

Exploring the Mediating Role of Self-Directed Learning Behaviours in the Relationship Between Work-Family Conflict and Job Satisfaction, with Direct Influence of Organizational Commitment

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Abstract

Balancing work and family demands presents challenges for employee well-being and job performance. Continuous skill development is also crucial for career success in today's changing workplace. However, few research studies have looked into the role of self-directed learning behaviour (SDLB) in managing work-family conflict (WFC). The current study aimed to investigate the relations between WFC, job satisfaction (JS), organizational commitment (OC) and SDLB and whether SDLB mediates the relation between WFC and JS. A sample of 157 employed adults aged 18-65 years completed self-report measures of WFC, JS, SDLB, OC and demographic variables. SEM analysis was performed to examine the proposed relationships. Results showcased a significant direct negative effect of WFC on JS ($\beta = -0.438, p < 0.001$) but no indirect effect through SDLB ($\beta = -0.012, p > 0.05$). Moderated mediation analyses were also performed with gender as a moderator which revealed no significant conditional indirect effects. The findings suggest WFC directly impacts employees' job attitudes, but SDLB may not buffer these effects as hypothesized. Implications and limitations are discussed. The study's findings carry significant implications for organizations striving to enhance employee performance and well-being amidst evolving workforce trends.

Keywords: Job Satisfaction, Organizational Commitment, Self-Directed Learning Behaviour, Work-Family Conflict.

Introduction

The modern workforce is increasingly confronting the difficulties of managing the balance between work and non-work responsibilities. Recent surveys find that over 60% of employees feel work negatively impacts their family or personal life at least some of the time (1). Rising dual-career families and caregiver demands only intensify these pressures. Unsurprisingly, work-family conflict (WFC) has arisen among employees and become a key retention concern for organizations (2). With training budgets tightened, fostering self-directed approaches that accommodate varied learning styles assumes greater significance. Additionally, globalization and technological change places importance on continuous skill adaptation and development to support career progression (3). Against this backdrop, understanding factors that can help

mitigate WFC while strengthening independent learning and work commitment holds theoretical and practical relevance.

The concept of work-family conflict has garnered considerable recognition in the field of management and organizational psychology. Researchers have studied how the demands and responsibilities of one domain can clash with the other, creating work-family conflict (4). This conflict can harm employees in various ways, such as increasing stress levels, lowering job satisfaction, increasing turnover intentions, and reducing overall well-being (5). However, most of these studies have only looked at the direct link between work-family conflict and job satisfaction (JS), without exploring the hidden factors that may explain this link. One of these factors is self-directed learning behavior (SDLB), which is when individuals take charge of their own learning

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and actively seek new knowledge and skills for their personal and professional growth (6). Research indicates self-directed learning promotes skills like problem-solving, adaptability to change, lifelong learning tendencies and resilience that lead to career growth and maintenance of job relevance (7, 8). Feeling competent and in control of one's learning helps foster greater job satisfaction as work responsibilities can be more capably handled. Self-directed workers perceive more control over skill development, connecting learning to career goals and intrinsic motivation (9). We think that self-directed learning behavior is important because it can help employees cope better with work-family conflict.

Moreover, we also think that organizational commitment (OC), which is how much employees feel attached and loyal to their organization, can influence JS directly, as well as interact with WFC and SDLB. Previous studies have revealed that OC is associated with numerous positive outcomes, such as job satisfaction (10). We want to understand how organizational commitment affects job satisfaction, to get a more complete picture of the underlying mechanisms. Therefore, the aim of this research is to investigate how self-directed learning behavior mediates the relationship between work-family conflict and job satisfaction, while also considering the direct influence of organizational commitment. The hypothesized conceptual model is depicted in Figure 1.

This research study seeks to make a substantial contribution to the scholarly understanding of factors that influence employee well-being, performance, and professional growth within modern work environments. As organizations increasingly adopt hybrid and remote work models, blurring the boundaries between employees' work and personal domains, it becomes critical to identify strategies that can help foster job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and continuous learning and development.

