



A comprehensive framework linking environmental factors, bi-directional work family conflict and well being of expatriates

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ABSTRACT

The study focuses on work family conflict of expatriates. Extending the prior work on work family conflict, applying role theory and conservation of resource theory, the paper presents a theoretical framework regarding situations and conditions specifically related to expatriates that can contribute to their work family conflict as prior work on expatriates is scarce in this particular research domain. It investigates the influence that issues like role novelty, cultural novelty, spousal adjustment, and education facilities may have on the work family conflict of expatriates. The study also postulates the probable moderating role of personality traits in the relationship between these issues and work family conflict being experienced by expatriates.

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Introduction

“Globalization has changed us into a company that searches the world, not just to sell or to source, but to find intellectual capital - the world's best talents and greatest ideas.”
Jack Welch

A rapidly expanding global economy has led to an increase in demand for expatriates. Having an internationally skilled workforce, equipped with cross-cultural competence, has become a competitive necessity. Proficient and skilled expatriates are considered the most viable means of enhancing a business's global presence; multinational corporations (MNCs) are therefore on a constant lookout for them (Harvey & Moeller, 2009). According to Global Relocation Trends Survey (GRTS, 2010), 44% of the companies included in the survey expected an increase in the number of their expatriate employees.

Initially expatriates were sent on international assignments for specific tasks, to manage a project or fill the staffing needs at a subsidiary. Today owing to the rapidly increasing globalization trend, the expatriate assignments have gained a lot of strategic importance. The foremost strategic purpose of an expatriate assignment is the acquisition and transfer of knowledge (Cuizon, 2009). International assignments also help in developing the leadership skills and cross cultural competencies of the key employees of the organization (Harvey & Moeller, 2009). MNCs need the competencies (Przytuła, 2011) knowledge and cross cultural skills of expatriates to form strategic vision and response structures to deal with rapidly changing global environment (Antal, 2000). Balancing the needs of autonomy, coordination, and control at the subsidiaries is another vital purpose of expatriate assignments (Caligiuri, Tarique, & Jacobs, 2009).

Considering the strategic importance of expatriate assignments MNCs endeavor to assess and select suitable employees to send on international assignments (Harvey & Moeller, 2009). At present, 30% of the companies use specially

designed selection tools to assess a candidate for international assignment; an additional 21% are on their way to adopting such processes in order to avoid failure of international assignments due to poor assessment/selection of the candidates (Cartus, 2010). Moreover in order to ensure effectiveness of expatriates and success of assignments, after selection, 80% of MNCs provide pre-departure cross cultural training to expatriates as well as their families (GRTS, 2010). Expatriates are also highly compensated and are considered one of the most expensive investments the MNCs make to establish themselves globally (Black and Gregersen, 1999).

Still according to Cartus (2010), 88% of the MNCs surveyed encountered failure to some extent. With failure being widely defined as, early withdrawal by the expatriates, expatriates not meeting the objectives and the early repatriation on part of MNCs due to a decline in the performance of expatriates. The most cited reasons for the failure of international assignments are spousal dissatisfaction, 65%, and other family concerns, 40% (GRTS, 2010). According to a survey, 70% of the expatriates were married, another 7% were in a serious relationship, and 47% were accompanied by children (GRTS, 2010). Expatriate assignments are generally recognized as a turbulent experience for expatriates because of the changes they cause in both the central domains of expatriates lives: work and family (Caligiuri, et al., 2009; Shaffer, Harrison, Gilley, & Luk, 2001). These assignments act as mechanism of change for work as well as family lives of expatriates, and expatriates strive to find a new balance between their work and family roles (Lazarova et al., 2010). At work, expatriates have to deal with a new work environment and a new work role with an increased pressure to perform. In the family domain, expatriates encounter issues like cultural adaptability, spouse's career and adjustment problems and children's schooling (van der Zee et al., 2005). Furthermore at the time when expatriate are exposed to challenging demands in both work and family domains, they get

cut off from one of their most important resource: social support. This whole scenario makes expatriates a more than likely candidates for experiencing work family conflict (Develio lu, 2009; Fischlmayr and Kollinger, 2010; Grant-Vallone and Ensher, 2001) :a form of inter role conflict in which the role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985).

