

Linking Work Rumination, Emotional Intelligence, Workaholic Behaviours and Work-to-Family Conflict in Nigeria

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to examine the link between work rumination, emotional intelligence, workaholic behaviours and work-to-family conflict in Nigeria. The hypotheses were tested using regression analysis, on a sample of 97 principals selected from private-owned secondary schools in South-eastern Nigeria. Findings suggest that work rumination and workaholic behaviours were positively related to work-to-family conflict, while emotional intelligence was negatively related to work-to-family conflict. Implications for managerial practice and future investigations of work-life conflict are discussed.

Keywords: *work rumination, emotional intelligence, workaholic behaviours, work-to-family conflict, Nigeria*

INTRODUCTION

Over the past two decades, work–family conflict has received a lot of attention from researchers (e.g., Karatepe & Baddar, 2006; Mihelič, & Tekavčič, 2014; Akintayo, 2010; Epie & Ituma, 2014). Extant studies in this area suggest that the traditional family patterns, typified by the role of men as breadwinners and the role of women as homemakers, is becoming uncommon

(Nurmayanti, Thoyid, Noermijati, & Irawanto, 2014). Dual earning families are increasingly substituting the traditional family pattern as the overriding family model, thereby causing a shift in family structure (Bruck, Allen, & Spector, 2002). High cost of living and changes in the demographic make-up of the workforce has been the primary impetus for the increased focus on work and family issues (Mooghali, Lankarani, Abedi, & Sarikhani, 2015). These factors have led to an increase in the experience of work-family conflict (Duxbury & Higgins, 2002).

Work-family conflict is broadly defined as conflicting role pressures between

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work and family that are incompatible, so much so that participation in one role is made more difficult by virtue of participation in the other (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). Extant literature (e.g., Mache, Benburg, Vitzthum, Groneberg, Klapp, & Danzer, 2015; Mooghali et al., 2015) suggest that there are two forms of work-family conflict (work-to-family conflict and family-to-work conflict). Even though negative spillover may occur in both directions, work-to-family conflict is far more prevalent than family-to-work conflict (Bellavia & Frone, 2005) due to the fact that work boundaries are less porous than family boundaries and employees report more work-to-family conflict than family-to-work conflict (Dugan, Matthews, & Barnes-Farrell, 2012; Mooghali et al., 2015). However, dealing with multiple roles of paid worker, partner, parent, and homemaker at the same time, often lead to dissonance in one of the two roles played. Efforts to satisfactorily fulfill these incompatible roles can increase interpersonal and intrapersonal conflict among individuals, which further can result in work-to-family conflict. Work-to-family conflict has been found to be associated with lower levels of work satisfaction (Allen et al., 2000), organisational commitment (Byron, 2005), absenteeism (Kossek & Ozek, 1998), and psychological well-being (Parasuraman & Greenhaus, 1997), family satisfaction (Eby, Casper, Lockwood, Bordeaux & Brinley, 2005).

Interestingly, while advances have been made in the study of work-family conflict in a number of occupational group, relatively little research effort has been devoted to examining the work-to-family conflict experiences of various occupational

groups in non-Western context. This is despite the acknowledgment that work-family conflict is present at different hierarchical levels and among many occupational groups. Most extant studies on work-family conflict has focused on occupational groups such as engineers (Post, DiTomaso, & Farris, 2009; Watai, Nishikido, & Murashima, 2008), medical officers (Hao, Wu, Liu, Li, & Wu, 2015; Razak, Omar, & Yunus, 2010), entrepreneurs (Kim & Ling, 2001), teachers (Nurmayanti et al., 2014), police personnel (Rathi & Barath, 2013) and accountants (Pasewark & Viator, 2006) in Western countries.

