Effect of Work Family Conflict on Counterproductive Work Behaviour: The Moderating Role of Emotional Intelligence

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Abstract

The paper examines effect of work family conflict on counterproductive work behaviour; exploring the moderating role of emotional intelligence. The paper premised on the fact that emotional intelligence is capable of mitigating work family conflict and counterproductive work behaviour in an organization, employing secondary data for its analysis and concluded that employees (workers) with high emotional intelligence will be able to manage work family conflict and by extension limited or out rightly eradicate the tenet of counterproductive work behaviour in an organization. The paper suggested that since work family conflict cannot be avoided, an appropriate test be given to would-be employees/workers to test their level of emotional intelligence with a view to stemming intending conflict relating to work and family, thereby avoid counterproductive work behaviour from employees as they are inimical to an organization's growth.

Key words: Work Family Conflict, Counterproductive Work Behaviour, Moderating Role, Emotional Intelligence

Introduction

Work - family conflict occurs when an individual experiences incompatible demands between work and family roles, causing participation in both roles to become more difficult. This imbalance creates conflict at the work-life interface. It is important for organizations and individuals to understand the implications linked to work-family conflict. In certain cases, work–family conflict has been associated with increased occupational burnout, job stress, decreased health, and issues pertaining to organizational commitment and job performance, thus hampering organizational productivity and growth if not checked. Also, it can be seen as a form of inter-role conflict in which the role pressures from work and family domains are mutually imbalanced; where the demands and responsibilities from work roles and family roles are mutually mismatched in some respect. It is pertinent to note that the tension that arises between incompatible demands between family and work responsibilities and obligations, may result in competing obligations and diminished participation in one sphere to meet the demands in the other sphere; thus, making organizational effort counterproductive in the process.

Counterproductive work behaviour entails a destructive behaviour that harms organizations or people in the workplace (Barling, Dupre & Kelloway, 2009). Behaviours in this regard include destroying company property, calling in sick when not ill, insulting another employee, and stealing from employers.

Counterproductive work behaviour is any employee behaviour that undermines the goals and interests of a business. Counterproductive work behaviour comes in many different forms, but can

include tardiness, theft, fraud, sexual harassment, workplace bullying, absenteeism, substance abuse, workplace aggression, or sabotage. These types of behaviour not only impact the quality of work produced by the employee engaging in counterproductive work behaviour but also can negatively affect the productivity level of other employees in the company and create undesirable risks for the employer. Implicit here is that employers should seek to hire individuals who are less likely to engage in any counterproductive work behaviours, and some pre-employment tests can help assess the likelihood that an individual is more prone to counterproductive work behaviour. Specifically, behavioural tests and integrity/honesty tests can help employers mitigate risk related to counterproductive work behaviour by measuring conscientiousness, rule adherence, attitudes towards theft, and overall reliability.

Counterproductive work behaviour arises from a combination of variables. It has received considerable attention from organizational managers and related scholars in recent years. Stress from inter-role conflict is a significant reason for counterproductive work behaviour (Spector & Fox, 2002). When employees are unable to manage the increased workload of their different roles, they will feel more stress and seek ways to restore balance in their lives, thereby increasing their tendency to use counterproductive work behaviour to reduce stress; hence the need for the employment of staff with high emotional intelligence; as it is a key variable in tackling work family conflict.

Emotional intelligence refers to the ability to perceive, control, and evaluate emotions. Some researchers suggest that emotional intelligence can be learned and strengthened, while others claim it's an inborn characteristic. The key take home about emotional intelligence is the ability to express and control emotions essentially. It is also the ability to understand, interpret, and respond to the emotions of others. The implication here is that one is able to understand when a friend was feeling sad or when a co-worker was angry; as it will help in mitigating crisis and losses that is of personal and organizational interest.

Theoretical Framework
The study is hinged on the Job Demands-Resources theory (JD-R). The theory investigates the impact of working conditions on employees and the impact employees have on the working conditions. According to the JD-R theory, factors of well-being and organizational behaviour influence each other over time on organizational, team, and individual levels (Bakker & Demerouti, 2018). JD-R theory outlines the processes where work requirements may impact job health, well-being, organizational behaviour, and job performance. More precisely, job stressors are identified on the basis of self-reported states and perceptions of the individual employees. When organizational leaders know which particular tasks and problems require immediate attention, strategic and structural measures are introduced in order to optimize problematic processes for the employees to allow them to improve the quality of their work life. In the same vein, family issues can be characterized as the disturbances affecting job performance. This study explores the existing theoretical background of JD-R theory and applies it to examine work-family conflict and counterproductive work behaviour in an organizational (Bakker & Nishii, 2016).
Literature Review

