

The Interrelationships among Core-Self Evaluation, Coping, Work-Family Conflict, and Job/Family Satisfaction: A Cognitive Framework of the Work-Family Interface

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ABSTRACT

This study asserted that work-family conflict (WFC) is a self-evaluation process involving individuals' evaluation of core self (CSE) and environmental resources. In addition, coping behavior is based on an evaluation of the urgency of an incident. People cope according to their cognition of the environment of which this cognition is influenced by their own personality traits. This cognition elicits different levels of WFC and then forms the best coping behavior to accomplish work and family satisfaction. As a result of proposing a conceptual framework based on the bidirectional interrole conflict, roles player's CSE, coping strategies, and job/family satisfaction, insights are also provided into the cognitive nature of WFC. The relevant propositions detailing possible causal relationships are discussed.

Keywords: work-family conflict, core self-evaluation, coping behavior, job satisfaction, family satisfaction

INTRODUCTION

Traditionally, WFC was defined as "a form of interrole conflict in which the role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect" (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985), and would negatively affect individuals (Kossek & Ozeki, 1998; Netemeyer, Boles, & McMurrian, 1996) and organizations (Frone, Yardel, & Markel, 1997; Kossek, Colquitt, & Noe, 2001). To strive for work performance, women may choose to refrain from giving birth to children (Hewlett, 2002) and even overlook their family affairs in order to climb up the corporate ladder (Bennett & Reardon, 1985). The changes in gender relationships as well as the restructuring and downsizing strategies adopted by organizations in response to competition have caused an imbalance in work and family roles. As a result, WFC has become an important issue to the majority of dual-earner families as well as human resource management in business organizations.

Although previous studies contributed significantly to the understanding of WFC, there is still ample room for further discussions and development. For example, some scholars have recently turned

their attention to the dispositional factors such as negative affectivity and the Big Five personality traits (Stoevaet et al., 2002; Bruck & Allen, 2003; Lo, 2009). Voydanoff (2004) proposed that an individual's cognition of WFC is build upon their evaluation of available resources and demands levels. Moreover, a study of Luria & Torjman (2009) found that participants with higher CSE, higher cognitive abilities and higher levels of social support perceive lower stress levels.

As such, this study asserted that the variance of WFC can be better explained by CSE because of its cognitive valuation and generic nature. According to Judge et al. (2004), individuals with positive CSE appraise themselves in a consistently positive manner across situations; such individuals see themselves as capable, worthy, and in control of their lives. Tasousis, Nikolaou, Serdaris & Judge (2007) found that CSE moderates subjective well-being and physical and psychological health, and high CSE is associated with good physical health mechanisms.

Regarding to the coping behavior, when individuals experience stress, they will go through a cognitive process to evaluate the importance of the incidents and choose the appropriate coping behavior (O'Connor & Clarke, 1990). Frequently, coping behavior differs with different situations and personality traits. Individuals may cope differently according to different situations and thus choosing the necessary coping behavior or strategy is beneficial to the stress situation. Our study will begin with a brief review of prior models of WFC. We conclude that the existing models lack of emphasis on cognitive nature of WFC and its dynamic relationships with job/family outcomes. The framework proposed by the current study identifies dispositional antecedents, namely CSE (self-esteem, self-efficacy, self-esteem, locus of control, and neuroticism) and coping behavior, and consequences of WIF and FIW. This article addresses the following question: How does an individual's self-evaluation play a part in his/her cognition of WFC, corresponding coping behavior and life satisfaction?

In summary, this study asserted that WFC is a self-evaluation process involving individuals' evaluation of personal traits and environmental resources and CSE can provide better insight of the cognitive nature of WFC. In addition, coping behavior is based on an evaluation of the urgency of an incident. In other words, people cope according to their cognition of the environment of which this cognition is influenced by their own personality traits. This cognition elicits different levels of WFC and then forms the best coping behavior to accomplish work and family satisfaction. Therefore, based on the previous models of WFC, this study proposed a "Cognitive Evaluation Model of WFC" which incorporates two cognitive covariates – CSE and coping behavior (figure 1). This study also uses job satisfaction and family satisfaction as empirical indicators to validate the proposed.

Cognitive Evaluation Framework of WFC

The model is hereafter referred to as "cognitive evaluation framework of WFC." The propositions developed by this study are explained as follows. The model in Figure 1 depicts the possible relationships of CSE with WFC, coping behavior, life satisfaction, and job satisfaction.