By examining the mediating role of self-directed learning behavior in the relationship between work-family conflict and job satisfaction, this study will advance theoretical insights into the behavioural mechanisms through which employees can

proactively navigate and mitigate the negative impacts of work-life interference. The findings may elucidate how workers' ability and motivation to engage in self-guided learning and skill acquisition can serve as a crucial pathway for maintaining job contentment and productivity, even when faced with competing professional and family responsibilities. By shedding light on how learning behaviors and organizational context interact to affect vital job attitudes, the study is also willing to provide a framework to guide future exploration into optimization of human capital development processes and corporate culture changes. Moreover, by incorporating the direct influence of organizational commitment, this research thrives to provide a more holistic view of the complex interplay between individual, interpersonal, and organizational factors in shaping employee well-being and career development. The implications will inform talent management strategies that foster a corporate culture supportive of work-life balance, continuous learning, and meaningful employee-employer relationships. Such insights can empower organizations to design policies, resources and leadership practices that cultivate an engaged, adaptable workforce capable of thriving amidst evolving work dynamics.

Hypothesis Development

Direct Relationship Between WFC and JS

Consistent evidence suggests a negative relation between work-family conflict (WFC) and job satisfaction (JS). According to role conflict theory, balancing the demands of work and family roles creates inter-role conflict that depletes finite personal resources like time and energy (11). When work interferes more with family responsibilities, fewer resources are available to fully engage in and feel satisfied with one's job. Early research found work hours and schedules impacted JS through increased WFC (12). The two variables have a significant negative correlation, which is confirmed by further meta-analyses (13, 14). The depletion of resources explains this link. Employees experience role overload and impaired well-being, when work obligations interfere with their ability to perform family duties (15). As per the principle of conservation of resources theory, people strive to

preserve, safeguard, and build resources, so resource loss lowers positive work attitudes (16). For instance, increased WFC led to emotional exhaustion that diminished JS among nurses (17). Thus:

H1: There is a negative direct relationship between work-family conflict and job satisfaction.

Direct Relationship Between WFC and SDLB

Considerable evidence suggests work-family conflict (WFC) undermines behaviors requiring personal resources like self-directed learning behavior (SDLB). Empirically, several studies found increased WFC relates to decreased developmental behaviors. For example, higher WFC led managers to participate less in voluntary training (18). WFC also hindered supportive supervisor relationships that could facilitate on-the-job learning (19). Additionally, spillover of depleted resources from high WFC roles impairs cognitive flexibility needed for creative problem-solving and adaptable learning styles. Collectively, role conflict and conservation theories indicate that when work overloads drain personal resources, employees have less energy and initiative left to invest in discretionary improvement activities like self-directed study on the job. Therefore:

H2: There is a negative direct relationship between work-family conflict and self-directed learning behavior.

Direct Relationship Between SDLB and JS

Self-directed learning behavior (SDLB) can enhance employees' job satisfaction (JS) through several mechanisms. First, engaging in independent study allows workers to expand their skills, responsibilities, and autonomy over work tasks (20). These improvements to person-job fit strengthen positive work attitudes according to person-environment fit theory (21). Additionally, participation in informal and non-mandatory learning displays commitment to career growth, signaling willingness to invest personal resources for long-term benefit (22). Such future-oriented orientation builds optimism that protects against strains from current job demands. Both enhanced task mastery and future orientation raise feelings of competence and control that bolster JS (23). Empirically, some studies provide support such as

personal development strengthened enjoyment and meaningfulness of work among employees (24). Enhanced mastery through independent study also widened professionals' career opportunities, supporting positive attitudes. Therefore:

H3: There is a positive direct relationship between self-directed learning behavior and job satisfaction.

Indirect Relationship Between WFC and JS Through SDLB

Drawing on the expected relationships in Hypotheses 1-2, Self-directed learning behavior (SDLB) is proposed to partially mediate the negative impact of work-family conflict (WFC) on job satisfaction (JS). Role conflict and conservation theories provide a conceptual framework for this indirect effect. For example, in some studies, family-supportive supervision partially mediated the negative effect of family interference with work on affective commitment, as predicted by conservation theory (25). Additionally, self-directed career management behaviors were found to mediate relationships between job insecurity, stressor, and job attitudes including satisfaction (26). Collectively, this prior evidence suggests the resource depletion and redirection triggered by WFC lowers SDLB, which in turn lowers JS. Specifically:

H4: Self-directed learning behavior partially mediates the relationship between work-family conflict and job satisfaction.

Direct Relationship Between OC and JS

A direct positive association between organizational commitment (OC) and job satisfaction (JS) has gotten a well-established record in literature. OC refers to an employee's sense of psychological connection with the organization they work for, encompassing their belief in its values and desire to remain a member (27). OC shapes work attitudes both effectively, through pride in organizational membership, and calculatedly by the perceived costs of leaving (28). Higher OC reflects greater identification with and involvement in the organization that fosters more favorable perceptions of the job.

