Locus of Control Internal vs External: The Role in the Relationship between Work-Family Conflict and Job Stress

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration among all authors. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

Original Research Article

ABSTRACT

This study aims to investigate the role of personality factor, locus of control, as a moderator in the relationship between work-family conflict and stress. It is hypothesized that an internal locus of control may diminish the impact of work-family conflict on job stress. The research sample consisted of 110 employees from the Ministry of Cooperative and SMEs. Primary data were collected by distributing questionnaires to selected respondents. The practical implications of this study can provide valuable insights to the leadership at the Ministry of Cooperative and SMEs regarding the impact of work-family conflict on employees' stress levels, thus offering considerations to alleviate this influence

Keywords: Work-family conflict; job stress; locus of control.

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1. INTRODUCTION

"Recently, a new paradigm has emerged regarding the profession of Civil Servants (ASN) as state servants. With the bureaucracy reform, ASN are required to enhance their competencies and the quality of public services. This improvement must be supported by a deeper understanding of the psychological aspects of ASN to enable them to work more professionally. The current government's bureaucracy reform program must be implemented based on three main components, alongside other supporting factors: institutional (organization), administrative (business process), and human resources. Concerning human resources, every ASN is expected to work more professionally by utilizing a merit system based on qualifications, competencies, and performance" [1].

"One of the government's efforts to support the bureaucracy reform and the enhancement of ASN professionalism, as well as the improvement of the quality of public services, is by changing the performance assessment method. The performance assessment of ASN is no longer based on job execution but rather on planning and achievement based on the tasks and functions of the positions held by each ASN, which leads to an increased workload due to the continuous demand for improved public services. As the management of government administration evolves, the increasing workload also impacts the complexity of tasks, which potentially triggers role conflicts, especially for ASN with dual roles. The dual role refers to a situation where an individual holds more than one position or condition, thus increasing the responsibilities that must be fulfilled" (Indriyani, 2009). "The role conflicts arising from dual roles include work-family conflict, a situation where job demands and family roles cannot be reconciled in some aspects" [2]. "Work-family conflict creates negative effects on individuals' well-being such as depression symptoms, stress, physical health, and tension in family life" [3].

Work-family conflict is considered a significant issue in today's business world [4], leading to a lot of researchers being interested in discussing this conflict. "Previous studies have examined the relationship between work-family conflict and several potential consequences, one of which is stress that can lead to job stress" [5]. "Research on the perspective of job stress mainly focuses on stressors such as work-family conflict and its impacts on tension and employee well-being, both at work and at home" [6]. "Job stress becomes one of the main consequences of work-family conflict because it stems from incompatible role demands between work and family roles" [7]. "Work-family conflict is a crucial topic as it generates negative consequences for both organizations and individuals. However, research on work-family conflict has yet to demonstrate significant impacts on improving employees' lives, including reducing workplace stress, fostering positive job-family relationships, and effectively implementing job and family policies" [3].

"The relationship between work-family conflict and its consequences is complex to study, so academics must be careful in drawing conclusions about this relationship. Various factors may moderate the influence of work-family conflict on its consequences" [8]. For instance, research conducted by Fabienne, et al. [5] mentioned that "there is no meta-analysis that provides a comprehensive review of the literature on three things, one of which is potential moderating variables". One significant variable to moderate the influence of work-family conflict on job stress is the personality factor, locus of control, as it can be used to predict an individual's behavior or actions in response to the events they are experiencing (Meutia, Adam, & Nurpratiwi, 2018) and can influence employees' orientation towards the stress they are facing [7].

"Personality is defined as the sum total of an individual's ways of acting or behaving in relation to others around them" [9]. Research on the role of locus of control in relation to the influence of work-family conflict on job stress has some differences, including research conducted by Melisa, Bülent, & Meral [7], Michel, et al., [10] which uses locus of control as a variable that directly influences job stress, Chen [11] uses locus of control as a mediating variable, but Spector (1982, 1986) states that "personality variables are better moderators than mediating or antecedent variables". This is because personality affects the final consequences in the research model and is relatively stable within the individual. However, research on the influence of work-family conflict on job stress using locus of control as a moderation variable has not been widely conducted, so this study will examine the influence of work-family conflict on job stress with locus of control as a moderating variable, conducted on ASN in the Ministry of Cooperative and SMEs Personnel Bureau. It is hoped that this research can contribute to the development of

knowledge about role conflict (work-family conflict) and its consequences in the field of human resources, which has been previously more studied in the psychological field. Furthermore, it is hoped that this research can add to the literature on the moderating role of locus of control as previously discussed by Spector (1982, 1986), and its implications for job stress as a consequence of work-family conflict.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Work-Family Conflict

