Role of personality and affect on the social support and work family conflict relationship

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ABSTRACT

The relationship between support and work family conflict has been studied extensively, but previous studies have not examined if personality moderates this relationship. In this research, we examine the moderating influence of personality on the relationship between contextual support and work-family conflict across two studies. In Study 1, we examine if core self-evaluations (CSE) moderate the relationship between four different types of workplace support, 1. family friendly work policies (FFOP), 2. family supportive organizational climate (FSOC), 3. perceived organizational support (POS), and 4. perceived supervisor support (PSS), and work interfering with family conflict (WIF) using a sample of working adults (N=435). In Study 2, we examine if Big Five personality traits and negative affect moderate the relationship between co-worker support and (WIF) using a large national sample (N=1130) of working respondents from the "midlife in the US" (MIDUS) study of health and well-being. Taken together, the current research examines the moderating effect of several key personality variables on the relationship between important forms of social support and work family conflict. Results based on these two samples indicate CSE moderates the relationship between POS and WIF, and PSS and WIF, but does not moderate the relationship between FFOP and WIF, or FSOC and WIF. Further, conscientiousness and agreeableness moderate the relationship between co-worker support and WIF. Co-worker support and WIF is stronger for individuals with higher levels of negative affect. We discuss the implications for research and practice relating to work family conflict.

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1. Introduction

Management of work and family lives is a huge challenge for U.S. employees (Ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012; Kelly et al., 2014). Most U.S. employees indicate that they are overworked and do not have the necessary workplace flexible arrangements to deal with conflicting work and family roles (Valcour, Ollier-Malaterre, Matz-Costa, Pitt-Catsouphes, & Brown, 2011; Galinsky et al., 2005; Tang & Wadsworth, 2008). In an effort to clarify the antecedents of efficient management of work–family conflict, work–family scholars have often focused on the role played by support (e.g., Carlson & Perrewé, 1999; Grandey & Cropanzano, 1999; Kossek, Pichler, Bodner, & Hammer, 2011; Shockley & Allen, 2013).

Support has been broadly categorized as contextual support, defined as any form of support that originates outside of self and within various domains of life such as work or family (Ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012). Within the domains of work and family, specific forms of support, such as social support and family friendly organizational policies have been found to be very effective in the management of work–family conflict (Hammer, Kossek, Anger, Bodner, & Zimmerman, 2011; Kossek et al., 2011). Social

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support is defined as emotional, informational and instrumental assistance provided by significant others, like co-workers, supervisors or family members (Thoits, 2011) and family friendly organizational policies, are organizational practices that are aimed towards ameliorating conflict in the work-family domains (Grover & Crooker, 1995). In summary, support acts as an important resource that goes a long way in the management of work–family conflict and to understand this role played by support, conservation of resources (COR) theory offers a valuable framework (Halbesleben, Neveu, Paustian-Underdahl, & Westman, 2014; Hobfoll, Freedy, Lane, & Geller, 1990; Ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012).

COR theory is an integrative theory of resources that conceives of resources broadly (Halbesleben et al., 2014). COR theory argues that people seek to obtain and protect resources and in addition to contextual resources, personal characteristics also act as key resources that assist individuals in managing their work and personal lives (Hobfoll et al., 1990). COR theorists also contend that resources not only help in achieving the desired goals but also aid the accomplishment of more resources (Ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012; Halbesleben et al., 2014). Within the realm of COR theory, various forms of contextual support have been found to be effective in buffering the conflict in the work–family interface (Michel & Clark, 2013). In addition to contextual sources, personal resources, such as personality, also have been reported to influence work–family conflict (Michel, Mitchelson, Pichler, & Cullen, 2010; Michel & Clark, 2013). Although more companies have work life initiatives today than in the past, support in the work and family domains is becoming increasingly scarce as global competition has heighted the intensification of work and more workers are single parents or part of a duel-earner family. Given contemporary work lives, it is important to examine how personal resources act in conjunction with other sources of support in reducing work–family conflict (Kossek, Lewis, & Hammer, 2010).

In addition to COR theory, the Work–Home Resources (W-HR) model proposed by Ten Brummelhuis and Bakker (2012) also highlights the importance of personal resources. According to the W-HR model, resources do not act in isolation, but rather resources help in the production of other resources. For example, emotional support from a supervisor (a workplace resource) may lead to positive mood and enhanced self-esteem (personal resources), and together, these resources work towards work–family enrichment (Ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012). The role of personal resources, such as personality, in the effective management of work–family conflict has often cited in extant research. For example, Thoits (1994) regarded personality differences as 'coping resources' that influence individual ability to cope with life's situations, and Grzywacz and Marks (2000) reported personality as a key influencer of work–family conflict.

Building on the above perspectives, we propose that contextual resources interact with personal resources to produce beneficial outcomes for the individual in the management of work–family conflict. In other words, contextual support resources from work and family domains interact with personal resource of personality to curb conflict in the work–family interface. From the work domain, we examine four important organizational support variables: family-friendly organizational policies (FFOP), family
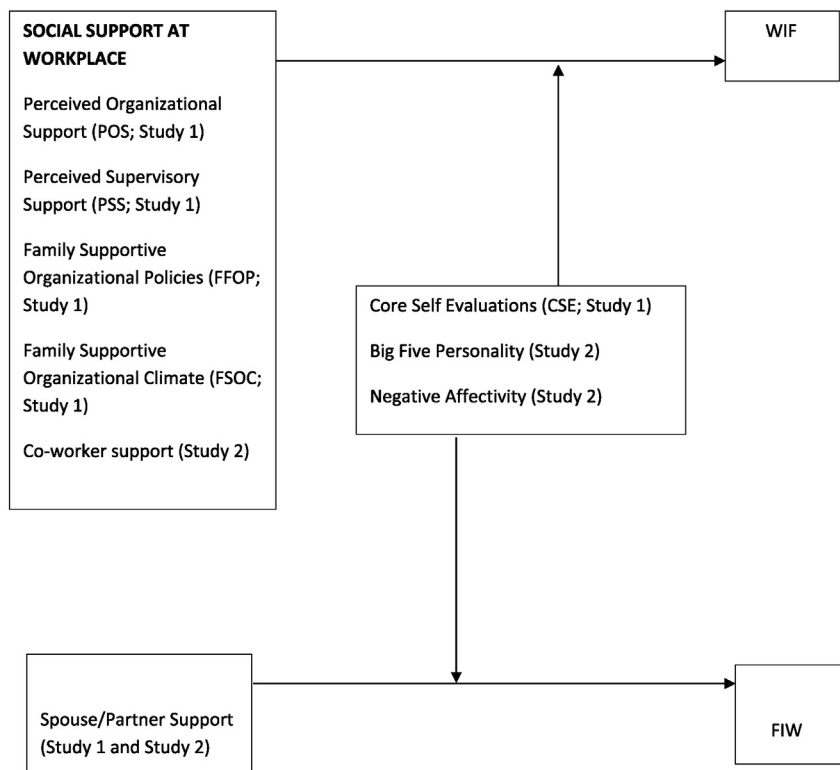

Fig. 1. Research model.

supportive organizational climate (FSOC), perceived organizational support (POS), co-worker support and perceived supervisory support (PSS). From the family domain we examine one important form of support, i.e., spousal support. For personal resource moderators, we use several important personality variables, including core self-evaluations (CSE), Big Five dimensions, and negative affectivity. Finally, on the outcome side, we examine two distinct forms of work–family conflict: work interfering with family (WIF) conflict and family interfering with work (FIW) conflict. WIF conflict occurs when demands of the workplace impede family role performance, while FIW occurs when demands of the family impede work-role performance (Netemeyer, Boles, & McMurrian, 1996; Frone, Russell, & Cooper, 1992).