Meta-analyses report a consistent moderate correlation between OC and JS across cultures and occupations (29). For example, across over 200

samples Ricketta (29) observed a mean correlation of $r = 0.44$. Theoretical frameworks support this link. Social identity and social exchange theories propose stronger organizational ties enhance perceptions that the organization values and supports employees' well-being (30). Thus:

H5: There is a positive direct relationship between organizational commitment and job satisfaction.

Role of Gender

While much of the existing research on WFC, JS, OC and SDLB has not found differences based on demographic variables like gender (14, 15, 31), it is worthwhile hypothesizing and testing for measurement and structural invariance. Differences in gender socialization and family roles may influence this model. Socio-cultural theories suggest women traditionally bear a greater share of household duties, making them more vulnerable to work-family interference and resource depletion from WFC (32). However, shifting gender norms have seen converging experiences in recent cohorts (33).

Prior research on related topics found mixed evidence. Some studies found gender moderated links between constructs like workload and OC (34), while meta-analyses detected small or insignificant differences overall (35). Given mixed past findings, structural equation modelling can test if relationships between constructs hold equally for men and women. Thus:

H6: The structural model, including direct and indirect relationships between work-family conflict, self-directed learning behaviour, organizational commitment, and job satisfaction, is invariant across gender.

Methodology

A quantitative cross-sectional research approach was used to examine the relationships between the variables discussed in this study. Data were gathered from Indian working professionals through convenience sampling, employing four well established self-report questionnaires as specified below. Both a paper-based survey and an online Google Forms questionnaire were utilized in the data collection process. A total of 157 participants took part in this study. Inclusion criteria required

participants to be aged 18 or above and currently employed. The sample composition comprised 36.3% females ($n = 57$) and 63.7% males ($n = 100$). SEM was employed for analysing the data. The SEM analysis was performed using IBM AMOS software, enabling the evaluation of the hypothesized structural model.

Measures

Work and Family Conflict Scale (WAFCS)

Work-Family Conflict (WFC) was measured using Work and Family Conflict Scale (WAFCS) developed by Haslam et al. (36), which includes 10 items rated on a 7-point Likert-type scale. The instrument measures two dimensions: family-to-work conflict (FWC), where family obligations negatively impact work, and work-to-family conflict (WFC), where work interferes with family life. Each dimension includes 5 items, sample items included: "My work prevents me spending sufficient quality time with my family" (WFC subscale) and "My family has a negative impact on my day-to-day work duties" (FWC subscale). With the current study's sample, the internal consistency attained with this scale was ($\alpha = .86$).

Job Satisfaction Survey (JSS)

The original 36-items Job Satisfaction Survey (JSS) developed by Spector (37) was used to assess Job Satisfaction (JS). The scale uses a 6-point Likert response scale. The instrument measures 9 dimensions, each dimension consisting of 4 questions. The nine dimensions consist of questions on performance-based rewards, required organizational policies and procedures, coworker relations, internal communication practices, and the inherent nature of job responsibilities. Sample items were "I feel I am being paid a fair amount for the work I do." and "My supervisor is unfair to me." The internal consistency attained with this scale was ($\alpha = .88$).

TCM Employee Commitment Survey

Organizational Commitment (OC) was measured using the short-form of TCM Employee Commitment Survey developed by Allen and Meyer (38), based on the Three-Component Model (TCM) of commitment (10, 27), which comprises 18 items rated on a 7-point Likert-type scale. The scale assesses three

different forms of employee commitment to an organization with 6 items in each dimension: Affective commitment – based on desire (eg “I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this organization.”), Normative commitment – based on obligation (eg “I would feel guilty if I left my organization now.”) and Continuance commitment – based on cost (eg “Right now, staying with my organization is a matter of necessity as much as desire.”). The internal consistency attained with this scale was ($\alpha = .78$).

Self-Directed Learning Readiness Scale

The modified version of SDLRS originally constructed by Fisher (39) and later modified by Justus (40), was used to measure the Self-directed Learning Behaviour (SDLB). Responses should be given using a 5-point Likert scale. The items within the scale are aggregated to form three subscales: Self-Management (SM) including 10 items (eg “I am able to plan my own learning”), Desire to Learn (DL) with 8 items (eg “I enjoy learning new information”) and Self Control (SC) including 9 items (eg “I can find out information for myself”) (40). The internal consistency attained with this scale was ($\alpha = .94$). Originally the scale was developed for the use in undergraduate students, but high Cronbach’s alpha value indicate that it can be used in the working population as well.