In the literature regarding individuals working in their home countries, work family conflict is one of the most important construct affecting the well being of employees (Madsen et al., 2005). And well being, both physical and psychological, is widely accepted to have a positive relationship with the performance of the employees (Page & Vella-Brodrick, 2009). Although there are studies in expatriate literature that confirm the negative influence work family conflict has on well being and turnover intentions of international assignees (Grant-Vallone & Ensher, 2001; Shaffer, et al., 2001; van der Zee et al., 2005), there is a dearth of studies exploring the antecedents of work family conflict of expatriates.

Expatriate assignments are a special kind of work role transitions (Black, 1988), which lead to changes in both work and family lives of expatriates. To the best of our knowledge no comprehensive study has been done to investigate the influence of these changes, and challenges inherent in them, on the work and family conflict of expatriate. A reduced work family conflict can reduce the stress and enhance the well being of expatriates, which shall improve their performance. Keeping in view the importance of expatriate assignments and the necessity of expatriates to perform well on them, the present study investigates the changes and challenges that may serve as the antecedents of work family of expatriates. It further endeavors to explore, if personality characteristics can moderate the relationship between antecedents and perceived work family conflict of expatriates. The paper proposes a theoretical framework which is an extension of the existing studies on work family conflict. As the research on well being of expatriates is at its minimal, the propositions have been drawn from the literature on well being and work family conflict regarding the individuals working in their home countries.

Work Family Conflict

The roots of the work family conflict lies in the role theory (Bellavia and Frone, 2004). A role is described as the set of activities and behaviours that an individual is expected to perform (Kahn et al., 1964). Researchers agree that an individual have to perform multiple roles in both work and family domains. Goode (1960) proposed that people have limited number of personal resources, i.e. time and energy, and having to fulfil multiple role can easily become over bearing. He argued that it is impossible for an individual to meet the expectations of all the roles, as more often than not demands of the roles conflict with each other, resulting in stress being experienced by the individual. This conflict arising from the incompatibility of the demands of two roles, that is fulfilling demands of one role make it impossible to fulfil the demands of the other role, was described as the inter-role conflict by Kahn, et al.(1964).

According to the role theory, conflict arises when individuals engage themselves in multiple roles whose demands are incompatible with each other (Katz and Kahn, 1978). Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) put forward a comprehensive definition of work family conflict based upon "scarcity theory" (Robbins, 1937; Smith, 1978) and inter-role conflict(Kahn et al., 1964): "*a form of inter role conflict in*

which the role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect. That is participation in the work (family) role is made more difficult by virtue of participation in the family (work) role". Greenhaus & Beutell (1985) identified three forms of work family conflict; time based, and strain based and behavior based.

Bi-Directionality of Work Family Conflict

A very significant distinction of Greenhaus and Beutell's (1985) definition is that it unequivocally depicts a bi-directional conceptualization of the work family conflict, and distinguishes between work to family conflict (W→F conflict) and family to work conflict (F→W conflict). The idea was put forward for the very first time that it is not adequate to merely discuss work family conflict as a whole or in global context, and that it is vital to recognize and understand the two distinct directions of the conflict; W→F conflict and F→W conflict (Frone et al., 1992a).

The advocates of bi-directionality of work family conflict argue that work and family domains boundaries are asymmetrically permeable, with family boundaries being more permeable than the work boundaries. And not taking into account two directions of work family conflict and asking mixed questions like "How much do your work and family interfere with each other?" for the most part measure only work's interference with family almost ignoring the family's interference with work (Frone, Russell, & Cooper, 1992b)

Supporters of the bi-directionality of work family conflict emphasize that W→F conflict originates from the work environment and F→W conflict is influenced by factors belonging to non-work/family domain. Therefore, one cannot fully understand the work family conflict nor can give effective measures to reduce it unless one understands the source and corresponding direction of the conflict (Carlson and Kacmar, 2000; Frone et al., 1992a; Gutek et al., 1991). Considering all this, the present study takes into account the bi-directionality of work family conflict.