Our research model is presented in Fig. 1. As articulated above, the model suggests that individual personality moderates the relationship between contextual support and work–family conflict. Using data from two different sources we test our hypotheses by way of two studies (identified as Study 1 and Study 2 in the model). The first study, Study 1, includes the four organizational support variables: FFOP, FSOC, POS and PSS, on one side and WIF on the other, with CSE as moderator. Study 2 focuses on the relationship between co-worker support and WIF with Big Five dimensions and negative affectivity as moderators. Both studies also include spouse/partner support as family support variable in relation to FIW.

With two studies and two different samples, our research uses data triangulation (Denzin, 1978) in the investigation of the moderating role of personality on the relationship between contextual support and work family conflict and contributes to existing work–family literature in three ways. First, our interaction model is consistent with the COR theory as it discusses the importance of resources (contextual and personal) in the management of work–family conflict (Halbesleben et al., 2014). The study also expands on W-HR framework (Ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012) by establishing that personal resources not only arise from, but also enhance the efficacy of the contextual resources.

Second, in the examination of the above relationships our study voices the person-situation interactionist perspective (Ekehammer, 1974), by highlighting the importance of personality in the management of the work-life situations. According to Michel and Clark (2013), in the management of work–family conflict, the examination of individual differences as a boundary condition is an important research question, one that has not been adequately researched. To our knowledge, only one study, by Boyar and Mosley (2007), focuses on examining the relationship between CSE and work–family conflict. Therefore, by including personal and situational variables to better understand work–family conflict, our study addresses an important call by work–family researchers (e.g., Allen et al., 2012; Bruck & Allen, 2003; Eby, Casper, Lockwood, Bordeaux, & Brinley, 2005; Mesmer-Magnus & Viswesvaran, 2006; Michel et al., 2010; Michel & Clark, 2013; Shockley & Allen, 2007).

Finally, we examine the role of both specific and generic forms of organizational support. FFOP and FSOC are human resources practices specifically aimed at efficient management of work–family roles, while, generic support such as POS, PSS and co-worker support is aimed at overall wellbeing of the employee. The inclusion of the above forms of support better informs both theory and practice by providing an enhanced understanding of the nomological net of support variables and their role in reducing work–family conflict by synergistically interacting with personal-level support variables (Selvarajan, Cloninger, & Singh, 2013; Kossek et al., 2011).

2. Study 1

2.1. Literature review and hypotheses

2.1.1. CSE as moderator on the relationship between social support and work family conflict

CSE represents a stable personality trait based upon an individual's evaluation of self in relation to the environment (Judge, Locke, & Durham, 1997). People with a high level of CSE think positively of themselves and their ability to successfully manage their environment (Judge, Locke, Durham, & Kluger, 1998). CSE is a multidimensional construct with four dimensions: 1) self efficacy, 2) self-esteem, 3) locus of control, and 4) emotional stability. Individuals with high levels of CSE have higher levels of self-efficacy, self-esteem and emotional stability and have internal locus of control (Kammeyer-Mueller, Judge, & Scott, 2009).

CSE, with these four dimensions, acts as an important personal resource. According to the COR model, resources fall under three categories, a) personal (e.g., self-esteem and self-efficacy), b) instrumental (e.g., money) and c) social (e.g., social support) (Hobfoll, 2001). Thus, CSE is a personal resource that has the potential to help employees successfully manage conflict in the work and family environment. According to work–family researchers, (e.g., Friede & Ryan, 2004), CSE influences the work–family interface in at least two important ways. First, CSE influences the appraisal of work and family roles, and also the level of perceived strain created by these roles. For example, an individual with positive CSE can perceive a demanding family or work role as challenging while an individual with a negative CSE can appraise the same role as stressful. Thus, individuals with positive CSE tend to have a positive appraisal of the work or family roles and consequently perceive lesser strain due to those roles. Second, individuals with positive CSE use positive coping strategies (such as problem focused coping) to solve problems and consequently, are more efficient in managing conflict in their work and family roles (Kammeyer-Mueller et al., 2009). On the other hand, an individual with a negative CSE may use avoidance strategies to cope with problems which may further exacerbate their perception of role conflict in the work–family interface (Kammeyer-Mueller et al., 2009). Thus, it is reasonable to assume that an employee with high level of CSE is better able to manage the demands of family and work environment and to perceive lower levels of WIF and FIW.

Research on CSE and work family conflict has been sparse. To our knowledge, only one study, Boyar and Mosley (2007), has explicitly examined the relationship between CSE and work family conflict; in their study of employees in a retirement facility, they found that CSE was negatively related to WIF and FIW. As previously mentioned, the primary focus of this research is to

examine how individual resources such as CSE may interact with social support in reducing conflict in the work–family interface. The person-situation perspective (e.g., Ekehammer, 1974) suggests that the interaction between personal factors (such as personality, individual ability) and situational factors can influence outcomes such as behavior, attitude or perception (Terborg, Richardson, & Pritchard, 1980). The person-situation perspective is also consistent with socio-cognitive theory (e.g., Mischel, 1973; Shoda & Mischel, 1993), which proposes that the interaction of relatively stable personal attributes with situational characteristics can produce patterns of behavior (Shoda, Mischel, & Peake, 1990). Furthermore, differential appraisals of a given situation by different individuals often results in, unique behavior consequences (Endler & Magnusson, 1976). For example, a supportive supervisor may be viewed as more enabling for performance by individuals with low level of neuroticism compared to those who are highly neurotic.

Although empirical evidence favoring the moderating influence of CSE in the relationship between social support system and work–family conflict is lacking, research in stress and burnout provide support for a similar relationship. For example, De Hoogh and Hartog (2009), in a study of leadership and burnout, found that charismatic leadership was associated with lower burnout for employees with internal locus of control. In a similar vein, we expect that, at higher levels of CSE, the mitigating influence of social support systems in the work domain in reducing WIF is synergistically enhanced. Thus, the negative relationship between social support systems and WIF is stronger for those with high CSE. Likewise, we also expect that the relationship between spousal support and FIW is stronger for those with high CSE. On the contrary, consistent with the person-situation perspective, employees with lower levels of CSE perceive the available social support as less efficacious in reducing work–family conflict, and for such individuals, the relationship between social support and WIF is weaker (Naswal, Severe, & Hellene, 2005; Cutrona, Hessling, & Suhr, 1997). The above review and discussion leads to the following set of hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1. The inverse relationship between a) FFOP, b) FSOC, c) PSS and d) POS and WIF is moderated by CSE, such that the buffering effect of social support on WIF will be stronger for those with higher levels of CSE than those with lower levels of CSE.

Hypothesis 2. The inverse relationship between perceived spousal support and FIW will be moderated by CSE, such that the buffering effect of spouse support on FIW will be stronger for those with higher levels of CSE than for those with lower levels of CSE.

2.2. Methodology for Study 1

2.2.1. Sample description

This sample consisted of 435 full time employees who are employed at various organizations and enrolled in an executive MBA program at a Southwestern university. They were recruited for this study in return for minimal extra credit. The average age of the sample was 30.6 years. The sample consisted of approximately 59% women, and the average number of years of work experience was 10.9 years. Approximately 42% classified themselves as Caucasian, 15% as Latino, 19% as African–American, 18% as Asian, and 6% as belonging to other racial categories or indicated no race.

2.2.2. Measures for study 1

Unless otherwise stated, respondents used a five point scale (1 for "Strongly Disagree" to 5 for "Strongly Agree") to respond to the items for the measures used in this study.