In the Nigeria context, no study has examined the work-family conflict of secondary school principals. In order to address this gap, we set out to better understand work-family conflict issues among secondary school principals in Nigeria. Specifically, this study aims to examine the relationships between work rumination, emotional intelligence, workaholic behaviours and work-to-family conflict among principals of private-owned secondary schools in Nigeria. Among the various under-researched professional groups in Nigeria, we choose to focus on secondary school principals due to the perceived demanding nature of their job which involves a wide range of dissimilar tasks including, teaching, administration, management, and student counselling. Indeed, school principals have huge responsibilities and as such are often under enormous pressures regarding offering excellent services for their school to remain at the apex. Given this scenario, the job of school principals appears to be a recipe for breeding work-to-

family conflict. In addition to contributing to the growing literature on work-family conflict, this study responds to the recent calls for studies on work life balance among under-researched professional groups in non-Western context. The remainder of the paper is laid out as follows: First, we briefly explore the relevant literature to establish some of the antecedents and consequences of work-to-family conflict. Second, we present the methodology used to collect and analyse the data. Subsequently, the findings of the study are presented. Finally, the paper discusses the findings of the study, considers the managerial implications of the results and suggests directions for future research.

Work rumination and work-to-family conflict

A priority for many organisations should be to keep its employees healthy in order to ensure top performance. To be able to achieve this, it is fundamental to encourage employees to have adequate rest, such as detaching themselves from all work-related thoughts when not at work. People think in various forms, some think about the tasks they have not completed, others ruminate over a problem that has proven difficult to be solved, and still others ponder on the negative relationship with colleagues at work. People do not just think about events or issues that have already taken place, they also ruminate about upcoming events/demands and issues they may be expecting at work (Cropley & Zijlstra, 2011). When employees engage in such thought repetitively, it could give rise to paying less attention to domestic issues which may in turn become fertile ground for work-to-family conflict. Repetitive thoughts seem to

be deleterious, especially when encountering negative events and experiencing negative emotions (Thomsen, Tønnesvang, Schnieber, & Olesen, 2011). Such repetitive thoughts in the form of rumination have been found to be associated with a range of negative outcomes (Thomsen, 2006; Watkins, 2008). Individuals that ruminate during off-work hours experience difficulties in switching-off from work (Zijlstra & Cropley, 2006), have health problems, such as negative mood (Pravettoni, Cropley, Leotta, & Bagnara, 2007), saliva cortisol secretion (Rydstedt, Cropley, Devereux, & Michalianou, 2009), and sleep disturbance (Akerstedt, Knutsson, Westerholm, Theorell, Alfredsson, & Kecklund, 2002) and such individuals may also experience work-to-family conflict. It is therefore predicted that:

Hypothesis 1: Work rumination will be positively related to work-to-family conflict

Emotional intelligence and work-to-family conflict

Most school management teams may feel that they try harder, and think smarter than their competitors, but despite this, sometimes they fail to create expected impact; meaning that either they have not done enough or have omitted something very special. Emotional intelligence (EI) may however be the missing link that managers need to connect to make their effort more fruitful and also ameliorate unpleasant emotions that may brew in the work environment. Although emotion and organisation researchers are still at disparity with the nature of EI (Antonakis,

Ashkanasy, & Dasborough, 2009), one area that seems to be gratifying is the understanding that emotional intelligence is an individual's ability to accurately process and use emotional information (Jordan, Dasborough, Daus, & Ashkanasy, 2010) to address some challenges often posed by life events.

Fredrickson's (2001) broaden-and-build (B&B) model of positive emotions, which advocated broadening mindsets to promote well-being, could serve as theoretical background to explain the proposed link between emotional intelligence and work-to-family conflict. Her Broaden-and-Build theory posits that positive emotions broaden people's momentary thought-action repertoires and build their enduring personal resources and thereby either 'correct' or 'undo' the negative after-effects or serve as 'antidotes' for the lingering effects of negative emotions. Based on this, research has indicated that higher emotional intelligence is associated with less depression (e.g., Martinez-Pons, 1997), greater optimism (Schutte et al., 1998) and greater life satisfaction (Ciarrochi, Chan, & Caputi, 2000). Carmeli (2003) maintains that highly emotional intelligent individuals handle work family conflict better than persons low emotional intelligence. Lenaghan, Buda and Eisner (2007) alluded that the ability of individuals to perceive, understand and manage their emotions would help to balance the work family life. Sjoberg (2008) found that emotional intelligence has a significant negative relationship with work to family conflict and family to work conflict. Similarly, Biggart, Corr, O'Brien and Cooper (2010) pointed out that fathers who effectively regulate their emotions experience less work-

