conflicts and well-being outcomes. Emotional stability and agreeableness turned

out to be significant factors that moderate the above relationship and these findings were consistent with others (e.g. Noor, 2002; Stoeva, 2002; Watson & Clark, 1992; Williams, et. al., 1991). In addition, conscientiousness was reported to be negatively correlated with work-family conflict (Bruck & Allen, 2003; Wayne, 2004) but positively influenced job satisfaction (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Salgado, 1997; DeNeve & Cooper, 1998; Kossek, Noe & DeMarr; 1999; Kinnunen, 2003). Nonetheless, extraversion and openness to experience were found to be unrelated to work-family conflict (Watson, 1988; Stoeva, 2002; Bruck, 2003) and negatively related to job satisfaction (Lounsbury, 2003; Ahmas & Razzack, 1983). Taken together, the following hypotheses are summarized:

- P2: Emotional stability significantly moderates the relationship between WFC and job satisfaction.
- P3: Agreeableness significantly moderates the relationship between WFC and job satisfaction.
- P4: Conscientiousness significantly moderates the relationship between WFC and job satisfaction.
- P5: Openness to experience does not significantly moderate the relationship between WFC and job satisfaction.
- P6: Extraversion does not significantly moderate the relationship between WFC and job satisfaction.

Figure-1. Personality traits as a Moderating Effects on the relationship between Work-Family Conflict and Job Satisfaction



3. Methodology

A set of 38-items questionnaire using a five-point likert rating of between 1 to 5, where; 1 – Strongly Disagree, 2 – Disagree, 3 – Fair, 4 – Agree, 5 – Strongly Agree. A total of 90 married female teachers were selected as samples for this study using simple random sampling. The required data for this study were collected by distributing a set of questionnaire to the selected teachers. The questionnaire were distributed to 90 married female teachers at selected primary and private schools in Klang Valley. This study focused on teachers because teacher is one of the stressful occupation (McShane & Von Glinow, 2010) which tends to cope with WFC and job satisfaction issues. Data collected will be tabulated and analyzed using Rasch Unidimensional Measurement Model and with the aid of Rasch Analysis Software - WinSteps®, a rating scale model that uses the item response theory to test the overall data fit (Bond & Fox, 2007).

4. Conclusion

There are abundance of studies on women and labour and most of them are focusing on the quantitative aspects of women's labor and the psychological process. Other researchers have noted that personality traits have been only minimally considered in studies of work-family conflict and job satisfaction. Since it is expected that personality traits might have significant impact on the intensity of work-family conflict, it is worthwhile to explore the influence of these traits on the mentioned variable. Hence, a conceptual framework is developed indicating that the dependent variable of job satisfaction is influenced by the work-family conflict. This relationship is moderated by the personality traits which taken from the framework of the Big Five Model, that is, emotional stability, extraversion, conscientiousness, agreeableness, and openness to experience. It is concluded that this paper is perhaps one of the earlier to propose that the different personality traits might have different

influence on the way the married women employees manage their work-family conflict and job satisfaction in Malaysia.

5. Acknowledgement

The authors are gratefully acknowledged Faculty of Business Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA for supporting this research paper.

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