Reciprocal Relationship between F→W Conflict & W→F Conflict

Frone, et al. (1992a) proposed and tested a model for the US employees and established that there exists a "positive reciprocal" relationship between W→F conflict and F→W conflict. Aryee, Fields & Luk (1999) tested Frone, et al.'s (1992a) model for Hong Kong employees and their results further validated the existence of positive reciprocal relationship between W→F conflict and F→W conflict. It was established that W→F conflict and F→W conflict are positively related to each other. An increase in one signifies an increase in the other. This positive reciprocal relationship is best understood by taking into account the spillover theory. W→F conflict that causes family demands to go unfulfilled gives rise to family issues and in accordance with spillover theory these family issues spillover into the work domain, causing family to interfere with work that is giving rise to F→W conflict (Carlson & Kacmar, 2000).

As family issues are recognized as the main cause for the failure of expatriate assignments, there is a large body of research investigating the role of family variables in the adjustment of expatriates, but most of these studies tend to be unidirectional and consider only the effect of family pressure on work, disregarding the stress being faced by family life due to a demanding work life (Shaffer, Harrison, Gilley & Luk, 2001). It is vital to take into account the both directions of the conflict because due to the existence of positive reciprocal relationship between F→W conflict and W→F conflict, work domain

antecedents of $W \rightarrow F$ conflict can influence the $F \rightarrow W$ conflict (Boyar et al., 2003)

However the intensity to which $W \rightarrow F$ conflict influences $F \rightarrow W$ conflict may differ from the intensity to which $F \rightarrow W$ conflict influences $W \rightarrow F$ conflict. Frone, et al. (1992a) conducted the study for US workers and found that $F \rightarrow W$ conflict influenced $W \rightarrow F$ conflict more strongly. Aryee et al. (1999) studying the Hong Kong employees, though confirmed the positive correlation between $W \rightarrow F$ conflict and $F \rightarrow W$ conflict, but they found out that for Hong Kong employees $W \rightarrow F$ conflict influences the $F \rightarrow W$ conflict more strongly rather than vice versa. They attributed this difference in two findings to the cultural differences between US and Hong Kong. According to the said study in Chinese society work is seen as the means to achieve family well being, while in US individuals may work for reasons other than family well being like for example self enhancement.

As here we are concerned with expatriates on the whole, they may come from different cultural backgrounds but are faced with the same task of adjusting to a foreign environment so we anticipate that $W \rightarrow F$ and $F \rightarrow W$ will influence each other with almost the same strength for these expatriates in the global sense.

Proposition 1: *There is a positive reciprocal relationship between $F \rightarrow W$ and $W \rightarrow F$ for expatriates, with $W \rightarrow F$ influencing $F \rightarrow W$ with the same amount of strength with which $F \rightarrow W$ influences $W \rightarrow F$.*

Antecedents of Work Family Conflict

The antecedents of work family conflict ($F \rightarrow W$ conflict and $W \rightarrow F$ conflict) studied so far are categorized into two groups; personal factors, and the conditions related to work and family domains (Poelmans et al., 2005).

Personal/Dispositional Factors as Antecedents of Work Family Conflict

Personal characteristics comprises of demographic factors like age, gender and marital status, and the personal characteristics like self esteem, hardiness. Pleck (1977) suggested that women will report more $F \rightarrow W$ conflict than $W \rightarrow F$ conflict as they have greater amount of family responsibilities. And men will experience more $W \rightarrow F$ conflict as they will be more prone to take their work home (Frone et al., 1992b). Fu and Shaffer (2001) study of a Chinese sample supported Plecks views, that is women experience more $F \rightarrow W$ conflict and men experience more $W \rightarrow F$ conflict. Others have discovered that women reported higher level of both $W \rightarrow F$ conflict and $F \rightarrow W$ conflict as compared to men (Innstrand et al., 2009). Of the other demographics like age and marital status, Grandey and Cropanzano (1999) hypothesized and established that older individuals have more work resources like seniority and tenure, and therefore encounter less $W \rightarrow F$ conflict as compared to young people. Considering being married as a resource it was discovered that married individuals experienced lower level of family role stress as compared to unmarried individuals (Grandey and Cropanzano, 1999).

