

Relationship between Work- Family Conflict and Cognitive Flexibility Among Employees

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ABSTRACT

According to Greenhaus and Beutal (1985) Work family conflict is a type of inter-role conflict that occur when the demands of work and family are incompatible, making it different to participate in one role due to the other. Further Miyake et al., (2000); Zelazo, (2015) Cognitive flexibility is the ability to shift attention between task sets, attributes of a stimulus, responses, perspectives or strategies. (Hayri Furkan) conducted study on effects of cognitive flexibility and emotional regulation of work life balance: The mediating role of job crafting. The author recommended implications by presenting a perspective and strategies to increase organizational work life balance. The present study aim to identify the relationship between work family conflict and cognitive flexibility among employees, 100 samples were collected based on random sampling methods in AGP Electronics, Kandamangalam, Villupuram. To collect data regarding cognitive flexibility (CFI) by Dennis, J.P., and Wander wal, J.S(2015) was used and to measure work-family conflict (WAFCS) by Haslam, D., Filus, A., et al (2015) scale were used to collect data. The research formulates the hypothesis that, there will be a significant relationship between Work family conflict and Cognitive flexibility. In order to test the hypothesis correlation is used. The result of the study concluded that there is a negative and significant relationship between the variables Work family conflict and Cognitive flexibility.

Keywords: *Work family conflict and Cognitive flexibility*

The relationship between work-family conflict and cognitive flexibility has become an important area of research in organizational behavior and psychology. Work- family conflict occurs when the demands from work and family roles are incompatible, creating stress and negative impacts on both professional and personal life. Cognitive flexibility on the other hand, refers to an individual's ability to adapt their thinking and behavior to changing, conflicting, or novel situations. The relationship between these two concepts is vital for understanding how employees cope with conflicting role demands and how their mental adaptability influences their ability to manage work and family responsibilities effectively.

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Received: January 09, 2025; Revision Received: March 28, 2025; Accepted: March 31, 2025

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 are mutually incompatible. They argued that work-family conflict arises when fulfilling the demands of one role makes it difficult to fulfill the demands of the other role. Kahn et al. (1964) explored the idea of role conflict in organizational settings, which laid the groundwork for later studies on work-family conflict. They examined how multiple roles (work, family, social) can generate tension when the demands and expectations associated with these roles are unclear or conflicting.

Importance of Work Family Conflict

Work- family conflict is important because it's associated with an array of attitudinal and behavioral issues in the plant and in the family. (Greenhaus and Beutell) were among the first to formally define work-family conflict and explain its importance. They argued that work-family conflict occurs when the demands of work and family roles are incompatible, making it difficult for individuals to perform their responsibilities effectively in both areas. (Greenhaus and Beutell's) work is foundational because it established work-family conflict as a significant issue that impacts individuals' ability to balance work and family responsibilities. Their research emphasizes that this conflict leads to psychological stress, reduced well-being, and lower job satisfaction, which can have long-term consequences for both individuals and organizations. Frone's work underscores the psychological toll that work-family conflict takes on individuals. His findings highlight the need for interventions that can help individuals cope with these conflicting demands, as unmanaged work-family conflict can lead to severe emotional and psychological consequences.

Contribute to Work Family Conflict

A number of factors may impact whether an individual gets work- family conflict, including individual differences, job characteristics, family characteristics, support, and organizational programs.

Meaning of Cognitive Flexibility

Cognitive flexibility is defined as the human ability to adapt the cognitive processing strategies to face new and unexpected conditions in the environment (Canas et al. 2003). Individualities with lesser cognitive inflexibility have bettered life issues, better social functioning, and reduced cognitive decline with age (Koesten et al. 2009; Diamond and Lee 2011; Burke et al. 2019). Difficulties in inflexibility have also been observed in several internal health conditions.

