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The Mediating Effect of Work Family Conflict on the Relationship between Job Autonomy and Job Satisfaction

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Abstract

Satisfied employees are closely related with organizational success and performance, leading job satisfaction to become a key employee attitude. Employees feel greater satisfaction when they have freedom and independence to make work-related decisions. However, employees become dissatisfied with their job when they cannot balance their work and family lives due to competing demands. This study aims to investigate the mediating effect of work family conflict on the relationship between job autonomy and job satisfaction. The study was conducted with 270 participants. The study data was collected using Minnesota Job Satisfaction Questionnaire, Job Autonomy Scale and Work Family Conflict Scale. The study results demonstrated that job autonomy had a positive effect on job satisfaction, whereas work-family conflict had a negative mediating effect on this relationship between job autonomy and job satisfaction.

Keywords: Work-Family Conflict, Job Autonomy, Job Satisfaction

1. Introduction

Although job satisfaction has been probably the most popular research subject in organizational behavior literature, it is still not known what exactly drives employee satisfaction (Westover & Taylor, 2010). Job satisfaction is a significant employee attitude with a great influence on individuals' work and life domains in mental, emotional and behavioral terms. It also leads to several consequences for both employee and organizational well-being (Judge & Klinger, 2008). Satisfied employees are considered the key components of organizations that strive for success (Berry, 1997). It is known that an organization becomes more efficient when it has more satisfied employees (Robbins & Judge, 2007).

Among other factors reported to have an effect on job satisfaction in the literature is job autonomy, which has also work-related outcomes at the individual and organizational levels. As a job resource, job autonomy is considered crucial for organizational success (Amburgey, 2005) because greater autonomy is believed to result in greater job satisfaction due to the liberty of employees to decide their own pace and schedule at work (Nguyen et al., 2003). Nevertheless, prior research regarding the relationship between job autonomy and job satisfaction has been mostly conducted in psychology and sociology, including relatively small and unrepresentative study samples (Anderson et al., 1992; 1995; Schienman, 2002).

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Since the modern era has brought heavier commitments related to both work and family, employees are experiencing an overlap of work and family domains, resulting in greater employee stress and reduced job satisfaction. Individuals feel satisfied with their job when the job allows them to fulfill their responsibilities in their family life (Robbins, 2005). Otherwise, employees start to experience conflict between their work and family lives. Therefore, many employees struggle to meet work and family responsibilities due to competing demands. Such struggle may result from working long hours, inflexible working schedule or demanding employers (Wong & Ko, 2009). This kind of struggle may lead to great pressure, and thereby a negative influence on coping mechanisms of individuals. Thus, employees may experience reduced work performance and dissatisfaction with the work (Davidson & Cooper, 1992).

Based on this literature, this study aims to investigate the mediating effect of work-family conflict on the relationship between job autonomy on job satisfaction.

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2. Literature Review and Hypotheses

2.1. Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction is an important construct discussed in organizational culture, especially in the context of organizational success, and it is associated with individual, organizational, economic and ethical outcomes (Balzer et al., 1997). Job satisfaction is a broad conceptualization referring to an overall attitude toward the job. There is a plenitude of definitions and approaches explaining job satisfaction in the literature. The definition of Porter et al. (1975) emphasizes individual's reaction against the work or organization. Lease (1998) describes satisfaction as an individual's affective commitment to his/her organizational role. Brief (1998) defines satisfaction as "an internal state that is expressed by affectively and/or cognitively evaluating an experienced job with some degree of favor or disfavor". Weiss (2002) characterizes job satisfaction as an affirmative state of emotion and expression arising from an individual's assessment of his/her job and Oshagbemi (2003) states that job satisfaction is one's own comparison between desired and actual consequences.