Work Family Conflict is a form of inter-role conflict in which the demands of work and family roles are somewhat incompatible, making it difficult to participate in one role because of participation in the other role. Work family conflict occurs when work demands prevent one to satisfy their family needs, such as long work hours, travel, and so on, thus disturbing family

relations. Contrarily, FWC occurs when family responsibilities degrade work performance (Jiang, Chan & Liu, 2022), thus interrupting work. The imbalance between work and family roles can reduce work performance and organizational citizenship behavior (Nohe, Meier, Sonntag & Michel, 2014). WFC should be positively associated with job burnout, job tension, and job role ambiguity (Goff, Mount & Jamison, 1990). Although most research has focused only on WFC, some studies showed that FWC also significantly impacts employees. In addition, a dynamic link exists between WFC and FWC. Therefore, this study considers WFC and CWBs to explore the effect of their congruent or incongruent states on the dependent variable of emotional intelligence. Individuals' self-control behaviours, such as emotion regulation, distraction control, and habit-breaking, can consume their self-control resources (Baumeister, 2002). The conservation of resources theory is a stress theory that revolves around individuals' motivation to protect the available resources and acquire new resources (Hobfoll, 2001). Fundamentally, individuals only conserve and acquire the resources they value. Individuals will generate negative emotions when their resources are not available for them to cope with future tasks (Mulki, Jaramillo & Locander, 2006). Therefore, when work family conflict occurs, employees must regulate their negative emotions, which can deplete their self-control resources. In addition, employees tend to increase their resources or resolve their negative emotions in other ways, which leads to counterproductive work behaviours (Bazzy & Woehr, 2017). From the perspective of conservation resources theory, this study reveals the psychological mechanisms underlying the effect of work family conflict in counterproductive work behaviour, employing emotional intelligence as a variable.

Work-family conflict is a psychological situation of imbalance between work and home life (Romero, 2011). Based on the theory (Rabenu & Yaniv, 2017), work-family conflict is the result of a mismatch of role demands between work and family from time, tension, or behaviour (Bennett, Beehr & Ivanitskaya, 2017). Work-family conflict can occur in two directions; from work to family or from family to work (Jiang et al., 2022). This may have an asymmetric impact because work variables appear to be more strongly associated with work-family conflict than family variables appear to be associated with family-to-work conflict (Obrenovic, Jianguo, Khudaykulov & Khan, 2020). Work-family conflict is understood as a situation when experiences at work interfere with family life (van der Lippe & Lippényi, 2020), or family-work conflict, which occurs when family events interfere with work life (French & Allen, 2020). There are many causes behind work-family conflict (French et al., 2018), and the consequences can vary according to the cause (Soomro, Breitenecker & Shah, 2018).

Table 1: Dimension and Indicator of Work-Family Conflict

Dimension	Indicators
Time Based Conflict	1. Time for family
	2. Time for social life
	3. Holidays from work
Stain Based Conflict	4. Family problems affect work time
	5. Family problems affect working time
	6. The demands of work affect family life
	7. Complaints of family members
Behaviour Based Conflict	8. Role support
	9. Tired after work

Source: Allen et al (2020)

Emotional intelligence is a set of skills that enable individuals to recognize and manage emotions (Mayer *et al*, 2008). When different individuals lose self-control resources, the extent of resource loss and the subsequent effect on individual behavior are different due to their distinct characteristics (Li *et al*, 2020). Individuals with high emotional intelligence have a stronger ability to regulate emotions, which can reduce the negative effects of negative emotions and reduce the loss of self-control resources. Some studies explained that the differences in employee behavior result from the perspective of emotional intelligence and explored the relationship between emotional intelligence and job satisfaction, job burnout, and job performance (Gong et al., 2019). It is pertinent to note that a person's emotional intelligence can be improved by developing a high commitment to self-development. Emotional intelligence is a psychological ability to understand and use emotional information. Each individual has a different ability to act. Emotional intelligence can be done through practice and experience (Mayer et al., 2016). Therefore, employee behaviour by work standards can produce the expected job satisfaction. Job satisfaction consists of the feelings and behaviours that a person has about their job. All important aspects of work, good and bad, positive and negative, contribute to developing feelings of satisfaction (or dissatisfaction). In addition, high employee job satisfaction will positively affect overall organizational performance (Sahito & Vaisanen, 2017).

