



TASK SIGNIFICANCE AND STRAIN-BASED DIMENSION OF WORK-TO-FAMILY CONFLICT: MODERATING ROLE OF LOCUS OF CONTROL

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Abstract

This study investigated task significance and strain-based dimension of work-to-family conflict: Moderating role of locus of control among female bankers in Enugu State South East Nigeria. Two hundred and forty five participants between the ages of 20-60 years ($M=26.48$, $SD=4.56$) were drawn through multistage (cluster and criterion) sampling technique from commercial banks in Enugu state capital. The study was cross-sectional in which work-to-family conflict scale, job characteristics scale and locus of control scale were administered for data collection and regression was used for data analysis. The results indicated that task significance failed to predict strain-based dimension of work-to-family conflict while locus of control moderated the relationship between task significance and strain-based work-to-family conflict. These findings were discussed in the light of job demand resources theory.

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Introduction

Research suggests that 70% of employees experience difficulties in managing work and family responsibilities (Uddin, 2021; Lockwood, 2003; Schieman, Milkie, & Glavin, 2009). And this concern is more for married women due to the escalation in the number joining the workforce (Okonkwo, 2014; Noor, 2003). All in the bid to meet up with growing responsibilities bedeviling women in collectivist societies, the high influx of women into the labour force especially the banking industry has not come without challenges. In Nigeria because of high level of unemployment, employees especially those within the banking sector go extra length in their job responsibilities as tellers, customer care officers, marketers and other positions in order to retain their jobs. For instance, some married female marketers in order to meet targets even after close of work, go round the city to collect daily savings (isusu) from petty traders (Udeka & Raimi, 2016).

Women, in trying to balance work and family responsibilities are caught between cross role demands of family responsibilities and work behavior expectations (Frone, 2003). The cross role demands precipitate work interference with family and family interference with work. The interferences between work and family have always resulted in work-family conflict (Okonkwo, 2013). This conflict occurs when the employees especially working women extend their efforts to satisfy their work demands at the expense of family demands or vice versa (Cole, 2004).

These two incompatible domains precipitate work interference with family and family interference with work. Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) classified work-to-family conflict into three (time-based, strain-based and behaviour-based). According to Ugwu, Amazue and Onyedire (2017) emotionally exhausting jobs such as banking leaves individuals susceptible to strain, hence the interest of this study in strain-based dimension of work-to-family conflict. Usually the bankers' responsibilities and job demands such as managing a client's account, meeting targets and loan recovery can produce strain symptoms such as anxiety, tension, fatigue, depression, apathy and irritability that can permeate the family domain inducing strain-based work-to-family conflict. In these situations they are more likely to be sandwiched between work and family domain and therefore are unable to fulfill both work and family responsibilities. Several researchers have provided evidence that strain-based work-to-family conflict is positively associated with a host of adverse health-related outcomes including psychological distress, anxiety disorders, mood disorders and substance abuse disorders, as well as physical outcomes, including obesity, hypertension, psychosomatic symptoms and substance use (Geurts, Kompier, Roxburgh, & Houtman, 2003; Bellavia & Frone, 2005; Poelmans, Maestro & Greenhaus, 2013; Sweet, 2014; Thompson, Poelmans, Allen & Andreassi, 2007; Mullen, Kelley & Kelloway, 2008).

Recent meta-analyses of work-to-family conflict pointed to several workplace and personal variables as its antecedent sources (Allen et al., 2000; Ford, Heinen & Langkamer, 2007; Kossek & Ozeki, 1998, 1999). The apparent struggle between work and family domains could be attributed to the characteristics of the job such as task significance as suggested by theoretical views in job design (Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner & Schaufeli, 2001; Hackman & Oldham, 1976; Karasek, 1979). Task significance refers to the degree to which a job has a substantial impact on the lives of other people (Hackman & Oldham, 1975). This influence can

be felt in the immediate organization or in the external environment. In other words, an individual in a job which encompasses the aforementioned characteristic will be more likely to experience meaningfulness, which reinforces them to function at their optimum best thereby reducing the effects of high job demands and facilitating their ability to manage dual responsibilities of paid work and family obligations thus reducing strain-based work-to-family conflict.

