

Work Engagement as Moderator in the relationship between Work Interference with Family and Burnout

¹ Aneel Kumar, ² Muhammad Waqas Maharvi

ABSTRACT

Keywords:

*Work interference
with family, Work
Engagement,
Burnout.*

This research has looked into main effect of work interference with family on burnout and work engagement as a condition under which the effect of work interference with family on burnout will be weaker or stronger. For this study, we collected primary data from 227 banking sector employees through a survey questionnaire. In addition to interaction effects, pick a point approach is used and slopes are drawn. Results showed the significant effect of work interference with family on burnout. Further, such effects were weaker for the employees high on work engagement as compared to those who were low on it. Implications are discussed herewith. Work engagement can really work like an antidote for the employees who are suffering from burnout due to their work interference with family experiences. Based on implications of this study, banking sector organizations are urged to take care of the work engagement level of their employees so that they have energetic and dedicated employees.

INTRODUCTION

The initial work on an individual's life advocated the incompatibility between work and family roles known as work family conflict (WFC) (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). The role pressures are basically developed from the stressors in a role (i.e., sheer amount of demands in a role) (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). As this theory posits, the concept of WFC is bi-directional. Greenhaus & Beutell (1985) used WFC generally to describe conflict between both role irrespective of either work is interfering with family or family is interfering with work but such bi-directionality was operationalize by Carlson, et al. (2000) as work interfering with family (i.e., When due to stressors/ demands in work role an individual is unable to fulfill family role responsibilities) and family interfering with work. WFC theory posits that negative sanctions for noncompliance (i.e., penalties) are explicit and obvious in work role as compared to family role. Therefore, following this premise of WFC theory and

¹ Associate Professor, Institute of Commerce and Management, Shah Abdul Latif University, Khairpur, Pakistan. Email: aneel.kumar@salu.edu.pk (Corresponding Author)

² Assistant Professor, Institute of Business, Management and Administrative Sciences, The Islamia University of Bahawalpur, Pakistan. Email: waqas.maharvi@iub.edu.pk

considering the organizational context, the focus of this study will be on source of conflict which is originated in the work place and interferes with family role. Since the inception of WFC theory (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985) many potential outcomes of WFC have been investigated in organizational context i.e., employees' performance (Mahmood et al., 2025; Muthuswamy & Nithya, 2024); turnover intention (Chen & Liang, 2024; Jamshed, Noor, Ali, Arshad, & Asrar-ul-Haq, 2024; Kumar, Channa, & Bhutto, 2017; Wang & Wang, 2024); anxiety and depression (Huang et al., 2024); job satisfaction, affective commitment and organizational citizenship behavior (Jamshed, et al., 2024). This research has focused on the burnout as the outcome of work interference with family. Maslach (2013) argued that burnout is the consequence of the environment in which an individual works. When workplace is unable to offer the work to employees according to their human (family) side then it gives birth to a mismatch between the work and worker and there will be greater risk of burnout. Although, an employee might be striving hard to fulfill the work demands but due to lack of consideration for the family side on part of his/ her organization, the employee experiences work family conflict which may ultimately leads towards the burnout. Empirical evidence for burnout as consequence of work interference with family (Huang, et al., 2024) has well been documented in various studies. This will serve as the point of departure but current study extends the relationship between work interference with family and burnout by incorporating the role of work engagement. Job demand resource (JDR) theory (Bakker & Demerouti, 2013) posits that work place also offers resources which can nurture the work engagement among employees. Schaufeli et al. (2006) argued work engagement can really work like an antidote for the employees who are suffering from burnout due to their work demands. Therefore, we argue that work engagement can interact with work demands to reduce its impact on burnout and the effect of work interference with family on burnout will be less for employees high on work engagement. Thus, we aim to investigate the moderating role of work engagement in the relationship between work interference with family and burnout.

Hypotheses Development

Person-organization fit theory (Kristof, 1996; Kristof Brown, Schneider, & Su, 2023) describes the extent to which there is either compatibility or incompatibility between what the organization offers/ needs to and from an individual and what an individual offers/ needs to and from the organization. An organization may offer certain supplies such as resources (i.e., financial, physical, psychological) and opportunities (i.e., task related and interpersonal) demanded by an individual. Similarly, an individual may offer certain supplies such as resources (i.e., time, effort, commitment, experience) and knowledge, skills and abilities (i.e., task and interpersonal) demanded by his/ her organization. Our first, proposition is based on