The approach most commonly used to explain job satisfaction in the literature is the Job Characteristics Theory by Hackman and Oldham (1976). This theory proposes that job satisfaction increases when there is an intrinsic motivation related to the job. The authors identified five job characteristics that motivate employees intrinsically and affect five job-related outcomes (motivation, satisfaction, performance, and absenteeism and turnover) through three psychological states (experienced meaningfulness, experienced responsibility, and knowledge of results). These core characteristics are task identity, task significance, skill variety, feedback and autonomy. This theory suggests that the job itself serves as a motivating factor and employees feel greater motivation and satisfaction when these five characteristics are included in the job. Intrinsic sources occur within the individual such as the ability to choose working speed (autonomy), one's own performance and relations with supervisors. Extrinsic sources, in turn, occur outside the individual such as job security, working conditions and benefits. This two-dimensional nature of job satisfaction was also examined by Rose (2001) and it was concluded that it is equally significant to have both intrinsic and extrinsic sources for a sense of satisfaction.

2.2. Job Autonomy

Job autonomy is an important job resource that is characterized by the extent to which the job allows individuals to decide and choose how to plan their assignments and accomplish them (Hackman & Oldham, 1975; Parker et al., 2001). Autonomy, as defined by Stamps and Piedmonte (1986), is the degree of independence and freedom related to the job, which is required or allowed to conduct daily activities of job.

Autonomy has been reported to be a crucial part of professional development (Gray & Pratt, 1989; Hart & Rotem, 1995) and has a positive influence on satisfaction with the job (Blegen, 1993; Finn, 2001; Weismann et al., 1980). Autonomy implicates responsibility for work-related outcomes such as enhanced work efficiency and greater

intrinsic motivation (Hackman & Oldham, 1976; Langfred & Moye, 2004). As stated by Chung (1977), autonomy has an effect on work planning, working speed and goal setting processes since employees given autonomy have the freedom to control the speed of work and to determine work and assessment processes.

Job autonomy is believed to play a vital role in employee well-being as employees can deal with work-related stress better when they have greater autonomy at work (Karasek, 1998). Since job autonomy drives employees to believe that they have the competence and capabilities required to achieve their assignments, it leads to enhanced job performance (Saragih, 2011), and performance is known to have a significant effect on various variables including job satisfaction (Judge et al., 2001; Spector, 1997). According to Thompson and Prottas (2006), employees experiencing high levels of autonomy report greater job satisfaction.

Complex jobs have a disorganized structure, requiring employees to make judgments and decisions, be innovative and take discretionary actions (Chung-Yan, 2010). Therefore, individuals who have discretion and control are likely to exercise more effective solutions in case of problems as they have the liberty to decide how to handle the situation (Frese & Zapf, 1994). Therefore, employees usually need autonomy at work for an effective performance (Naqvi et al., 2013). Autonomy drives employees to feel a sense of job-related pride (Mehmood et al., 2012). There is a limited research on the direct relationship between job autonomy and job satisfaction. However, job autonomy is one of the five core job characteristics defined by Hackman and Oldham (1976) and review of the relevant literature provides additional support for this theory. Hackman and Oldham (1980), Fried and Ferris (1987), Lee (1998), Pousette and Hansen (2002) all reported that there is a positive relationship between job autonomy and job satisfaction. Thus, it seems reasonable to expect that employees who have more job autonomy would be more satisfied with their job due to freedom to make decisions on their own. Based on this literature, the present study proposes the following hypothesis:

H₁: Job autonomy has a positive effect on job satisfaction.

2.3. *Work-Family Conflict*

A balance between work and life domains is “the satisfaction and good functioning at both work and home with minimal role conflict” (Clark, 2000). However, these domains may sometimes be in conflict, especially when the demands of one domain do not comply with those of another domain. This situation is called as work-family conflict when there is work interference with family and family-work conflict when the interference is in the opposite direction (Carr et al., 2008).

Kahn et al. (1964) stated that work-family conflict arises from an inter-role conflict, whereas Renshaw (1976) suggested that it is the consequence of interaction between work- and family-related stresses. The strong predictors of work-family conflict have been reported as working long hours, work overload and job stressors (Bakker & Geurts, 2004; Demerouti et al., 2004; Voydanoff, 2004).