2.2.2.1. Family friendly organizational policies (FFOP). Family friendly organizational policies were measured using a check list of seven commonly mentioned family friendly policies in the management literature. The participants were asked to indicate whether the company provided these policies. The check list included family friendly policies such as telecommuting, compressed work week, day care for children, flextime and leave to take care of family. Following Batt and Valcour (2003) and Ngo, Foley, and Loi (2009), we constructed an index of family friendly policies with values ranging from 0 to 7 based on the number of policies provided by the organization as specified by the participants in the survey.

2.2.2.2. WIF and FIW. The variables WIF and FIW were measured using the scale developed by Netemeyer et al. (1996). WIF was measured with a five-item scale. A sample item from this scale is, "The demands of my *work* interfere with my home and *family* life". FIW was measured with a similar five-item scale. A sample item from this scale is, "My co-workers and peers at *work* dislike how often I am preoccupied with my *family* life". The Cronbach's alpha for the WIF and FIW scales were 0.86 and 0.83, respectively.

2.2.2.3. Perceived organizational support (POS) and perceived supervisory support (PSS). Perceived organizational support was measured using the eight-item scale version of the measure developed by Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, and Sowa (1986). A sample item from this scale was, "My organization cares about my opinions". Following Eisenberger et al. (1986), perceived supervisory support was measured by modifying the eight-item POS scale by replacing the word 'organization' with 'supervisor/manager' to derive the perceived supervisory support scale. A sample item from this measure was, "My manager/supervisor considers my goals and values". The Cronbach's alpha for the POS and PSS scales were 0.92 and 0.93, respectively.

2.2.2.4. Family supportive organizational climate (FSOC). Family supportive organizational climate was measured using the 3-item family work climate scale used by Kossek et al., (2001). A sample item from this scale was, "In my organization it is expected that employees have to take time away from families to get work done" (reverse coded). The Cronbach alpha for this scale was 0.77.

2.2.2.5. Social support in the family domain. Social support in the family domain was measured using the four item scale used by Frone, Yardley, and Markel (1997) to measure tangible support from spouse/partner. A sample item from this scale was, "I can depend on my spouse/partner to help me if I really need it". The Cronbach's alpha for this scale was 0.80.

2.2.2.6. Core self-evaluations. We used the scale developed by Kammeyer-Mueller et al. (2009) for measuring CSE and this scale comprised of 12 items. The traits measured were self-esteem, generalized self-efficacy, emotional stability and locus of control. The alpha reliability for this scale was 0.81.

2.2.2.7. Controls variables. We used the following control variables: age, gender, marital status and number of children. These variables were chosen based on prior research studies of social support and work–family conflict (Byron, 2005; Powell & Greenhaus, 2010; Taylor, Delcampo, & Blancero, 2009).

2.3. Results Study 1

The descriptive statistics and correlations are presented in Table 1. We performed regression analysis for testing the hypotheses, and the results of regression analysis are presented in Table 2. For all analyses, we included the control variables but for simplicity we did not show the results of the table. Hypothesis 1a–d pertains to the workplace support variables. As indicated in this table, the moderating effect of CSE is significant for the support variables POS and PSS and not significant for the support variables FFOC and FSOC. To understand significant interactions, we plotted the interactional effect for POS and the graph is presented in Fig. 2. The graphs show that the relationship between POS and WIF was stronger for individuals with higher levels of CSE (low CSE: $B = 0.03$, $p > 0.05$; high CSE: $B = -.14$, $p < 0.05$). Similarly, the interaction for the support variables PSS as shown in Fig. 3 shows that the relationship between PSS and WIF is stronger for individuals with higher levels of CSE as hypothesized (low CSE: $B = 0.04$, $p > 0.05$; high CSE: $B = -.12$; $p < 0.05$). Results from Table 2 also indicate that CSE did not moderate the relationship between spouse support and FIW, and thus, Hypothesis 2 was not supported.

3. Study 2

In Study 1, we examine the moderating influence of CSE on the relationship between various forms of social support and work family conflict. In Study 2, we extend the research on work–family conflict by examining Big Five personality factors, consciousness, agreeableness, neuroticism, openness to experience, and extraversion as key moderators. The Big Five model of personality is the most consequential model of personality studied in organizational research. Study 2 focuses on co-worker support as a workplace social support and spousal support as family support variable. Our argument resonates with the principles of COR and W-HR models as we propose that resources do not act in isolation but that resources synergistically interact with one another to influence outcomes in the work–family domain (Halbesleben et al., 2014; Ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012). Various personality variables, such as self-efficacy, type-A, locus of control have already been conceptualized as personal resources in extant research (e.g., Cohen & Edwards, 1989; Schwarzer, Boehmer, Luszczynska, Mohamed, & Knoll, 2005). In current research, we conceptualize the Big Five personality factors, or dimensions of personality, as personal resources, and propose them as moderators of contextual support in the work–family conflict relationship. Furthermore, we also examine the moderating influence of negative affect. Previous research on work family conflict indicates that negative affect that employees experience in their daily lives can significantly impact work family conflict (Ilies et al., 2007).

3.1. Literature review and hypotheses for Study 2

3.1.1. Big Five personality dimensions as moderators of support-WIF relationships
Within management and social psychology literatures, the Big Five personality taxonomy is the most widely accepted way of describing and measuring individual personality (Barrick & Mount, 1993; Hurtz & Donovan, 2000). Big Five dimensions have been successfully associated with a host of individual outcomes either directly or indirectly (e.g., Demerouti, 2006; Hurtz & Donovan, 2000; Wayne, Musisca, & Fleeson, 2004; Witt & Carlson, 2006; Zhao & Seibert, 2006). In addition to personal outcomes, the Big Five personality dimensions also have been reported to influence outcomes in the work–family domain (e.g., Wayne et al., 2004; Witt & Carlson, 2006).

3.1.1.1. Conscientiousness as moderator of contextual support and work–family conflict relationship. The first dimension of personality from the Big Five that we discus is conscientiousness. Conscientiousness represents organization, hard work, drive and persistence (Zhao & Seibert, 2006). Labeled as the most consistent predictor of job performance, conscientiousness is a symbol of individual achievement motivation and dependability (Mount & Barrick, 1995). According to personality psychologists, conscientious is an important personal resource, and high conscientiousness enables individuals to handle multiple roles in their work and family

Table 1
Descriptions and correlations for Study 1.

| Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. Age	30.646	8.092												
2. Gender	1.589	0.492	−0.065											
3. Marital status	1.700	0.960	0.412**	−0.075										
4. No. of children	0.801	1.063	0.406**	−0.003	0.398**									
5. Family income	3.479	1.568	0.410**	−0.083	0.593**	0.258**								
6. FFOP	9.765	1.401	0.095*	0.037	0.038	0.034	0.140**							
7. FSOC	3.205	0.904	−0.141**	0.131**	−0.086	−0.086	−0.087	0.186**						
8. Perceived supervisor support	4.247	1.011	−0.045	−0.037	0.049	0.037	0.052	0.249**	0.254**					
9. Perceived organizational support	3.555	0.864	−0.008	0.005	−0.023	−0.033	−0.019	0.296**	0.288**	0.754**				
10. Perceived spouse/partner support	4.104	0.828	0.117*	−0.019	0.589**	0.135*	0.367**	0.116*	0.054	0.200**	0.098			
11. Core self evaluation	3.779	0.529	0.022	−0.070	0.084	0.043	0.045	0.241**	0.167**	0.277**	0.311**	0.231**		
12. Family interfering with work conflict (FIW)	2.082	0.667	0.080	−0.050	0.114*	0.200**	0.077	−0.203**	−0.197**	−0.212**	−0.19**	−0.092	−0.362**	
13. Work interfering with family conflict (WIF)	2.490	1.021	0.137**	−0.17**	0.084	0.191**	0.038	−0.262**	−0.549**	−0.300**	−0.346**	−0.106*	−0.261**	0.512**