one of the core and common operationalization of this theory which is related to the extent to which an organization facilitates or hinders in meeting the physical or psychological demands of an individual. Maslach (2013) argued that burnout is the consequence of the environment in which an individual works. Individuals working in human service organizations frequently experience burnout (James & Mazerolle, 2001). They described burnout as the human syndrome which employees experience while interacting with their clients. They described three dimensions of burnout. One is “emotional exhaustion” in which individual feels psychologically, that there nothing left in them that they can provide to others (Maslach & Jackson, 1985). The second is “depersonalization” which they described as the negative and unkind attitude towards the other individuals (i.e., colleagues, clients). The third is related to negative evaluation of their “personal accomplishment”, the extent to which individuals are dissatisfied or unhappy with their work. Initial studies on burnout mostly focused on the burnout as the problem of people but in fact it’s the workplace environment (Allen, Regina, Wiernik, & Waiwood, 2023). When workplace is unable to offer the work to employees according to their human (family) side then it gives birth to a mismatch between the work and worker and there will be greater risk of burnout. An individual may physically be present in the workplace domain but his/ her cognition may cross the work border, thinking about the family role responsibilities which need dire attentions. Therefore, the failure of an organization to pay attention to family angle may endanger severe burnout. Ample empirical evidence is available to support this notion that work interference with family experienced by an individual due to lack of availability of supplies by an organization causes burnout among the employees (Allgood, Jensen, & Stritch, 2024; Blanch & Aluja, 2012; Huang, et al., 2024; Li et al., 2024).

H1: Work interference with family experiences causes burnout

Schaufeli et al. (2006) and Schaufeli (2012) argued that conversely to those individuals who suffer from burnout due to the demanding nature of work, engaged employees see such demanding work as the challenge and they manage their work demands with their energy, and effective connection. In fact, work engagement is considered as an antidote/ antithesis for burnout. It is the positive state of cognition or mind. When individuals work with such a positive state filled with high level of positive energy, involvement and considering oneself as part of the work then the suffering from burn out are likely to be healed. Further, JDR (Bakker & Demerouti, 2013) also posits that work place also offers resources which can nurture the work engagement among employees. Therefore, based on JDR and responding to their call, we propose that the effect of work interference with family on burnout will lessor

for employees high on work engagement. Although, the moderating role of work engagement (Abdullah, Ismail, Alnoor, & Yaqoub, 2021; Clauss, Hoppe, Schachler, & O'Shea, 2021; Derks, Van Duin, Tims, & Bakker, 2015; Kim, Park, & Headrick, 2018; Pujol-Cols & Lazzaro-Salazar, 2018) is investigated in multiple studies but there is dearth of studies, investigating it as moderator in work interference with family and burnout relationship. Therefore, this study will bring fresh insights for the role of work engagement as moderator for managerial implications.

***H2:** Work engagement buffers the positive relationship between work interference with family and burnout such that the effect of predictor (i.e., work interference with family) on burnout will be stronger when moderator (i.e., work engagement) is at low level and weaker when moderator is at higher level*

METHODOLOGY

Participant and Procedure

Data were collected from the commercial banking sector employees working in the city areas of two adjacent districts (i.e., Sukkur and Khairpur) of Pakistan. Although, inclusion of some other districts could have increased the generalizability but these commercial banks under study usually have uniform policies and procedures across all regions. Therefore, branches of the banks in these two districts are likely to be representative of other branches. We distributed around 400 questionnaires using five point Likert type of scale and finally after data cleaning 227 were selected as sample. Convenient sampling method was used. As there was no proper information available regarding the total population, therefore, we applied convenient sampling. Banking sector employees are selected as the sample because they have long work hours and a very hectic schedule. It's very hard for them to go on a leave or vacation. They have never been offered flexibility in the workplace. Such characteristics make them the most suitable sample for this study.

Measurement

Work interference with family is measured by a 9 items' scale adopted from Carlson et al. (2000). Work engagement is measured using a 9 items' scale adopted from Schaufeli et al. (2006) whereas, burnout is measured using a 22 items' scale adopted from Maslach and Jackson (1981). Further, based on studies investigating relationship between work interference with family and burnout (Allgood, et al., 2024; Blanch & Aluja, 2012; Huang, et al., 2024; Li, et al., 2024), gender, age and experience were included as the demographic controls.