The concept of work-family conflict has gained substantial attention since it has been found negatively related with several variables concerning employees (Allen et al., 2000). For instance, work-family conflict is usually reported to have a considerable impact on job satisfaction (Brief, 1998; Grandey et al., 2005; Parasuraman & Simmers, 2001). Based on the role theory, job satisfaction is expected to decrease when there is greater conflict between work and life roles (Kahn et al., 1964).

Job satisfaction has been frequently investigated in the context of outcomes caused by conflicts between work and life domains (Grandey et al., 2005). Such conflict leads employees to experience stress, which impairs their assessment about the job, resulting in reduced job satisfaction (Zhao & Namasiyayam, 2012). In this regard, empirical studies and meta-analyses provide evidence regarding the close relationship between job satisfaction and work-family conflict. Such studies suggest that employees experiencing high levels of work-family conflict have lower levels of job satisfaction. The study by Kossek and Ozeki (1998) established that work-family conflict is negatively related with job satisfaction. Likewise, Allen et al. (2000) reported a significantly negative correlation between work-family conflict and job satisfaction.

As a crucial job characteristic in work domain, job autonomy may serve as a tool providing employees with flexibility in engaging in the non-work domains. Gellatly and Irving (2001) stated that situational factors impose less pressure on individuals who have greater levels of autonomy at work compared to those with low levels. Job autonomy reflects control over the job and freedom to discuss about job-related issues, resulting in reduced stress

and conflicts arising from the job (De Rijk et al., 1998). Therefore, job autonomy is considered to have a significant part in meeting the demands of work and life domains (Nawab & Iqbal, 2013). The literature contains multiple studies reporting the relationship between job autonomy and work-life balance. Voydanoff (2004) reported a negative relationship between autonomy and work-family conflict. Butler et al. (2005) stated that greater job control leads to lower conflict between work and life domains on the daily basis. From this viewpoint, the present study formulates the following hypotheses:

H₂: There is a negative relationship between work-family conflict and job satisfaction.

H₃: There is a negative relationship between job autonomy and work-family conflict.

H₄: Work-family conflict has a mediating effect on the relationship between job autonomy and job satisfaction.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Goal

The present study aims to determine the mediating effect of work-family conflict on the relationship between job autonomy and job satisfaction. Hypotheses were tested using questionnaires.

3.2. Sample and Data Collection

The study questionnaires were distributed to 320 participants. 270 of these questionnaires were fully completed. 68.9% (n=186) of the participants were female, 46.7% (n=147) were married.

3.3. Strategy of Analysis

SPSS 17.00 was used to perform frequency distributions and explanatory factor analysis of the study data. AMOS 16.0 was used to test the explanatory factor analysis and the proposed model as a structural equation model.

3.4. Instruments

Job satisfaction was measured using the Minnesota Job Satisfaction Questionnaire developed by Weiss et al. (1967). This scale consists of twenty questions rated on a five-point scale with 1 (“not satisfied”), 2 (“somewhat satisfied”), 3 (“satisfied”), 4 (“very satisfied”) and 5 (“extremely satisfied”). The scale measures a general job satisfaction with intrinsic (e.g. “Being able to keep busy all the time”) and extrinsic satisfaction (“The way my boss handles his/her workers”). The Cronbach’s alpha of the scale was 0.91.

Job autonomy was measured using a scale developed by Voydanoff (2004). This scale consists of three items (e.g. “I have a lot of freedom to decide how I will do my job”) measured on 5-point ratings (1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree). The Cronbach’s alpha of the scale was 0.68.

