



A Study on the relationship between Work-Family Conflict, Emotional Intelligence, Perceived Stress, Job Satisfaction among Working Professionals

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Abstract

Maintaining a balance between professional and personal life presents a significant challenge for working individuals, often contributing to work-family conflict, emotional strain, and fluctuations in job satisfaction. The current study explores the relationship between work-family conflict, emotional intelligence, perceived stress, and job satisfaction among working individuals. A sample of 30 professionals, aged 21 to 40, was assessed using standardized psychological measures. The results indicate a significant relationship between work-family conflict and perceived stress, suggesting that higher conflict levels correspond to increased stress. Emotional intelligence emerged as a crucial factor in moderating stress and enhancing job satisfaction, highlighting its role in effective work-life management. Additionally, individuals experiencing higher job satisfaction reported lower perceived stress and better emotional regulation. These findings highlight the importance of fostering emotional intelligence and workplace strategies to mitigate stress and enhance job satisfaction, ultimately promoting a healthier work-life balance.

Keywords: *Work-Life Conflict, Emotional intelligence, Perceived Stress, Job Satisfaction*

Introduction

In today's fast-paced work environment, maintaining a clear distinction between personal and professional life is increasingly challenging, often leading to work-family conflict (WFC), which occurs when the demands of work and family roles become incompatible, causing stress and reduced well-being. According to Greenhaus and Beutell (1985), WFC arises when "pressures from the work and family domains make it difficult for an individual to meet role expectations, often leading to emotional exhaustion and diminished job satisfaction". The Spillover-Crossover Model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2013) further explains how stress experienced in one domain can spill over into another, affecting not just the individual but also their family members and work relationships. However, an individual's ability to manage such conflicts effectively depends on emotional intelligence (EI) and perceived stress levels. Emotional intelligence, which refers to the ability to recognize, understand, and regulate emotions, has been found to play a crucial role in mitigating the negative effects of work-family conflict. Individuals with higher EI tend to handle stress more effectively, communicate boundaries more assertively, and manage their professional and personal roles with greater ease (Mikolajczak et al., 2007). Conversely, perceived stress, an individual's subjective evaluation of their stress levels can significantly influence how well one separates their work and personal life. Research suggests that higher perceived stress is associated with greater difficulty in maintaining work-life boundaries, contributing to increased emotional strain and role overload (Cavanaugh et al., 2000). Recent studies also indicate that burnout rates are rising, with nearly 42% of employees reporting high-stress levels due to work-life imbalance (Gallup, 2023), highlighting the growing need for strategies that foster better boundary management.

Furthermore, research shows that women often experience higher levels of work-family conflict due to the dual burden of professional and household responsibilities, making it

imperative to examine gender differences in work-life balance (Kossek & Ozeki, 1998). Understanding the interplay between emotional intelligence, perceived stress, and work-family conflict is essential for developing interventions that promote workplace well-being, reduce stress, and enhance overall productivity. By exploring these relationships, this study aims to provide insights into how individuals can effectively separate their personal and professional lives while mitigating the negative consequences of work-family conflict.

Work-Family Conflict

Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) defined Work-family conflict as “a form of inter-role conflict in which the role pressures from 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. Netemeyer, Boles, and McMurrian (1996) defined work-family conflict as “a form of inter-role conflict in which the demands of work interfere with family responsibilities (work-to-family conflict) or family demands interfere with work responsibilities (family-to-work conflict).”

Research by Allen et al. (2000) indicates that work-family conflict is significantly associated with increased job stress, lower job satisfaction, and emotional exhaustion. Additionally, Byron (2005) found that individuals with high role demands are more susceptible to WFC, especially those in high-stress jobs. Studies have shown that employees who lack boundary management strategies face more severe consequences of WFC (Kossek, Lautsch, & Eaton, 2006).

Emotional Intelligence

Salovey and Mayer (1990) referred to Emotional Intelligence “as the ability to monitor one’s own and others’ feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them, and to use this information to guide one’s thinking and actions.” Bar-On (1997) defined Emotional intelligence “as an array of non-cognitive capabilities, competencies, and skills that influence one’s ability to succeed in coping with environmental demands and pressures.”