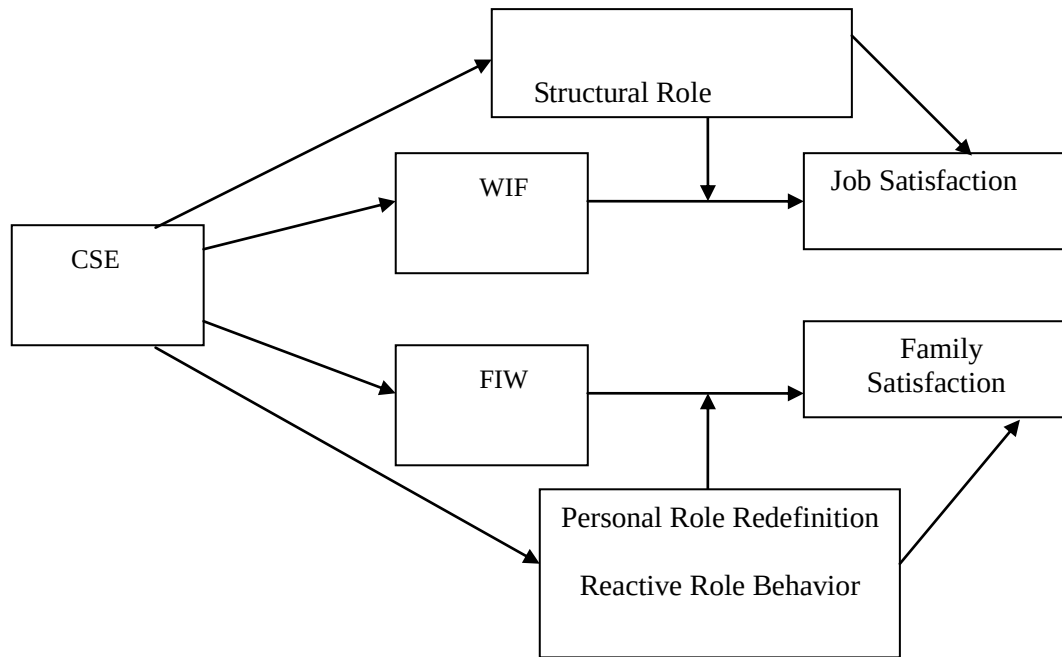


Figure 1 : Cognitive Evaluation Model of WFC

CSE and WFC

Boyar & Mosley (2007) asserted that individuals' CSEs influence their perceptions, attitudes, beliefs, decisions, and actions in their work and family domains. Those with positive CSEs are predisposed to perceive aspects of work and family domains in a positive manner. They may view life events more positively and seek situations that enhance positive role fulfillment, and may work to minimize negative situations (Judge, Bono, Erez & Locke, 2005). CSE can predict positive outcomes, such as family satisfaction, and also negative outcomes, such as strain (Judge, Erez, Bono & Thoresen, 2002). Strain is an important component of WFC (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). Individuals may perceive intensifying strain when fulfilling multiple role demands, which may further lead to fatigue and burnout. Individuals with high CSEs can successfully manage their jobs and the high demands of life (Boyar & Mosley, 2007). In other words, individuals with high CSEs perceive lower conflict in their work and family domains. Also, many scholars stressed that WFC should be classified into two dimensions – WIF and FIW (Frone, 2003; Frone et al., 1992; Mesmer-Magnus & Viswesvaran, 2005; Netemeyer et al., 1996). Therefore, we theorize the following relationships between high CSE, WFC, WIF and FIW:

Proposition 1: Individuals with high CSEs perceive low WFC.

Proposition 1a: Individuals with high CSEs perceive lower WIF.

Proposition 1b: Individuals with high CSEs perceive lower FIW.

WIF, FIW, Job and Family Satisfaction

Burke (1988) noted that a higher level of WIF was related to more psychological burnout and alienation and less job satisfaction in his sample of police officers. Bacharach et al (1991) found that WIF was significantly related to burnout, which then was related to lower job satisfaction for both a sample of engineers and sample of nurses. A study by Thomas and Ganster (1995) also suggested that WIF was negatively related to job satisfaction. As to the studies of FIW, Wiley (1987) demonstrated that FIW was negatively related to family conflict in a sample of employed graduate students. Similar conclusions were drawn by Wu et al. (2010), who studied Taiwanese female business owners.

