Study on Impact of Remote Work on Job Satisfaction: Mediating Role of Work Family Conflict

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Abstract-This paper discusses the empirical study regarding work family conflict on job satisfaction. 100 IT professionals from the Indian IT industry participated in this study. Findings showed that work-family conflict is negatively correlated with job satisfaction. The results suggest that employees, who engage in remote work, do so more frequently, which leads to greater satisfaction with their jobs.

Keywords: Work family conflict, remote work, job satisfaction, IT personnel, and moderation.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the last decade, renewed interest has emerged in studying the effects of remote work due to the increase of technology and globalization (Caramela, 2017). Technology is now making it easier to work anywhere in the world, as long as one is connected to the Internet (Hendricks, 2014). According to a research-based consulting company, Global Workplace Analytics (GWA), 80% to 90% of the U.S. workforce said that they would like to work remotely on a part-time basis (Latest Telecommuting Statistics, 2017). Thus, the expectations of more flexible work arrangements are increasing, which may potentially impact employees' level of job satisfaction, overall job performance, work-family conflict levels, and/or turnover intention rates.

In recent years, disagreement around the performance of remote employees has received wide attention in the media as some argue that working from home allows employees to be more productive due to fewer office distractions, while others argue that working from home is not the best environment because it allows for more home distractions (Fonner & Roloff, 2010).

For instance, Marissa Mayer, former CEO of Yahoo, ended the remote work policy for all employees in 2013 and stated, " to become the absolute best place to work, communication and collaboration will be important, so we need to be working side-by-side" (Pepitone, 2013, p.1). However, according to a Gallup report on the State American Workplace, "people who work remotely are more engaged, enthusiastic, and committed to their work — only if they work outside the office 20% of the time or less" (Gallup, 2017, p. 29). Therefore, it is paramount that if organizations want to remain profitable and stay competitive in a growing technological society, better understanding of the consequences of remote work is vital for the future of the workplace.

According to some researchers (e.g., Allen, Renn, & Griffeth, 2003; Bailey & Kurland, 2002), the body of literature on remote work is based on problematic assumptions regarding remote work's impact on the individual and organizational level. These assumptions are: employees work remotely full-time, employees work remotely on a permanent basis, and remote work impacts the organization positively (i.e., cost savings) (Bailey & Kurland, 2002).

In the last 20 years, researchers have found inconsistent results with employee job satisfaction, job performance, and work-family conflict when analyzing the consequences of remote work (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007; Golden, 2006). Researchers have expressed their concern that current managers and researchers in the field may not be able to rely on literature for guidance on how remote work affects individual telecommuters. However, recently more researchers are studying the potential positive and negative consequences of remote work, due to changing work dynamics via mobile work (e.g., Ferguson et al., 2016).

Until now, few researchers have examined the potential mediators of remote work; therefore, with the current state of knowledge on remote work, this paper aims to contribute to the limited literature on this topic by examining the relationship between remote work and job satisfaction. More specifically, the current research examines the mediating role of

work-family conflict, perceived autonomy, and telecommuting intensity on the relationship between remote work and job satisfaction.

2.REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In the literature review, I begin by providing a brief history of remote work and its origin. Next, I have reviewed past literature on the direct relationship between remote work and job satisfaction and address different arguments made by researchers due to their conflicting findings on this relationship. Then, I have investigated literature on work-family conflict as a potential mediator in relation to remote work and job satisfaction. Lastly, I reviewed the literature on the topic of telecommuting intensity and its potential mediating effect on the relationship between remote work and job satisfaction.

3.REMOTE WORK AND JOB SATISFACTION

Locke (1976) defined job satisfaction as "a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job or job experiences". Overall, the relationship between remote work and job satisfaction derives from the assumption that remote work allows workers more flexibility and more autonomy in how their work is achieved, which allows the employee to meet the demands of their job and their own personal (life and family) demands (Virick, DaSilva, & Arrington, 2010).