family conflict. Akintayo (2010) found that emotional intelligent workers can manage their work family role conflicts effectively. In the same vein, Kappagoda (2013) established that emotional intelligence has a significant negative relationship with work-family conflict. Mikolajczak, Menil and Luminet (2007) suggest that high trait emotional intelligent individuals employ superior emotional responses in handling or managing stressful effects of emotional dissonance experienced at work because they are highly motivated by their work and family activities. It could therefore be predicted that:

Hypothesis 2: Emotional intelligence will be negatively related to work-to-family conflict

Workaholic behaviours and work-to-family conflict

The momentum for investigations into workaholic behaviours was initially restricted to more developed societies such as America (e.g., Brady, Vodanovich, & Rotunda, 2008), Japan (e.g., Shimazu, Demerouti, Bakker, Shimada, & Kawakami, 2011), Italy (e.g., Guglielmi, Simbula, Schaufeli, & Depolo, 2012), and the Netherlands (van Wijhe, Peeters, Schaufeli, & van den Hout, 2011). But today, the pressures of globalisation and the concomitant increase in competition (Blair-Loy & Jacobs, 2003) and widespread advances in communication technology have made it possible for work to be performed almost everywhere, anywhere and anytime (Ng, Sorensen, & Feldman, 2007; van Wijhe, Peeters, & Schaufeli, 2011). Roe, van den Berg, Zijlstra, Schalk, Taillieu and van der

Wielen (1994) vociferously maintain that development has stimulated the phenomenon of “tele-homework” and “distance work” which has shrunk the value of working times. There is evidence of the presence of workaholic behaviours among employees in a developing country such as Nigeria (Ugwu, 2011); though research in this national context is still in its infancy. Generally, workaholism is now seen as a common occurrence in many countries. As intense business competition continues to grow, workaholism is now highly admired by societies rather than being condemned as an addictive behaviour with negative consequences (Porter, 1996). Also, a common occurrence is the interference or conflict that workaholic behaviour has brought to personal and family lives.

The scarcity hypothesis (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000) can provide an explanation regarding why workaholism should be related to work-to-family conflict. Accordingly, people possess limited and fixed amounts of resources (e.g., time and energy). Managing multiple roles is difficult as it draws on the same scarce resources. Because workaholic people tend to invest more resources in their work at the cost of non-work activities (Ng et al., 2007), they are likely to experience interference from their work with their family lives, due to fewer resources left to devote to their family and respond to family demands. As a result, workaholism has been linked with quite a number of negative behaviours such as burnout (Burke, Matthiesen, & Pallesen, 2006), poor family functioning, increased marital problems (Robinson, Flowers, & Carroll, 2001), lower family satisfaction (Burke, 1999), lower relationship satisfaction

(Bakker Demerouti, & Burke, 2009), and greater work-family conflict (Bakker et al., 2009; Taris, Schaufeli, & Verhoeven, 2005). Judging from the foregoing, it is posited that:

Hypothesis 3: Workaholism will be positively related to work-to-family conflict.

METHOD

Participants and procedure

Participants were the principals of private-owned secondary schools sampled from across Enugu and Anambra states, south-eastern part of Nigeria. Fifty nine participants were sampled from Enugu whereas thirty eight participants were sampled from Anambra state. In all, 97 principals (63 females and 34 males) participated in the study. Employment length of the participants ranged from 6 years to 13 years ($M = 8.72$ years, $SD = 1.67$ years). The participants' age ranged from 43 to 60 years ($M = 50.20$ years, $SD = 3.95$ years). Their educational attainment ranges from first university degree or its equivalent to second university degree. A total of 60 copies of the questionnaire were administered to the principals in their places of work in Enugu state, and 100% response rate was achieved. In Anambra state, 41 copies were administered to principals; out of this, 38 copies were completed and returned representing a response rate of 92.68%. Altogether, 101 copies were administered, 98 were completed and returned, 1 copy was discarded due to improper completion and only 97 copies were used for data analyses.