WIF and FIW scholars discovered that outcome variables should be discussed in terms of domains, i.e. WIF affects job outcomes and FIW affects family outcomes (e.g., Fu & Shaffer, 2001; Boyar & Mosley, 2007; Wu, Chang & Zhuang, 2010). Some scholars argued on the basis of WFC's spillover effect and suggested that outcome variables would be influenced by cross-domains and that WIF would also affect family satisfaction (e.g., Frone, Yardel & Markel, 1997; Wayne, Musisca & Fleeson, 2004). Although different viewpoints are detected in literature, research results showed that they are generally attributed to domain specific demand levels and are predictable (e.g., Kossek & Ozeki, 1998; fu & Shaffer, 2001; Wu, Chang & Zhuang, 2010). Therefore, this study posits the following propositions:

Proposition 2: WIF is negatively correlated with job satisfaction and the relationship intensity will be higher than that of WIF and family satisfaction.

Proposition 3: FIW is negatively related to family satisfaction, and the relationship intensity is higher than that of FIW and job satisfaction.

CSE, WIF and FIW

As mentioned above, CSEs are correlated with job strain and stress (Best et al., 2005). High CSEs are negatively correlated with WFC (Boyar & Mosley, 2007). Past studies also noted that WIF can predict job satisfaction and FIW can predict family satisfaction (e.g, Allen et al., 2000; Kossek & Ozeki, 1998). However, empirical testing of the cross relations has been insignificant (Fold, Heinen & Langkamer, 2007). Individuals with high CSEs may view life events more positively and seek situations that enhance positive role fulfillment, and may work to minimize negative situations (Judge, Bono, Erez & Locke, 2005; Judge, Erez, Bono & Thoresen, 2002). This study theorizes that conflict is caused by a form of context and the context will differ with the individual's different subjective perception. Therefore, this study adopts WFC (a negative conceptualization) as the focus of the proposed model to explore the relationships among CSE, WIF and FIW, and job and family satisfaction. Extending the role relationship of moderators proposed by Baron & Kenny (1986), this study theorizes that individuals would form different perceptions of WIF according to different levels of CSE, which would further have different effects on job satisfaction. Similarly, different perceptions of FIW would cause different effects on family satisfaction. In other words, high CSE individuals (stronger cognitive evaluation ability) would stimulate a higher level of motivation to enhance job satisfaction through the

assessment of WIF contexts (or attempt to reduce conflict). Similarly, high CSE individuals would attempt to reduce FIW and enhance family satisfaction. This leads to Proposition 4 and Proposition 5:

Proposition 4: Higher CSE individuals perceive lower WIF and higher job satisfaction.

Proposition 5: Higher CSE individuals perceive lower FIW and higher family satisfaction.

Coping Behavior

Lo et al. (2003) found that married working females in Hong Kong would lower their expectation of their children's performance and their living quality when dealing with WFC. Ng et al. (2002) noted that a majority of females in Hong Kong would lower their expectation for promotion because they believed that marriage and family are personal choices. In other words, WFC is a personal problem and they should address it by themselves. However, researches on similar topics are thus far scant. Employees of Taiwanese companies are still inclined to treat their job and family domains separately. If there were conflicts in job and family demands, they would act according to the conclusions of Ng et al. (2002). The Chinese societies are still confined by traditional culture. In other words, due to job considerations, individuals may hire a nanny or cleaner to help them complete their individual role demands; structural coping may perhaps be applied to work. Moreover, some individuals may adjust their work flows according to the age of their children, which is a form of personalized or reactive coping behavior. This could perhaps be applied to the family domain. Then:

Proposition 6: Structural coping behavior moderates the decrease in job satisfaction caused by WIF conflict.

Proposition 7: Personalized and reactive coping behavior moderates the decrease in family satisfaction caused by FIW conflict.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The current work proposed a framework to address the questions of how an individual's self-evaluation plays a part in his/her cognition of WFC, corresponding coping behavior and life satisfaction. Regardless of the interactive nature of work-family conflict, this study maintained that the personal cognition plays the most important part for an individual deciding whether work or family stressors were influencing his/her life. Therefore, this study asserts that the variance of WFC can be better explained by CSE because of its cognitive valuation and generic nature. This effort should contribute to the understanding of the nature of WFC and its dynamic relationships with job/family outcomes.

REFERENCE