Note:
* $p < 0.05$.
** $p < 0.01$.
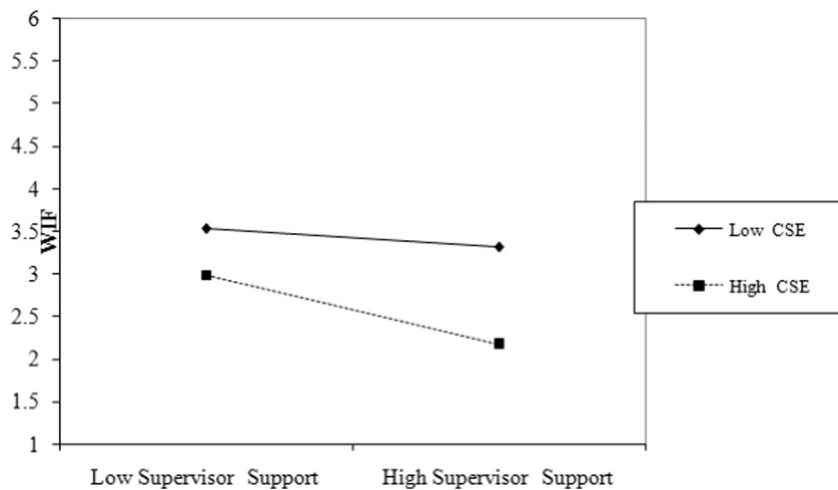
Fig. 2. Supervisor support and WIF: CSE as the moderator.

routines because of their faith in their personal abilities (Witt & Carlson, 2006; Zhao & Seibert, 2006). In contrast, individuals who are low on conscientiousness, due to poor organization and lack of prioritization, witness greater difficulty in both role management and delivery, and consequently, are more susceptible poor performance (Witt & Carlson, 2006).

Empirical research on conscientiousness also supports that conscientiousness enhances individual ability to manage time effectively, solve problems creatively and buffers individuals against stress (Witt & Carlson, 2006). Thus, we believe that conscientiousness is a unique personal resource, which would interact positively with other forms of support (e.g., co-worker support) in further lowering the perceptions of work–family conflict. In other words, if a highly conscientious individual is also provided with support from other sources, it would help such a person in further lowering perceptions of WIF, leading to the following hypotheses.

Hypothesis 3a. The inverse relationship between co-worker support and WIF will be moderated by conscientiousness such that the relationship will be stronger for those with higher levels of conscientiousness.

Hypothesis 3b. The inverse relationship between spousal support and FIW will be moderated by conscientiousness such that the relationship will be stronger for those with higher levels of conscientiousness.

3.1.1.2. Agreeableness as moderator of contextual support and work–family conflict relationship. The personality dimension agreeableness suggests that agreeable individuals are highly sociable, cooperative and emphatic towards others; on the contrary, individuals who are low on agreeableness tend to be antagonistic and short tempered (Skarlicki, Folger, & Tesluk, 1999). Empirical research has shown that individuals who are highly agreeable are less emotional, while individuals with low scores on agreeableness demonstrate high emotions and quickly become distressed (Skarlicki et al., 1999; Wayne et al., 2004). An individual's tendency to get
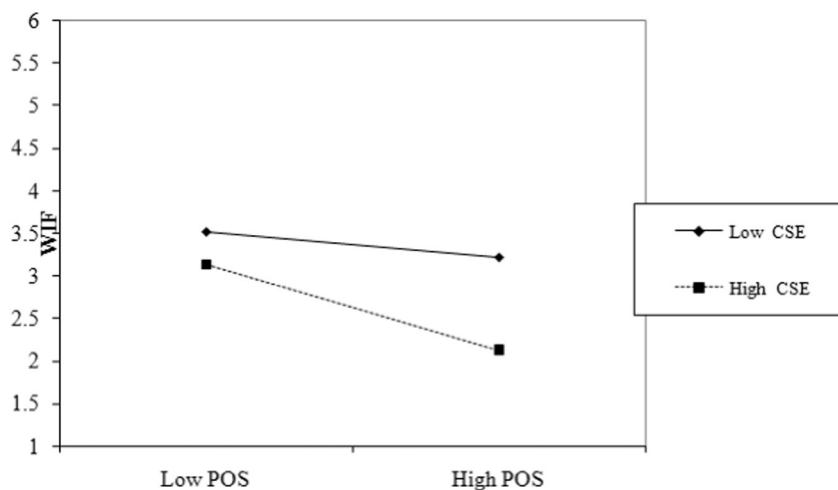

Fig. 3. POS and WIF–CSE as the moderator.

into any kind of relationship conflict is also determined based on agreeableness (Wayne et al., 2004). Individuals who are low on agreeableness not only attack other peoples' positions and ideas, but also tend to vigorously defend their positions, resulting in strong emotional episodes. Thus, individuals who are low on agreeableness are harder to satiate and quickly find themselves embroiled in conflicts (Skarlicki et al., 1999; Wayne et al., 2004).

Based on the above evidence it is reasonable to assume that individuals who are low on agreeableness also would have a hard time managing their work and family lives, and consequently perceive more WIF, even in the presence of contextual support, as opposed to individuals who are highly agreeable. Furthermore, research on personality has shown that agreeable individuals tend to exercise a better control over their emotions, especially when their emotions can be damaging for their interpersonal relationships (Yang & Diefendorff, 2009). Thus, agreeableness presents an important resource which positively interacts with other forms of support (e.g., coworker support), and consequently, an agreeable individual would perceive lesser WIF as opposed to individuals low on agreeableness. Therefore,

Hypothesis 4a. The inverse relationship between co-worker support and WIF will be moderated by agreeableness such that the relationship will be stronger for those with higher levels of conscientiousness.

Hypothesis 4b. The inverse relationship between spousal support and FIW will be moderated by agreeableness such that the relationship will be stronger for those with higher levels of conscientiousness.

3.1.1.3. Neuroticism as moderator of contextual support and work–family conflict relationship. Neuroticism is also referred to as emotional stability and is defined as anxiety, insecurity, tension, and worry (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Judge, Higgins, Thoresen, & Barrick, 1999; McCrae & John, 1992), and these characteristics are responsible for more perceived stress, which, in turn, amplifies the conflict experienced in work–family lives (Stoeva, Chiu, & Greenhaus, 2002). Thus, a person's tendency to experience negative emotions in response to an environmental stimulus is greatly affected by neuroticism (Clark, Watson, & Mineka, 1994; Wayne et al., 2004). High levels of neuroticism have been associated with several maladaptive outcomes, such as increased psychological distress (Suls, Green, & Hillis, 1998) and increased vulnerability to anxiety and depression (Clark et al., 1994; Djurkovic, McCormack, & Casimir, 2006). Not only do highly neurotic individuals experience negative emotions, they also lack the ability to make the most of the support provided to them (Elovainio, Kivimäki, Vahtera, Virtanen, & Keltikangas-Järvinen, 2003). Therefore, we propose that a lower level of neuroticism acts like a resource that synergistically interacts with other forms of support to curb WIF. In other words, it is quite reasonable to assume that support would mean very little to individuals with high levels of neuroticism but, individuals low on neuroticism, would utilize support more productively, and consequently perceive lesser WIF. Therefore,

Hypothesis 5a. The inverse relationship between co-worker support and WIF is moderated by neuroticism such that the relationship will be weaker for those with higher levels neuroticism.

