

Role of personality and affect on the social support and work family conflict relationship

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ABSTRACT

The relationship between support and work family conflict has been studied extensively, but previous studies have not examined if personality moderates this relationship. In this research, we examine the moderating influence of personality on the relationship between contextual support and work-family conflict across two studies. In Study 1, we examine if core self-evaluations (CSE) moderate the relationship between four different types of workplace support, 1. family friendly work policies (FFOP), 2. family supportive organizational climate (FSOC), 3. perceived organizational support (POS), and 4. perceived supervisor support (PSS), and work interfering with family conflict (WIF) using a sample of working adults (N=435). In Study 2, we examine if Big Five personality traits and negative affect moderate the relationship between co-worker support and (WIF) using a large national sample (N=1130) of working respondents from the “midlife in the US” (MIDUS) study of health and well-being. Taken together, the current research examines the moderating effect of several key personality variables on the relationship between important forms of social support and work family conflict. Results based on these two samples indicate CSE moderates the relationship between POS and WIF, and PSS and WIF, but does not moderate the relationship between FFOP and WIF, or FSOC and WIF. Further, conscientiousness and agreeableness moderate the relationship between co-worker support and WIF. Co-worker support and WIF is stronger for individuals with higher levels of negative affect. We discuss the implications for research and practice relating to work family conflict.

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1. Introduction

Management of work and family lives is a huge challenge for U.S. employees (Ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012; Kelly et al., 2014). Most U.S. employees indicate that they are overworked and do not have the necessary workplace flexible arrangements to deal with conflicting work and family roles (Valcour, Ollier-Malaterre, Matz-Costa, Pitt-Catsoupes, & Brown, 2011; Galinsky et al., 2005; Tang & Wadsworth, 2008). In an effort to clarify the antecedents of efficient management of work–family conflict, work–family scholars have often focused on the role played by support (e.g., Carlson & Perrewé, 1999; Grandey & Cropanzano, 1999; Kossek, Pichler, Bodner, & Hammer, 2011; Shockley & Allen, 2013).

Support has been broadly categorized as contextual support, defined as any form of support that originates outside of self and within various domains of life such as work or family (Ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012). Within the domains of work and family, specific forms of support, such as social support and family friendly organizational policies have been found to be very effective in the management of work–family conflict (Hammer, Kossek, Anger, Bodner, & Zimmerman, 2011; Kossek et al., 2011). Social

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support is defined as emotional, informational and instrumental assistance provided by significant others, like co-workers, supervisors or family members (Thoits, 2011) and family friendly organizational policies, are organizational practices that are aimed towards ameliorating conflict in the work–family domains (Grover & Crooker, 1995). In summary, support acts as an important resource that goes a long way in the management of work–family conflict and to understand this role played by support, conservation of resources (COR) theory offers a valuable framework (Halbesleben, Neveu, Paustian-Underdahl, & Westman, 2014; Hobfoll, Freedy, Lane, & Geller, 1990; Ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012).

COR theory is an integrative theory of resources that conceives of resources broadly (Halbesleben et al., 2014). COR theory argues that people seek to obtain and protect resources and in addition to contextual resources, personal characteristics also act as key resources that assist individuals in managing their work and personal lives (Hobfoll et al., 1990). COR theorists also contend that resources not only help in achieving the desired goals but also aid the accomplishment of more resources (Ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012; Halbesleben et al., 2014). Within the realm of COR theory, various forms of contextual support have been found to be effective in buffering the conflict in the work–family interface (Michel & Clark, 2013). In addition to contextual sources, personal resources, such as personality, also have been reported to influence work–family conflict (Michel, Mitchelson, Pichler, & Cullen, 2010; Michel & Clark, 2013). Although more companies have work life initiatives today than in the past, support in the work and family domains is becoming increasingly scarce as global competition has heightened the intensification of work and more workers are single parents or part of a dual-earner family. Given contemporary work lives, it is important to examine how personal resources act in conjunction with other sources of support in reducing work–family conflict (Kossek, Lewis, & Hammer, 2010).

In addition to COR theory, the Work–Home Resources (W–HR) model proposed by Ten Brummelhuis and Bakker (2012) also highlights the importance of personal resources. According to the W–HR model, resources do not act in isolation, but rather resources help in the production of other resources. For example, emotional support from a supervisor (a workplace resource) may lead to positive mood and enhanced self-esteem (personal resources), and together, these resources work towards work–family enrichment (Ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012). The role of personal resources, such as personality, in the effective management of work–family conflict has often cited in extant research. For example, Thoits (1994) regarded personality differences as ‘coping resources’ that influence individual ability to cope with life’s situations, and Grzywacz and Marks (2000) reported personality as a key influencer of work–family conflict.

Building on the above perspectives, we propose that contextual resources interact with personal resources to produce beneficial outcomes for the individual in the management of work–family conflict. In other words, contextual support resources from work and family domains interact with personal resource of personality to curb conflict in the work–family interface. From the work domain, we examine four important organizational support variables: family-friendly organizational policies (FFOP), family

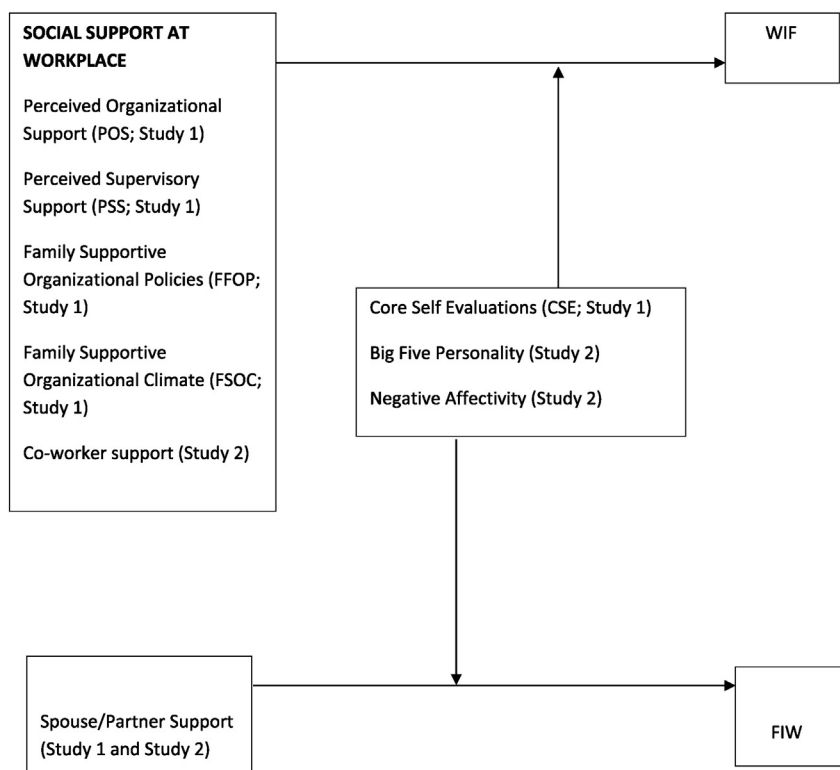


Fig. 1. Research model.

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