



Examining the relationship between spousal support, spousal conflict, and work-life outcomes

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Abstract

Balancing relationships and jobs are difficult in the fast-paced lifestyle that the average American worker faces. Too much attention on either area can be detrimental to the other, so it is crucial to maintain a balance between both areas of life. This idea is known as the spillover effect (i.e., how having a good marriage can produce satisfaction in both a relationship and in work) (Liang, 2015). Furthermore, family and work relationships can be beneficial or detrimental towards one another depending on how each spouse views the importance of both areas in their lives. This study will also help identify certain areas that partners should be aware of to have a healthy relationship. However, although spousal support may be imperative for a long-lasting relationship, is also important for performance at work. Additionally, it is not just physical exhaustion that may impact work engagement, but also emotional exhaustion that may result from home-life spillover. Organizations can take these findings to evaluate how they can make their workspace better by encouraging meaningful time at work and also at home.

Literature Review

- ❖ **Spousal Support**
 - Previous research has found that **spousal recovery support and life satisfaction are positively associated** with one another (Park and Fritz, 2015).
 - Research had also found that spousal instrumental support was **negatively associated with emotional exhaustion** (Carlson, Halbesleben, Perrewe, Rotondo, & Zellars, 2010).
- ❖ **Spousal Conflict**
 - Research has found that conflict with the people closest to you causes **more anxiety, depression, interpersonal sensitivity, and a poor quality of life** (Abbey, Abramis, & Caplan, 1985).
 - Previous research has found that higher levels of work-family conflict results in **lower levels of work engagement** (Henn & Opie, 2013).
- ❖ This **proposed study** aims to investigate **spousal support and spousal conflict** and its relationship with **emotional exhaustion, engagement, life satisfaction and job satisfaction**.

Hypotheses

- H1: Spousal support** will have a **negative relationship** with emotional exhaustion and a **positive relationship** with engagement, job satisfaction and life satisfaction.
- H2: Spousal conflict** will have a **positive relationship** with emotional exhaustion and a **negative relationship** with engagement, job satisfaction, and life satisfaction.

Measures

- ❖ **Spousal Support:** eight-item scale that measures how much an individual feels affirmed from people in their lives they view as supportive (Abbey, Abramis, & Caplan, 1985).
 - Items are measured from 1 to 5 with 1= *Not at All* and 5= *A Great Deal*. An example item is, *“My partner listens to me when I need to talk about things that are very important to me.”*
- ❖ **Spousal Conflict:** five-item scale that measures the conflicts that a person faces with family members that occurs in anger or tension (Abbey, Abramis & Caplan, 1985).
 - Items are measured from 1 to 5 with 1= *Not Very Much* and 5= *Very Much*. An example item is, *“When you and your spouse argue, to what extent are the problems or arguments serious?”* (Braiker and Kelly, 1979).
- ❖ **Emotional Exhaustion:** five-item scale from the MBI General Survey that measures how someone distances themselves due to the amount of work as a coping mechanism and the main area of job burnout (Schaufeli, Leiter, Maslach, & Jackson, 1996).
 - Items are measured from 1 to 7 with 1= *Strongly Disagree* and 7= *Strongly Agree*. An example question is *“I feel all used up at the end of the workday”*.
- ❖ **Employee Engagement:** nine-item assessment scale that measures a mindset that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption (Schaufeli, Salanova, Gonzalez, & Bakker, 2002).
 - Items will be modified from to measure engagement from the employee’s own perspective rather than their supervisors. Items are measured from 1 to 7 with 1= *Strongly Disagree* and 7= *Strongly Agree*. An example item that will be asked is *“At work, I am full of energy.”*
- ❖ **Job Satisfaction:** three-item scale that assesses employee satisfaction with their work, their coworkers, and their supervisor (Price & Mueller, 1986).
 - Items are measured on from 1 to 5 with 1 = *Very Unsatisfied* and 5 = *Very Satisfied*. An example item is, *“All in all, how satisfied are you with the work itself of your job?”*.
- ❖ **Life Satisfaction:** five item Satisfaction of Life Scale that measures an individual’s perception of their quality of life (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985).
 - Items are measured from 1 to 7 with 1= *Strongly Disagree* and 7= *Strongly Agree*. An example question is *“In most ways, my life is close to ideal”*.

Proposed Method

- ❖ Participants will be 250 participants from Amazon’s Mechanical Turk (MTurk) - an online crowdsourcing platform where workers can complete tasks (e.g., surveys) for monetary compensation (Cheung 2017).
- ❖ Study inclusion criteria include the need to be married and a full-time employee.
- ❖ Survey order will be randomized between participants.

Predicted Results

Table 1. Hypothesized relationships between study variables

	1	2	3	4	5
1 Spousal Support	--				
2 Spousal Conflict	(-)				
3 Emotional Exhaustion	(-)	(+)			
4 Employee Engagement	(+)	(-)	(-)		
5 Job Satisfaction	(+)	(-)	(-)	(+)	
6 Life Satisfaction	(+)	(-)	(-)	(+)	(+)

Discussion

- ❖ There are several factors that contribute to balanced lifestyle between work and home life.
 - Emotional exhaustion, engagement, job satisfaction, and life satisfaction are all variables that affect having a supportive or conflicting relationship.
- ❖ Relationship partners should focus on having a positive and supportive relationship, as it is related to performance and satisfaction at work.
- ❖ Spousal conflict can also negatively affect an individual’s work experience - avoiding conflict may help decrease emotional exhaustion and increase engagement at work.
- ❖ Overall, this study can benefit organizations by highlighting the importance of how an employee’s home and work-life are intertwined. Organizations should take certain precautions to make sure their employees’ work life does not negatively interfere with their home life.

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