Data Analysis

Data cleaning was carried out using Excel, while descriptive analyses were conducted using SPSS (version 29). Then Cronbach’s alpha value was estimated to assess the internal consistency of each utilized scale. To examine the connection between the variables, correlation analyses were conducted. AMOS (version 26) was used to perform SEM, where mediation model was made, and model fit was examined. To analyse the mediation effect, 5,000 bootstrapped standard errors were utilized, consistent with recommended methods (41), with the corresponding 95% confidence intervals detailed below. Multi-group analysis was conducted to investigate moderated mediation, employing gender as a moderator to test conditional process analysis, as outlined by Hayes (42).

Results

Descriptive Statistics

For all the variables of interest, Table 1 showcases the calculated means, standard deviations, and correlation matrix. JS had significant positive correlations with both OC ($r = 0.32$), and SDLB ($r = 0.19$), along with negative correlation with WFC ($r = -0.42$). No significant correlation was found between OC and WFC, OC and SDLB, and between WFC and SDLB.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics are presented alongside correlations for the variables

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3
(1) WFC	31.78	11.32			
(2) JS	136.38	24.79	-0.42***		
(3) OC	77.38	14.45	0.09	0.32***	
(4) SDLB	113.19	14.78	-0.12	0.19*	0.10

Note: N = 157; *** and * denote significance at 0.001 and 0.05 level (two-tailed), respectively. WFC = Work-family conflict, SDLB = Self-directed learning behaviour, OC = Organizational commitment, JS = Job satisfaction.

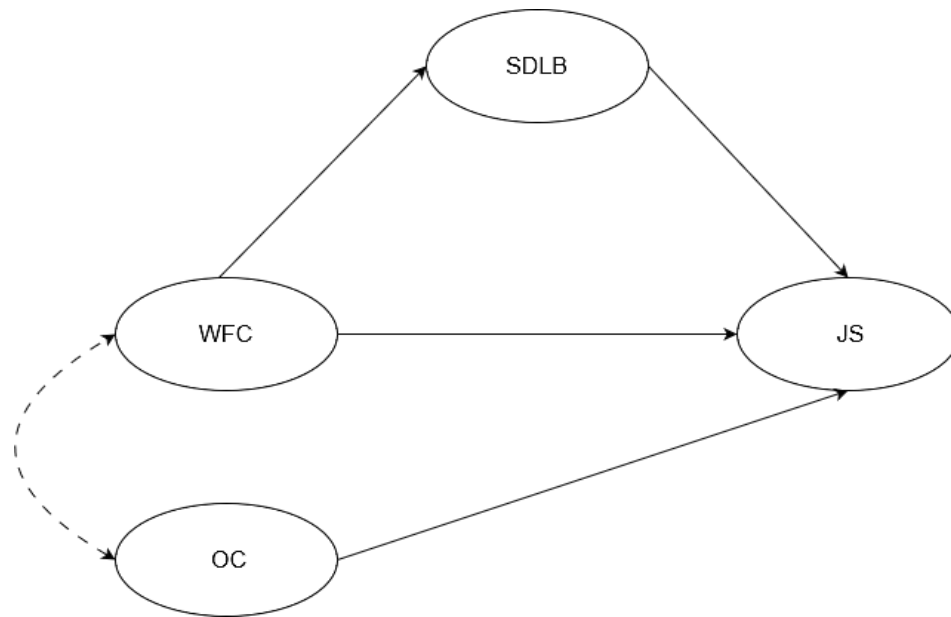


Figure 1: The hypothesized conceptual model

Note. Solid lines indicate regression coefficients, while dotted lines represent covariance. WFC, work-family conflict; SDLB, self-directed learning behavior; JS, job satisfaction; OC, organizational commitment.

Structural Equation Modeling

Mediation Model

The model shown in Figure 1 was subjected to a mediation analysis using Full Estimation Maximum Likelihood, in which SDLB was proposed to mediate the relationship between WFC and JS, with OC directly predicting JS. The adequacy of the model was assessed using a range of fit indicators. The chi-square (χ^2) value and the chi-square to degrees of freedom ratio (χ^2/df) were examined. We are looking for a χ^2 value not significant i.e., $p > 0.05$ (43). A well-fitting χ^2/df ratio falls between 1 and 3 (44). Additionally, the CFI and TLI values were calculated. A CFI value close to 0.95 suggests a strong fit between the proposed model and the observed data, while values between 0.90 and 0.95 are deemed acceptable (45), whereas a TLI value greater than or equal to 0.95 indicate a good accepted fit (45). The RMSEA and SRMR were also examined. An RMSEA and an SRMR value less than 0.08 signify a well-fitting model (45).