Work-family conflict was measured using the multi-dimensional scale developed by Carlson et al. (2000). This scale consists of 9 items for work-to-family conflict. Three items each measure different dimensions of work-family conflict: time-based WFC (e.g. “The time I must devote to my job keeps me from participating equally in household responsibilities and activities”), strain-based WFC (e.g. “Due to stress at home, I am often preoccupied with family matters at work”) and behavior-based WFC (e.g. “Behavior that is effective and necessary for me at home would be counterproductive at work”). Each item is measured on 5-point ratings (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). The Cronbach’s alpha of the scale was 0.89.

3.5. Analyses and Results

The Cronbach’s alpha coefficient was 0.89 as measured by the reliability analysis of the items in the job satisfaction scale. The KMO value was examined to determine the adequacy of the data for the factor analysis and the data were found adequate for the factor analysis with 0.89. Additionally, Bartlett’s test of sphericity (Chi-square=1713.205, degrees of freedom=136, p=0.000) was found significant. The explanatory factor analysis of the

20-item scale revealed that 17 items (except 3 items) were collected under 4 factors and the total variance was 0.60, which had a good explanatoriness for social sciences (Table 1). The first factor, based on the items collected under it, was named the *Statue* factor and the share within the total explanatoriness was 18.9% for this factor, 16.9% for the second factor named *Manager*, 12.4% for the third factor named *Dynamism* and 11.8% for the fourth factor named *Materiality*.

Table 1: Results of the factor analysis of the job satisfaction scale

Rotated Component Matrix^a				
	Component			
	1	2	3	4
%of variance	18.9	16.9	12.4	11.8
<i>Statue</i> (Eigenvalue : 3.213)				
C4 The chance to be “somebody” in the community.	.765	.227	-.036	.251
C20 The feeling of accomplishment I get from the job	.755	.188	.206	.073
C2 The chance to do something that makes use of my abilities	.715	.112	.269	.102
C17 The chance to do things for other people	.671	.264	.317	.005
C19 The way my job provides for steady employment.	.618	-.013	.208	.127
C18 Being able to do things that don’t go against my conscience	.555	.209	-.063	.356
<i>Manager</i> (Eigenvalue : 2.872)				
C9 The way my boss handles his/her workers	.090	.840	.104	-.075
C10 The competence of my supervisor in making decisions.	.143	.761	-.034	.272
C11 The freedom to use my own judgment	.236	.678	.267	.105
C13 The praise I get for doing a good job	.145	.556	.344	.182
C15 The chance to tell people what to do	.239	.509	.317	.172
<i>Dynamism</i> (Eigenvalue : 2.113)				
C3 The chance to do different things from time to time.	.267	.055	.703	.013
C7 The chance to work alone on the job	.125	.226	.662	.161
C5 The way company policies are put into practice	.167	.364	.598	.259
<i>Materiality</i> (Eigenvalue : 2.000)				
C6 My pay and the amount of work I do	.117	.004	.321	.781
C8 The chances for advancement on this job	.310	.186	-.053	.739
C14 The working conditions.	.137	.353	.388	.613
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.				
a. Rotation converged in 6 iterations.				

A factor analysis was performed in relation to Job Satisfaction using AMOS 16.0 and the analysis revealed that (Chi-square=192.355, degrees of freedom=109, $p=0.000$) Chi-square/df was 1.765. This value is desired to be less than 2. Table 2 presents the goodness of fit indexes.

Figure 1 shows the graphic regarding the factor analysis of the job satisfaction scale. The factor with the highest effect on Job Satisfaction consisting of four factors called Statue, Manager, Dynamism and Materiality, was dynamism with a correlation coefficient of 0.90, which was followed by Manager with a correlation coefficient of 0.87, Materiality with a correlation coefficient of 0.82, and Statue with the lowest correlation coefficient of 0.73, respectively.