Mixed conclusions have been reported regarding whether telecommuting has positive or negative effects on job satisfaction (Bailey & Kurland, 2002). For example, some researchers have found support for the linear relationship between telecommuting and job satisfaction, suggesting that employees who work remotely more are more satisfied with their jobs (Dubrin, 1991; Guimaraes & Dallow, 1999) or that employees who work remotely more are less satisfied with their jobs (Cooper & Kurland, 2002; Pinsonneault & Boisvert, 2001). In contrast to the argument about a linear relationship between remote work and job satisfaction, Golden (2006) found support for an inverted u-shaped (curvilinear) relationship between the extent of telecommuting (or the amount of time spent working remotely) and job satisfaction. The authors imply that as remote work increases, job satisfaction increases; however, it only

increases up to a certain point (Golden & Veiga, 2005). Further increases in remote work led to a decrease in job satisfaction (Golden, 2006). These findings imply that managers and telecommuters should be cautious when employees telecommute substantially, as it may decrease the quality of employee relations, which would subsequently affect job satisfaction. The researchers suggest that managers should limit telecommuting to only a couple of days per week, so that both needs (a flexible schedule and social interaction with colleagues) are met. In sum, Golden (2006) concluded that remote work is likely to promote job satisfaction, however only up to a point.

Golden and Veiga (2005) examined the relationship between remote work and job satisfaction among 321 professional-level employees. The researchers collected and measured remote work in the number of hours they spent working remotely per week (telecommuting intensity). The researchers were the first to posit a curvilinear relationship (inverted u-shaped), such that employees would experience higher levels of job satisfaction at lower levels of remote work and lower levels of job satisfaction at higher levels of remote work. Based on their findings, the researchers found support for a curvilinear relationship. The researchers found that the relationship between working remotely and job satisfaction subsided, and the employees' job satisfaction levels decreased at higher levels of remote work. In other words, this finding's main implication is that employees are able to socially connect in person with their coworkers and managers, while also having the flexibility of meeting their personal needs when they work remotely only several days out of the week. Alternatively, when employees work the majority of their work week remotely, they experience more isolation due to less social interaction with their colleagues at work, which leads to a decline in their job satisfaction levels.

Allen, Golden, and Shockley (2015) found in a recent meta-analysis that remote work was positively associated with job satisfaction, however, the correlation was small (r = .09). In addition, the authors found that the extent of telecommuting did not relate equally to job satisfaction, which explains why the association between remote work and job satisfaction is curvilinear. In particular, the

researchers found that as remote work increased, so did the employees' levels of job satisfaction, but only up to a point (15.1 hours per week). After that, as remote work continued to increase, employees' levels of job satisfaction started to decrease. In sum, Allen et al. (2015) posited that this curvilinear relationship may be due to the lack of social interaction with coworkers and the increased perception of isolation, which telecommuters may experience when teleworking too frequently during the week. These potential drawbacks may counterbalance the benefits of working remotely which may impact employees' overall job satisfaction. Thus, the following null hypothesis has been made:

H01: Job autonomy has no positive effect on job satisfaction.

4.THE MEDIATING EFFECT OF WORK-FAMILY CONFLICT

Another major theme that has been investigated is remote work's relationship to work-family conflict. According to Greenhaus and Beutell (1985), work-family conflict is produced by simultaneous "pressures from work and family roles that are mutually incompatible". These authors further explain that work-family conflict occurs when one role interferes with meeting the expectations of another role. There is much debate surrounding this topic and past empirical literature has found inconclusive results whether remote work is beneficial in relation to family roles or not (Raghuram & Wiesenfeld, 2004).

Golden, Veiga, and Simsek (2006) studied telecommuting and its differential impact on work-family conflict. The researchers surveyed 454 working professionals who divided their work time between a central work location (an office) and home. The researchers' focus was to examine the mode of where work was being done (office or at home) and if it would impact work-to-family conflict (WFC) and family-to-work conflict (FWC). Work-to-family conflict is defined as work interfering with spouse/family responsibilities, while family-to-work conflict is defined as spouse/family interfering with work responsibilities (Golden et al., 2006). According to their results, the more an employee engaged in telecommuting, the less work interfered with family, which reduced work-to-family conflict.