Recently researchers have started to investigate the affect of Big Five personality factors, openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism, on the work family conflict of an individual. Of these personality factors neuroticism has been found to be positively related to both $W \rightarrow F$ conflict and $F \rightarrow W$ conflict, while extraversion and conscientiousness are known to reduce

the conflict (Grzywacz and Marks, 2000; Rantanen et al., 2005; Wayne et al., 2004).

Work and Family Domain Conditions as Antecedents of Work Family Conflict

Gutek(1991), in view of the Greenhaus and Beutell(1985) definition of work family conflict, suggested that $W \rightarrow F$ conflict originates from work domain, and $F \rightarrow W$ conflict originates from family domain. Most of the research that followed validated the idea, and today while studying the antecedents of work family conflict, work environment is explored to find the antecedents of $W \rightarrow F$ conflict, and family domain conditions are investigated to understand the $F \rightarrow W$ conflict (Poelmans et al., 2005).

Work and family role stressors.

Work related time demands are positively associated with time based $W \rightarrow F$ conflict. Work role conflict and work role ambiguity are considered the work role stressors and are positively linked to behavior based $W \rightarrow F$ conflict. Without taking into account the three forms of conflict, work role demands and work role overload were found to be positively associated with over all $W \rightarrow F$ conflict (Michel and Hargis, 2008). Family role conflict and family role ambiguity, that is family role stressors, are considered the primary antecedents of strain based $F \rightarrow W$ conflict (Aryee et al., 1999; Carlson et al., 2000). Large families and number of young children at home are associated with time based $F \rightarrow W$ conflict (Boyar et al., 2003). Like $W \rightarrow F$ conflict, disregarding the three form of conflict, an increase in family role demands and family role overload are positively linked to over all $F \rightarrow W$ conflict (Kinnunen and Mauno, 1998).

Van der Zee et, al. (2005), exploring the antecedents of work family conflict for expatriates, tested and confirmed that work role demands were positively related only to $W \rightarrow F$ conflict, but family role demands were found to be linked to both $W \rightarrow F$ conflict and $F \rightarrow W$ conflict. This result was attributed to the crossover affect, where stress and anxiety being experienced by one partner is transferred to the other. Shaffer and Joplin's (2001) research established that business travel, time pressures at work are positively linked to expatriates $W \rightarrow F$ conflict, while household hours and parental demands are positively linked to $F \rightarrow W$ conflict.

Social support.

Another antecedent of work family domain that has been explored by various researchers is the social support. Carlson and Perrewé (1999), found that work related social support that comes from the peers and supervisors decreased the $W \rightarrow F$ conflict, and family related social support that comes from the spouse, other family members and friends reduced the $F \rightarrow W$ conflict. Karatepe and Uludag (2008), and Cinamon and Rich (2010) however discovered that social support from managers reduced both $W \rightarrow F$ conflict and $F \rightarrow W$ conflict. This finding is in support of Van der Zee et, al. (2005), who found that for expatriates though family support was related only to $F \rightarrow W$ conflict, work social support reduced both $W \rightarrow F$ conflict and $F \rightarrow W$ conflict.

Work Family Conflict of Expatriates

So far we have discussed the antecedents of work family conflict mostly in relation to the employees working in their home countries which is an extensively explore phenomena in literature. However apart from the work and family role stressors expatriates face some distinctive work and family domain challenges, which are not encountered by the employees

working in their home countries. Expatriate assignments act as mechanism of change for work as well as family lives of expatriates, and expatriates strive to find a new balance between their work and family roles (Lazarova et al., 2010). In the present study we attempt to identify the specific work and family domain conditions that can influence the work family conflict of expatriates.