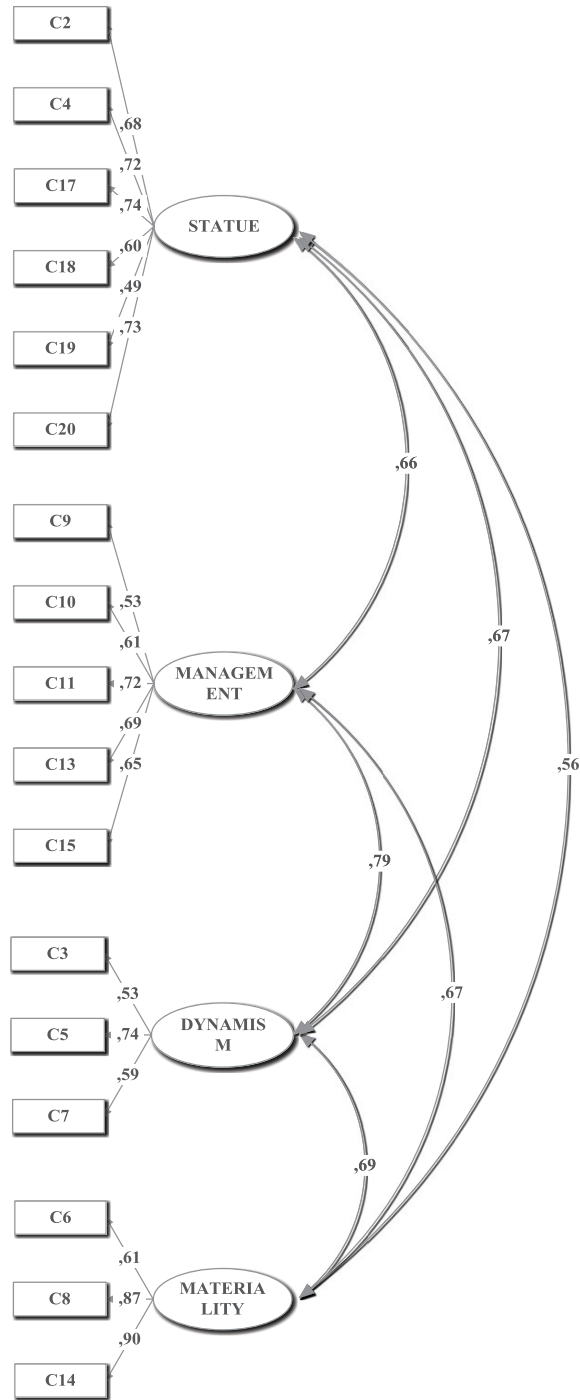


Figure 1: Explanatory factor analysis of the job satisfaction scale

Table 2: Goodness of fit indexes of the explanatory factor analysis of job satisfaction

Fit indexes	Good index	Acceptable index	Model
Normal Theory Weighted Least Squares Chi-Square			170.206
Chi-square (χ^2) value			
Degrees of Freedom (df)			105
χ^2/df	$0 \leq \chi^2 / df \leq 2$	$2 \leq \chi^2 / df \leq 3$	1.621
Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA)	$0 \leq RMSEA \leq 0.05$	$0,05 \leq RMSEA \leq 0.10$	0.048
Comparative Fit Index (CFI)	$0.95 \leq CFI \leq 1.00$	$0.90 \leq CFI \leq 0.95$	0.960
Goodness of Fit Index (GFI)	$0.95 \leq GFI \leq 1.00$	$0.90 \leq GFI \leq 0.95$	0.932
Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI)	$0.90 \leq AGFI \leq 1.00$	$0.85 \leq AGFI \leq 0.90$	0.900

The Cronbach’s alpha coefficient was 0.90 as measured by the reliability analysis of the items in the work-family conflict scale. The KMO value of the 8-item scale was 0.87, indicating that the data were adequate for factor analysis. Additionally, Barlett’s test of sphericity (Chi-square=1370.499, degrees of freedom=28, p=0.000) was found significant. The explanatory factor analysis revealed that 9 items were collected under 2 factors and the total variance was 0.73, which had a good explanatoriness for social sciences (Table 3).