The mediation model demonstrated a good fit to the data across various fit indices, $\chi^2(1) = 1.955$, $p > 0.05$, $\chi^2/df = 1.955$, CFI = 0.984, TLI = 0.902, RMSEA = 0.078, SRMR = 0.0371; and the model explained 31% of variance in job satisfaction and a very small 1.3%

of variance in self-directed learning behaviour (Figure 2). The mediation analysis revealed a significant direct effect of WFC on JS, $\beta = -0.438$, SE = 0.145, $Z = -3.020$, $p < 0.001$, and a significant direct effect of OC on JS, $\beta = 0.352$, SE = 0.156, $Z = 2.256$, $p < 0.001$. Bootstrapping was employed to verify the significance of the direct effects, given that estimates of these effects may exhibit asymptotic distributions. The 95% confidence intervals for the standardized direct effects excluded 0. Ranging for WFC \rightarrow JS, 95% CI [-0.553, -0.312] and for OC \rightarrow JS, 95% CI [0.184 to 0.519]. However, there is no significant direct effect of WFC \rightarrow SDLB, $\beta = -0.116$, SE = 0.097, $Z = -1.195$, $p > 0.05$, and of SDLB \rightarrow JS, $\beta = 0.108$, SE = 0.119, $Z = 0.907$, $p > 0.05$.

In examining the mediation model, it was discovered that there is no statistically significant indirect effect of WFC on JS through SDLB indicating no mediation, $\beta = -0.012$, SE = 0.011, $Z = -1.090$, 95% CI [-0.044, 0.003]. It is to be noted that all the SE values reported are bootstrap estimates of the standard errors. It was observed that the direct effect of WFC on JS accounted for 45% and of OC on JS accounted for 35.2% of the total effect i.e., 1 standard deviation increase in WFC causes a 0.45 standard deviation

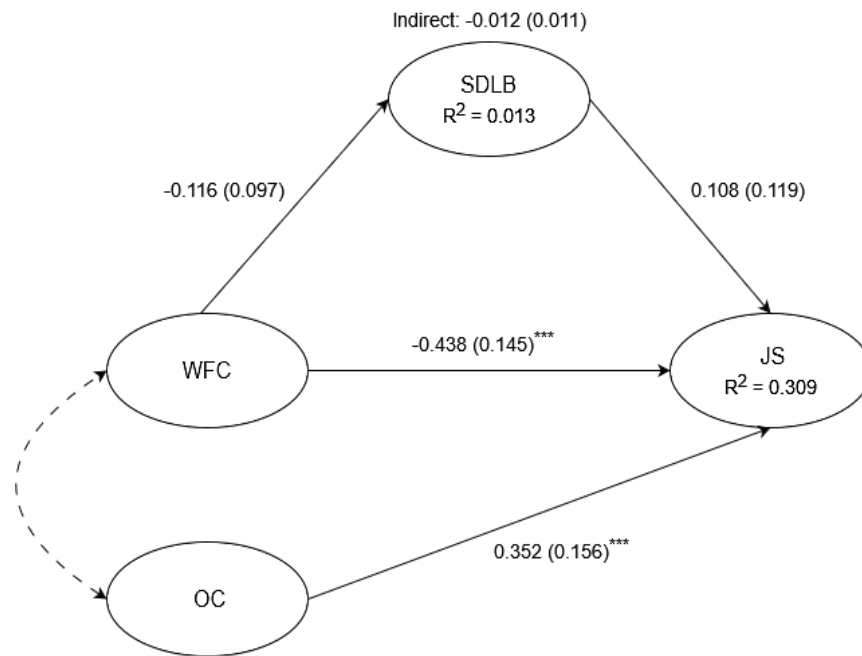


Figure 2: The mediation model

Note. The depicted values represent standardized β coefficients, while the values in parentheses indicate the standard error of β . Covariance is denoted by dashed line. Significant paths are denoted by *** ($p < 0.001$). WFC, work-family conflict; SDLB, self-directed learning behaviour; JS, job satisfaction; OC, organizational commitment.