Hypothesis 5b. The inverse relationship between spousal support and FIW is moderated by neuroticism such that the relationship will be weaker for those with higher levels of neuroticism.

3.1.1.4. Openness to experience as moderator of contextual support and work–family conflict relationship. Openness to experience is a Big Five dimension that explains the extent to which an individual is broad-minded, imaginative, curious, and open to new ideas and experiences (George & Zhou, 2001; Wayne et al., 2004). In contrast, individuals who are low on openness to experience prefer conventional and familiar routines in life (Costa & McCrae, 1992; George & Zhou, 2001). Research has shown that individuals with a high level of openness to experience possess a wider repertoire of ideas, feelings and perspectives and making them better equipped to handle challenging circumstances. Openness to experience, in many ways is a resource that makes individuals more accepting of change, and in many ways improves individual creativity in developing solutions and handling conflict. Highly open individuals, by virtue of being exposed to several different situations, possess a wealth of experience which offers them a useful resource that they can willingly transfer from one domain to benefit behavior in another (George & Zhou, 2001; Wayne et al., 2004). Some studies report that, highly open individuals create challenges to alter the status quo in their lives to avoid monotony (e.g., Costa & McCrae, 1992). Thus, individuals with high levels of openness are more comfortable in the times of uncertainty and are more likely, than individuals with low levels of openness, to make use of situational resources to manage work-life pressures and conflicts. This suggests the following hypotheses.

Hypothesis 6a. The inverse relationship between co-worker support and WIF will be moderated by openness to experience such that the relationship will be stronger for those with higher levels of openness to experience.

Hypothesis 6b. The inverse relationship between spousal support and FIW will be moderated by openness to experience such that the relationship will be stronger for those with higher levels of openness to experience.

3.1.1.5. Extraversion as moderator of contextual support and work–family conflict relationship. Extraversion is one of the dominant dimensions of the Big Five personality model which is fairly stable over the course of a person's life, and is instrumental in influencing a host of individual work behaviors (Bauer, Erdogan, Liden, & Wayne, 2006). Individuals who are extroverts are generally quite outgoing, social, and gregarious, and they seek opportunities to interact with others (Costa & McCrae, 1992). Two

characteristics of extroverts that really stand out are positivity and energy, and are especially relevant in the management of conflict (Wayne et al., 2004). Extroverts possess higher levels of energy and consequently, are able to accomplish more in a given time and to perceive less fatigue than introverts (Wayne et al., 2004). Due to their focus on positive aspects of situations, extraversion acts a resource that helps in making work-life situations as less stressful

Studies have also shown that extroverts have a tendency to attract social attention, and accordingly, they engage in behaviors that garner social limelight (Ashton, Lee, & Paunonen, 2002). With respect to job characteristics, it also has been reported that extrovert individuals seek tasks that are challenging, novel, and with higher levels of complexity (Costa & McCrae, 1992). Introverts, on the other hand, are reluctant to partake in social interactions and are more comfortable in either their own company or the company of habitual others (Bauer et al., 2006). With respect to job characteristics too, introverts have been found to prefer work routines that are predictable in nature (Costa & McCrae, 1992).

From the above distinctions between extroverts and introverts, it can be inferred due to their very nature, that extroverts are more open to challenging routines and work assignments, and consequently, extroverts also are bound to experience more conflict in their work–non-work roles and perceive greater WIF. However, since extroverts also possess higher levels of energy and positivity, they also are in a better position to handle conflict. Therefore, we propose that if extroverts are offered contextual support they can make a better use of the support in lowering their perceptions of WIF, than introverts. Research on personality has also shown that extroverts are more likely to experience reward sensitivity, which, "facilitates and guides approach behavior towards goal" (Depue & Collins, 1999: 495). Reward sensitivity has been reported to be composed of dimensions such as social dominance, assertiveness, and goal accomplishment (Depue & Collins, 1999), and has been identified as a higher-order factor that underlies the dimension of extroversion. Hence, it is in the very nature of extroverts to exert greater effort, and in such scenarios, greater support would hold a greater prominence for extroverts as opposed to introverts. Therefore,

Hypothesis 7a. The inverse relationship between co-worker support and WIF will be moderated by extraversion such that the relationship will be stronger for those with higher levels of extraversion.

Hypothesis 7b. The inverse relationship between spousal support and FIW will be moderated by extraversion such that the relationship will be stronger for those with higher levels of extraversion.

3.1.2. Negative affect as moderator of contextual support and work–family conflict relationship

The personality dimensions discussed above refer to individual traits, while the affect we examine in this hypothesis is a measure of individual emotional states (Larsen & Ketelaar, 1989). For the moderating role of negative affect on the relationship between contextual support and work family conflict, we expect that the effect would be stronger for individuals with high levels of negative affectivity. According to the COR theory, resource losses have greater consequences for the individuals, and hence, they strive to mobilize resources so that they can recover from the losses (Hobfoll et al., 1990; Halbesleben et al., 2014). Research has established that negative affectivity is symptomatic of resource loss (Hobfoll, 2001). Thus we would expect individuals with higher levels of negative affectivity to be more inclined to better utilize resources such as co-worker support to recover from a loss. For example, an employee who has experienced a negative affective event will perceive higher levels of work–family conflict due to his/her emotional state. In order to overcome the situation, the employee may actively seek out or utilize available co-worker support to reduce work–family conflict

Extant research provides support for the above notion that individuals with high levels of negative affectivity may better utilize resources to reduce role overload. In a study of hospital doctors, Parker, Johnson, Collins, and Ngyuen (2013) found that the buffering effect of socio-structural support on role overload was stronger for individuals with higher levels of negative affectivity. In a similar vein, in the current research, we expect that the relationship between social support and work conflict will be stronger for individuals with higher levels of negative affectivity. Therefore,

Hypothesis 8. The inverse relationship between co-worker support and WIF will be moderated by negative affectivity such that the relationship will be stronger for those with higher levels of negative affectivity.

Hypothesis 9. The inverse relationship between spouse support and FIW will be moderated by negative affectivity such that the relationship will be stronger for those with higher levels of negative affectivity.

3.2. Methodology for Study 2

3.2.1. Sample description

The sample comes from the second wave of the midlife in the US (MIDUS) study of health and well-being conducted by University of Wisconsin research center. The sample has been used in previous work–family studies (e.g., Grzywacz & Marks, 2000; Grzywacz, 2000). The MIDUS sample was identified using random-digit dialing. The first wave of the survey was conducted in 1995 and the response rate was around 70%. During the second wave of the survey conducted in 2005, over 90% of the participants in the first wave were contacted and the response rate for this wave was around 75%. The data was collected using telephone interviews and self-administered questionnaires. For this research, the sample size was 1130 respondents who indicated that they were working at the time of the survey. The average age of respondents was 50.14. In terms of gender and race, 50.9% of respondents were women and over 85% identified themselves as White.

3.2.2. Measures

3.2.2.1. Co-worker support. Co-worker support was measured using a 5 point scale ranging from 1 for "all of the time" to 5 for "never". The scale had two items and a sample item in the scale was, "How often do you get help and support from your co-workers?" We reversed the scale for the analysis so that lower values reflect lower levels of support and higher values reflect higher levels of support. The coefficient alpha reliability for this scale was 0.67.

3.2.2.2. Spouse support. Spouse support was measured using a 4 point scale ranging from 1 for "a lot" to 4 for "not at all". The scale had six items and a sample item in the scale was, "How much does your spouse or partner really care about you?" Again, we reversed the scale so that lower values reflect lower levels of support and higher values reflect higher levels of support. The coefficient alpha reliability for this scale was 0.9.