The first factor, based on the items collected under it, was named the *Time* factor and the share within the total explanatoriness was 40.7% for this factor, and 32.7% for the second factor named *Behavior*.

Table 3: Results of the factor analysis of the work-family conflict scale

Rotated Component Matrix ^a		
	Component	
	1	2
<i>%of variance</i>	40.7	32.7
<i>Time</i> (Eigenvalue: 3.254)		
D3 The time I must devote to my job keeps me from participating equally in household responsibilities and activities	.905	.202
D1 The time I must devote to my job keeps me from participating equally in household responsibilities and activities	.885	.209
D2 I have to miss family activities due to the amount of time I must spend on work responsibilities	.850	.282
D5 When I get home from work, I am often too frazzled to participate in family activities/responsibilities	.760	.382
<i>Behavior</i> (Eigenvalue: 2.619)		
D9 The behaviors I perform that make me effective at work do not help me to be a better parent and spouse	.093	.822
D7 The problem-solving behaviors I use in my job are not effective in resolving problems at home	.241	.777
D8 Behavior that is effective and necessary for me at work would be counterproductive at home	.327	.747
D6 Due to all the pressures at work, sometimes when I come home I am too stressed to do the things I enjoy	.423	.687
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.		

Rotated Component Matrix ^a		
	Component	
	1	2
%of variance	40.7	32.7
Time (Eigenvalue: 3.254)		
D3 The time I must devote to my job keeps me from participating equally in household responsibilities and activities	.905	.202
D1 The time I must devote to my job keeps me from participating equally in household responsibilities and activities	.885	.209
D2 I have to miss family activities due to the amount of time I must spend on work responsibilities	.850	.282
D5 When I get home from work, I am often too frazzled to participate in family activities/ responsibilities	.760	.382
Behavior (Eigenvalue: 2.619)		
D9 The behaviors I perform that make me effective at work do not help me to be a better parent and spouse	.093	.822
D7 The problem-solving behaviors I use in my job are not effective in resolving problems at home	.241	.777
D8 Behavior that is effective and necessary for me at work would be counterproductive at home	.327	.747
D6 Due to all the pressures at work, sometimes when I come home I am too stressed to do the things I enjoy	.423	.687
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.		
a. Rotation converged in 3 iterations.		

Figure 2 shows the graphic regarding the factor analysis of the work-family conflict scale consisting of two factors. The goodness of fit indexes of the explanatory factor analysis of the work-family conflicts scale, presented in Table 4, indicates that the data showed a good fit to the model.

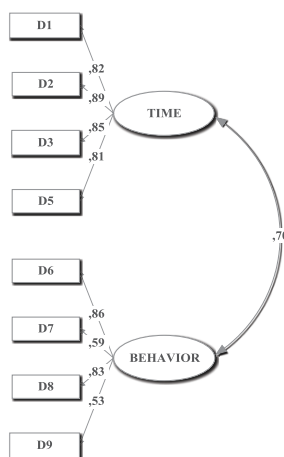


Figure 2: Explanatory factor analysis of the work-family conflict scale

Table 4: Goodness of fit indexes of the explanatory factor analysis of work-family conflict

Fit indexes	Good index	Acceptable index	Model
Normal Theory Weighted Least Squares Chi-Square			28.945
Chi-square (χ^2) value			17
Degrees of Freedom (df)			1.703
χ^2/df	$0 \leq \chi^2 / df \leq 2$	$2 \leq \chi^2 / df \leq 3$	
Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA)	$0 \leq RMSEA \leq 0.05$	$0.05 \leq RMSEA \leq 0.10$	0.051
Comparative Fit Index (CFI)	$0.95 \leq CFI \leq 1.00$	$0.90 \leq CFI \leq 0.95$	0.991
Goodness of Fit Index (GFI)	$0.95 \leq GFI \leq 1.00$	$0.90 \leq GFI \leq 0.95$	0.975
Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI)	$0.90 \leq AGFI \leq 1.00$	$0.85 \leq AGFI \leq 0.90$	0.946

The Cronbach’s alpha coefficient was 0.84 as measured by the reliability analysis of the items in the job autonomy scale. The KMO value of the scale was 0.72, indicating that the data were adequate for factor analysis. Additionally, Bartlett’s test of sphericity (Chi-square=331.733, degrees of freedom=3, p=0.000) was found significant. The explanatory factor analysis revealed that 3 items were collected under a single factor and the total variance was 0.76, which had a good explanatoriness for social sciences (Table 5). Based on the items collected under it, the factor was named the *Job Autonomy* factor.

