



Work-Life Conflict and Work Stress: The Mediating Role of Personality

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Abstract

In the current world of work and life, individuals typically encounter many obstacles that can severely impair their well-being. Among these difficulties, stress and work-family conflicts have surfaced as major problems impacting people individually, in groups, and in society. Striking a balance between work and family obligations may be difficult. Stress and conflict can have a number of detrimental effects, such as poor performance, decline in job satisfaction, and severe health effects. The purpose of this paper is to examine how personality factors may mitigate work-family conflicts and stress in employees. Through an investigation of the relationship between work-family conflicts and stress and Big Five personality traits, this study aims to advance the understanding of the intricate interactions between individual differences and environmental factors that shape well-being. A sample of 250 employees from various sectors were administered a questionnaire consisting of Personality, Work-family conflict and Work Stress scales. Correlation analysis showed that except for Extraversion, the remaining Personality dimensions showed significant correlation with Work-family Conflict and Work Stress among employees. Multiple regression results reveal that relationship between Work-to-family Conflict and Work Stress is partially mediated by Conscientiousness and Openness to Experience. The study highlights the importance of considering personality traits when examining work-family conflict and stress. Further Research has possibilities to investigate how personality interacts with gender or age to influence work-family conflict and stress, explore the specific reasons behind the gender difference in work-family conflict and examine how education interacts with factors as job type to influence work-family experiences.

Keywords: Work-family conflict; Work stress; Big Five Personality; Well-being; Job satisfaction

1. Introduction

In the current world of work and life, individuals typically encounter a many obstacles that can severely impair their well-being. Among these difficulties, stress and work-family conflicts have surfaced as major problems impacting people individually, in groups, and in society as large. Striking a balance between work and family obligations may be difficult, and stress and conflict can have a number of detrimental effects, such as poor performance, a decline in job satisfaction, and severe health effects. Although the impact of stress and work-family conflicts has been well studied, personality is increasingly understood to play a moderating influence in these consequences [1]. Individuals' perceptions and reactions to work-family conflicts and tensions can be influenced by their personality characteristics, which are comparatively consistent patterns of thoughts, feelings, and

behaviours [2]. Individual variations in coping strategies and resilience can be better understood by taking into account the interactions between personality factors, work-family conflicts, and stress. Stress and work-family conflicts are common problems in today's culture, especially for those who work and have to juggle their obligations to their families and their employment [3]. These conflicts, which may cause stress and detrimental effects on people and organizations, can originate from a variety of situations, including competing time obligations, role overload, and inter-role conflict [4]. Balancing the demands of work and family continues to be a significant challenge for today's working individuals [5]. Personality traits, such as extraversion, conscientiousness, neuroticism, agreeableness, and openness to experience, are known to influence how individuals perceive and respond to stressors in their

environment. The purpose of this article is to examine how personality factors may mitigate work-family conflicts and stress in employed individuals. Through an investigation of the relationship between work-family conflicts and stress and personality traits like extraversion, conscientiousness, neuroticism, agreeableness, and openness to experience, this study aims to advance our understanding of the intricate interactions between individual differences and environmental factors that shape well-being outcomes.

1.1. Work-Family Conflict

Work-family conflict may occur when roles are incompatible, according to [6], who characterized it as "a form of inter role conflict in which the general demands of time, devoted to, and strain created by the job interfere with performing family-related responsibilities." Work-family conflict has a number of detrimental effects, including increased emotional exhaustion [7], emotional intelligence and self-efficacy [8], lower work-life balance, job satisfaction, job performance, & work engagement [9]. In addition, job dissatisfaction has been linked to this conflict.

1.2. Work Stress

The negative emotional reaction that people may have in or out of the job when they believe they are unable to adequately respond to a perceived danger is known as "stress," and it causes them to feel frustrated and anxious [10]. According to Kihara and Mugambi [11], a number of issues can lead to stress, including work-life balance, insufficient engagement, work-conditions that are detrimental to productivity and health, work overload, and the incapacity to handle demands at work or voice complaints due to fear of losing one's job (Dodanwala et al.,) [12]. According to Kyriacou [13], job stress is a collection of unpleasant emotional states that arise when an employee's resources and talents are insufficient to meet the demands of their job, including concern, anxiety, and frustration [14]. According to Kyriacou [13], job stress is a collection of unpleasant emotional states that arise when an employee's resources and talents are insufficient to meet the demands of their job, including concern, anxiety, and frustration [6].