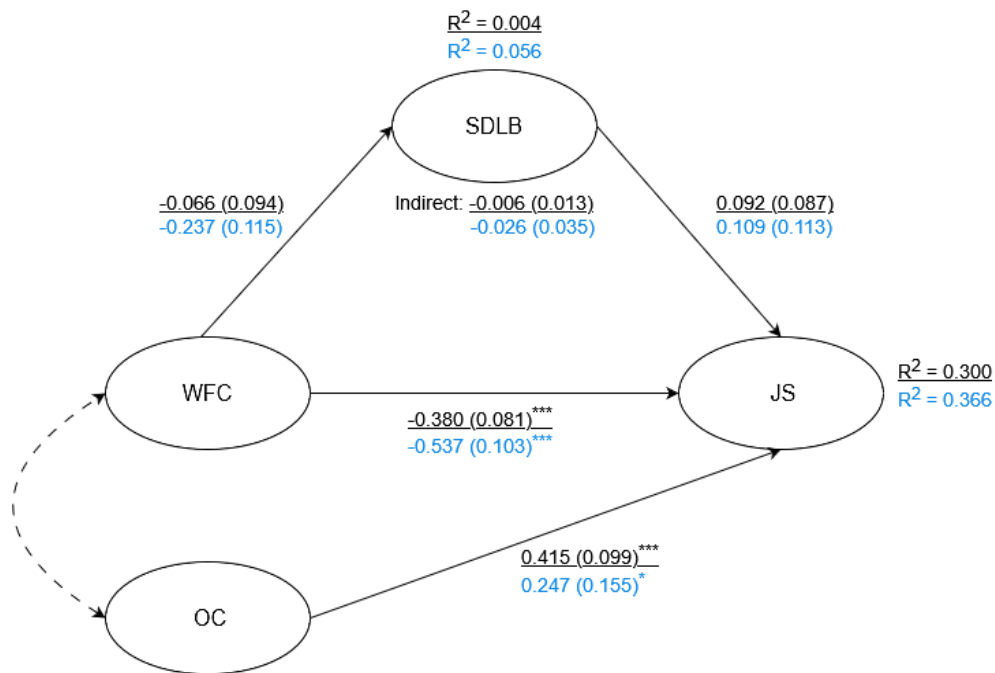


Figure 3: Gender differences in the mediation model

Note. The standardized β coefficients are shown together with the standard error of β in parentheses for the full invariance mediation model across genders. The underlined parameters denote the estimates for males and the font in blue for females. Covariance is denoted by dashed line. Significant paths are denoted by *** ($p < 0.001$) and * ($p < 0.05$), respectively. WFC, work-family conflict; SDLB, self-directed learning behaviour; JS, job satisfaction; OC, organizational commitment.

decrease in JS and same goes for OC on JS. Standardized parameter estimates are presented here for both the predictor and outcome variables.

Gender Differences

Potential gender variances within the mediation model presented in Figure 2 were investigated using Multi-Group analysis, thus gender was acting as a moderator. Two models were made, Unconstrained (where model allows for the free estimation of path coefficients for each group) and Constrained (where certain path coefficients are set to be equal across groups) which were run for two groups males and females. Both the models showed very good fit to the data, unconstrained: $\chi^2(2) = 2.108, p > 0.05, \chi^2/df = 1.054, CFI = 0.998, TLI = 0.989, RMSEA = 0.019, SRMR = 0.0485$; constrained: $\chi^2(6) = 6.706, p > 0.05, \chi^2/df = 1.118, CFI = 0.988, TLI = 0.975, RMSEA = 0.028, SRMR = 0.0597$. Comparing the fit indices between the unconstrained and constrained models, $\chi^2(4) = 4.598, p > 0.05, \chi^2/df = 0.064, CFI = 0.01, TLI = 0.014, RMSEA = 0.009, SRMR = 0.011$, the differences in CFI, TLI, RMSEA, SRMR and chi-square difference were not statistically significant, suggesting that the constrained (nested) model provides an acceptable fit and that the path coefficients can be considered equivalent across gender groups.

In examination of the full invariance mediation model, Figure 3 presents the parameter estimates for both male and female subgroups. The patterns of significance, as observed in Figure 2, are consistent across genders when evaluating both the groups separately.

To examine the moderating effect of gender on all paths, critical ratios of differences of parameters for males and females were calculated, $WFC \rightarrow JS = -1.636, OC \rightarrow JS = -0.720, WFC \rightarrow SDLB = -0.891$ and $SDLB \rightarrow JS = 0.355$. These values indicate that there is no statistically significant difference between any of the path coefficients for males and females, as the Z values fall within the range of -1.96 to 1.96, suggesting a lack of significant divergence. To assess the potential moderation of mediation (moderated mediation) and differences in indirect effects across gender groups, we conducted pairwise comparisons for the path $SDLB \rightarrow JS$ (46). The non-significant Z

value for the $SDLB \rightarrow JS$ path suggests the absence of moderated mediation by gender, aligning with the absence of mediation in the first place. Despite the shared significance outcomes and lack of significant differences, we observed variations in the actual parameter values between male and female groups. These observed differences, while not statistically significant, warrant further exploration and will be subject to more in-depth evaluation in subsequent analyses.