Based on the items collected under it, the first factor was named the *Time* factor and the share within the total explanatoriness was 40.7% for this factor, and 32.7% for the second factor named *Behavior*.

Table 5: Results of the factor analysis of the job autonomy scale

Component Matrix ^a	
	Component
	1
%of variance	0.76
G3 I have the freedom to make decisions about my job.	.892
G2 How the job is done is essentially under my responsibility	.879
G1 I determine how the job is done in line with my own opinions	.840

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Research Model

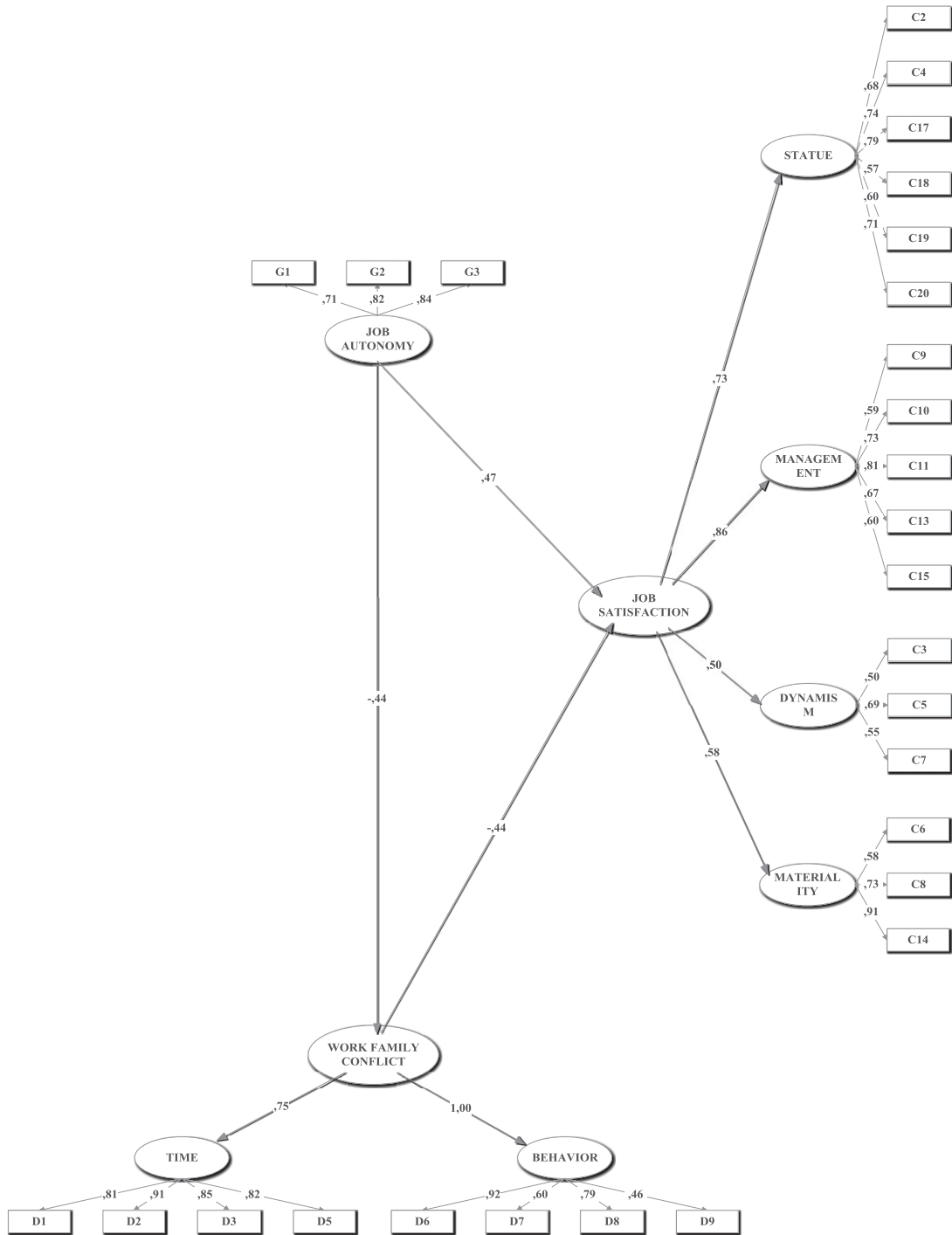


Figure 3: The mediating effect of WFC

While *Dynamism* is the factor that positively affects *Job Satisfaction* most, it is followed by the *Manager* factor. *Materiality* is revealed to be the factor that ranked third and the *Job Status* factor ranked last. *Work Family Conflict*, on the other hand, is reflected on *Behaviors* in the first place and is affected by *Time* in the second place.

Table 6: Fit indexes of the research model

Fit indexes	Good index	Acceptable index	Model
Normal Theory Weighted Least Squares Chi-Square			367.984
Chi-square (χ^2) value			
Degrees of Freedom (df)			327
χ^2/df	$0 \leq \chi^2 / df \leq 2$	$2 \leq \chi^2 / df \leq 3$	1.125
Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA)	$0 \leq RMSEA \leq 0.05$	$0.05 \leq RMSEA \leq 0.10$	0.022
Comparative Fit Index (CFI)	$0.95 \leq CFI \leq 1.00$	$0.90 \leq CFI \leq 0.95$	0.915
Goodness of Fit Index (GFI)	$0.95 \leq GFI \leq 1.00$	$0.90 \leq GFI \leq 0.95$	0.902
Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI)	$0.90 \leq AGFI \leq 1.00$	$0.85 \leq AGFI \leq 0.90$	0.879