Studies have also shown that individual attributes determine how positively or negatively a person responds to job demands when provided with job resources (Elfering, Keller & Berset, 2016), hence the interest of this study in locus of control as a moderator. Locus of control is concerned with beliefs about the causes of events in one's life. Individuals who base their success on their own work and believe they control their life have an internal locus of control. In contrast, people who attribute their success or failure to outside influences have an external locus of control (Rotter, 1966).

However, studies have shown that women still navigate the myriads of challenges in the workplace and home, based on some personal attributes such as locus of control (Erez & Judge, 2001), which may determine job resources utilization (Parker, Van den Broeck & Holman, 2017). As also proposed by Job Demand Resources Theory (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). In Nigeria, traditional gender role socialization has left women with the responsibilities of nurturing children and taking care of other family responsibilities despite their status and engagement in the workplace. This implies that as roles conflict, certain individual and job attributes protected and utilized can act as resources that could enable women cope with work and family demands thus reducing strain-based work-to-family conflict.

However, till date, little or no research has been conducted to examine the moderating role of internal locus of control on the dimensions of work-to-family conflict (strain based) and job characteristics dimensions (task significance (e.g., Wang & Lin 2018; Mooghali, Lankarani, Abedi & Sarikhani 2015; Khoshouei (2017) ; Boyar & Mosley, 2007; Haines, Harvey, Durand, & Marchand, 2013). Regrettably, there are virtually no previous studies in the Nigerian context even though a few extant European and American studies exist as highlighted above. To address this gap in literature, the present study has focused on the moderating role of locus of control and task significance on strain-based work-to-family conflict among women in the banking sector.

With a view to filling this gap in researches on this area, the following hypotheses were tested:

1. Task significance, will negatively predict work-to-family conflict (strain-based).
2. Locus of control will negatively predict work-to-family conflict (strain-based).
3. Locus of control will significantly moderate the relationship between task significance and work-to-family conflict (strain-based).

Method

Participants

Participants in this study comprised two hundred and forty five (245) married female bank employees drawn from commercial banks in Enugu State Metropolis Nigeria. The participants were selected through multistage (cluster and criterion) sampling techniques. The age of participants ranged from 20-60 years ($M=26.48$, $SD=4.56$).

Instruments

The participants completed three sets of inventory namely: Work-to-family conflict scale, Job characteristics scale, Locus of control scale.

Work-to-family conflict scale

Work-to-family conflict scale (Okonkwo, 2011) used to assess work-to-family conflict experienced by employees. This instrument has three dimensions: Strain based, time based and behavior based work-to-family-conflict but only the strain based dimension of the instrument was used in this study. Response is patterned on a five-point Likert-type format ranging from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree”. Respondents were expected to indicate the extent to which they agree with the listed statements regarding interference of work to family. High scores indicate higher strain based work-to-family conflict and lower scores indicate lower strain based work-to-family conflict. Internal reliability coefficients of .89 and a convergent validity of .55 were obtained by the developer.

Job Characteristics scale

Job characteristics scale is a measure for job characteristics in organizations developed by Hackman & Oldham (1975) and is used to assess employees perception of different aspects of job related attitude and behaviors especially as it relates to task significance. Sample items include: “The outcomes of my work affect other people in very important ways”. It is on a 7 point scale 1- very inaccurate to 7-very accurate. The developers reported a reliability index of .59. A validation by Omoluabi (2000) for Nigerian sample was also achieved.

Locus of control scale

Internality locus of control scale developed by Levenson (1981) is designed to measure how individuals feel about activities and causes of circumstances around them and their life. This 8-item scale comprises of sample items such as ‘Whether or not I get to be a leader depends mostly on my ability’, ‘I can pretty much determine what will happen in my life’. In this study each of the adapted questions asks how strongly the respondents agreed or disagreed with statements on a six point that ranged from 1=strongly disagree to 6=strongly agree. High scores indicate higher internality and lower scores indicate externality. The developer obtained a reliability index of Cronbach alpha of .74.

