

The Effects of Neuroticism, Extraversion and Conscientiousness on Work and Family Conflicts

A Field Research Investigation

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Abstract

Over the past two decades, a volume of research on work-family conflict (WFC) has been done, contributing to a huge body of knowledge in the field. Work-family conflict (WFC) is a common topic of modern life in many countries and cultural contexts. However, the perception and prevalence of WFC, its antecedents and consequences tend to vary across cultures and times.

The purpose of the present study is to investigate the predictor role of important personality traits in relation to work-family conflict and family-work conflict. Although an extensive body of literature exists on the consequences of work-family Conflict (WFC), comparatively little research has examined the personality's antecedents. Thus, the present study expands the literature by examining three personality variables (conscientiousness, extraversion, neuroticism) in relation to work-interference-with-family (WIF) and family-interference-with-work (FIW) conflict.

Introduction

Former researchers have identified numerous consequences of work-family and family-work conflicts, including work-related outcomes, non work-related outcomes, and stress-related outcomes [1, 2], highlighting the potentially deleterious effects of WFC and FWC for both individuals and organizations. In terms of antecedents, researchers have found support for role-related variables as well as personality variables [3, 4], though comparatively less research has been conducted on the latter.

To that end, researchers have investigated, and found support for, numerous antecedents of WFC, including those arising in the work domain (e.g., work time, role overload, schedule flexibility, work support) and those arising in the family domain (e.g., family conflict, family support; see [3, 5]).

Generally, the present study is identifying individual difference variables that relate to WFC and FWC. In fact, the present study aims to expand the construct's literature and allow for the identification of individuals who may be at higher risk for experiencing conflict between the work and family domains.

Research Problem, Objectives and Plan

Regarding to Kahn et al. [6] and their researches on role conflict, Greenhaus and Beutell [7] defined work-family conflict as "a form of inter-role conflict in which the role

pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect. That is, participation in the work (family) role is made more difficult by virtue of participation in the family (work) role". Conversely, Carlson and Frone [8] conceptualized work-family conflict as external (representing outward behavioral interference) or internal (representing psychological preoccupation while in the other role), making empirical support for the proposed factor structure.

In addition to the various types of work-family conflict, researchers have acknowledged the bi-directionality of the variable; specifically, work can interfere with family (WFC), and family can interfere with work (FWC) [9]. Moreover, according to the domain specificity hypothesis, situational variables associated with a given domain relate to conflict originating from that domain [4, 9].

Additionally, a small amount of researches has examined the role of individual differences, such as personality traits on work and family conflicts [10]. Because of personality traits have been moderately neglected in the study of work-family conflict, the current study contributes to the work-family literature by investigating their roles in the process.

This research consistent with other empirical and research works recognized that a relative lack of literature regarding the relationship between personality traits and work and family conflicts in Asian male and female nurses, and there have been few studies concerning these relations in the Asian workers.

Literature review

First, a literature review of studies analysing work and family conflict and family-work conflict and their antecedents and consequences was conducted. The majority of these studies showed some of these consequences are much more known than other such as, personality traits [10] but unfortunately most of these researches have been done by European and American countries.

Neuroticism. Compared to other dispositional personality antecedents examined in the work-family conflict literature, neuroticism has received the most research attention and scientific support. Various samples and studies showed that neuroticism has been positively linked to negative spillover from work to family and family to work [11]; to WFC and FWC [12, 13, 14] to time and strain conflicts [15, 13], and to a bidirectional measure of WFC [16]. Thus, the positive relationship between neuroticism with work and family conflicts is well-supported.

Extraversion. Another one of the big five personality traits, extraversion can be defined by the six subscales: warmth, gregariousness, assertiveness, activity, positive emotionality, and excitement seeking [17]. Thus, high-extravert people tend to be outgoing and energetic, whereas individuals low on extraversion are more introverted and reserved [18]. Researchers have reported a negative relationship between extraversion and WFC, with some inconsistencies. For example, Grzywacz and Marks [19] found that extraversion was negatively related to both negative spillover from work to family (among women and men) and negative spillover from family to work (among women only). Regardless they found that family-to-work spillover only take place for women workers; other researchers have reported a relationship between FWC and extraversion in their studies [12, 20]. To now, overall the literature supports the notion that individuals high on extraversion tend to report lower levels of work-family conflict.