Discussion

Work-family conflict (WFC) denotes the clash between demands and responsibilities arising from both work and family domains that deplete personal resources (11). Increased WFC has been negatively linked to developmental behaviors like training participation (18) and learning-supportive relationships (19). Self-directed learning behavior (SDLB) involves independent skill acquisition (20) and supports competency development (39). Higher SDLB correlates with positive outcomes including job involvement and satisfaction (22). Organizational commitment reflects psychological attachment that fosters favorable perceptions and positively relates to job satisfaction across contexts (29). This study aims to advance understanding by integrating these factors into a single framework to test direct and indirect relationships hypothesized based on conservation of resources, role conflict, and social exchange theories.

We hypothesized that: 1) There is a negative direct relationship between work-family conflict and job satisfaction. 2) There is a negative direct relationship between work-family conflict and self-directed learning behavior. 3) There is a positive direct relationship between self-directed learning behavior and job satisfaction. 4) Self-directed learning behavior partially mediates the relationship between work-family conflict and job satisfaction. 5) There is a positive direct relationship between organizational commitment and job satisfaction. 6) The structural model, including direct and indirect relationships between work-family conflict, self-directed learning behavior, organizational commitment, and job satisfaction, is invariant across gender. Results supported only hypotheses 1, 5 and

6. Zero-order correlations suggest that WFC showed an inverse relationship with JS. In addition, OC and SDLB were both positively significantly related to JS (Table 1). Proceeding to the mediation analysis which had a very good fit to the data, it was found that WFC inversely predicts JS ($\beta = -0.438, p < 0.001$), means higher WFC predicts lower JS. OC was positively related to JS ($\beta = 0.352, p < 0.001$), higher OC predicts higher JS. SDLB did not mediate the relationship between WFC and JS ($\beta = -0.012, p > 0.05$) as such no mediation was evident. WFC did not have an effect on SDLB and JS did not get effected by SDLB (Figure 2).

The negative relationship between WFC and JS aligns well with extensive past research (47, 48). Allen et al. (49) meta-analyzed 76 studies and found a consistent inverse link between these variables, with an overall weighted correlation of -0.24 with a range from +.14 to -.47 in individual studies. The positive association of OC with JS also replicates frequently reported connections in the organizational literature. Meyer et al. (28) reviewed over 20 years of research on the effects of organizational commitment. They concluded commitment consistently had moderate to strong positive relationships with various employee attitudes like job satisfaction, intent to stay, and job performance. However, the non-significant mediating role of SDLB diverges from some theoretical frameworks. Carlson et al. (50) proposed development activities could enrich resources to offset demands like WFC. Dweck (51) also suggested learning goals buffer stress by expanding capabilities. While a null effect is reported occasionally, like the minimal impacts of training/development opportunities on reducing stressors like WFC, most empirical work supports partial mediation (26, 52). Additionally, the lack of relationships between WFC-SDLB and SDLB-JS contrast studies proposing learning goals and skills buffer stress (51). This contrasts with the present study which reports no impact of SDLB.

Finally, multigroup analysis revealed no substantial significant variations in the model across gender. An evaluation of the estimates and fit for the nested models, where parameters estimates were set to be equivalent, suggested that the hypothesized model appropriately depicts the data for both male and

female groups. The amount of variance explained in the results was somewhat larger for females. While the difference in values is not significant between male and female group, noteworthy observations emerged during the examination of effect sizes, the effect of WFC on JS is considerably larger for females and the effect of OC on JS is considerably larger for males indicating that experiencing work interfering with family seems to more negatively impact job satisfaction for women and feeling committed to the organization relates more strongly to job satisfaction for men.

Previous research provides some insights into why WFC may more negatively impact women's job satisfaction while OC relates more strongly to men's satisfaction. Traditional gender role expectations mean that women still bear a disproportionate responsibility for childcare, eldercare, and household duties (53). This makes it challenging for women to compartmentalize their work and family roles, resulting in greater work-family conflict (14). Qualitative studies also find that masculine-oriented organizational cultures tend to value long hours and face time more, which clashes with females' family responsibilities and enhances their experience of work interfering with their personal life (54). Research also provides evidence that men tend to derive more of their self-esteem and life satisfaction from their work roles and accomplishments due to traditional gender socialization patterns (53, 55). Studies have shown that work self-efficacy and success in professional domains are more predictive of overall life and career satisfaction for men in contrast to women, for whom multiple life domains contribute to well-being (56).