1.3. Personality

Personality can be understood as the relative stability of a person's thought, feeling and behavioural tendencies across different situations [15]. According to personality theory, a process of predisposition accounts for people's perseverance in various spheres of life, including family, career, and education [16]. To explain human personality, numerous researchers have developed personality models. Examples of these models include the five factor model of personality [15], the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator [17], the Eysenck personality model [18], and Type A and B personalities [19]. The Five Factor Model (FFM) is now the most popular and useful taxonomy of personality among these several models [20]. The five main personality traits of FFM, sometimes known as the "Big Five," are neuroticism (N), extraversion (E), openness to experience (O), agreeableness (A), and conscientiousness (C).

1.4. Work-Family Conflict and Work Stress

Work-family conflict arises when employees carry issues and tensions from their jobs into their homes, which has a detrimental effect on the well-being of the family. In their study of the relationship between work-family conflict and job stress, Kim and Ling [21] found that the two were positively correlated. Additionally, work-family conflict is impacted by job stress, according to Netemeyer et al. [22]. Work-family conflict arises when an individual's capacity to participate in family activities is hindered by stress connected to their job. Work-family conflict and workplace stress are regularly linked, according to Byron's [23] research. The most significant antecedent of work-family conflict is job overload [24]. Role ambiguity, role conflict, and role overload were identified by Clark and Baltes [25] as stressors that precede work-family conflict. Work-family conflict may be reduced if employees are able to effectively manage role ambiguity, role conflict, and role overload. This will also help to prevent work-related issues from becoming entangled in personal matters. According to Young et al. [26], those who are under stress at work, have high expectations for their employment, and do not have a supportive work environment also tend to feel down at home and have more marital arguments. Work-family conflict rises

as a result of job stress, which makes it more difficult to fulfill the family role [22].

1.5. Personality and Work Life Conflict

Research on the possible influence of personality factors on "work-life conflict" was conducted by Leka and De Alwis [27]. As per the findings, the most significant personality characteristic that predicted work-life conflict was neuroticism. Furthermore, a substantial bivariate association was found between conscientiousness and all types of work-life conflict. Work-family conflict continues to be a compelling issue in workplaces. The conflict has widespread impact on employee's work and family life such as significant job stress, negatively impacting employee well-being, declining productivity and reduced organisational performance. When employees are stressed with Work-life conflict, they may become less engaged in discretionary behaviours that benefit an organisation [28]. Employees experiencing high levels of Work-family conflict have reported lower job satisfaction and reduced engagement in their work [29]. Research reported by Park, J.H., & Kim, M [30] have demonstrated that work-family Conflict can mediate the negative impact of organisational injustice on job performance. A longitudinal study reported by Wang, Y., et al [31] found that employees experiencing high levels of Work-family conflict over a long time were more likely to develop symptoms of depression, anxiety, burnout, decreased job satisfaction and productivity. The Big Five Personality traits have shown to influence individuals' responses to stressors, including work-family conflict. The Big Five traits have been found to be related to many aspects of work behaviour including stress. The results of a meta-analysis [32] found that Conscientiousness and Agreeableness were negatively associated with job burnout and Neuroticism was positively associated with job burnout. This suggests that personality traits can mediate the relationship between Work-family conflict and burnout. In support of this finding, Park, J.H., & Kim, M [33] indicates that Conscientiousness was positively associated and Neuroticism was negatively associated with job performance. In addition, it was found that individuals high on Neuroticism have a negative impact on Work-family

conflict and job satisfaction [34]. In a study done by Salanova, M., & Shaufeli, C [35] (2002), it was found that Extroverted individuals may be better able to cope with stress and burnout by seeking social support. A study conducted at Universiti Teknologi Mara Perlis (UiTM Perlis) [36] indicated that personality traits are stronger predictors of occupational stress than environmental factors. Specifically, neuroticism emerged as a significant predictor of occupational stress, with depression and anger hostility being the primary components contributing to this relationship. The study suggests that newly employed individuals are at a higher risk of experiencing high levels of occupational stress compared to those with more experience in the profession. Moreover, individuals with higher levels of depression and anger hostility are more likely to experience elevated levels of occupational stress. With these review of literature the hypothesis proposed for this study was H: Personality mediated the relationship between Work-family conflict and job stress.