However, the more an employee engaged in telecommuting, the more family interfered with work, which increased family-to-work conflict. In other words, the researchers did not find support for a full integration between work and family roles or else the researchers would have found a decrease in both work-to-family conflict and family-to-work conflict (Golden et al., 2006). In this particular study, the participants' perception of job satisfaction was not examined as a potential outcome of telecommuting, therefore, it would be interesting to assess if a mediating effect of work-to-family conflict/family-to-work conflict would occur for the relationship between telecommuting and job satisfaction. This is a gap that the current study explores, while focusing only on work-to-family conflict as a potential mediator and not family-to-work conflict.

In recent years, many researchers have focused on examining work-family conflict as a potential mediator within different relationships, such as transformational leadership and job satisfaction, job autonomy and job satisfaction, and job characteristics and well-being at work, in which many have found that work-family conflict mediated or partially mediated these relationships (Chambel, Carvalho, Cesario, & Lopes, 2017; Gözükara & Çolakodlu, 2016; Munir, Nielsen, Garde, Albertsen & Carneiro, 2012). Along with examining the direct effect of job autonomy with job satisfaction, Gözükara and Çolakodlu (2016) assessed the relationship between job autonomy and job satisfaction with work-family conflict as the mediating factor. This research is based on role theory which states that "work-family conflict arises from an inter-role conflict" (Gözükara & Çolakodlu, 2016, p.255). After surveying 270 employees, they found that work-family conflict had a negative mediating impact on the job autonomy and job satisfaction relationship, such that higher amounts of autonomy led to lower work-family conflict, which in turn led to higher amounts of job satisfaction.

Similarly, Chambel et al. (2017) also studied the mediating role of work-to-life conflict for the relationship between job characteristics (i.e., job demands, job autonomy, and supervisor support) and well-being at work (i.e. burnout and engagement). In this study, the researchers specifically looked at part-time versus full-time employees from call center

companies in Portugal. After the researchers surveyed 736 (full-time or part-time) employees, the researchers found that employees' perceptions of job demand, job autonomy and supervisor support levels were related to their overall well-being, in which work-to-life conflict partially mediated the relationship between job characteristics and well-being at work. Even though the researchers did not include remote work as part of their study, it is still important to note what their findings were because they analyzed the relationship between job autonomy and well-being, and well-being has been shown to be connected to job satisfaction in past literature (Faragher, Cass, & Cooper, 2005).

Fonner and Roloff (2010) examined the relationship between remote work and job satisfaction in relation to work-life conflict. More specifically, the researchers examined the degree to which remote work affected job satisfaction by considering the following potential mediators: work-life conflict, stressful situations such as meetings or interruptions, organizational politics and information exchange. After studying 89 teleworkers and 103 office-based employees, the researchers found that telecommuters were more satisfied with their jobs than office-based employees and found work-life conflict to be a mediator of the relationship between remote work and job satisfaction. In this study, telecommuters were defined as employees who had an agreement with their employer to regularly work at least three days a week from a location other than the office (Fonner & Roloff, 2010).

Overall, the researchers found that telecommuters achieved important benefits from their arrangement at work and found that having less work-life conflict was most instrumental to their overall satisfaction. The implications of their results are that working remotely may ease conflicting situations with work and life, which in turn may provide an overall more productive and satisfying work environment and stated, "□ spending less than 50% of the week in the collocated office affords more flexibility and aids in the balance of work and personal roles, which teleworks find satisfying" (Fonner & Roloff, 2010).

Yu (2011) concluded that work-family conflict has a negative effect on job satisfaction. Furthermore, perceived supervisor support not only has direct effects on job satisfaction, but also significantly moderates the relationship between work-family conflict and job satisfaction. The perceived supervisor support is considering an act of social support.