Procedure

The copies of questionnaire were administered to the participants by the researcher in the selected bank branches with the aid of operation secretaries who served as research assistants. Commercial banks in Enugu Metropolis (Access Bank, Diamond Bank, Eco Bank, Fidelity Bank, First Bank, First City Monument Bank, Guarantee Trust Bank, Keystone Bank, Polaris Bank, Stanbic IBTC, Sterling, United Bank for Africa, Union

and Zenith Bank) and their branches formed clusters. From each cluster two (2) branches were randomly selected using balloting, since the banks have varied number of branches. Using criterion sampling technique participants who met a predetermined criterion of importance (must be married with children) were selected and copies of questionnaire administered. There was no monetary reward or any other form of inducement that was given to the participants for taking part in the research. Hence, participation in the study was voluntary alongside informed consent. All the participants were very co-operative regardless of their tight schedule and had no difficulty in completing the inventories for the study.

Design/ Statistics

The study adopted a cross-sectional survey design as data was collected to make inferences about the population of interest at one point in time. Regression was statistically used to test the hypotheses and enable accurate predictions. SPSS version 23 and Process Macro 3 were used for the data analysis to determine the interaction and direction or strength of the relation between study variables.

Results

Table 1: DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS AND ZERO ORDER CORRELATION

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1 Age	26.48	4.56	1										
2 YIC	4.58	2.45	.59**	1									
3 Highest Education Level			.20**	.30**	1								
4 NOC			.52**	.39**	-.05	1							
5 Age of 1 st Child	7.91	4.51	.61**	.56**	.22**	.54**	1						
6 Age of last Child	3.19	2.42	.47**	.53**	.24**	.26**	.72**	1					
7 Support			.15*	.15*	-.06	.13*	.06	.04	1				
8 Rank			-.48**	-.67**	-.25**	-.42**	-.43**	-.31**	-.20**	1			
9 Task-significance	14.61	2.19	.04	.11	.10	.01	.08	.04	.01	-.03	1		
10 Locus of Control	37.80	11.06	.11	.12	-.02	.12	.10	.08	.09	.00	.00	1	
11 Strain-based	19.62	8.50	-.42**	-.42**	-.16*	-.34**	-.41**	-.37**	-.32**	.42**	-.08	.07	1

Note ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$; YIC=Year in Company;NOC= Number of Children

The correlations in Table 1 showed that age negatively correlated with strain based work-to-family conflict ($r = -.42, p = .001$). Years spent in the company had a significant negative relationship with work-to-family conflict (strain-based) ($r = -.42, p = .001$). Educational level had a significant negative relationship with work-to-family conflict (strain-based) ($r = -.16, p = .01$). Number of children had a significant negative relationship with strain based work-to-family conflict ($r = -.34, p = .001$). Age of first child had a significant negative relationship with work-to-family conflict (strain-based) ($r = -.41, p = .001$). Age of last child had a significant negative relationship with work-to-family conflict (strain-based) ($r = -.37, p = .001$). Support had a significant negative relationship with work-to-family conflict (strain-based) ($r = -.32, p = .001$). Rank had a significant positive relationship with work-to-family conflict (strain-based) ($r = .42, p = .001$). Task significance had no significant relationship with strain based work-to-family conflict ($r = -.08, p = .01$)

while locus of control had no significant relationship with strain based work-to-family conflict ($r = .07, p = .01$).

Table 2: Summary of Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting work-to-family conflict (Strain-based) (N=245)

Note dependent variable- strain based WFC, at $p < .01 = **$; $p < .05 = *$

	Step 1		Step 2		Step 3		Step 4	
	β	T	B	t	B	T	B	t
Age	-.11	-1.47	-.127	-1.74	-.13	-1.70	-.09	-1.21
YIC	-.05	-.60	-.052	-.63	-.09	-1.02	-.06	-.62
Highest Educational level	-.06	-1.06	-.036	-.63	-.03	-.58	-.03	-.50
NOC	-.11	-1.57	-.099	-1.42	-.10	-1.50	-.08	-1.20
Age of 1 st Child	-.04	-.42	-.013	-.140	-.02	-.19	-.02	-.17
Age of last Child	-.16	-1.99*	-.183	-2.29*	-.19	-2.37*	-.19	-2.30*
Support	-.25	-4.57**	-.225	-3.91*	-.24	-4.13**	-.23	-3.88**
Rank	.15	2.01*	.168	2.30*	.13	1.75	.15	2.07*
Task significance			-.037	-.671	-.04	-.64	-.01	-.16
tasksXlocus of control							-.15	-1.98*
R	.280	.627	.642	.688				
R ²	.337	.393	.412	.473				
ΔR^2	.337		.056		.019	.061		
F	15.00(8, 236)**		4.30(5, 231)**		1.80(4, 227)	1.26(19, 208)		