3.2.2.3. WIF and FIW. The variables were measured using a 5 point scale ranging from 1 "all of the time" to 5 for "never". Each scale had four items and a sample item in the WIF scale was, "Your job reduces the effort you can give to activities at home." A sample item in the FIW scale was, "Responsibilities at home reduce the effort you can devote to your job." The scales were reversed so that lower values reflect lower levels of conflict and vice versa. The coefficient alpha reliability for the WIF scale was 0.81 and for the FIW scale it was 0.78.

3.2.2.4. Big Five personality. For the MIDUS sample, personality was measured using self-descriptive adjectives for each of the five dimensions. The items for the scale were drawn from Goldberg's (1992) markers for the Big Five personality scale. Conscientiousness was measured using five adjectives (Organized, Responsible, Hardworking, Careless (Reverse coded), Thorough), agreeableness with five adjectives (Helpful, Warm, Caring, Softhearted, Sympathetic), neuroticism with four adjectives (Moody, Worrying, Nervous, Calm (Reverse code)), extraversion with five adjectives (Outgoing, Friendly, Lively, Active, Talkative) and openness to experience with seven adjectives (Creative, Imaginative, Intelligent, Curious, Broad-minded, Sophisticated, Adventurous). The authors for the MIDUS project conducted a pilot project for the scale development of personality variables (Lachman & Weaver, 1997). As mentioned in this scale development research, a pilot study was conducted with a probability sample of 1000 men and women to validate the personality scale used in this research. Conscientiousness, measured using the 5 items, had an alpha reliability of 0.68. Agreeableness had an alpha reliability of 0.80. Neuroticism had an alpha reliability of 0.74. Extraversion had alpha reliability of 0.76, and openness to experience had an alpha reliability of 0.77.

3.2.2.5. Negative affectivity. For measuring negative affectivity, the study used five negative adjectives from the PANAS scale (Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988) and the participants were asked to rate the affect based on their feelings during the past 30 days. The alpha reliability for this scale is 0.8.

3.2.2.6. Control variables. We used the following control variables: age, gender, marital status and number of children. These variables were chosen based on prior research studies of social support and work–family conflict (Byron, 2005; Powell & Greenhaus, 2010; Taylor et al., 2009).

3.3. Results of Study 2

The descriptive statistics for this study are presented in Table 3. The results of moderated regression analysis are presented in Table 4 and Table 5. As indicated in Table 4, the relationship between co-worker support and WIF was stronger for individuals with higher levels of conscientiousness, thus providing support for Hypothesis 3a. Similarly, the relationship between co-worker support and WIF was stronger for individuals with higher levels of agreeableness, this supports Hypothesis 4a.

To better understand these interaction effects, we plotted the interactions. Consistent with the hypothesis, Fig. 4 shows that the relationship between co-worker support and WIF was stronger for individuals with higher levels of conscientiousness (low conscientiousness: B = −.21, p < 0.01; high conscientiousness: B = −.34, p < 0.01). Similarly, Fig. 5 shows that the relationship between co-worker support and WIF was stronger for individuals with higher levels of agreeableness (low agreeableness: B = −0.19, p < 0.05; high agreeableness: B = −0.38, p < 0.01). As presented in Table 4, the other three Big Five personality variables did not moderate the relationship between co-worker support and WIF. Similarly, none of the Big Five personality factors moderated the relationship between spouse support and FIW. Thus Hypotheses 3b–7b and 5a–7a were not supported.

Hypothesis 8 predicted that the relationship between social support and work–family conflict will be stronger for individuals with higher levels of negative affectivity. Results from Table 4 suggest that the relationship between co-worker support and WIF is stronger for individuals with higher levels of negative affectivity, thus providing support for Hypothesis 8. The interaction is shown in Fig. 6. As observed in this figure, the relationship between co-worker support and WIF is stronger for individuals with higher levels of negative affectivity, as hypothesized (low negative affectivity: B = −0.16, p < 0.01; high negative affectivity: B = −0.33, p < 0.01. Results from Table 5 indicate that negative affectivity did not moderate the relationship between spouse support and FIW. Thus, Hypothesis 9 was not supported.

Table 3
Descriptions and correlations for Study 2 (MIDUS sample).

Variables	Mean	S.D	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
1. Age	55.43	12.45	1													
2. Gender	1.53	0.50	.004	1												
3. Marital status	1.75	0.44	−.133**	−.161**	1											
4. No of children	2.50	1.76	.256**	.021	.150**	1										
5. WFC	10.08	2.85	−.253**	−.006	.035	−.083**	1									
6. FWC	8.14	2.47	−.275**	.057**	.019	−.031	.539**	1								
7. Negative affectivity	1.54	0.53	−.180**	.079**	−.044**	−.056**	.313**	.345**	1							
8. Agreeableness	3.45	0.50	.109**	.283**	−.045**	.064**	−.100**	−138**	−.089**	1						
9. Extraversion	3.11	0.57	.059**	.079**	−.011	.048**	−.166**	−143**	−.209**	.504**	1					
10. Neuroticism	2.07	0.63	−.178**	.115**	−.031*	−.066**	.333**	344**	.560**	−.114**	−.196**	1				
11. Conscientiousness	3.39	0.46	−.027	.082**	.052**	−.018	−.132**	−.160**	−.231**	.291**	.284**	−.197**	1			
12. Openness to experience	2.90	0.54	−.005	−.050**	−.037*	−.050**	−.080**	−117**	−.150**	.331**	.513**	−.213**	.342**	1		
13. Coworker support	7.25	1.49	.006	.048*	.054**	.039	−.166**	−142**	−.113**	.145**	.145**	−110**	.102**	.086**	1	
14. Spouse support	3.63	0.53	.104**	−.137**	.076**	.000	−.133**	−.247**	−.251**	.127**	.167**	−.171**	.118**	.136**	097**	1

* p < 0.05.
** p < 0.01.

Table 2
Regression analysis for Study 1.

Variables	DV: WIF/FIW			Model R- squared	R-squared change due to interaction
	B	SE	t		
IV. FFOP				0.19^{**}	0.005
FFOP	−0.16	0.03	−4.87[**]		
CSE	−0.44	0.09	−5.01[**]		
CSE * FFOP	−0.03	0.07	−0.53		
IV: FSOC				0.37^{**}	0.000
FSOC	−0.55	0.04	−12.31[**]		
CSE	−0.36	0.08	−4.76[**]		
CSE * FSOC	−0.09	0.08	−1.10		
IV: Supervisor support				0.21^{**}	0.008^{*}
Supervisor support	−0.26	0.05	−5.7[**]		
CSE	−0.42	0.09	−4.79[**]		
CSE * supervisor support	−0.15	0.08	−1.99[*]		
IV: POS				0.23^{**}	0.008^{*}
POS	−0.33	0.05	−6.12[**]		
CSE	−0.37	C C3	−4.29[**]		
CSE * POS	−0.18	0.09	−1.98[*]		
IV: Spouse support				0.21^{**}	0.000
Spouse support	−0.05	0.05	−1.10		
CSE	−0.51	0.06	−8.42[**]		
CSE * spouse support	0.07	0.07	1.00		

Dependent variable for spouse support is FIW and for all work support variables, the dependent variable is \Ai.

[**] $p \leq 0.01$.
[*] $p < 0.05$.

4. Discussion

The objective of this research is to examine how various types of support originating from the workplace and family domains interact with a broad range of personality variables to influence work–family conflict. Building on existing work–family literature, we tested this proposition using two large samples and tried to address a major gap in work–family research. Three contributions emerge from the results of this study.

Table 4
Regression analysis for Study 2 (MIDUS sample). Co-worker support and WIF.