"Work-Family Conflict is a form of role conflict that creates pressure or imbalance between the roles of work and family" [2]. "Furthermore, Greenhaus and Beutell identified three types of work-family conflict. Firstly, Time-based conflict, where the time required to fulfill one task between work or family can reduce the time to complete the other task [12]. Time-based conflict occurs when the time used to fulfill one role complicates meeting the expectations of another role, for example, due to workplace issues, out-of-town meetings, household chores, and so on" [13]. Secondly, Strain-based conflict, which occurs when family roles affect job performance, or vice versa (role ambiguity or family conflict) [14]. Thirdly, Behavior-based conflict, which occurs when an individual's behavioral patterns do not align with the expectations of either work or family.

Karakaş and Tezcan [14] divided "the impact of work-family conflict on stress into two main parts. Firstly, work-family conflict encompasses issues related to work [15]. This conflict arises when various workplace demands affect an individual's role and responsibilities towards their family. The second type of conflict is the reverse, where issues in the family affect job performance". Furthermore, Karakaş and Tezcan [14] provide "examples of work-family conflict, including long working hours, inadequate supervision, while examples of family-work conflict include caring for parents or being a single parent".

2.2 Job Stress

Colquitt [16] defines "stress as a psychological response to demands that exceed one's capabilities. Stress is seen as an adaptive response to situations perceived as challenges or threats to a person's health". "The adaptive response can be observed from psychological (emotional) and physical (physiological) reactions" (McShane and Glinow, [17], Robbins [18] identifies "three groups of factors as potential sources of stress: environmental, organizational [11,19], and personal (personality)". Schuler and Jackson [20] and Cohen et al. [21] suggest that "there are "4S" causes of stress, namely Supervisor, Salary, Security, and Safety. In addition to these "4S" factors, an individual's personality also contributes to stress, influenced by values, past experiences, life conditions, intelligence, education and training, and learning".

There are four symptoms of job stress: physical symptoms (difficulty sleeping, headaches, digestive disorders, excessive sweating, changes in appetite, loss of enthusiasm or energy, making many mistakes or errors in work and life), emotional symptoms (easily angered, easily offended, overly sensitive, easily restless, often anxious, easily crying and depressed, nervous, aggressive towards others, prone to hostility and attack, mental sluggishness), cognitive symptoms (easy forgetfulness, confused thoughts, difficulty concentrating, decreased work performance, decreased productivity, low work quality, excessive daydreaming, many mistakes made at work, loss of healthy humor), and behavioral symptoms (indifferent, loss of trust in others, easily breaking promises with others, being closed and defensive towards others) [22].