Cognitive Flexibility in the Workplace

Cognitive flexibility in the workplace refers to the ability to shift one's thinking and behavior in response to changing conditions, new information, or evolving demands. It enables employees to adapt to new roles, manage multiple tasks simultaneously, and switch between different strategies or problem-solving approaches as needed. Cognitive flexibility is especially important in dynamic work environments where roles, technologies, and organizational priorities are constantly shifting. It enhances employees' ability to innovate, collaborate with diverse teams, and tackle unforeseen challenges. Moreover, leaders who demonstrate cognitive flexibility are better equipped to make decisions in uncertain situations, guide their teams through change, and foster an atmosphere of continuous learning and adaptation. That cognitive flexibility is linked to improved adaptive performance, creative problem-solving, and job satisfaction (LePine, Colquitt, & Erez, 2000). This skill is also associated with higher levels of leadership effectiveness and

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organizational agility (Agarwal & Rath, 2018), making it a key competence in navigating the complexities of the modern workplace.

Factors of Cognitive Flexibility

Cognitive flexibility is influenced by several factors that determine an individual's ability to adapt to new information, switch between tasks, and adjust strategies based on changing circumstances. One key factor is executive function, which involves higher-level cognitive processes such as working memory, inhibition, and task-switching (Miyake et al., 2000). These functions allow individuals to control their thoughts, behaviors, and emotions while adapting to new or complex situations. Personality traits also play a role. Individuals high in openness to experience tend to be more flexible in their thinking, as they are more willing to entertain new ideas and adjust their perspectives (Jackson & Paunonen, 2015). Motivation is another factor, as people who are motivated to learn or solve problems are more likely to demonstrate cognitive flexibility, actively seeking out new solutions when faced with challenges. Stress and emotional regulation also influence cognitive flexibility, as individuals who can manage stress effectively are better equipped to adapt their thinking when faced with high-pressure or unpredictable work environments (Güldenpfennig, Kaluza, & Spieß, 2016). Lastly, experience and learning contribute to cognitive flexibility, as individuals with diverse experiences or those who engage in continuous learning are more likely to develop the ability to switch between mental frameworks and handle varying tasks effectively (Schraw et al., 2006)

Impact of Cognitive Flexibility

Cognitive flexibility, the ability to switch between different concepts or adapt thinking based on new information and changing circumstances, is shaped by several key factors that impact both individual performance and organizational outcomes in the workplace. One of the primary causes of cognitive flexibility is executive function, which encompasses mental processes such as task-switching, working memory, and inhibitory control. These cognitive abilities are crucial for managing complex tasks, navigating shifting priorities, and adapting to unforeseen challenges (Miyake et al., 2000). Task-switching allows individuals to rapidly adjust to new roles or projects, while working memory helps employees retain and manipulate multiple source of information, which is vital for problem-solving and decision-making in dynamic environments. Personality traits, particularly openness to experience, also significantly influence cognitive flexibility. Individuals who score high on openness are generally more willing to entertain new ideas and adjust their perspectives, which enhances their ability to adapt to change and approach problems from diverse angles (Jackson & Paunonen, 2015). In addition, emotional regulation plays a pivotal role in cognitive flexibility. Employees who can manage stress and negative emotions tend to perform better under pressure, as they are less likely to become overwhelmed by uncertainty or rapidly changing circumstances (Güldenpfennig, Kaluza, & Spieß, 2016). Moreover, experience and learning contribute to the development of cognitive flexibility. As individuals gain exposure to different work challenges and environments, they accumulate the mental frameworks necessary to tackle new situations creatively and effectively. Continuous learning and feedback help employees refine their ability to shift perspectives and apply knowledge in diverse contexts (Schraw et al., 2006). The impact of cognitive flexibility in the workplace is profound. It enables employees to handle multitasking, manage complex tasks, and collaborate across teams effectively. By promoting flexibility in thinking, employees are more likely to innovate, generate creative solutions, and adapt quickly to emerging technologies or shifting market demands. The cognitive flexibility is linked to enhanced adaptive performance, allowing individuals to remain effective when job roles or