Flisbäck and Lindström (2013) explored contemporary Swedish artists' experiences of work-family conflict from a gender perspective. Sweden is a critical case as the country is well-known for its official gender equality policy which stresses the importance of possibilities for women and men to balance family and paid work. The analysis of survey data collected from 2,025 Swedish professional visual artists showed a generally low level of self-reported work-family conflict, but that of women were higher than men. While an OLS regression analysis showed a relationship between the artists's parenting responsibility and their perceived level of work-family conflict overall, for men artists this was so only at the second child. An unequal division of housework had negative consequences for women artists' work-family balance, while the effect brought about by being single was more pronounced among men. This suggests that men, to a greater extent than women, depend on a spouse to handle the balance between work and family. Such pattern of dependence and traditional gender roles in work and caring continue to persist, limiting individuals' choices and actual ability to work. On the basis of this, following null hypotheses have been constructed:

H02: Work-family conflict has no mediating effect on the relationship between job autonomy and job satisfaction.

5.DATA ANALYSIS

Description of respondents:

Table 1 showing Demographic data of respondents for this study:

Table 1 Demographic data of respondents

Particulars	Category	Number (N)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	82	41
	Female	118	59
	Total	200	100
Marital Status	Single	154	77
	Married	44	22
	Divorced	2	1
	Total	200	100
Average Working Hours	Under 10	18	9
	10 to 30	12	6
	31 to 40	68	34
	Above 40	102	51

Age (years)	Total	200	100
	20 to 30	166	83
	31 to 40	22	11
	More than 40	12	6
	Total	200	100
Industry Type	Banking	16	8
	Manufacturing	12	6
	Software	98	49
	Telecom services	6	3
	Networking	4	2
	Multimedia	4	2
	Health Care	4	2
	Web Based	18	9
	Mobile Application	10	5
	Oil & Gas	6	3
	Others	22	11
	Total	200	100

Source: Author's compilation

The sample included employees from different sectors' large Indian companies. The participants came from a variety of job positions (e.g., talent acquisition, human resources, operations, client service, business development, and marketing).

Demographic information is presented in Table 1. Overall, there was a total of 200 participants. The participants' ages ranged from 20--60 years (M = 33.45, SD = 10.78) with a median age of 28 years. The sample consisted of 41.0% males, 59.0% females. Close to half of the sample (77.0%) identified themselves as being single and 22.0% identified as married and 1.0% divorsed.

In terms of their job, maximum 49.0% reported being in their job in software companies, 9.0% having web based job, 8.0% from banking sector, 6.0% from manufacturing sector, 5.0% from mobile application and remaining from telecom, networking, multimedia, health care etc.

6.MEASURES

Remote Work: A single question was asked to measure whether participants engaged in remote work or not. The question was, "Do you engage in remote work activities during the work week? Here, remote work is defined as performing regular work at a site other than the main office, supported by technological connections (e.g., working remotely, working from home, working from a coffee shop, etc). The responses to this item were either "yes" or "no".

Job Satisfaction: The Brayfield-Rothe Job Satisfaction Index (Brayfield & Rothe, 1955) is a five-item scale that was selected to measure the overall job satisfaction levels of all employees. Responses were rated on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Somewhat disagree, 4 = Neither agree nor disagree, 5 = Somewhat agree, 6 = Agree, 7 = Strongly agree). Questions included "I feel fairly satisfied with my present job" and " I find real enjoyment in my work." The participants' responses were averaged to create an overall job satisfaction score in which higher scores indicated higher job satisfaction. Cronbach' s alpha (internal consistency) demonstrated high reliability of the scale (α = .84).