For analysis of the data, SPSS was used. Main and moderating effects were determined by installing Process macro (Hayes, 2012) in SPSS. Process provides you a detailed moderation

analysis not just limited to interaction beta coefficient but conditional effects at low, moderate and high level. Process is a versatile modeling tool which has frequently been used in moderation, mediation moderated mediation analysis in multiple studies (Kumar, Channa, & Bhutto, 2019; Yan, Ping, Feng, & Jin, 2024). Further, we can analyze multiple mediators and moderator simultaneously through this macro very easily in comparison to the tedious process involved in structural equation modeling soft wares like, AMOS, Mplus. As this study had a single moderator therefore, model 1 with 5000 bootstrap samples was applied in moderation analysis procedure recommended by Hayes (2012) for Process macro. Bootstrapping is the process which is applied with greater confidence to tackle the issues of asymmetry and non-normality with small samples (Preacher & Hayes, 2004). Further, moderation slopes were also plotted (Aiken, West, & Reno, 1991). These slopes provide you a clearer, graphical display of weaker/ lower and stronger/ higher effects.

ANALYSIS

The descriptive statistics results showed that banking sector employees are experiencing work interference with family but their work engagement level was also higher. The existence of burnout was also found among employees. Cronbach's alpha reliabilities were also well above the acceptable level of .7 (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2010). The correlations provided the initial support for our first proposition as the correlations between work interference with family and burnout were strongly positive and significant ($r = .92$, $p < .01$). These are depicted in table 1.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics & Correlation Matrix

S. No.	Variable	Mean	S.D	1	2	3	4	5	6
1.	Gender	NA	----	1					
2.	Age	31	7.72	-.12	1				
3.	Experience	6.92	7.19	-.09	.91**	1			
4.	WIF	4.06	.58	-.13*	.05	.02	.88		
5.	WE	4.00	.62	-.12	.04	.01	.85**	.91	
6.	Burnout	4.15	.49	-.15*	.06	.01	.92**	.85**	.93

Note: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$; $N = 227$; WIF: Work Interference with Family; WE: Work Engagement; Cronbach's Alpha reliabilities are given diagonally

Regression analysis with the Process macro (Hayes, 2012) showed positive and significant main effect of work interference with family on burnout ($\beta = .52$, $p < .01$) as we proposed in H1. However, the effects of all control variables were insignificant. Further, the interactive effects of work interference with family and work engagement were also significant ($\beta = -.11$, $p < .01$). The size of interaction beta coefficient was small but significant and in the expected direction as we proposed. Overall, 89 percent of significant variance was explained by model. The change in variance due to moderation was also significant. These are depicted in table 2.

Table 02: Effect of Work Interference with Family on Burnout under the Condition of Work Engagement

Independent Variables	β	Std. Error	t	p
Gender	-.01	.03	-.30	.76
Age	.005	.003	1.66	.10
Experience	-.006	.003	-1.79	.07
WIF	.52	.03	13.24	.00
WE	.14	.03	4.07	.00
WIF X WE	-.11	.01	-6.00	.00

Dependent Variable: Turnover Intention

R-Square: .89; F – Value: 298.24; Significance level: .00

R-Square change due to moderation: .02; F – Value: 36.01; Significance level: .00

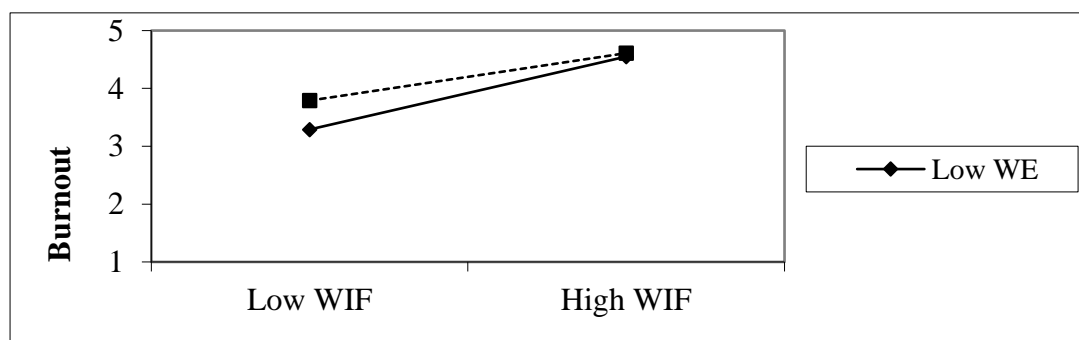
Further, to understand the conditional effects of work interference with family on burnout at different values of moderator (i.e., low, moderate and high), results showed that the effect of predictor (i.e., work interference with family) was stronger when moderator was at low level and weaker when moderator was at higher level as we proposed and these effects at all levels were significant. These are depicted in table 3.