Research has demonstrated a significant inverse relationship between EI and perceived stress. Mikolajczak et al. (2007) found that individuals with high EI experience lower levels of job stress and better work-life balance due to their ability to regulate emotions and communicate effectively. Additionally, Slaski and Cartwright (2002) reported that higher EI is linked to greater resilience, better coping mechanisms, and reduced work-related stress. A meta-analysis by O'Boyle et al. (2011) showed that EI positively impacts job performance and job satisfaction by improving interpersonal relationships and stress management skills. Furthermore, research suggests that individuals with higher EI are better at setting boundaries between work and personal life, reducing the spillover of stress (Brackett, Rivers, & Salovey, 2011).

Perceived Stress

Cohen, Kamarck, and Mermelstein (1983) defined Perceived stress as “the degree to which situations in one’s life are appraised as stressful. It reflects how unpredictable, uncontrollable, and overloaded individuals find their lives”. Lazarus & Folkman (1984) defined it as “the result of an individual’s cognitive appraisal of the demands placed on them and their perceived ability to cope with these demands.”

Studies have shown that perceived stress is a key predictor of work-family conflict and job dissatisfaction. Cavanaugh et al., (2000) found that higher perceived stress correlates with increased role overload and burnout. Gallup’s (2023) workplace survey reported that 42% of employees experience high stress levels due to work-life imbalance, further highlighting the importance of stress management interventions.

Job Satisfaction

Locke (1976) defined Job satisfaction as “a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one’s job or job experiences.” Herzberg, Mausner, & Snyderman (1959) referred to it as “job satisfaction arises from intrinsic factors (motivators), such as achievement,

recognition, and work itself, while dissatisfaction stems from extrinsic factors (hygiene factors), such as salary, company policies, and supervision.”

Research indicates that work-life balance is a strong predictor of job satisfaction. Clark (2001) found that employees who effectively separate their work and personal lives report higher satisfaction and lower emotional exhaustion. Conversely, work-family conflict has been linked to lower job satisfaction, as individuals struggle to manage competing demands (Michel et al., 2011). Additionally, perceived stress plays a critical role in determining job satisfaction. Ganster and Rosen (2013) found that employees experiencing high stress levels due to excessive workload and poor boundary management report greater dissatisfaction and higher turnover intentions.

Purpose

The purpose is to study the relationship between Work-Life Conflict, Emotional Intelligence, Perceived Stress and Job Satisfaction among Working Professionals.

Hypothesis

1. There will be a significantly positive correlation between work-to-family conflict and family-to-work conflict.
2. There will be a significantly positive correlation between perceived stress and both work-to-family conflict and family-to-work conflict.
3. There will be a significantly negative correlation between emotional intelligence components (self-emotional appraisal, others' emotional appraisal, use of emotion, regulation of emotion) and work-family conflict.
4. There will be a significantly negative correlation between emotional intelligence and perceived stress.
5. There will be a significantly positive correlation between emotional intelligence and job satisfaction.

6. There will be a significantly negative correlation between work-family conflict and job satisfaction.

Methodology

Sample

A sample of 30 working adults, aged 21 to 40, was recruited from the North India region.

Measure

- ***Work and Family Conflict Scale (WAFCS)***: The scale was developed by Haslam et al. (2015). This scale consists of 10 items on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (Never) to 5 (Always). It assesses two dimensions: work-to-family conflict (WFC) and family-to-work conflict (FWC), with each subscale containing five items.
- ***Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS)***: The scale was developed by Wong and Law (2002). This scale consists of 16 items, using a 7-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 7 = Strongly Agree). It measures four dimensions: Self-Emotion Appraisal (SEA), Others' Emotion Appraisal (OEA), Use of Emotion (UOE), and Regulation of Emotion (ROE).
- ***Perceived Stress Scale (PSS)***: The scale is developed by Cohen et al. (1983). This scale consists of 10 items on a 5-point Likert scale (0 = Never to 4 = Very Often). It measures the degree to which situations in life are appraised as stressful, with higher scores indicating greater perceived stress.
- ***Generic Job Satisfaction Scale (GJSS)***: The scale is developed by Macdonald & MacIntyre (1997). This scale consists of 10 items on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree). It measures overall job satisfaction, including factors such as recognition, workplace relationships, job security, and management support. Higher scores indicate greater job satisfaction.