Model	DV: WIF			Model R-squared	R-squared change due to interaction
	B	SE	t		
Moderator: conscientiousness				0.09^{**}	0.002^{*}
Co-worker support	−0.28	0.04	−7.7[**]		
Conscientiousness	−0.90	0.12	−7.2[**]		
Interaction	−0.15	0.08	−1.96[*]		
Moderator: agreeableness				0.08^{**}	0.002^{*}
Co-worker support	−0.29	0.04	−7.7[**]		
Agreeableness	−0.32	0.11	−2.84[**]		
Interaction	−0.17	0.07	−2.39[*]		
Moderator: neuroticism				0.17^{**}	0.0003
Co-worker support	−0.24	0.04	−6.8[**]		
Neuroticism	1.37	0.09	16.08[**]		
Interaction	−0.05	0.05	−0.91		
Moderator: extraversion				0.09^{**}	0.000
Co-worker support	−0.27	0.04	−7.26[**]		
Extraversion	−0.73	0.10	−7.62[**]		
Interaction	−0.01	0.06	−0.15		
Moderator: openness					
Co-worker support	−0.29	0.04	−7.8[**]	0.08^{**}	0.0001
Openness to experience	−0.30	0.10	−2.94[**]		
Interaction	−0.12	0.07	−1.86		
Moderator: negative affectivity				0.17^{**}	0.002^{*}
Co-worker support	−0.24	0.03	−6.8[**]		
Negative affectivity	1.69	0.11	15.73[**]		
Interaction	−0.16	0.07	−2.44[*]		

[**] $p \leq 0.01$.
[*] $p < 0.05$.

Table 5
Regression analysis for Study 2 (MIDUS sample). Spouse support and FIW.

Model	DV: FIW			Model R-squared	R-squared change due to interaction
	B	SE	t		
Moderator: conscientiousness				0.15**	0.000
Spouse support	0.87	0.09	−9.68**		
Conscientiousness	−0.79	0.12	−6.89**		
Interaction	0.15	0.18	0.82		
Moderator: agreeableness				0.15**	0.000
Spouse support	−0.86	0.09	−9.46**		
Agreeableness	−0.60	0.10	−5.81**		
Interaction	0.16	0.15	1.08		
Moderator: neuroticism				0.17**	0
spouse support	−0.82	0.09	−9.23**		
Neuroticism	1.11	0.08	14.23**		
Interaction	0.01	0.13	0.08		
Moderator: extraversion				0.15**	0.000
Spouse support	−0.87	0.09	−9.43**		
Extraversion	−0.46	0.09	−5.09**		
Interaction	0.09	0.14	0.66		
Moderator: openness					
Spouse support	−0.90	0.09	−9.83**	0.14**	0.000
Openness to experience	−0.39	0.10	−4.11**		
Interaction	−0.24	0.16	−1.47		
Moderator: negative affectivity				0.14**	0.000
Spouse support	−0.71	0.09	−7.74**		
Negative affectivity	1.47	0.10	14.18**		
Interaction	0.16	0.14	1.15		

** p ≤ 0.01.
* p < 0.05.

First, based on the results from Study 1, we found that CSE moderated POS-WIF, as well as PSS-WIF relationships. However, CSE did not moderate the relationship between FFOP and WIF, nor between FSOC and WIF. This pattern of results suggests that CSE interacted with generic types of social support to further reduce WIF. The synergistic effect of support and CSE was not present for family-specific social supportive practices like FFOP and FSOC. This indicates that when the organizational support is family-specific, CSE does not provide an incremental synergistic effect to further reduce the conflict, but when the support is generic, CSE provides that extra edge to further reduce the work–family conflict. This is an interesting result which adds new information to Kossek et al.'s (2011) meta-analytic research. Their research had suggested that generic support had weaker impact on work–family conflict than family-specific support, but our study indicates that personal resources such as CSE interact with the generic forms of support (POS and PSS) to make these support resources more potent in reducing the work–family conflict.

The results are also supportive of the prescriptions of COR theory, whereby, employees may choose to conserve their personal resources, such as CSE, in a work environment which is already replete with family-specific support, as family specific support by itself can considerably reduce work–family conflict. In contrast, generic support may not be sufficient to reduce work–family conflict and consequently, employees feel the need to deploy personal resources, such as CSE, to further reduce work–family conflict. In addition, the results also contribute to WH-R model, by reporting the interactive properties of different forms of support in the management of work–family conflict.
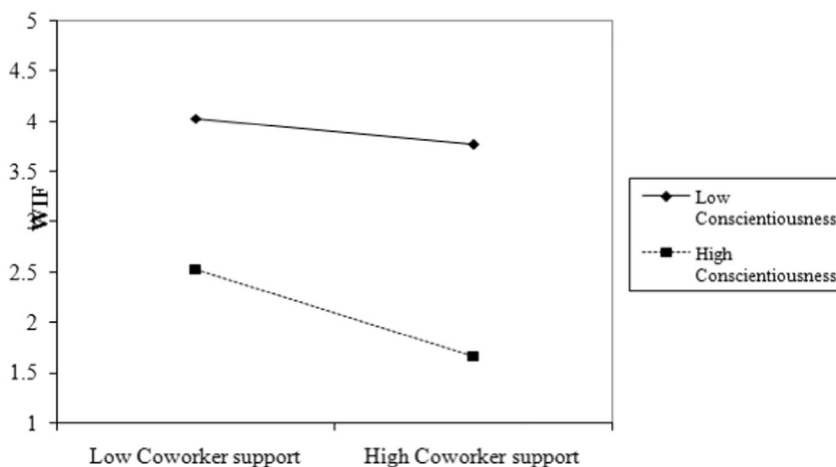

Fig. 4. Co-worker support and WIF: conscientiousness as moderator.
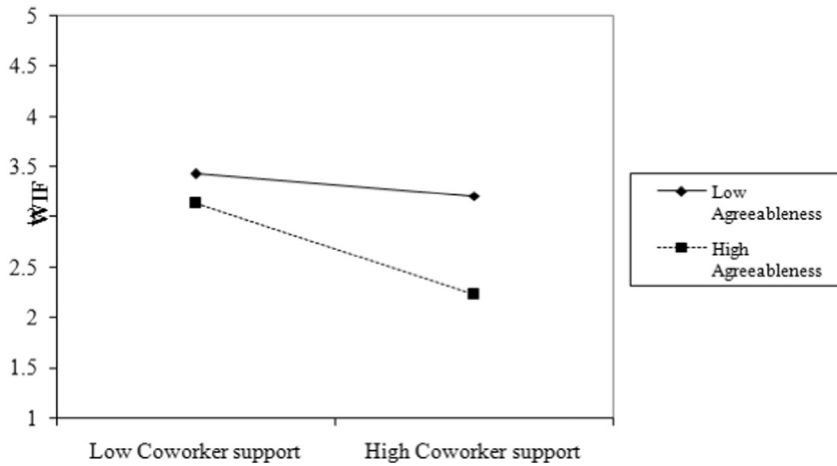
Fig. 5. Figure: co-worker support and WIF: agreeableness as moderator.

Second, based on the results from Study 2 we found that conscientiousness and agreeableness moderated the relationship between co-worker support and WIF. These results underscore the importance of conscientiousness and agreeableness, in conjunction with social support at workplace, as important dimensions that can help to buffer work–family conflict. Organizational research has recognized that these two personality dimensions can predict a broad range of outcomes more than any other personality dimension (e.g., Chiaburu, Oh, Berry, & Ning, 2011). For instance, according to Witt, Burke, Barrick, and Mount (2002), conscientiousness is the most consistent predictor of individual outcomes. Individuals who are high in conscientiousness are not only organized, disciplined, diligent, dependable, methodical, and purposeful but they are also cognitively more advanced (Barrick, Mount, & Judge, 2001) and consequently, they are more likely, than others to thoroughly and correctly work towards dealing with work–family conflict.