Results of the hierarchical multiple regression for the test of work-to-family conflict (strain-based) is shown in Table 2. The variables were entered in stepwise models. The demographic variables (age, year in company, educational level, number of children, support and rank) in the regression analysis none of it was a significant predictor of strain-based dimension of work-to-family conflict.

Task significance dimension of job characteristics was not a significant predictor of strain-based work-to-family conflict ($\beta = -.037, t = -.671, p = .50$).

Locus of control significantly moderated the relationship between task significance and work-to-family conflict (strain-based) ($\beta = -.15, t = -1.98, p = .05$).

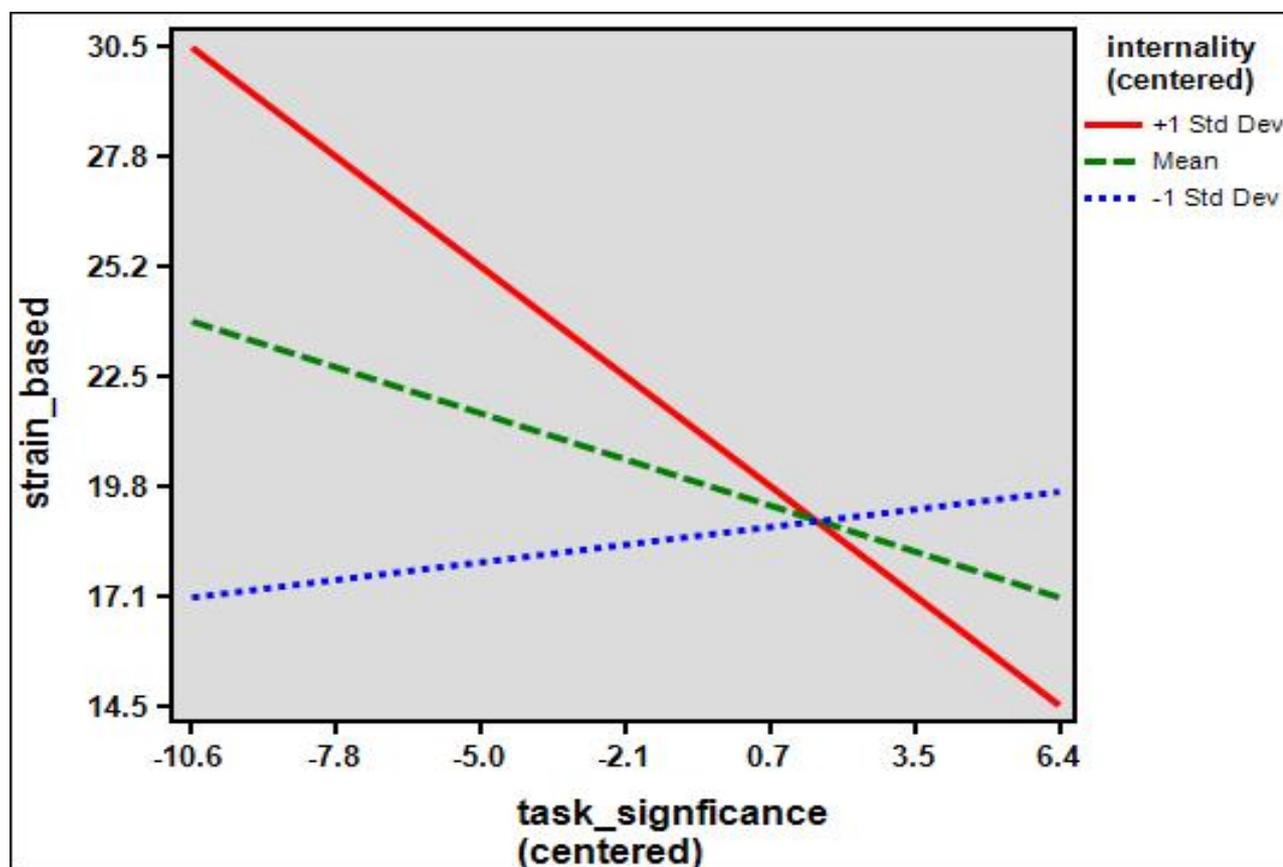


Figure 3: Moderation plot of task significance and locus of control on work-to-family conflict (strain based)