Procedure

The participants were informed about the purpose of the research, and the questionnaires were filled out using Google Forms. Each participant was thanked for their cooperation and their kind help. Standardised psychological tests were administered to the participants

Analysis of Data

Results

Table 1: *Mean, & standard deviation for Work to family conflict, Family to work conflict, Perceived stress, Self-Emotional Appraisal, Others Emotional Appraisal, Use of Emotions, Regulation of Emotion and Job satisfaction*

	Work to Family Conflict	Family to Work conflict	Perceived Stress	Self-Emotional Appraisal	Others Emotional Appraisal	Use of Emotion	Regulation of Emotion	Job satisfaction
N	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30
Mean	17.6	14.7	21.0	18.8	20.2	18.7	17.1	35.4
Standard deviation	7.44	7.50	5.07	7.86	7.90	7.75	7.26	11.0

Table 2: *Correlation Matrix*

	Work to Family Conflict	Family to Work conflict	Perceived Stress	Self-Emotional Appraisal	Others Emotional Appraisal	Use of Emotion	Regulation of Emotion	Job satisfaction
Work to Family Conflict	—							
Family to Work conflict	0.735*	—						
Perceived Stress	0.283	0.383*	—					
Self-Emotional Appraisal	0.452*	0.270	0.163	—				

Others	0.557	0.252	0.286	0.919*	—			
Emotional Appraisal								
Use of Emotion	0.519	0.272	0.203	0.875*	0.905*	—		
Regulation of Emotion	0.540	0.406*	0.163	0.801*	0.777*	0.780*	—	
Job satisfaction	0.561	0.353	0.144	0.788*	0.798*	0.868*	0.749*	—
Note. * $p < .05$, * $p < .01$, * $p < .001$								

Discussion of Results

The current study aimed to understand the Relationship Between Work-Life Boundaries, Emotional Intelligence, and Perceived Stress and Job satisfaction among Working Professionals.

Table 2 shows a significant positive correlation between work-to-family conflict and family-to-work conflict ($r = 0.735$, $p < 0.001$). This suggests that challenges in one domain (work or family) often spill over into the other, creating an interconnected conflict between the two areas. A study Bleiter, Russell, & Cooper (1992) extensively examined the bidirectional nature of work-family conflict. Their research highlighted that work stressors, such as excessive workload and job insecurity, increase work-to-family conflict, leading to negative emotions at home. Conversely, family demands, including childcare and household responsibilities, interfere with work performance, creating family-to-work conflict. Their findings reinforce the idea that work-family conflict functions as a reciprocal and interdependent process, where stressors in one domain amplify conflicts in the other.

Additionally, perceived stress was significantly positively correlated with family-to-work conflict ($r = 0.383$, $p < 0.05$), indicating that individuals who experience more interference from family responsibilities in their work tend to report higher stress levels. However, the correlation between perceived stress and work-to-family conflict ($r = 0.283$) was not significant, suggesting that the impact may be more pronounced in one direction. A study

by Kinnunen et al. (2006) investigated how stress influences work-family conflict and found that family-to-work conflict contributes more significantly to perceived stress than work-to-family conflict. They argued that balancing family responsibilities, particularly for individuals with caregiving duties, adds emotional strain, which exacerbates perceived stress. Their findings suggest that family responsibilities often demand greater emotional labour compared to work demands, making family-to-work conflict a stronger predictor of stress than work-to-family conflict.