The present study investigates the antecedents of work family conflict of expatriates keeping in view the role theory (Katz and Kahn, 1978) and Hobfoll's (1989) Conservation of resource (COR) theory. Role theory as discussed before focuses on the incompatibility of demands between work and family domains, which leads to the conflict between the two domains. COR theory presented by Hobfoll (1989) is an integrated model encompassing various theories of stress and is established on the credence that all individuals strive to retain and acquire resources, and are threatened by the probable or actual loss of these resources. According to COR theory stress is the individual's reaction to the environment, that occurs when there is either a threat or an actual loss of resources in the environment, and also when the resources gained after investment of resources are not envisioned to be sufficient. COR theory also suggests that an individual under stress due to loss of a resource may utilize his other resources to overcome the loss and reduce the stress.

Grandey and Cropanzano (1999) were the first ones to study the work family conflict as an interplay between resource gain and lose in accordance with COR theory, arguing that interrole conflict led to stress because resources are lost "juggling" both work and family roles. Poelmans, et al. (2003) proposed, though did not specify or tested, that any loss of resource in the work domain will be positively related to W→F conflict, and any loss of resources in the family domain will be positively related to F→W conflict. The resources recognized by this model are objects (home, car etc), personal characteristic (confidence, self esteem etc), conditions (marital status, seniority etc) and energies (time, money and knowledge).

We rely on COR theory for understanding the work family conflict of expatriates due to various reasons. First, COR theory recognizes change, being a series of linked events, as a potential factor contributing to stress. It argues that though change or transitions are not necessarily stressful within themselves, but if an individual faces a threat of or an actual loss of resources due to the challenges associated with the change the stress is more than likely to ensue (Hobfoll, 1989). As expatriation is a special kind of work role transition which brings changes in both work and family lives of expatriates, we believe that COR theory shall explain as to how the resources loss or gained during the change can prove to be antecedents of work family conflict and also affect the well being of expatriates. Secondly, COR theory also recognizes social support as a type of resource required to sustain all other resources (Hobfoll, 1989). This idea of social support helps to understand social support as a vital resource the absence of which can result in either direction of work family conflict and decrease in well being of an individual. Last and most important reason for relying on COR theory to explore the work family conflict of expatriates is that it allows space for moderators. The COR theory suggests that though loss of a resource is stressful, the individuals employ other available resources to offset this loss. These other resources used to cope for the loss of a resource may be the energy resource like time

and knowledge or personality characteristics like self esteem, self efficacy and emotional stability (Hobfoll, 1989).

Keeping in view the COR theory we shall identify the antecedents and moderators of work family conflict of expatriates. In accordance with the work family conflict literature, we investigate work domain to identify the antecedents of W→F conflict and explore non-work/family domain to identify antecedents of F→W conflict.

Antecedents of W→F conflict of Expatriates

Expatriates enter a new and unknown work environment where role demands and expectations are often uncertain and ambiguous (Aryee & Stone, 1996). In the section we discuss few work domain challenges that expatriate may have to face, which can cause a strain on their resources and lead to W→F conflict.

Organizational culture novelty

Organizational culture novelty refers to the extent to which organizational culture in the host country is different from the organizational culture at home. The greater the organizational cultural novelty more difficult it is for the expatriates to adjust to their work environment. High cultural novelty of the organization implies that expatriates have to learn and adopt new behaviors that are considered more appropriate according to their host organizations' culture (Stroh et al., 2004) for which they may have to increase their office timings and strive to gain more knowledge regarding the work behavior and understanding the organizational culture. The previous knowledge about the suitable behaviors at work will prove to be futile for expatriates and in accordance with the COR theory, owing to the high cultural novelty, expatriates will be facing a potential loss of their coveted personal resources i.e. knowledge, which may result in increase in stress (Hobfoll, 1989). Keeping in view the previous studies regarding resources and work family conflict (Grandey & Cropanzano, 1999; Poelmans, et al., 2003) high organizational novelty, the cause of the loss of resource (knowledge) in work domain, will be positively related to W→F conflict hence we propose that:

Proposition 2: Organizational culture novelty is positively related to W→F conflict of expatriates.