At the same time, Livingston and Judge (53) note that shifts in gender roles over time mean work may now contribute equally to well-being for both sexes once other factors are controlled. Additionally, there is debate around whether organizational commitment truly aligns better with emphasized masculine traits, or if commitment to valued responsibilities both inside and outside of work similarly informs identity and satisfaction regardless of gender. Furthermore, research has demonstrated the importance of dependent care responsibilities, showing that commitment matters less for parents managing

work-life balance compared to individuals without such constraints (57). Overall, the gender differences observed in the direct effects may reflect assorted individual and cultural influences still warranting clarification through more detailed investigations.

Practical Implications

With the increasing prevalence of remote and hybrid work arrangements stemming from technological advancements and health concerns (58), policies aimed at reducing work-family interference become increasingly crucial. Recent surveys show that work-life balance has gotten worse during the pandemic (59), so there's a need for solutions that address flexibility, inclusion, and wellness (2). While targeted skill development alone proved insufficient, research emphasizes the effectiveness of blended formal and informal learning approaches in fostering knowledge retention amidst changing markets demanding continuous adaptation (60). As organizational commitment positively impacts employee attitudes, cultivating psychological attachment through empowering policies that promote diversity and career progression holds relevance. By designing interventions that support work integration and take into account the changing ways people work, businesses can create cultures that boost productivity and competitiveness in a changing world.

Some interventions can be taken into account such as: Organizations should evaluate work-life policies and flexibility practices given the strong link between reduced WFC and improved attitudes. Tailored solutions addressing varying employee needs are important. Supporting employee commitment through initiatives fostering inclusion, recognition and career growth is crucial with rising dual-career households and emphasis on retention. As independent learning did not mediate WFC impacts, dedicated policies/resources for skill development alone may be ineffective. Broader work-life support is also needed. Practices to reduce stressors compounding from overlapping roles are vital as remote/hybrid work blurs boundaries and caring responsibilities grow. Training must incorporate varied paced/styles to boost outcomes since self-paced learning alone may be insufficient.

Blended solutions accommodate diversity. Telework and flex-time policies could help facilitate work integration amid global talent demands and ongoing health crises emphasizing virtual possibilities. Accounting for changing workforce dynamics, implementing evidence-based multidimensional policies supporting work-life integration, commitment and development can positively shape organizational cultures and competitiveness.

Limitations

One major limitation of this study was using a convenience sampling approach which introduces potential selection bias that restricts the generalizability of the findings. While the prominent relationships between WFC-JS and OC-JS converge with consensus, insufficient power to detect more nuanced mediated pathways due to small sample size may partly explain inconsistencies compared to related studies employing more rigorous methodologies. Moreover, the SDLB measure that was used, which was a modified version for undergraduate students, possibly didn't accurately capture the full nature of on-the-job learning and development undertaken by working employees. As learning looks different in educational versus professional contexts, this scale may not have adequately represented the theoretical constructs involved in the proposed relationships. A multi-dimensional assessment focusing on relevant competencies could yield different results. The study analyzed gender as a potential moderator in the moderated mediation analysis. However, finding non-significant differences still limits conclusions that can be drawn about more complex conditional processes.

Conclusion

This study provides an integrated theoretical model examining the relationships between key work-life and attitudinal variables. While support was found for certain direct effects, self-directed learning behavior did not act as an effective mediator between work-family conflict and job satisfaction as hypothesized. However, reflecting the complex interplay of factors in work environments, the mixed results also point to refinements needing consideration. Future research could explore

alternative mediators that may account for mitigating the impacts of stressors like work-family conflict. Potential constructs to investigate include perceived organizational support, supervisor support, autonomy, and flexible work arrangements, as well as emotional intelligence and coping strategies - which may aid in understanding effective conflict management approaches as noted in past literature.

Abbreviation

Work-Life Conflict (WFC), Self-Directed Learning Behavior (SDLB), Job Satisfaction (JS) and Organizational Commitment (OC).

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Author Contributions

Ritika Lal: Conceptualization, Methodology, Data curation, Formal analysis, Writing – original draft, Review and Editing; Vandana Gambhir: Methodology, Review and approval, Revised Manuscript Review, Supervision.

Conflict of Interest

The authors have no conflict of interest.

Ethics Approval

Ethical review and approval were not applicable. All participants provided informed consent, and their data have been anonymized entirely.

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