Instruments

Work rumination- Work rumination was measured using the rumination subscale of the Rumination-Reflection Questionnaire (RRQ) developed by Trapnell and Campbell (1999). The rumination subscale consists of 12 items that are rated on a 5-Point Likert-type response format ranging from strongly disagree = 1 to strongly agree = 5. Higher scores indicate higher degrees of rumination. Sample item of the rumination subscale is: "I tend to "ruminate" or dwell over things that happen to me for a really long time afterwards". The scale's Cronbach's alpha (internal reliability coefficient) for the present study was 0.81.

Emotional intelligence- Emotional intelligence was measured with the 10 items from the Schutte Self-Report Inventory (SSRI) developed by Schutte and colleagues (1998). It is a 5-point Likert-type response format measure that ranged from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). Sample items includes: "I know when to speak about my personal problems to others" and "When I am faced with obstacles, I remember times I faced similar obstacles and overcame them." Cronbach's α for the scale for the present study was 0.77.

Workaholic behaviours- Workaholism was measured with two scales of the Dutch Work Addiction Scale (Schaufeli, Taris, & Bakker, 2008). The first scale was Working Excessively (WE; seven items, a sample item is "I overly commit myself by biting off more than I can chew"). The alternate scale is Working Compulsively (WC; nine items, a

sample item is "I feel obliged to work hard, even when it's not enjoyable"). The internal consistencies of both scales are 0.73 and 0.80, respectively. Participants responded to each item on a four-point scale (1 = never, 4 = always).

Work-to-family conflict- Work-to-family conflict was assessed with a 4-item scale measuring work interference with family constructed by Gutek, Searle and Klepa (1991). Sample item of the scale is: "After work, I come home too tired to do some of the things I'd like to do". It is a 5-point response format that ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Cronbach's alpha of the scale for the present study was .70.

RESULTS

The results of the descriptive statistics computed revealed that among all the 5 control variables tested in the study, only gender was not related to work-to-family conflict. Marital status was significantly related to work-to-family conflict ($r = 0.42, p < .001$), education ($r = 0.46, p < .001$), length of employment was negatively related to work-to-family conflict ($r = -0.22, p < .01$), age was positively related to work-to-family-conflict ($r = 0.22, p < .01$). Work rumination was positively related to work-to-family-conflict ($r = 0.28, p < .01$). Emotional intelligence was negatively related to work-to-family conflict ($r = -0.26, p < .01$). Workaholism was positively related to work-to-family-conflict ($r = 0.28, p < .01$).

The results of the hierarchical regression analyses revealed that control

variables accounted for 1.9% of the variance in the criterion variable (work-to-family conflict). Of all these control variables tested in the first model, only education ($\beta = 0.24$, $p < .05$) and length of employment ($\beta = -0.30$, $p < .05$) that were significant. The results further indicated that work rumination accounted for 9.9% of the variance in the criterion variable over and above the control variables [F Change (6, 96) = 9.12, $p < 0.01$]. In the regression equation model, work rumination was significantly and positively related to work-to-family conflict ($\beta = 0.30$, $p < 0.01$), which is consistent with *H1* in that work rumination will be positively related to work-to-family conflict.

Emotional intelligence accounted for 16.3% of the variance in the criterion variable over and above the control variables and work rumination [F Change (7, 96) = 7.87, $p < 0.01$]. In the regression equation model, emotional intelligence was significantly and negatively related to the criterion variable ($\beta = -0.28$, $p < .01$), which is also consistent with *H2* in that emotional intelligence will be negatively related to work-to-family conflict. On the other hand, workaholic behaviours accounted for 21.2% of the variance in the criterion variable over and above the control variables, work rumination and emotional intelligence [F Change (8, 96) = 6.51, $p < 0.01$]. In the regression equation model, workaholic behaviours was significantly and positively related to work-to-family conflict ($\beta = 0.28$, $p < .01$), which confirms *H3* in that workaholic behaviours will be positively related to work-to-family conflict.