Work role novelty

Work role novelty refers to the extent to which the current work role in the foreign country is different from the past work role being performed by expatriates in their home countries. Role novelty is proposed to cause uncertainty about the job and increase the stress of expatriates (Black et al., 1991). Though role novelty is something that the individuals having a domestic, rather than international, transfer may also encounter (Harrison et al., 2004), but there is no known study investigating the affect of role novelty on work family conflict and well being of individuals. For understanding the influence of role novelty on W→F conflict one needs a sample of individuals who have been transferred from one job to another in recent past, as expatriates fulfill this criterion this study proposes that work role novelty will be positively related to W→F conflict.

Proposition 3: Work role novelty is positively related to W→F conflict of expatriates.

Antecedents of F→W Conflict of Expatriates

International transfers do not bring change in only the work environment the non-work environment and family environment are also greatly affected by them. In this section we discuss the non-work environment situations/conditions that can result in F→W conflict.

Cultural novelty

Cultural novelty is the perceived distance between the cultures of host and home countries (Shaffer et al., 1999). While relocating to a foreign country the expatriates carry with them the pre-conceived notions of appropriate behaviors based on their experiences and learning in their native countries. But these perceptions of how to behave and act in a society more often than not prove to be insufficient because every country has its own set of unique beliefs and values. Higher the perceived difference between the host and home countries culture greater is the cultural novelty that expatriates have to encounter in their general/non-work environment (Harrison et al., 2004). High cultural novelty implies that expatriates previous knowledge about values and behaviors become irrelevant and they have to learn and adopt the new cultural environment they have come to live in (Stroh et al., 2004). This will require extra time and effort, an increase in demand of resources from the non-work/family domain which can result in F→W conflict.

Proposition 4: *Cultural novelty is positively related to F→W conflict of expatriates.*

Spousal adjustment

Spousal or family adjustment is defined as the psychological comfort experienced by the spouse/family of expatriates towards the host country living environment. Spousal adjustment is recognized as a vital factor predicting the general adjustment of expatriate (Shaffer et al., 1999). Shaffer and Joplin's (2001) study proposed that spousal adjustment is negatively related to F→W conflict. More adjusted the spouse is in the new living environment, less will be the demands on expatriate's time and energy resources. In other words if the spouses will be well adjusted in their new environment the expatriates will not have to apply extra effort or resources to make them comfortable with the new living conditions. Poelmans, et al. (2003), suggested that family demands were positively related to F→W conflict, and as less spousal adjustment implies more demands in the family domain, thus spousal adjustment can be considered as an antecedent of F→W conflict.

Proposition 5: *Spousal adjustment is negatively related to F→W conflict of expatriates.*

Education facilities

According to GRTS (2010) 47% of the expatriates were accompanied by children. In the work family conflict literature there is a consensus among researchers that number of children at home is positively related to F→W conflict (Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985). The presence of children is known to increase the strain being experienced by the expatriates (Takeuchi et al., 2005). One of the most important concerns of parents when it comes to their children is the education. In the 2009 HSBC survey regarding the favored expatriate destinations, education facilities was one of the four major factors considered responsible for the preferred status of an expatriate assignment destinations, the other three being finances, healthcare and social contacts (Michael, 2010). We believe that having good education facilities is a resource for an individual to secure a good future for the children. Not having satisfactory education facilities may force expatriates to spend more time in the family domain to help out their children and this can lead to F→W conflict.