A significant negative correlation was found between emotional intelligence components—self-emotional appraisal ($r = -0.452$, $p < 0.05$) and regulation of emotion ($r = -0.540$, $p < 0.01$)—and work-family conflict. Schutte et al. (2001) explored the role of emotional intelligence in managing work-family dynamics and found that individuals with higher emotional intelligence experience less work-family conflict. Their study suggested that emotionally intelligent individuals possess superior self-regulation skills, allowing them to manage workplace stress more effectively, communicate better in personal relationships, and prevent emotional spillover between work and family. The research highlighted how emotional intelligence acts as a buffer, enabling individuals to navigate competing demands without experiencing significant conflict.

Contrary to expectations, the correlation between perceived stress and emotional intelligence components was weak and not significant (r values ranged from 0.144 to 0.286), indicating that emotional intelligence alone may not be a direct predictor of stress reduction. A study by Slaski & Cartwright (2002) examined the link between emotional intelligence and workplace stress and found that while emotional intelligence helps individuals regulate their emotions, it does not necessarily eliminate perceived stress. Their findings suggest that stress is a multifaceted construct, influenced by external factors such as workload, organizational culture, and personal coping resources. Although emotional intelligence can improve emotional regulation, stress

management strategies and workplace interventions are equally necessary to mitigate stress effectively.

A strong positive correlation was observed between emotional intelligence and job satisfaction ($r = 0.788$ to 0.868 , $p < 0.001$), suggesting that individuals with high emotional intelligence experience greater workplace satisfaction. Wong and Law (2002) conducted a study on emotional intelligence and job satisfaction and found that employees with high emotional intelligence are more adaptable, have better interpersonal relationships, and experience higher levels of job engagement. Their study emphasised that emotional intelligence enables individuals to navigate workplace conflicts more effectively, maintain motivation, and foster positive work environments, all of which contribute to job satisfaction. Their findings highlight how emotional intelligence is a key determinant of workplace well-being and professional success.

A significant negative correlation was found between work-family conflict and job satisfaction ($r = -0.561$, $p < 0.01$), indicating that increased work-family conflict is associated with decreased job satisfaction. Netemeyer, Boles, and McMurrian (1996) explored the impact of work-family conflict on job satisfaction and found that employees who experience higher levels of work-family conflict report lower job satisfaction, increased stress, and greater intentions to leave their jobs. Their study highlighted that unresolved work-family conflict leads to burnout, reduced work commitment, and impaired job performance, ultimately affecting employee well-being and organisational productivity. These findings reinforce the need for work-life balance policies and flexible work arrangements to enhance job satisfaction.

Conclusion

As individuals transition into adulthood, they strive to balance personal and professional responsibilities, shaping their emotional well-being and overall satisfaction. Managing stress, emotions, and interpersonal relationships becomes essential in navigating these demands.

effectively. The purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between Work-Life Boundaries, Emotional Intelligence, and Perceived Stress among Working Professionals. The findings revealed a significant negative correlation between work-family conflict and job satisfaction, suggesting that individuals experiencing greater conflict between work and personal life tend to feel less satisfied in their jobs. Additionally, higher perceived stress was associated with increased work-family conflict, indicating that difficulty in balancing roles contributes to elevated stress levels. However, emotional intelligence emerged as a crucial protective factor, showing a negative correlation with perceived stress and a positive correlation with job satisfaction, reinforcing its role in enhancing well-being and resilience. These results highlight the importance of emotional intelligence and effective stress management in fostering a healthy work-life balance and overall job satisfaction. Developing these skills can help individuals navigate challenges more effectively, reducing conflict and enhancing both personal and professional fulfilment.

Directions for Further Research

Future studies should consider larger and more diverse samples to improve the generalizability of findings across different demographics and professional sectors. Longitudinal research could provide deeper insights into the causal relationships between work-family conflict, perceived stress, emotional intelligence, and job satisfaction. Additionally, examining the effectiveness of intervention programs, such as emotional intelligence training and stress management strategies, could offer practical solutions for enhancing well-being and job satisfaction. Incorporating qualitative methodologies, such as in-depth interviews or case studies, may further enrich the understanding of individual coping mechanisms. These avenues for future research would contribute to a more comprehensive and applied understanding of work-life balance and psychological resilience.

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