DISCUSSION

In this study the relationships between work rumination, emotional intelligence, workaholic behaviours and work-to-family conflict was investigated. These assertions were tested with three hypotheses, and findings support the research speculations. More specifically, this study shows that work rumination (*H1*) and workaholic behaviours (*H3*) are positively related to work-to-family conflict. Furthermore, emotional intelligence (*H2*) is negatively related to work-to-family conflict. Findings of the current study corroborate with earlier studies that rumination is associated with a range of negative outcomes (Thomsen, 2006; Watkins, 2008). It also subscribes to the view that individuals that ruminate during off-work hours find it difficult coping with family responsibilities, which lead to conflict at home. This finding also seems to agree with previous studies that employees that ruminate over work experience negative mood (Pravettoni et al., 2007) and sleep disturbance (Kerstedt et al., 2002) which may predispose them to work-to-family conflict.

Emotional intelligence was found to be significantly and negatively related to work-to-family conflict. It may not be that the energy sources of the emotionally intelligent individuals are not depleted during the course of discharging their responsibilities, but because they employ superior emotional responses in handling or managing stressful effects of emotional dissonance experienced at work because they are highly motivated with their work and family activities (Mikolajczak, Menil, & Luminet, 2007).

Table 1: Descriptive statistics and intercorrelations among study variables

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1 WIF conflict	13.89	1.43	-								
2 Gender	1.35	.48	-.02	-							
3 Marital status	1.11	.32	.07	.42***	-						
4 Education	1.26	.44	.11	.46***	.38***	-					
5 Length of employment	8.72	1.67	-.22**	.23**	-.21**	.13	-				
6 Age	50.20	3.95	-.02	.22**	.19*	.28**	.18*	-			
7 Work rumination	39.36	5.38	.28**	.10	.00	-.06	-.00	-.19*	-		
8 Emotional intelligence	33.32	4.89	-.26**	.16	-.17*	.00	-.02	.01	-.03	-	
9 Workaholism	37.60	7.25	.28**	-.15	-.28**	-.25**	.10	.01	.42***	-.03	-

Key: *** = $p < .001$; ** = $p < .01$; * = $p < .05$

Note: A total number of 97 school principals participated in the study. Gender (1 = male, 2 = female); Marital status (1 = married, 2 = single); Education (1 = first university degree, 2 = second university degree); Length of employment, age, work rumination, emotional intelligence and workaholic behaviour were coded such that higher scores indicated higher report of such behaviours.

Table 2: Hierarchical regression results

Variables	Step 1 (β)	Step 2 (β)	Step 3 (β)	Step 4 (β)
Gender	-.03	-.08	.02	.04
Marital status	-.03	-.03	-.13	-.06
Education	.17	.20	.19	.24*
Length of employment	-.24*	-.24*	-.29**	-.30**
Age	-.02	.04	.05	-.00
Work rumination		.30**	.29**	.16
Emotional intelligence			-.28**	-.27**
Workaholism				.28**
R ²	.02	.10	.16	.21
ΔR^2	.07	.09	.07	.05
ΔF	1.37	9.12	7.87	6.51
F Values	1.37	2.77	3.68	4.23

Key: ** = $p < .01$; * = $p < .05$

This finding seems to corroborate numerous previous studies that emotional intelligence has a significant negative relationship with work-to-family conflict (Sjoberg, 2008; Biggart, Corr, O'Brien, & Cooper, 2010; Akintayo, 2010; Kappagoda, 2013).

The results of the study also revealed that workaholic behaviour was found to be significantly related to work-to-family conflict. The scarcity hypothesis (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000) could be employed to explain this result. The model posits that because workaholics have the compulsive inner drive to keep working even when they should stop working and thus work excessively, they exhaust every energy that none would be left to cope with family demands thereby leading to work-to-family conflict. Workaholic people tend to invest more resources in their work at the expense of non-work activities (Ng et al., 2007), thus they are more likely to have a situation where work interferes with their family lives, due to inadequate resources left to devote to their family and cope with family demands.