Perceived Autonomy: The Work Design Questionnaire (Morgeson & Humphrey, 2006) is a nine-item scale that was chosen to measure the employees' perceptions of autonomy in three different areas (work-scheduling autonomy, decision-making autonomy, and work methods autonomy). Items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neither agree nor disagree, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly agree). Questions included "The job allows me to make my own decisions about how to schedule my work" and "The job gives me considerable opportunity for independence and freedom in how I do the work." The participants' responses were averaged to create an overall perceived autonomy score in which higher scores indicated higher perceived autonomy. Cronbach's alpha demonstrated high reliability of the scale (α = .93).

Work-family Conflict: The Work-Family Conflict Scale (Netemeyer, McMurrian, & Boles, 1996) is a five-item scale that was used for this study to measure how work interferes with family. Items were rated on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Somewhat disagree, 4 = Neither agree nor disagree, 5 = Somewhat agree, 6 = Agree, 7 = Strongly agree). Items included" The demands of my work interfere with my home and family life" and " My job produces strain that makes it difficult to fulfill family duties." The participants' responses were averaged to create an overall work-family conflict score in which higher scores indicated higher work-family conflict. Cronbach's alpha demonstrated high reliability of the scale (α=.95).

7.RESULTS

The collected data were analyzed using SPSS (Version 21). In Table-2, correlations are displayed that test the relationships among the study variables.
Table 2-Descriptive Statistics, Pearson Correlations among Variables

	Item	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1.	Remote work	.79	.42	.19*	-			
2.	Job satisfaction	5.49	1.05	.16*	27**	-		
3.	Perceived autonomy	4.04	.77	.32**	.36**	.55**	-	
4.	Work-family conflict	3.10	1.61	-.24**	-.25**	-.33**	-.41**	-

Note: N=200, *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001

Table 2 showing means and standard deviations for all the variables. The purpose of conducting this analysis was to check central tendency and variability for each variable. Among the participants, 79% indicated that they engaged in remote work activities during the average work week, while 21% of the participants did not. According to the sample's telecommuting intensity results, the participants spent on average 13.7 hours of their week working remotely, which classifies the average participant as a low-intensity telecommuter (M = 13.70, SD = 15.0). The respondents' ratings of their overall job satisfaction were moderately high (M = 5.49, SD = 1.05) followed by the ratings of participants' perceived autonomy were moderately high as well (M = 4.04, SD = .77). Ratings of the respondents' overall work-family conflict were moderately low, meaning participants perceived their jobs to have low interference with their spouse/family commitments (M = 3.10, SD = 1.61). On average, participants spent more hours working remotely from their home offices versus satellite offices, coffee shops, or in other remote locations (M = 10.90, SD = 13.39).

8.PEARSON CORRELATIONS

Remote work and job satisfaction had a moderately positive, significant relationship, r(168) = .16, p < .05, indicating that those who were engaged in remote work experienced higher job satisfaction. Remote work and perceived autonomy had a moderately, positive significant relationship, r(168) = .32, p < .01, such that those who were engaged in remote work experienced higher job autonomy. Remote work and work-family conflict had a moderately, negative significant relationship, r(168) = -.24, p < .01, suggesting that those who were engaged in remote work experienced lower work-family conflict.

The relationship between perceived autonomy and job satisfaction was found to be strong, positive and significant, r(168) = .55, p < .01, indicating that higher perception of independence was related to higher satisfaction of one' s job. A moderately strong negative relationship was found between work-family conflict and job satisfaction, r(168) = -.33, p < .01, such that higher conflict between work and home was related to lower satisfaction of one' s job. A significant strong, negative relationship between perceived autonomy and work-family conflict was found, r(168) = -.41, p < .01, indicating that higher perception of independence was associated with a lower perception of conflict between work obligations and spouse/family obligations.

Overall, these results indicated that employees who engaged in remote work perceived their jobs to be more autonomous, reported less work-family conflict, and experienced higher job satisfaction levels.

9.TEST OF HYPOTHESES

Hypothesis-1 stated that Job autonomy has no positive effect on job satisfaction. A hierarchical regression analysis was conducted using the quadratic model in order to test this hypothesis. A scatterplot bivariate graph was created in order to better visualize the strength and direction between the predictor and outcome variables. Before the variables were entered into the simple regression model, the predictor variable was squared.