2.3 Locus of Control

"Locus of control is a personality variable defined as an individual's perception of the source of their fate" Robbins, [23]. According to Spector [24], locus of control is closely related to motivation (Yang et al., [25], effort, performance, job satisfaction, perception of work, and leadership style. Locus of control is divided into two types: internal and external [26] Lin et al., [27]. "Furthermore, Aube explains that internal locus of control focuses on an individual's perception that every event is under their own control and caused by their own actions. External locus of control focuses on an individual's perception that every event is controlled by external factors such as fate and luck. It can be said that individuals with an internal locus of control have better performance than those with an external locus of control" [28]. The illustration of locus of control is shown as following Fig 2.
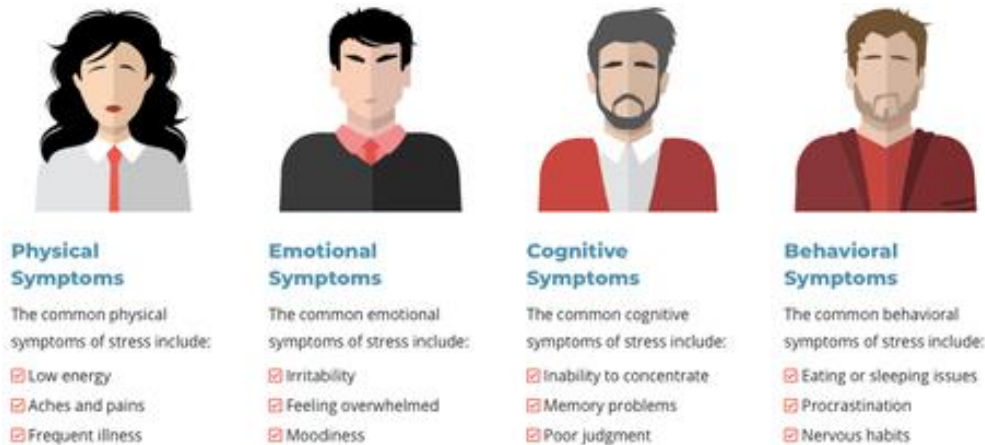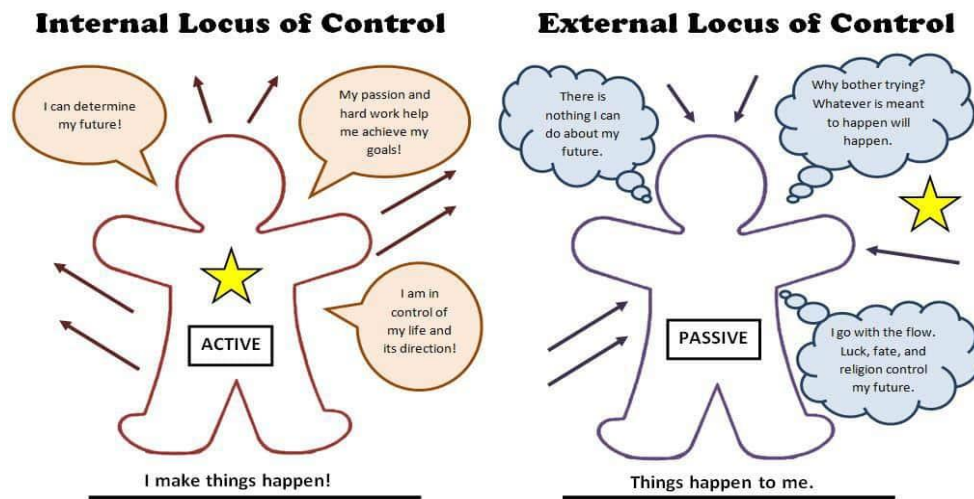
Fig. 1. Job Stress

Fig. 2. Locus of Control

3. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The focus of this research is on work-family conflict, locus of control, and job stress, with the subjects being civil servants (ASN) holding executive and functional positions within the Ministry of Cooperative and Small and Medium Enterprises [1]. This study adopts an explanatory approach, employing quantitative methods to test formulated hypotheses and explore the relationships among the variables under investigation. Data for this study are sourced internally, consisting of both primary and secondary data. Primary data were collected through the distribution of questionnaires directly to respondents within the Ministry of Cooperative and Small and Medium Enterprises. Data collection utilized questionnaires, measured using a Likert scale. Variable indicators were detailed within the Likert scale, forming the basis for constructing instrument items, including statements or questions.

The population under study comprises civil servants holding executive and functional positions within the Ministry of Cooperative and Small and Medium Enterprises, totaling 110 individuals (as per data from SIMPEG as of February 02, 2024). Purposive sampling methodology Suliyanto, [29] was employed, with the criterion that sampled individuals are married, resulting in a sample size of 110 individuals. Data collection was conducted through the dissemination of questionnaires. The analysis technique employed in this study is Moderated Regression Analysis (MRA) using SPSS, a specialized application of multiple linear regression where the regression equation contains interaction terms. This research comprises two regression models: Model (1),

which examines the direct relationship between work-family conflict and job stress, and Model (2), which investigates the relationship between work-family conflict and job stress moderated by locus of control.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study employs a moderation model with internal and external locus variables as moderators. The preliminary hypothesis is that both internal and external locus can moderate the relationship between work-family conflict and job stress. Due to the presence of two moderator variables, the researcher conducted testing using SPSS by separating the moderator variables and testing them in two separate models. The analysis results of this study are shown as in Table 1.