Conscientiousness. Conscientiousness represents one of the five major variables in the five factor model of personality and can be defined in six subscales, including competence, order, dutifulness, self-discipline, deliberation, and achievement striving [17]. Therefore, highly conscientious individuals tend to be organized, responsible, and efficient, while

individuals with low conscientiousness tend to be lackadaisical, unreliable, and careless in working toward their goals [18]. Researchers examining conscientiousness as an antecedent to work-family conflict have generally reported a negative relationship. For example, FWC and conscientiousness were negatively related among a sample of 164 employees at one of the American universities [10]. Also, some of researches could obtain the same result in the Netherlands [20]. Although these studies did not find a significant relationship between WFC and conscientiousness, other researchers found. For example, Wayne et al. [14] found that conscientiousness was negatively related to both WIF and FIW using a national, random sample (N=2,130). Although the correlation between FIW and conscientiousness was slightly higher than that of WIF and conscientiousness, they were both significant ($r_s = -.20$ and $-.17$, respectively). Additionally, Smoot [16] reported a negative relationship between a general measure of WFC and conscientiousness. Thus, while studies linking WFC and conscientiousness have found mixed results, the literature generally supports a negative relationship between work-family conflict and conscientiousness.

There are many researches that have investigated the relations between personality traits and work-family conflict and family-work conflict. The majority of them demonstrate that these three personality components have a potential relationship with these conflicts [11, 12, 19, and 20]. But it seems this is needed to conduct new research to show that if these conclusions between male and female are similar or not.

Developing the research model and Hypotheses

According to a review of previous studies related to the mentioned variables, we have a basis for the recent survey [e.g. 1, 4, 8, and 9.10]. In addition to the review, we are going to find the types of effects between men and women working groups that if the amount and direction of the relationship between male nurses and female nurses are similar or not?

Population and Sample design

The study population consisted of all nurses who are working in hospitals of Ahvaz City. According to the hospital nurse's office in 2012 had a total of around 3000 nurses. For the study, 311 individuals from the population were randomly selected to account for hypothesis testing and 50 subjects were selected relative to the sampling issue. Generally, in this study, 311 hospital nurses from 6 units completed surveys of personality traits scale and work-family conflict scale.

Looking to Table1 provides us with a complete profile of the surveyed respondents.

Table I: The profile of surveyed respondents

Type	Number	Percent
Men	46	14.8%
(from 6 hospital units)		
Women	265	85.2%
(from 6 hospital units)		
Total	311	100.00%

Legend: Table 1 describes the profile of the respondents to the survey personality traits scale and work-family conflict scale

Research Design and Data Collection

The research design, involved a survey method was used in this study as it is very cost effective and easy to administer self survey. There is high level of flexibility in the process of administering questions for the study and hence the survey method the best and most preferable research design in this research. Survey method is preferred because population characteristics are clearly displayed.

Data was collected through questionnaire method where self-reported questionnaires are administered. Open and closed ended questions used in gathering information. Participants had adequate time to respond to the asked questions. Accurate and reliable data was collected through questionnaire method. Participants studied through this method are given adequate time and freedom to answer the questions and hence accurate information is collected. Using of closed and open ended questions helps in restricting participants to some questions and gathering wide range of information respectively.

Data analysis and model testing

Resolving the issues that were stated in the preceding methodology section, the data were processed using statistical software packages (SPSS 16). Also, Simple and Multiple regression analysis were conducted. Three research hypotheses were investigated by Pearson correlation and Regression analysis. The results of testing each of the three hypotheses are given below:

The results of testing hypothesis H_1 :

Hypothesis H_1 is related to simple relationship between three personality traits (Neuroticism, Extraversion and Conscientiousness) with work-family conflict and family-work conflict in men and women that were accepted based on the data analysis. Generally, the Pearson correlation analysis yielded the results shown in Table II. Specifically, the Pearson correlation analysis yielded the results shown in Table III.