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expectations evolve (LePine, Colquitt, & Erez, 2000). Leaders with high cognitive flexibility are also better equipped to navigate ambiguity, make strategic decisions in uncertain situations, and guide their teams through change (Agarwal & Rath, 2018). This ability to adapt is especially valuable in industries where innovation and change are constant. Cognitive flexibility also improves job satisfaction, as employees who can flexibly adapt to challenges and changes are more likely to feel competent and engaged in their roles. Additionally, the ability to switch between different tasks and thought processes allows individuals to cope with stress more effectively, leading to improved well-being and work-life balance (Güldenpfennig, Kaluza, & Spieß, 2016). Ultimately, the development and application of cognitive flexibility enhances both individual job performance and overall organizational adaptability, helping companies thrive in today's fast-paced and unpredictable business environment.

Need for the Study

Understand the work family conflict and cognitive flexibility of the employees helps to understand how much struggle the employees are facing and how they have to be adjusted to the situation. The understanding of the problem of the study can provide more help to the employees. To hope with the conflict and can be applied in the future if any such conflicts reoccur.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Ying pan, Nadilai Assihaer, Qinyi Li, Yue Jiao & Shenpei Ran (2022) conducted a study on Work Family conflict, Happiness and Organizational Citizenship behaviour among professional women: A motivated mediation model. Data were collected 386 employees in nine companies in China. Work family Conflict was assessed with the 4 item scale developed by Grzywac and Marks (2000) and OBC were used 6 item scale adopted from Den Hartogetal(2003). This study enriches the literature on work family by using family support as a mediating mechanism for work family conflict. It enhanced our understanding of the influencing mechanisms of organizational citizenship behaviour by constructing a more detailed model.

Xin Yang and Xiangonkong (2024) conducted a study on the effect of work family on employee well-being among physician: The mediating role of job satisfaction and work engagement. Data were collected from 2480 physicians in China, Partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) was applied in the study. In this study, the 8 item WFCS developed by Marriten Carlson et al and translated by Liu et al was used to measure physician; work engagement scale (WES-17) developed by Schaufeli were used. The finding of the study work family Conflict negatively affects physicians employees well-being. Moreover, the investigation revealed that the association between work family conflict and employees well- being is influenced by both job satisfaction and work engagement and that work engagement plays a mediating role in the link between job satisfaction and employees well-being.

Kinjal Rambhiyan, Dr. Lokesh L, (2023) Conduct on the study to identify Cognitive flexibility, leadership style on decision making among self-employed and employed". The aim of the study is to relationship between cognitive flexibility, leadership styles and decision making and also to compare the degrees It between Self Employed and Employed population. Convenience sampling technique was used. Cognitive Flexibility questionnaire, Multi factorial leadership style and General decision-making style questionnaire was completed by 121 actors between age group of 2tyrs to 60 yrs, The results suggested that

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there's low positive relationship between Cognitive Inflexibility and Decision Making. There's high correlation between cognitive inflexibility and decision making on employed also Self- employed.

METHODOLOGY

Problem of the Study

The present study is attempted to investigate about “Relationship Between Work Family Conflict and Cognitive Flexibility Among Employeess.

Objective

The objectives of the present study were:

- To examine the relationship between cognitive flexibility and the work family conflict and its dimension.

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated based on the objectives of the study :

- H0: There will be no significant relationship between work-family conflict and cognitive flexibility.
- H0: There is significant relationship between cognitive flexibility and family work conflict.

Research Design

The sample size of 100 employees were selected for the study in the A.G P. Electronics Powder Coating & Electroplating Company. There are 86 males and 14 females have been taken. The age group is from 20 to 70. This study employed a quantitative method and Purposive sampling method was used for the study.

Instruments used

The following instruments were used for data collection.