2. Methods

From April to May 2024, this cross-sectional study was conducted at various organisations belonging to IT field, teaching field, clerks, doctors, nurses, and managers. To facilitate data collection, a convenient method was applied to select the participants. Employees were invited to use Google Forms to complete the questionnaires. And the purpose of the study was explained at the beginning. The questionnaire was related to Work-life conflict, and thus limited to subjects currently working. New recruits (working less than half a year), retired employees, and those on long-term leave were excluded. Initially, a total of 265 employees were recruited for the study. Subjects with missing data or invalid data were excluded from the analysis, resulting in a final study sample of 250 individuals. Job stress was studied with the help of The Workplace Stress Scale (1978) (The Marlin Company and the American Institute of Stress) [37], Work-family conflict with the Work and Family Conflict Scale (WAFCS) by Haslam, D., Filus, A., Morawska, A., Sanders, M. R., & Fletcher, R. [38], and Personality was studied with a very brief measure

of the Big-Five personality domains by Samuel D. Gosling, Peter J. Rentfrow, and William B. Swann Jr. [39]. The internal reliabilities (Cronbach's α) in the present study were 0.70, 0.83 and 0.74 respectively for Personality, Work-family conflict and Work stress. Descriptive statistics and correlation analyses were calculated with SPSS (IBM, released 2019, SPSS Statistics for Windows Version 26.0, Armonk,

New York). The mean and standard deviation were used to describe the score of each dimension scale, and t(t')- test or analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to test the difference between groups of variables. Pearson's r correlations were calculated to explore the association between variables. The hypothesis was tested with multiple regression to ascertain the mediation effect.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Results

3.1.1.Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 Demographic Characteristics and Scores of the Respondents (Mean $\pm$ Standard Deviation)

	No	%	N	E	O	A	C	WFC	WS
Total	252	100	6.55 $\pm$ 1.62	6.42 $\pm$ 1.67	7.38 $\pm$ 1.41	7.21 $\pm$ 1.29	7.53 $\pm$ 1.47	14.40 $\pm$ 4.29	23.05 $\pm$ 5.03
Gender									
Male	116	46	7.07 $\pm$ 1.43	6.52 $\pm$ 1.71	7.39 $\pm$ 1.46	7.06 $\pm$ 1.37	7.51 $\pm$ 1.48	13.74 $\pm$ 4.09	22.46 $\pm$ 4.88
Female	136	54	6.10 $\pm$ 1.65	6.55 $\pm$ 1.63	7.36 $\pm$ 1.36	7.33 $\pm$ 1.20	7.54 $\pm$ 1.47	14.96 $\pm$ 4.39	23.55 $\pm$ 5.12
t			4.950	-1.420	0.162	-1.711	-0.144	-2.269	-1.712
p			0.000	0.157	0.872	0.088	0.886	0.024	0.088
Age group									
21-30	132	52.4	6.53 $\pm$ 1.63	6.20 $\pm$ 1.71	7.46 $\pm$ 1.51	7.09 $\pm$ 1.36	7.48 $\pm$ 1.56	15.08 $\pm$ 4.48	23.37 $\pm$ 5.26
31-40	34	13.5	6.26 $\pm$ 1.46	6.21 $\pm$ 1.67	6.97 $\pm$ 1.21	6.88 $\pm$ 1.00	7.05 $\pm$ 1.41	14.41 $\pm$ 4.16	23.70 $\pm$ 4.92
More than 40	86	34.1	6.69 $\pm$ 1.68	6.80 $\pm$ 1.56	7.40 $\pm$ 1.30	7.51 $\pm$ 1.21	7.79 $\pm$ 1.32	13.34 $\pm$ 3.85	22.30 $\pm$ 4.68
F			0.883	3.490	1.725	4.034	3.179	4.360	1.509
p			0.415	0.032	0.180	0.019	0.043	0.014	0.223
Education									
Complete d school	9	3.6	6.11 $\pm$ 1.53	6.22 $\pm$ 1.20	7.33 $\pm$ 1.00	6.77 $\pm$ 1.64	7.66 $\pm$ 1.41	15.22 $\pm$ 3.70	25.33 $\pm$ 5.33
Graduate	104	41.3	6.57 $\pm$ 1.38	6.26 $\pm$ 1.70	7.36 $\pm$ 1.36	7.25 $\pm$ 1.14	7.25 $\pm$ 1.45	14.51 $\pm$ 4.17	23.17 $\pm$ 4.85
Post graduate	97	38.5	6.49 $\pm$ 1.89	6.52 $\pm$ 1.68	7.30 $\pm$ 1.47	6.98 $\pm$ 1.33	7.72 $\pm$ 1.47	14.86 $\pm$ 4.37	23.01 $\pm$ 5.23
Professional qualification	42	16.7	6.71 $\pm$ 1.58	6.59 $\pm$ 1.69	7.59 $\pm$ 1.46	7.69 $\pm$ 1.35	7.76 $\pm$ 1.47	12.85 $\pm$ 4.29	22.35 $\pm$ 4.98
F			0.404	0.601	0.411	3.364	2.187	2.361	0.902
p			0.751	0.615	0.745	0.019	0.090	0.072	0.441