Proposition 6: *Satisfaction regarding education facilities is negatively related to F→W conflict of expatriates.*

Consequences of work family conflict

Consequences of work family conflict have been recognized as intention to leave, poor job performance, poor physical and psychological health and low job and life satisfaction. Both directions of conflict, F→W conflict and W→F conflict are generally recognized to be positively related to an employee's turnover intentions (Boyar, et al., 2003; Harr, 2004). Shaffer et al. (2001), established the positive relation between the two directions of work family conflict and expatriates assignment withdrawal cognitions. Frone, et al., (1997) successfully tested a model establishing that F→W conflict was negatively related to job performance and W→F conflict was negatively associated with family performance. Karatepe and Kilic (2007) study also indicated that there is no significant relationship between W→F conflict and job performance, however F→W conflict does have a negative influence on the job performance. Studies have repeatedly shown that both directions of work family conflict are negatively related to both job and life satisfaction of employees (Brough, O'Driscoll, & Kalliath, 2005; Grandey, Cordeiro, & Crouter, 2005).

Well being generally encompasses both physical health and psychological well being (PWB) of an individual. F→W conflict and F→W conflict both are widely recognized to be negatively related to physical health and PWB of an individual: an increase in either direction of the work family conflict lead to deterioration of PWB and physical health of an individual (Kinnunen et al., 2010; Kinnunen et al., 2004; Madsen et al., 2005; Noor, 2003). Studying the effects of work family conflict on well being of expatriates Grant-Vallone and Ensher (2001) showed that W→F conflict was related to expatriates' depression and anxiety, and F→W conflict was linked to expatriates concern for their health.

The present framework focuses on the deterioration of physical health and psychological well being (PWB) of expatriates as the outcome of increased work family conflict because time and again well being of an individual has been found to encompass or influence all the other outcomes of work family conflict, which are performance, satisfaction and turnover (Page & Vella-Brodrick, 2009).

Proposition 7: *W→F conflict and F→W conflict are negatively related to a) psychological well being of expatriates b) physical health of expatriates*

Moderators of work family conflict

Work family conflict researchers have studied various moderators for work family conflict. One of the variables that researchers have focused on as a moderator in work family conflict studies is the gender. Gutek, et al. (1991) study showed that women experience significantly higher level of W→F conflict than men, even when they both worked the same hours. Hill (2005) study also established that the positive relation between job hours and W→F conflict was more pronounced in women than in men.

Social support is another variable studied as a moderator in work family conflict studies. Fu and Shaffer's (2000) study revealed that spouse/partner support and domestic support (parents, servants) moderated the relation between family role stressors and F→W conflict, whereas supervisor support reduced the strength of relationship between work role stressors and W→F conflict. However social studies investigating the link between social support and work family conflict have repeatedly "favored" social support as an antecedent to role stressors and work family conflict instead of a moderator (Carlson & Perrewé,

1999; Michel, Mitchelson, Pichler, & Cullen, 2010; Seiger & Wiese, 2009).

Kinnunen, Vermulst, Gerris, and Mäkikangas's (2003) study investigates the Big Five personality dimensions, openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism/emotional stability, as possible moderating variables between the two directions of work family conflict and well being. The study established that neuroticism moderated the relationships between W→F conflict and job exhaustion and between W→F conflict and depression. Individuals who were emotionally stable fended off the negative effects of work family conflict. Agreeableness was the personality characteristic that was found to moderate the relationship between F→W conflict and marital satisfaction.