- **Work Family Conflict WAFCS (2015):** A work family conflict was found by R. Fletcher (2015) was used for data collection. This scale is a development and initial validation of a self - report work family conflict measure of work family conflict for use the study. And the scale consists of 10 items with 7 alternative response such as very strongly disagree, strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, strongly agree, very strongly agree. The scale two dimensions of work family conflict and family work conflict. The first dimension work family conflict for the first five items (1, 2, 3, 4, 5). and next items (6, 7, 8, 9, 10) family work conflict.
- **Cognitive Flexibility Inventory (CFI):** The 22 items of cognitive flexibility inventory (CFI), developed by Dennis, j. p., and Vander Wal, j. s. (2010). was used for data collection. The Cognitive Flexibility Inventory (CFI) is a self-report measure to monitor how often individuals engage in cognitive behavioral thought challenging interventions. Cognitive flexibility enables people to think adaptively when encountering stressful life events, and it is a core skill that helps them avoid becoming stuck in maladaptive thinking patterns. The CFI measures two aspects of cognitive flexibility.

Alternatives-the adaptive ability to perceive multiple alternative explanations for life occurrences and the ability to generate multiple alternative solutions to difficult situations.

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Control-having an internal locus of control, or the tendency to perceive difficult situations as somewhat controllable. Clients with high cognitive flexibility are more likely to react adaptively in response to difficult life experiences, while cognitively inflexible clients are more susceptible to experiencing pathological reactions. The total score ranges between 22 and 154, where higher scores (>110) indicate greater cognitive flexibility. And the scale consists of 22 items with 7 alternative responses for each column using the following point system. Strongly disagree 1 point, Disagree 2 points, Somewhat disagree 3 points, Neutral 4 points, Somewhat agree = 5 points, Agree 6 points, Strongly agree = 7 points the scale. A higher score indicates more high cognitive flexibility and a low score indicates low cognitive flexibility.

Procedure

The samples are selected by random sampling technique. The work family conflict (2015) and cognitive flexibility (2010) were given to the 100 participants. The data was taken from A.G P. Electronics Powder Coating & Electroplating Company. Permission was taken for data collection from the manager of company. General instructions were given to the participants regarding the purpose.

Statistical tool used

The statistical techniques to be employed for data analysis were selected based on these specific objectives and hypotheses formulated for the study. The important statistical technique used for data analysis are the following:

- Correlation , t-test, One way ANOVA.

RESULTS

Table.1 Shows the correlation between cognitive flexibility and work family conflict.

Variable	Work Family Conflict
Cognitive Flexibility	-.301**

H0: There will be no significant relationship between work-family conflict and cognitive flexibility.

The table 1 shows the correlation between cognitive flexibility and work family conflict. Obtained results showed that the value -.301** is negatively correlated at the level of 0.05. Hence, alternative hypothesis is rejected and therefore the null hypothesis is accepted.

Table 2 Shows the correlation between cognitive flexibility and family work conflict.

Variable	Family Work Conflict
Cognitive Flexibility	-.380**

H0: There will be no significant relationship between cognitive flexibility and family work conflict.

The table 2 shows the correlation between cognitive flexibility and family work conflict. Obtained results showed that the value -.380** is negatively correlated at the level of 0.05. Hence, alternative hypothesis is rejected and therefore the null hypothesis is accepted.

CONCLUSIONS

The main aim of this research is to explore the relationship between the Work family conflict and Cognitive Flexibility. The study included a total 100 employees and employed a

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quantitative research design. The findings reveal that there is a negative correlation between cognitive flexibility and work family conflict. As a result, the study successfully addressed all objectives set by the research, including Work family conflict and Cognitive Flexibility.

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Acknowledgment

The author(s) appreciates all those who participated in the study and helped to facilitate the research process.

Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

How to cite this article: Visha, P. & Neelakandan, R. (2025). Relationship between Work-Family Conflict and Cognitive Flexibility Among Employees. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 13(1), 2981-2988. DIP:18.01.285.20251301, DOI:10.25215/1301.285