Table 1 provides the sociodemographic characteristics and scores of the main variables in the

sample. Among the total of 252 valid samples, most respondents were female (54%), about half of them

were aged from 21 to 30 (52.40%) and were highly educated, with at least a university education experience (41%). The descriptions of the scores were as follows: WFC (14.40+4.29), WS (23.05+5.03), extraversion (6.42+1.67), agreeableness (7.21+1.29), conscientiousness

(7.53+1.47), neuroticism (6.55+1.62), and openness (7.38+1.41). And for WFC, there is difference between male and female respondents for Work-family conflict ($p = 0.024$) and differ with age as the p -value is less than 0.05. In all other instances statistical analysis did not have significant results.

3.1.2. Correlation Analysis

Table 2 Correlation Matrix between Main Variables

Correlations							
	E	A	C	ES (N)	OE	WFC	WS
E	1						
A	-.041	1					
C	.173**	.190**	1				
ES (N)	.099	.202**	.248**	1			
OE	.181**	.094	.334**	.303**	1		
WFC	.024	-.212**	-.170**	-.307**	-.169**	1	
WS	.033	-.224**	-.207**	-.280**	-.206**	.666**	1

**, Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The correlation analysis from Table 2 reveals that Work-family conflict is positively ($r = 0.66$, $p < 0.01$) and significantly related to stress. Furthermore, personality dimensions such as Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Emotional stability and Openness to experience had inverse correlation with work-family conflict and Work stress at $p < 0.01$ level.

Extraversion had no correlation with Work-family conflict and Work stress. Another finding was that all the significant results were weak correlations. Notable feature of the correlation analysis is that Emotional stability had the highest value of inverse relationship with Work-family conflict ($r = -0.307$, $p < 0.01$) and work stress ($r = -0.280$, $p < 0.01$).

3.1.3. Mediation Analysis

Table 3 Mediation Analysis

Total Effect (WFC -> WS)		Direct effect (WFC -> WS)		Indirect Effect (WFC -> WS)				
Co-efficient	p-value	Co-efficient	p-value		Co-efficient	SE	t-value	p-value
0.781	0.000	0.780	0.000	H:WFC->P-EXT->WS	0.050	0.142	0.355	0.723
		0.759	0.000	H:WFC->P-AGR->WS	-0.341	-0.087	-1.815	0.071
		0.761	0.000	H:WFC->P-CONS-.WS	-0.331	0.162	-2.042	0.042
		0.751	0.000	H:WFC->P-ES->WS	-0.256	0.153	-1.678	0.095
		0.762	0.000	H:WFC->P-OE->WS	-0.344	0.170	-2.024	0.044