The regression analysis of Model 1 unveils significant insights into the relationship between work-family conflict, locus of control, and job stress. Firstly, the coefficient for work-family conflict stands at 1.101*** indicating a robust positive association with job stress. This suggests that heightened work-family conflict corresponds to increased levels of job stress among individuals. Similarly, the coefficient for internal locus of control is 0.914***, revealing a strong positive link between internal locus of control and job stress. This implies that individuals attributing outcomes to their own actions tend to experience higher job stress. Moreover, the interaction term between work-family conflict and internal locus of control yields a coefficient of -0.019***. This negative coefficient suggests that the impact of work-family conflict on job stress is moderated by internal locus of control. In essence, individuals with a stronger internal locus of control exhibit a weakened relationship between work-family conflict and job stress. These findings underscore the complex interplay between work-family dynamics, individual perceptions, and job stress levels, emphasizing the importance of considering personal characteristics in understanding stress experiences in the workplace.

The regression output of Model 2 highlights significant findings regarding the relationship between work-family conflict, locus of control (external), and their interaction in influencing job stress. Firstly, the coefficient for work-family conflict is 1.147**,indicating a positive association with job stress. This suggests that

increased work-family conflict corresponds to higher levels of job stress among individuals. Secondly, the coefficient for external locus of control is 1.348***, revealing a robust positive link between external locus of control and job stress. This implies that individuals who attribute outcomes to external factors tend to experience greater job stress. Additionally, the interaction term between work-family conflict and external locus of control yields a coefficient of 0.024**. This positive coefficient suggests that the impact of work-family conflict on job stress is moderated by external locus of control. In essence, individuals with a stronger external locus of control exhibit a strengthened relationship between work-family conflict and job stress. These findings underscore the intricate dynamics between work-family conflict, locus of control, and job stress, emphasizing the need to consider individual perceptions and coping mechanisms in understanding stress experiences in the workplace.

Mangkunegara (2011) defines conflict as the result of tensions between what someone expects of themselves, others, or the organization, and what they actually experience. In the organizational context, Winardi (2003) divides conflict into four types: vertical conflict, horizontal conflict, line-staff conflict, and role conflict. Role conflict can occur when an individual faces two conflicting role demands simultaneously (Luthans, 2006). One of the role conflicts experienced by employees is work-family conflict. Winardi (2003) states that conflicts, especially at the individual level, are closely related to stress, as evidenced by research conducted by Chiu, et al., (1998), Melisa, Bülent, & Meral [7], Karakaş and Tezcan [14], and Agustina and Sudibya (2018), which shows that work-family conflict has a direct positive effect on the stress experienced by employees.

"Locus of Control is one of the predictors of stress that can affect employees' potential achievement and well-being. The theory of locus of control categorizes individuals into two types: internal or external locus of control. Internal locus of control tends to be more directed and proactive in controlling the circumstances and conditions of the job being experienced" (Parkes, 1991) [26]. Robbins [23] defines locus of control as an individual's perception of the source of their fate, where individuals believe that fate can be determined by their own abilities. Locus of control is defined by Spector [30] as an

Table 1. The moderating regression analysis output

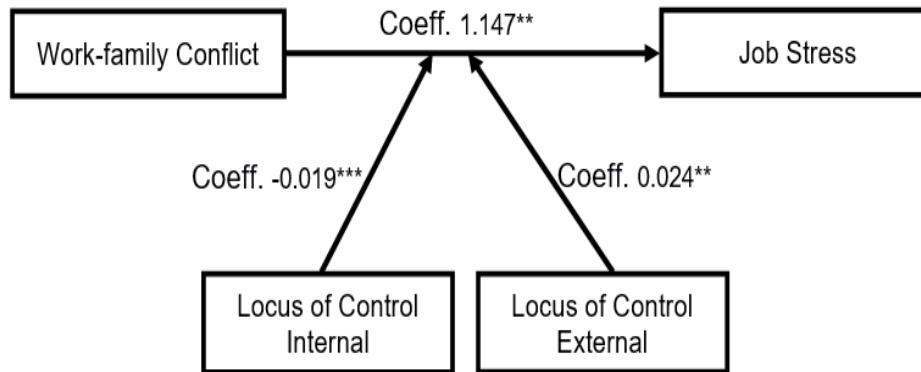| Job Stress	Model 1	Model 2
Work-family conflict	1.101***	1.147**
Locus of control Internal	0.914***	
WFC x LoCI	-0.019***	
Locus of Control external		1.348***
WFC x LoCE		0.024**