Discussion

The finding of this study revealed that the first hypothesis which stated that task significance will negatively predict work-to-family conflict (strain-based) was disconfirmed as task significance failed to predict strain based work-to-family conflict. A possible explanation points to the fact that bank jobs which are known to be emotionally exhausting especially for women may have affected their feelings of relevance leaving them indifferent to organizational success, thereby affecting their perception of how the job affects the organization and the lives of others. This finding is not in line with Mooghali, Lankarani, Abedi and Sarikhani (2015) whose results pointed to a negative relationship between dimensions of job characteristics and work-family conflict as respondents reported higher levels of work-to-family conflict and significant negative relations between skill variety, task autonomy and task significance with work-family conflict.

The second hypothesis which stated that locus of control will negatively predict work-to-family conflict (strain-based) was also rejected. This finding is in congruence with Andreassi (2011) who found no significant relationship between locus of control and work-family conflict dimensions. However, among these employees with an internal locus orientation they are likely to perceive that they can exert control over their work schedule and use more adaptive coping strategies in overcoming strain and incompatible behavior expectations when balancing work and family demands consequently, mitigating experiences that may arise across work and family domains.

The finding of this study also revealed that the third tested hypothesis which stated that locus of control will significantly moderate the relationship between task significance and work-to-family conflict (strain-based) was confirmed. The result indicated that internal locus of control moderated the relationship between task significance and strain-based work-to-family conflict.

This finding implies that with high locus of control (internal) and task significance, work-to-family conflict (strain-based) becomes high. This finding could be attributed to the vulnerable nature of the banking job as it impacts not just on the employee but on co-workers, customers and the organization at large. This finding posits that the level of pressure, stress, uncertainty and anxiety married female bankers experience in the course of discharging their duties can be heightened due to internal locus orientation of employees and the direct impact of the job on others. Employees with internal locus of control are known to bear the brunt of their actions and are likely to exert control and attach significant influence over work outcomes which heightens job stressors exposing them to strain. This demonstrates that individuals with internal locus of control when faced with delicate tasks that can affect others such as managing a customer's account, meeting targets and deadlines as well as processing and recovering bank loans could raise job pressure and anxiety resulting in strain based work-to-family conflict.

Another possible explanation is the fact that the weight of multifarious and sensitive tasks in the workplace requires that a lot of resources be invested in the work domain and less time and energy is left for the family domain increasing strain experienced across domains.

This finding is in congruence with previous studies (e.g. Lonergan & Maher, 2010; Baral & Bhargava, 2011) which demonstrated a little moderating influence of core self-evaluations on work-to-family conflict.

In line with these findings job demand-resources theory is the best model to explain strain based work-to-family conflict and task significance as locus of control moderates the relationship. This theory asserts that as roles conflict, certain individual attributes protected and utilized can act as resources that could either strengthen or weaken the roles of task significance on experiences of strain based work-to-family conflict.

Conclusion

It can be concluded from the high levels of support provided in this study especially among working mothers in the banking industry the differing impact of personal and job resources on employees. This study could also help organisations evaluate the demands of some tasks and proffer personality attributes needed to fit in the workplace so as to understand work-family balance. The cross-sectional nature of this study is an important weakness which reduces causal interpretations of the results. But, useful suggestions for questionnaire design that may reduce the risk of common method variance such as anonymity and instructing the participants that there is no right or wrong answers were followed in this study. However, the results of the study were in line with existing theoretical backgrounds and previous studies and also have serious implications in understanding and managing strain based work-to-family conflict in the Nigerian banking sector.

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