Table II. Summary output of the Pearson correlation analysis

Variable	Work-family conflict	Family-work conflict
Neuroticism	R= 0/460 P= 0/001	R= 0/388 P= 0/001
Extraversion	R= - 0/348 P= 0/001	R= - 0/299 P= 0/001
Conscientiousness	R= - 0/176 P= 0/002	R= - 0/286 P= 0/001

Table III. Summary output of the Pearson correlation analysis in men and women

Sex	Variable	Work-family conflict	Family-work conflict
Men	Neuroticism	R= 0/429 P= 0/003	R= 0/323 P= 0/029
Women	Neuroticism	R= 0/459 P= 0/001	R= 0/401 P= 0/001
Men	Extraversion	R= - 0/151 P= 0/318	R= - 0/079 P= 0/604
Women	Extraversion	R= - 0/366 P= 0/001	R= - 0/329 P= 0/005
Men	Conscientiousness	R= - 0/164 P= 0/275	R= - 0/274 P= 0/065
Women	Conscientiousness	R= - 0/179 P= 0/003	R= - 0/288 P= 0/001

As seen in Table I, there was a strong, highly significant association between these three components of personality traits with work-family conflict and family-work conflict (see the table II). As you can see, the relationship between neuroticism with work-family conflict and family-work conflict is positive and significant and the relationship between extraversion with work-family conflict and family-work conflict is negative and significant. Also, the relationship between conscientiousness with work-family conflict and family-work conflict is negative and significant (according to the former researches [1, 4, 8, and 9.10]). It should be mentioned that, although all of these relations are significant but their amount is different between male and female nurses separately (see the table III). In fact, it shows that negative effects of neuroticism on work and family conflicts and in women is significantly much more than men. Generally, these effects can have a vital role in increasing work and family conflict level who nurses experience in the hospitals.

The results of testing hypothesis H₂

Hypothesis H₂ is related to multiple relationships between these three components of personality traits and work and family conflicts. In other word, which of these personality traits can be a stronger predictor of WFC and FWC in the nurses? These results demonstrate that neuroticism ($r = - .385$ and $P = 0.001$) and extraversion ($r = - .163$ and $P = 0.007$) respectively are much more important predictors of work-family conflict than conscientiousness ($r = - .017$ and $P = 0.755$). It means that in the same working condition (nursing) the nurses who with more neuroticism and extraversion levels experience more work-family conflict (see table IV). In addition, the same results show that neuroticism ($r = - .290$ and $P = 0.001$) and conscientiousness ($r = - .151$ and $P = 0.008$) respectively are much more important predictors of work-family conflict than extraversion ($r = - .094$ and $P = 0.129$). It means that in the same working condition (nursing) the nurses who with more neuroticism and conscientiousness levels experience more family-work conflict than extraversion ($r = - .094$ and $P = 0.129$) (see table V).

Table IV. Summary output of the multiple regression analysis (Enter Method)

Dependent	Independent	MR	RS	SEE	F, P	B	T	Sig	N
	Neuroticism					-.385	-6.56	0.001	311
Work-family conflict	Extraversion	0.480	0.231	6.19	30.67 0.001	-.163	2.70	0.007	311
	Conscientiousness					.017	.312	0.755	311

Table V. Summary output of the multiple regression analysis (Enter Method)

Dependent	Independent	MR	RS	SEE	F, P	B	T	Sig	N
Family-work conflict	Neuroticism					.290	- 4.79	0.001	311
	Extraversion	0.429	0.184	5.37	23.03	.094	-1.52	0.129	311
	Conscientiousness				0.001	-.151	-2.65	0.008	311

Finally, the current research has presented some important novelties to work and family literature. Regarding to this research it will be necessary to know while women nurses can work as well as men nurses but in demanding situations women nurses are very sensitive than men. In addition to this conclusion, hospital managers must try to plan programs for improving their workers such as, stress management training and time management training to control and decline the negative effects of these conflicts on their workers.

Limitations and Further research

Turning to the limitations of the current work, we must point out that although the majority of the researches about work-family conflict have shown that this constructs have negative effect on employees but it is possible to decrease or control these effects by carrying out organizational and personal programs for workers and especially hospital nurses. So, it is needed to future research investigate the positive effects these programs in decreasing work and family conflicts in workplaces.

Nevertheless, further researches could examine the current research in other countries and on other samples such as teachers, particularly in Asian countries to see whether it can be applied. Finally, future studies can use different methodologies and samples to test whether it makes sense.

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