*** sig at 0.000; ** sig at 0.01; *sig at 0.05*

Fig. 3. Research model

individual's expectations of rewards, improvements, or achievement outcomes in their lives being controlled either by internal factors (their own actions) or external factors (other forces). Algadheeb (2015) states that "individuals with an internal locus of control tend to attribute events in their lives, both successes and failures, to their personality, abilities, efforts, and other factors within themselves, thus viewing themselves as determinants and controllers of their fate. Individuals with an internal locus of control will find it easier to cope with and manage stress in the event of work-family conflict". Robinson et al. (1991) divided "external locus of control into two categories: powerful others (believing that events experienced by individuals are determined by powerful individuals around them) and chance (believing that events experienced are fate or luck)". "Characteristics of individuals with external locus of control include being easily discouraged" (Crider, 2003). Individuals with an external locus of control find it more difficult to control work-family conflict and are more prone to experiencing stress.The framework illustrating the relationship between variables is depicted in Fig. 3.

The findings of the study indicated that both internal and external locus of control significantly moderated the relationship between work-family conflict and job stress. This means that the extent to which work-family conflict affects job stress varies depending on individuals' beliefs about the control they have over their lives. Specifically, individuals with a stronger internal locus of control experienced lower levels of job stress in the face of work-family conflict, while those with a stronger external locus of control experienced higher levels of job stress. These results underscore the importance of individuals' beliefs about control in shaping their responses to work-family conflict and its impact on job stress.

The results highlight the importance of individual differences, particularly in terms of locus of control, in influencing the experience of job stress amidst work-family conflict. Understanding employees' beliefs about control can inform targeted interventions and support mechanisms tailored to their specific needs. For instance, individuals with a stronger internal locus of control may benefit from empowerment strategies and resources that reinforce their sense of autonomy and control over their work and personal lives. On the other hand, employees with a stronger external locus of control may require interventions focused on enhancing coping skills and resilience-building strategies to mitigate the detrimental effects

Anggara et al., [31] of work-family conflict on job stress. These findings underscore the significance of organizational policies and practices in addressing work-family conflict and promoting employee well-being. Organizations should recognize the role of work-family conflict as a potential stressor and implement supportive measures to help employees manage their work and family responsibilities effectively [32-34]. This may involve flexible work arrangements, access to family-friendly policies, and initiatives that promote a culture of work-life balance. Moreover, fostering a supportive work environment where employees feel valued, respected, and empowered can contribute to reducing the negative impact of work-family conflict on job stress. Overall, by recognizing the nuanced interplay between individual beliefs about control, work-family conflict, and job stress, organizations can develop targeted interventions and create conducive work environments [18, 35-37] that support employees in effectively managing the challenges they face at the intersection of work and family life.

5. CONCLUSION

The study highlights the significant role of locus of control in moderating the relationship between work-family conflict and job stress among employees. Both internal and external locus of control were found to have distinct effects on how individuals perceive and respond to work-family conflict. Specifically, individuals with a stronger internal locus of control tended to experience lower levels of job stress when confronted with work-family conflict, indicating a greater sense of control over their circumstances. Conversely, those with a stronger external locus of control exhibited higher levels of job stress, suggesting a tendency to attribute their experiences to external factors beyond their control.

These findings underscore the importance of considering individual differences in beliefs about control when designing interventions to address work-family conflict in organizations. Tailoring support mechanisms to empower individuals with a stronger internal locus of control and enhancing coping strategies for those with a stronger external locus of control can help mitigate the negative effects of work-family conflict on job stress. By fostering a supportive work environment and implementing policies that promote work-life balance, organizations can contribute to the well-being and satisfaction of their employees while enhancing overall performance and productivity.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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