In the first step of the regression analysis, the linear term of telecommuting intensity was entered into the analysis and was found to be significantly related to job satisfaction, with telecommuting intensity accounting for 9% of the variance for job satisfaction (R2 = .09, R2 adj= .08, F(1,179) = 16.56, p < .01). This demonstrated that higher levels of remote work were related to higher levels of job satisfaction. This rejects the null hypothesis-1 and it can be concluded that job autonomy has a positive effect on job satisfaction.
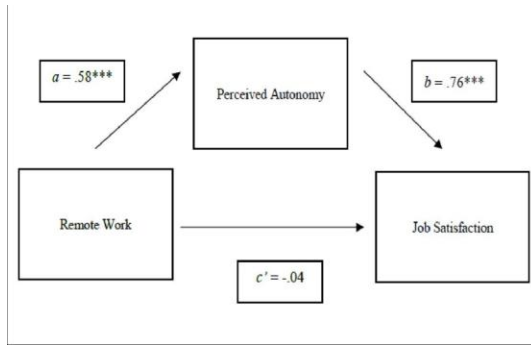
Fig. 1: Mediation model for job satisfaction using perceived autonomy as the mediator and remote work as a predictor where *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001.

Hypothesis-2 stated that work-family conflict has no mediating effect on the relationship between job autonomy and job satisfaction.

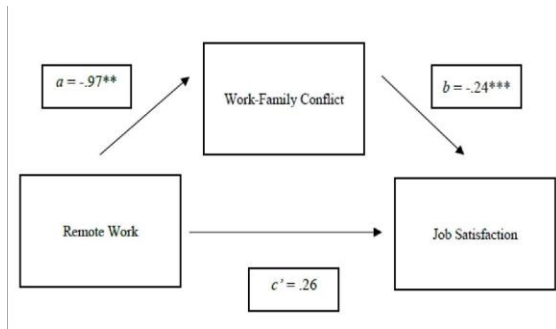Fig. 2: Mediation model for job satisfaction using work-family conflict as the mediator and remote work as a predictor where *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001.

To test this mediation effect, multiple regression analyses were conducted using the four-step approach proposed by Baron and Kenny (1986) who ran three regression analyses were run to observe the significance of the unstandardized regression coefficients (b's) in each step. According to Baron and Kenny (1986), "this model assumes a three-variable system such that there are causal paths feeding into the outcome variable: the direct impact of the independent variable (Path c) and the impact of the mediator (Path b) ...independent variable to the mediator (Path a)" . In addition, a Sobel test was conducted in order to test the indirect effect of perceived autonomy on the relationship between remote and job satisfaction (path ab). This rejects the null hypothesis-2 and it can be concluded that work-family conflict has a significant mediating effect on the relationship between job autonomy and job satisfaction.

10.CONCLUSION

The main goal of the study was to investigate the manner in which remote work impacts employees' job satisfaction levels. The findings suggest that engaging in remote work increases employees' job satisfaction levels. More specifically, as the intensity of remote work increases, job satisfaction also increases, and there is no point of decline as previously hypothesized. In addition, perceived autonomy, work-family conflict, and telecommuting intensity were investigated as potential mediators. The results suggest that employees who engage in remote work have greater perceptions of autonomy, which leads them to become more content with their occupations. Also, the results imply that employees who engage in remote work have fewer work disruptions with family time, which also leads them to become more content with their occupations.

Lastly, the results suggest that employees, who engage in remote work, do so more frequently, which leads to greater satisfaction with their jobs. In summary, engaging in remote work may benefit employees with providing a more autonomous work environment and, in parallel, mitigate work-family stressors. In return, this may also benefit the employer by having a more satisfied workforce. Overall, the results of the study may help future organizations decide whether to invest in telecommuting programs within their businesses.

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