Similarly, agreeableness, which reflects a higher degree of selflessness, helpfulness, tolerance and flexibility, in situations where joint action and a selfless outlook is required, provided an extra edge to individuals (Mount, Barrick, & Stewart, 1998). In other words, agreeable individuals have the ability to deal with conflict in cooperative and collaborative way, more than others, and they strive for common understanding and aim for maintaining a healthy balance in social situations (Digman, 1990). With regard to agreeableness, some researchers also contend that it is the primary concept that needs to be considered in the evaluation of individual differences (e.g., Havill, Besevegis, & Mouroussaki, 1998). Therefore, we feel that in the determination of work–family conflict, in the presence of all the Big Five dimensions, conscientiousness and agreeableness are the two dimensions that stand out as prime facie moderators of social support from co-workers.

Third, as predicted, we found that the relationship between co-worker support and WIF is stronger for individuals with higher levels of negative affect. Although this appears counterintuitive, the findings are consistent with the COR theory (Hobfoll et al., 1990) and the findings of Parker et al. (2013). These results also are consistent with our propositions, and our results which found that individuals with higher levels of negative affect can more effectively leverage social support to reduce WIF. On the
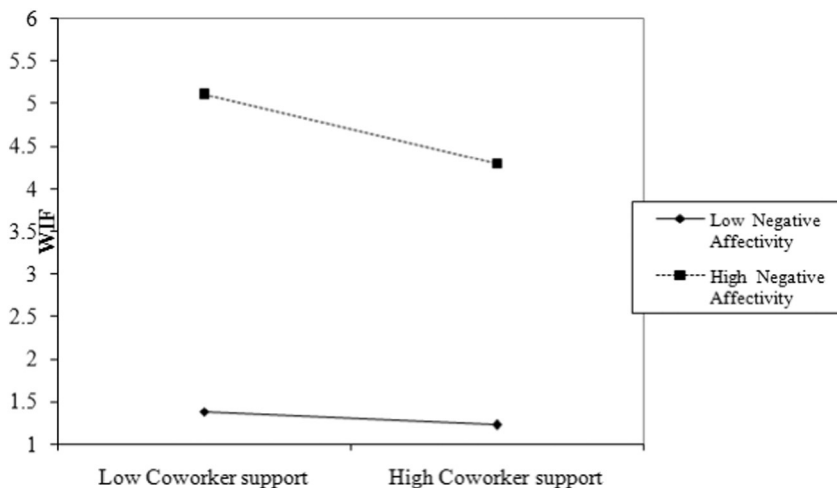

Fig. 6. Figure: co-worker support and WIF—negative affectivity as moderator.

other hand, individuals with already low levels of negative affect are not able to effectively utilize the social support to reduce work–family conflict. This finding illustrates that the need for support and the utilization of support depend on the individual situation. Based on our results, for individuals with high levels of negative affectivity, support seems to be very helpful in the management of WIF, but for individuals with low levels of negative affectivity, support is not very effective. Similar results also have been reported in management literature. For example, in their examination of individualism versus collectivism as moderator, Lai, Singh, Alshwer, and Shaffer (2014) report that individuals who scored high on individualism were more likely to use resources, such as social support and interpersonal trust in order to engage in citizenship behaviors as opposed to collectivists.

5. Implications for research and practice

5.1. Implications for research

Work-family researchers can further build on the above concepts and findings to expand the domain of work-conflict research. First, since the negative affective state seems to interact with social support in a different manner compared to personality variables, it would be interesting for future research to examine if Big Five personality dimensions interact with affect and social support to influence work family conflict. For example, although we did not find significant interaction for neuroticism and co-worker support, it would be interesting to examine a three way interaction among these two variables and negative affectivity. We performed a post hoc analysis and found that the interaction between co-worker support and neuroticism is stronger for individuals with higher negative affect. That is, even for individuals with high levels of neuroticism, when they experience higher negative affect they are better able to utilize the co-worker support to reduce work family conflict. A similar three way interaction was observed for the openness to experience dimension. Thus, future research models can include interaction between social support, personality and affective states to examine how they influence work family conflict. It also would be interesting for future research to examine if Big Five personality dimensions interact with perceived social status to influence work family conflict. The literature indicates that lower-status groups, such as traditionally identified as women, minorities, and those of lower socio-economic status, etc., experience greater stress and have fewer stress-buffering resources than higher-status groups (e.g., Thoits, 1992). Another avenue of research should investigate the resilience of workers over time. COR theory suggests that each time resources are diminished an individual will seek to conserve resources and be less able to cope with work and family demands, leading to additional losses of resources.

Lastly, our research found that co-workers are more important than managers when it comes to work family conflict. This finding seems to contradict some studies that suggest that co-workers can resent workers, especially parents given 'special treatment' to help them deal with WIF, and other studies that argue that the climate depends primarily upon supportive managers. This finding, however, appears to be keeping with Kossek et al. (2010) who suggest that workers are receiving ambiguous and mixed messages regarding work-life policies and practices, and the stereotype persists of the ideal worker as someone who does not need support. Thus, future research should examine co-worker support in conjunction with supervisor support and other contextual variables. The two samples are different in terms of age where the correlation between age and work–family conflict is negative for the MIDUS sample and this pattern is consistent with previous research which suggests that age is negatively related to work–family conflict for older employees as they become empty nesters (Allen & Finkelstein, 2014). For sample 1 with younger employees, there was a positive relationship between age and work–family conflict and this may be due to the fact that relatively 'older' employees in this sample may have started their families with children which may contribute to increased work–family conflict.

5.2. Managerial implications

The research also has important implications for managers and practitioners. The research has identified that in the management of work–family conflict individual personality plays an important role. Individuals with higher conscientiousness and higher agreeableness can be more proactive in better utilizing the workplace resources in better managing work–family conflict. We also found that CSE did not moderate the relationship between work–family specific support systems such as FFOP and FSOC. This finding has important implications for managers as introducing and implementing effectively family friendly policies and family supportive climate can be a great equalizer and can be effective for individuals regardless of their personality strengths. Often, despite all possible organizational efforts and provisions of support, employees still feel the brunt of work–family conflict, which in turn reflects in their work behaviors. By highlighting the role of personality as a moderator in management of work–family conflict, our study provides a valuable piece in solving the puzzle of work–family conflict management. Although it can be quite a challenge for organizational practitioners to alter individual personalities, but in an effort to manage work–family conflict, our study provides important insights for organizational practitioners and managers.

Current research analyzed work–family policies as an index and thus we did not analyze influence of each of the work–family policies. Future researchers may analyze the influence of each of the work family policies separately so that it can provide more informed guidance for practitioners as to which policies may be more effective in reducing work family conflict.

6. Limitations and conclusions

The research also has a few limitations. First, both the studies are cross sectional in nature, and thus we should be cautious to arrive at any causal conclusions based on this research. Second, the research is based on single source and thus common method bias could be a potential concern. However, the significance of interaction in this research means that common method bias may not be a significant issue for this research (DiRenzo, Greenhaus, & Weer, 2011). Future research designs should collect data from multiple sources to ensure that common method bias is eliminated.

In spite of these limitations, this research has made important contributions to the existing work–family literature by examining the influence of interaction between social support and personality on work–family conflict management. By including a broad set of social support systems and personality measures including affect, our research provides a strong starting point for research on social support and work–family conflict from a person situation interactionist perspective.

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