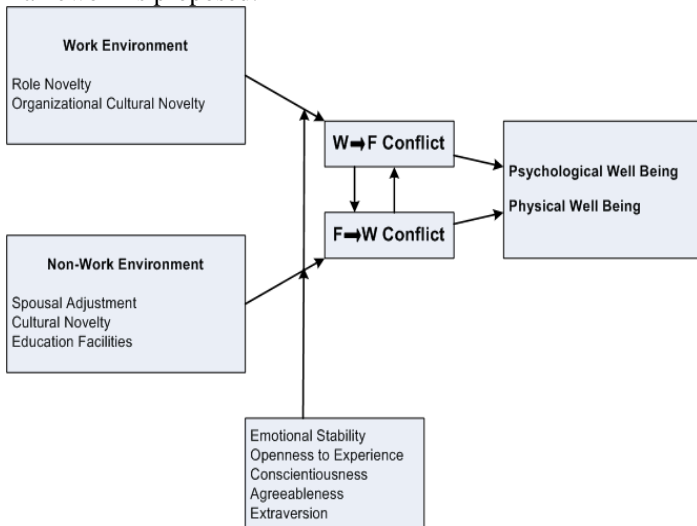
Personal characteristics of expatriates have been studied with regard to their cross cultural adjustment; the degree of comfort and familiarity that an individual feels towards his new environment (Black, 1988). Studies have shown that expatriates with greater extraversion, agreeableness and conscientiousness adjust better to their work and non-work environment. While emotional stability of expatriates has been found to be positively related to work adjustment and negatively related to assignment withdrawal cognitions (Shaffer et al., 2006; Sri Ramalu et al., 2010). In accordance with COR theory, the replacement of resources concept, the current study suggests that personal characteristics of openness to experience, emotional stability and conscientiousness are resources of expatriates and can moderate the relationship between antecedents of W→F conflict and W→F conflict, and the relationship between antecedents of F→W and F→W conflict. An individual who is emotionally stable, conscientious or is open to new experiences can better deal with the role novelty, spousal adjustment issues and cultural novelty issue and have a reduced experience of work family conflict.

Proposal 8: Big five personality characteristics moderate the relationship between a) role novelty, b) organizational cultural novelty and W→F conflict.

Proposal 9: Big five personality characteristics moderate the relationship between a) cultural novelty, b) spousal adjustment, c) satisfaction regarding education facilities and F→W conflict.

Theoretical Framework

Keeping in view the above discussion the following theoretical framework is proposed.



The two directions of work family conflict and their relation with each other are central to our proposed framework. We have

recognized work role novelty and organizational cultural novelty as the antecedents of W→F conflict: spousal adjustment, cultural novelty and education facilities have been recognized as the antecedents of F→W conflict. The personality traits of expatriates have been proposed to moderate the relationship between antecedents and the resulting direction of the work family conflict.

Conclusion

Proficient and skilled expatriates are considered the most viable means of enhancing a business's global presence (Harvey & Moeller, 2009). The problem that MNCs face today regarding the expatriate assignments is twofold, early withdrawal and decline in performance of the international assignees. Well being, consisting of SWB and physical health, has been found to be related to both an individual's intent to leave and his performance level, thus it is quite plausible that promoting and conserving expatriates well being will lead to high job performance and low turnover resulting in a healthier organization (Page & Vella-Brodrick, 2009). Work-family conflict is one of the most well recognized construct that is negatively related to well being and performance of employees. Considering this the present study presents a theoretical framework that investigates the expatriate related situations and conditions that can contribute to their work family conflict.

This study presents a theoretical framework based on previous studies and empirical evidence and it certainly requires an empirical testing of its own to draw substantial results. The presented model and hence the study though are not without limitations and room for improvement. Firstly it does not cater for the gender related issues. Gender has been studied both as moderator and as an antecedent in the literature of work family conflict (Gutek et al., 1991; Innstrand et al., 2009; Shaffer and Joplin, 2001). According to Cartus (2010) 19% of expatriates are female, thus it is suggested that in further research gender issues should be incorporated in the framework. Also we believe that impact of loss of social support is needed to be studied in detail. Other expatriate related issues like language proficiency and previous international experience can also be studied as factors having an influence on the work family conflict of expatriates.

Nonetheless the present study takes the first step towards recognizing the situations and conditions that can lead to an increase in work family conflict being experienced by expatriates. By understanding the antecedents of work family conflict of expatriates, MNCs will be in a better position to devise policies to appease the antecedents and reduce the conflict. As both directions of work family conflict have a negative influence on the well being of an individual that leads to poor performance and life dissatisfaction (Kinnunen, et al., 2006). A reduced work family conflict will reduce the anxiety/depression and improve the job satisfaction and performance of expatriates.

The paper also proposes to study the personal characteristics that can assist the expatriates in reducing their work family conflict and improving their well being. Identification of these personal characteristics will help the MNCs to select the right person to send on international assignments: an expatriate with the right personality-job fit and personality-culture (both work and country culture) fit will be able to successfully fend off the challenges of expatriation.

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