In addition to emotional intelligence, several scholars found that the presence of Work-Family Conflict also influences the company's performance (Ramadani & Hoy, 2015; Rüdiger, 2013; Jennings & Brush, 2013). A person who works and has a family has two equally important roles; wherein job he is required to be professional in carrying out his duties. In contrast, he has responsibilities and obligations related to his household when he is in the family. Carrying out these two roles simultaneous is not easy so that in its implementation, there will be a clash of responsibilities between work and family life. According to Radcliffe and Cassell (2015) difficulty in meeting the often-conflicting demands of work and family can lead to work-family conflict. When employees are faced with too many works demands and cannot manage the balance between family and work, they will feel emotional instability which has an impact on the emergence of work stress and reduced performance (Kayaalp et al., 2020; Di Stefano & Gaudiino, 2018). Job stress occurs when there is an imbalance between physical and psychological abilities in carrying out the work given by business organizations affecting various aspects that trigger conflicts.

Conflicts that arise between the two dimensions of different roles create an imbalance, on the other hand the balance between work and family is a big responsibility and should be fulfilled because both are important elements in life. In the view of (Soomro et al., 2018; Vipraprastha et al., 2018) in their respective study revealed that Work-Family Conflict will provide a relationship to job satisfaction; noting that it often makes it difficult for a person to fulfil the needs of other roles (work/family), such as changing time for activities and relaxing with family due to obligations towards office work.

Counterproductive Work Behaviour

Counterproductive work behaviour is basically a voluntary or intentional behaviour that could harm the interest of the organization either directly or indirectly by hurting the employees which resultantly reduces their effectiveness (Zacher et al., 2018). Spector et al. (2006) has categorized counterproductive work behaviour into five facets viz

    i.   abuse; behaviours that can be harmful physically or psychologically. It may include making nasty comments about coworker or reduce the effectiveness of coworker;

ii.   sabotage; affects the physical property of the organization (i.e. undermining the physical workplace of the organization);

iii. production deviance; behaviours that destroy the work process;

iv.   theft; results from economic need, job dissatisfaction or injustice and can be regarded a form of aggression against the organization; and

v.   withdrawal; behaviours that reduce the amount of time one works to less than what the organization requires.

Sabotage and production deviance has a direct impact while the withdrawal behaviour of employees has an indirect impact on the functioning of the organization. Some employees may engage in counterproductive work behaviour as emotional reaction or retaliation while others may choose it as a well-planned behaviour (Fox & Spector, 2010).

Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence (EI) is the ability to know and manage own emotions, know others' emotional state and behave with them appropriately. Counterproductive work behaviours are the intentional behaviours of employees that impede the productivity of organizations. Many researchers on employee withdrawal study counterproductive work behaviour as workplace deviant behaviours (Shapira-Lishchinsky & Tsemach, 2014; Anwar et al, 2011). Emphasis of their studies is aimed at examining how emotional intelligence and counterproductive work behaviour are related for teachers. They were united in their objectives as they noted that emotional intelligence is the ability to assess, express and regulate emotions. Implied from their observation is that emotional intelligence is a set of abilities to carry out complicated information processing about emotions or emotions-related stimuli and to use them as a guide to thinking and behaving (Mayer, et al., 2008). The five skills related to emotional intelligence are:

i.   self-awareness of emotions;

ii.   self-management of emotion;

iii.   self-motivation;

iv.   empathy (knowing others' emotions); and

v.   social skills (dealing with people according to their emotional state).

Emotionally intelligent people can get along with others. EI permits us to respond appropriately to others' needs (Feldman, 2015). In 1997, Mayer, Salovey and Caruso (2008) had proposed four-branch model of emotional intelligence which is still applicable till this day. This model suggested that the four abilities related to emotional intelligence are:

i.   managing emotions so as to attain particular goals;

ii.   understanding emotions through language and gestures;

iii.   using emotions to moderate thinking; and

iv.   perceiving emotions precisely in self and others.

In a study conducted by Coté, et al (2010), it is found that people who were able to amplify emotional reaction to a certain stimulus were shown to have more income. Income and emotional intelligence can be correlated. Other socio-demographic variables like age and family size also might correlate with emotional intelligence. Females reported higher emotional intelligence than males in a study by Szczygiel and Bazinska, (2013). Other variables like gender, education and ethnicity also might affect emotional intelligence.

Salovey and Mayer cited in Wen *et al* (2019) first explained the concept of emotional intelligence as part of social intelligence which is defined as the ability of individuals to understand their own emotions and those of those around them, and the ability to recognize emotions and use emotional information to guide them. thinking and behaviour, and that emotional intelligence includes 3 abilities, namely; the ability to evaluate and express emotions, the ability to regulate emotions and the ability to use emotions in solving problems. Emotional intelligence is a concept that has been studied intensively over the last few decades. When it comes to employee performance and productivity, emotional intelligence is a virtue associated with employee success in both personal and professional life. Meanwhile, Wen *et al* (2019) sees emotional intelligence as intelligence about self-awareness and managing feelings and emotions, being sensitive to and influencing others, motivating and balancing motivation and self-monitoring to achieve intuition, awareness and ethical behaviour. According to Goleman and Boyatzis (2017), the dimensions and indicators used in measuring emotional intelligence are as follows:

Table 2: Dimension and Indicator of Emotional Intelligence

Dimension	Indicator
Personal Competence	1. Self Confidence
	2. Self-Deprecating sense of Humor
Social Competence	1. See Other Perspective
	2. Service Oriented
Self-Regulation	ix. Transparency
	x. Integrity
Social Skills	iv. Persuasiveness
	v. Conflict Management

Furthermore, emotional intelligence is perceived as the abilities such as being able to motivate self and persist in the face of frustrations; to control impulse and delay gratification; to regulate one's moods and keep distress from swamping the ability to think; to empathize and to hope. Hence, it is the ability to manage oneself and one's relationships in a constructive and mature manner.

Results of previous studies recognizes emotional intelligence as a moderator of relationship between different variables like that being studied in this paper and including others like negative emotions and job insecurity (Jordan & Ashkanasy, 2002); negative emotions and counterproductive work behaviours (Yin, 2010). These studies emphasized the fact that emotional intelligence does actually serve as a moderator in the link between work family conflict and counterproductive work behavior.

For instance, emotionally intelligent people are more able to control themselves; therefore, they are more able to avoid indulging in activities (e.g deviant behaviours) that may harm their organizations (Petrides, Frederickson & Furnham, 2004). Also, findings revealed that employees' emotional intelligence plays a role in controlling deviant behaviours. On their part, Mayer, Salovey, and Caruso (2008) found negative relationship between emotional intelligence and employees' deviant behaviours. They argued that improvement in employees' emotional intelligence results in a decline in their deviant behaviours. A study by Deshpande (2005) also found that people with high levels of emotional intelligence consider counterproductive work behaviour more unethical than their counterparts. Similarly, Khalid et al. (2009) found that emotionally intelligent people aptly control their emotions and are more able to avoid misbehaviors

that could harm their organizations. Jung and Yoon (2012) proposed that employees who lack emotional intelligence are more prone to engage in counterproductive work behaviour.

Jiang et al (2022) noted that emotional intelligence is the ability to identify and regulate one's own emotions, to recognize the emotions of other people and feel empathy toward them, and to use these abilities to communicate effectively and build healthy, productive relationships with others. The implication here is that people with high emotional intelligence are usually successful in most things they do. They are characterized by having the ability to self-generate positive emotions (Miao et al., 2020). However, people with low emotional intelligence cannot control and harness their emotions well. They must channel negative emotions into positive results like solving problems or managing interpersonal conflicts. This process will reduce their self-control resources. Emotional influences on behaviour are also moderated by individual characteristics (Kang & Furnham, 2016). Thus, individual characteristics moderate the effect of self-control resource depletion on employee work behaviour (Dogra & Dani, 2019). Emotional intelligence is an important kind of individual characteristic. Generally, people with high emotional intelligence have a remarkable ability to control their emotions. Therefore, they can prevent, to some extent, the depletion of their self-control resources due to negative emotions caused by work family conflict. This process reduces their tendency to engage in counterproductive work behaviours. Contrastingly, if the employee's emotional intelligence level is not high, the negative emotions caused by work family conflict will be magnified, thus significantly increasing the employee's self-control resource depletion. Moreover, they may tend to increase their resources or resolve their negative emotions through counterproductive work behaviour.

Work-Family Conflict and Counterproductive Work Behaviour

Work Family Conflict is a particular type of inter-role conflict in which the role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respects. WFC would cause a series of negative consequences (Yagil & Oren, 2021). If no effective ways exist to cope with Work Family Conflict, employees' job satisfaction would be reduced, which might affect their passion for work (Houlfort et al., 2017). Although most research has focused only on Work Family Conflict, some studies showed that Family Work Conflict also significantly impacts employees. Therefore, this study focuses on Work Family Conflict and Counterproductive work behaviour and explores the moderating role of emotional intelligence in the process.

Conclusion

This paper examines effect of work family conflict on counterproductive work behaviour; exploring the moderating role of emotional intelligence. Emphasis in this study was placed on how emotional intelligence as a moderator variable can mitigate the effect of work family conflict and counterproductive work behaviour of employees in an organization. In the light of this, the study concluded that employees (workers) with high emotional intelligence will be able to manage work family conflict and by extension limited or out rightly eradicate the tenet of counterproductive work behaviour in an organization.

Recommendations

Arising from the conclusion, the paper suggested since work family conflict cannot be avoided, an appropriate test be given to would-be employees/workers to test their level of emotional intelligence with a view to stemming intending conflict relating to work and family, thereby avoid

counterproductive work behaviour from employees as they are inimical to an organizations growth.

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