Table 3: The effect of predictor (i.e., work interference with family) on burnout when moderator (i.e., Work Engagement) is at low, moderate and high level

Work Engagement	β	Std. Error	t	p
-.62	.59	.03	16.17	.00
.00	.52	.03	13.24	.00
.62	.45	.04	10.06	.00

Dependent Variable: Burnout

Finally, moderation slopes were plotted to show the effects of predictor (i.e., work interference with family) on dependent variable (i.e., burnout) when the moderator (i.e., work engagement) was at low and high level. The slopes also showed that the effect of predictor (i.e., work interference with family) was stronger when moderator was at low level and weaker when moderator was at higher level as we proposed. The dotted line shows the work engagement at high level (i.e., stronger) whereas plain line shows it at low level (weaker). These are depicted in figure 1. Thus, our both hypotheses were fully supported and, in the direction, as we proposed.

Figure 1: Slope for the Conditional Effect of Work Interference with Family on Burnout When Work Engagement is Low and High

DISCUSSION

Following person-organization fit theory (Kristof, 1996; Kristof Brown, et al., 2023); JDR (Bakker & Demerouti, 2013) and Maslach (2013) work related to the work and family issues of an individual, we proposed that employees' experiences of work interference with family causes burnout. Our findings also revealed so. Results showed the significant positive effect of work interference with family on burnout among the banking sector employees. Available empirical studies (Allgood, et al., 2024; Blanch & Aluja, 2012; Huang, et al., 2024; Li, et al., 2024) have also found the same. Further, based on the logical reasoning of Schaufeli et al. (2006) and Schaufeli (2012) this research looked into the condition of work engagement under which the effect of work interference with family on burnout is likely to be lesser or weaker. Consistent with their arguments, we found the significant moderating role of work engagement in the relationship between work interference with family and burnout, although the size of interaction effect was small but much similar to the studies testing work engagement as moderator. For example in the study of Clauss, et al. (2021) the size of interaction beta coefficient was -.12; study of Kim, et al. (2018) reported beta coefficient -.15 and in the study of Pujol-Cols & Lazzaro-Salazar (2018) the size of interaction beta coefficient was .11 but further to make sure about the interaction effect we also determined the conditional effect at low and high level of moderator and also plotted graphs which showed that the effect of work interference with family on burnout became weaker for employees high on work engagement level. Therefore, we may conclude that the role of work engagement as moderator was an invaluable in context of current study. The energy, dedication and employees immersion in their work role must have helped them to manage their work demands efficiently so that it does not have any interference with their family role and resultantly their burnout level is less as compared to the employees low on their work engagement level.

Conclusion

Following person-organization fit theory (Kristof, 1996; Kristof Brown, et al., 2023); JDR (Bakker & Demerouti, 2013) and Maslach (2013) work related to the work and family issues of an individual, this study found the significant effect of work interference with family on burnout. Further, such effects were weaker for the employees high on work engagement as compared to those who were low on it. There are hardly a few studies, investigating work engagement as moderator which has already been cited in current work. Therefore, this study will extend the role of work engagement as moderator in context of work family interface and burnout research for the banking sector employees.

Practical implications

This study has implications for employees whose work is of demanding nature like the employees of banking sector. If organizations do not take care of the human side which is related to family issues, and just needing them to fulfill their work demands then in such work environment employees are likely to experience work family imbalance and surely it will increase the risk of burnout among employees as the results of this study revealed. Further, as the results of this study showed that work engagement can really work like an antidote for the employees who are suffering from burnout due to their work interference with family experiences. Therefore, based on implications of this study, banking sector organizations are urged to take care of the work engagement level of their employees so that they have energetic and dedicated employees.

Limitations and Future Recommendations

Single time survey and self-reported measures can give birth to issue of common method variance which can be detected through one of the statistical procedure called, “Harman’s single factor test” (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). Therefore, use of longitudinal data and applying such tests are recommended. Further the sample is limited to two districts; therefore it can be expanded more for more generalizability. Three dimensions of work engagement may be tested as moderator in the aforementioned relationship. Similarly, three dimensions of work interference with family can be tested as the individual predictors of burnout. One important aspect which can boost the work engagement can be creating the flexible environment in which employees can adjust for their family responsibilities. Although, it’s not part of this but is recommended for testing as the antecedent for work engagement. Multi-level or diary studies can be conducted that can explore daily variations in WIF, work engagement and burnout. As burnout is the consequence of the environment in which an individual works. Therefore, an environment with demanding nature of work may cause burnout which can in turn increases the WIF of employees. Thus the reverse causality effect of burnout on WIF cannot be ignored and is recommended for further research.

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