The finding seems to be in line with quite a number of studies that have linked workaholicism to poor family functioning, increased marital problems (Robinson, Flowers, & Carroll, 2001), lower family satisfaction (Burke, 1999), and lower relationship satisfaction (Bakker et al., 2009). This result is consistent with recent studies (e.g., Bakker et al., 2009; Taris et al., 2005) that found that workaholic behaviour is related to greater work-family conflict.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

Several practical implications could be extracted from the result of the present study. Since we have observed that work rumination is significantly related to work-to-family conflict, it might be useful to train individuals with cognitive strategies that will help them to keep away ruminative thought about work. Another way of preventing work rumination from occurring is being able to provide to the employees enough resources at work in order to be able to complete each day's work, lessen their demands and temptation to think about work or take work home. More so, nurturing a satisfying atmosphere at work might be interesting for organisations since it might reduce the probability of employees taking work problems home which are more likely to create conflicts for them.

Related to this, it is important to underscore the effect that the new technological era is having on the lives of workers. The increase in mobile technology and rapid communication devices has as an outcome the likelihood of working while at home; making employees engage in the same psychological demands as in work and might expose them to work-to-family conflict. It's for this reason that organisations might benefit from training individuals with cognitive strategies that help them to repress the ruminative thought about work, not only training them but also providing resources to improve it.

Another important result of the present study that might have important practical implications is the relationship

between emotional intelligence and work-to-family conflict. Emotional regulation skills are shown to be negatively related to work-to-family conflict. Based on Fredrickson's (2001) broaden-and-build model of positive emotions, it is suggested that intervention strategies should be introduced within work setting that cultivate positive emotions among employees. Enhancement of positive emotions will help in preventing and managing difficult situations such as frustrations, negative emotions that may lead to work-to-family conflict.

Since workaholism is linked with burnout and job satisfaction (Burke et al., 2006), it is imperative for organisations to assess and keep a check on workaholism. Human Resource (HR) professionals can help employees to specifically handle the issue of work addiction, and kindle the career progress of employees (Burke & MacDermid, 1999). On the other hand, career counsellors may help workaholic employees to reflect on their core motivations and ambitions, and assist them to pursue a healthy balance between work and family life.

LIMITATIONS AND DIRECTION FOR FURTHER STUDIES

The findings of this study are bounded by some methodological limitations. Firstly, the sample size of this study is relatively small given that participants were drawn from only two states in Nigeria. Thus, the sample cannot be considered a complete representative sample of the principals of private-owned secondary schools in Nigeria.

In the light of the aforementioned context, the extent to which our findings are generalisable beyond the selected context remains an empirical question. Future researchers can expand the work to include other states of the country. Secondly, the cross-sectional and self-reported nature of the data may present endogeneity issues and precludes definitive causal claims. Although the directionality of the relationships examined in this study is unambiguous, future research may obviate these limitations by adopting a longitudinal approach with data from multiple sources in order to examine the causal status of the relationships examined. In essence, we consider the findings preliminary as a more longitudinal study of the aforementioned relationship is warranted in order to deepen our understanding of work-life conflict issues in Nigeria. These limitations notwithstanding, this paper provides a sound base for work-family conflict theory and research.

CONCLUSION

The study addressed a topic of increasing interest (work-family conflict) that has not received much empirical attention in non-Western context. The study specifically examined the relationships between work rumination, emotional intelligence, workaholic behaviours and work-to-family conflict among principals of privately-owned secondary schools. By so doing, we heeded the call from a number of scholars to expand the scholarship on work-family conflict to non-Western context. The results of the study showed that work rumination and workaholic

behaviours were positively related to work-to-family conflict, whereas emotional intelligence was negatively related to work-to-family conflict. This is, to the best of our knowledge, the first study that has examined the relationship between work rumination, emotional intelligence and workaholic behaviour among the secondary school principals in the Nigeria context. Overall, this study has contributed to our empirical understanding of work-family conflict, which, despite its importance, remains relatively under-studied in Nigeria.

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