The total effect of Work-family on Work Stress was significant ($H:B = 0.781$, $t = 14.103$, $p = 0.000$). Personality as a mediating variable is studied with five dimensions, i.e., Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Emotional Stability and Openness to Experience. With the inclusion of the mediating variable (Conscientiousness), the impact of Work-family Conflict and Work Stress has become significant with $B = 0.761$, $p < 0.05$. The indirect effect of Work-family Conflict on Work Stress through Conscientiousness was found significant ($B = -0.331$, $t = -2.042$, $p = 0.000$). This shows that the relationship between Work-family Conflict and Work Stress is partially mediated by Conscientiousness. Similarly, with the inclusion of the mediating variable (Openness to Experiences), the impact of Work-family Conflict and Work Stress has become significant with $B = 0.762$, $p < 0.05$. The indirect effect of Work-family Conflict on Work Stress through Openness to Experiences was found significant ($B = -0.334$, $t = -2.024$, $p = 0.000$). This shows that the relationship between Work-family Conflict and Work Stress is partially mediated by Openness to Experiences. All the remaining personality dimensions such as Extraversion, Agreeableness and Emotional Stability did not mediate between Work-family Conflict on Work Stress. To conclude, the hypothesis that Personality mediates the relationship between Work-family Conflict on Work Stress is partially accepted. (Refer Table 3)

3.2. Discussion

All occupations are characterised by varying degrees of Work-family conflict leading to Work stress. Personality dimensions in the employees will have a mediating effect to cope with both conflict and stress. This study brought out certain common findings across various sectors. The strongest negative correlations were observed with Emotional Stability, showing a 31% correlation with work-family conflict and a 28% correlation with work stress. Higher emotional stability translates to lower conflict and stress levels. Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, and Openness to Experience showed moderate negative correlations (around 17-22%) with both work-family conflict and work stress. Higher scores in these

dimensions suggest a tendency towards lower conflict and stress. This finding is supported by a study done by R.A, P. & R.J., W.[40], demonstrating that Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, and Emotional Stability (low Neuroticism) were negatively associated with work-family conflict. The article investigates how personality traits influence work-family conflict. The authors hypothesized that extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness to experience would all positively predict work-family conflict, while neuroticism would negatively predict it. Their findings showed that all except neuroticism were significant predictors. This suggests that personality does play a role in work-family conflict. In case of mediation analysis, it was found that Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Emotional Stability did not show a full mediation effect, but they might still play a role in how work-family conflict influences stress levels. Individuals high in Conscientiousness (organized, responsible) and Openness to Experience (adaptable, seek challenges) might be better equipped to manage work-family conflict, reducing its negative impact on stress. The findings of this study have found support in a few findings of reported studies. Wallace [41] suggested work-family conflict leads to stress and depression. It also explores the hypothesis that social support can lessen the negative effects of work-family conflict. This study delves deeper into the mechanisms behind the relationship between work and family demands and their impact on well-being. This research contributes to understanding how work characteristics, family demands, and social support interact to influence employee well-being. It highlights the importance of managing work-family conflict to prevent negative mental health outcomes like stress and depression. Another study was conducted with the fundamental premise that people's individual personality qualities influence how they perceive work-family conflict (W-F conflict). The findings suggest that personality traits including agreeableness, conscientiousness, openness to new experiences, and extraversion are predictive of conflicts at work and in the household. It's interesting to note that, contrary to expectations made by the literature, the hypothesis that suggested a negative

correlation between neuroticism and work-family conflict was not maintained. Work-family conflict has become a major social issue, with detrimental effects on people's health that include increased stress, mental instability, emotional tiredness, and a decline in life satisfaction (Nieuwenhuis R, Kossek EE.) [42]

Conclusion

The importance of considering personality traits when examining work-family conflict and stress is highlighted in the study. Gender differences in work-family conflict may be due to societal expectations. Age-related challenges in managing work-family demands were observed. Educational background may influence job type and career stage, impacting work-family conflict and stress. Different demographic groups may experience and manage work-family conflict and stress differently based on their life experiences, societal expectations, and personal characteristics. The study emphasizes the significant relationships between personality traits and work-family conflict/stress, highlighting the role of individual differences in how employees perceive and cope with work and family demands. The finding that younger employees experience more work-family conflict than older employees suggests that life stage and career development play a role in managing work and family responsibilities. Future research could focus on how personality interacts with gender or age to influence work-family conflict and stress, and explore specific reasons behind gender differences. Understanding these relationships can help organizations tailor their support programs to better meet the needs of their employees, ultimately improving employee well-being and organizational performance.

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