The goodness of fit indexes of the explanatory factor analysis of the scale, presented in Table 6, indicates that the data showed a good fit to the model. It was found that job autonomy positively affected job satisfaction (0.61), and this relationship declined when work-family conflict was added to the model as a mediating variable (0.47). Therefore, work-family conflict has a partially mediating effect on the relationship between job autonomy and job satisfaction. In this regard, all of the hypotheses H₁, H₂, H₃, and H₄ were affirmed at the significance level of 0.05.

4. Conclusion

The present study evaluated the mediating effect of work-family conflict on the relationship between job autonomy and job satisfaction. The study results showed that job autonomy has a positive impact on job satisfaction, and work-family conflict has a negative mediating effect on this relationship.

The first finding showed that autonomy at workplace enhances the satisfaction levels of employees. In this sense, the study provides significant support and contribution to the direct relationship between job autonomy and job satisfaction since there are only a few studies exploring such relationship. This finding may be beneficial to organizations in promoting employees' job satisfaction by providing more autonomy at work. Organizations may conduct questionnaires to measure the extent to which their employees feel autonomous and satisfied, and take necessary actions accordingly. Since need for autonomy varies depending on personality, future studies may examine the specific traits that are associated with such need and have a direct influence on satisfaction levels.

The second finding of this study revealed that work-family conflict reduced the positive impact of job autonomy on job satisfaction through a negative mediating effect. Thus, this study contributes to the literature on organizational management and organizational behavior. Since work-family conflict is closely related with employee satisfaction, organizations may formulate structures and strategies in order to minimize such conflict between their employees' work and family lives, and thereby to foster their satisfaction with the job.

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