Workplace social support and work-life balance:
A moderated mediation model of organizational identification

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Introduction

Competing demands of roles between work and life have been increased due to workplace change such as the increase of women's participation in the labor market and longer working hours (Beauregard & Henry, 2009). Because of the changes in perception, many people try to avoid overwork, keep their composure and improve their work-life balance. Thus, in recent years, many people in academic field and industrial field have become increasingly interested in work-life balance. Although the results of prior research whether work-life balance is positively associated with organizational performance are mixed, work-life balance is regarded as core value. Work-life balance should be considered in the organization.

Most of the existing research have examined and analyzed work-life balance practices or policies. That is, by offering the each practices or bundles of practices, organizations attract new members and reduce levels of work-life conflict among existing employees, and this improved recruitment and reduced work-life conflict enhance organizational effectiveness (Beauregard & Henry, 2009). Virtual office with extensive flexibility in the timing and location of work increased flexibility and positively influenced on work-life balance (Hill, Miller, Weiner, & Colihan, 1998). Offering voluntary reduced hours are associated with increased recruitment and retention (Williams, Ford, Dohring, Lee, & MacDermid, 2000). Flexible working hours improved retention among female employees with child (Glass & Riley, 1998). Organizations offering flexible career paths with family-supportive policies available to all employees and dual career paths with option to either prioritize caree, or balance career and family were perceived as significantly more attractive than those offering only traditional career path (Carless & Wintle, 2007). Employers who had

instituted flexible sick leave and childcare referral services experienced significant decreases in turnover among all employees (Baughman, DiNardi, & Holtz-Eakin, 2003). Lack of access to work-life practices predicted turnover intentions among mangers (Bretz, Boudreau, & Judge, 1994). Regardless of actual use of work-life practices, the availability of organizational resources such as flexible working hours has been linked to job satisfaction and organizational commitment for female employees and all employees with family responsibilities (Scandura & Lankau, 1997). Similarly, independent of actual use of work-life balance practices or policies, the presence of flexible working hours practices and childcare assistance was associated with employees' loyalty for those with family responsibilities (Roehling, Roehling, & Moen, 2001).

The aim of this paper is to examine whether workplace social support is positively related to an individual's work-life balance. Workplace social support is defined as the degree to which individuals perceive that their well-being is valued by workplace sources, such as supervisors and the broader organization in which they are embedded (Kossek, Pichler, Bodner & Hammer, 2011). Kossek et al.(2011) suggested workplace social support negatively affects work-to-family conflict. Thus, this research attempts to find out the underlying mechanism between workplace social support and work-life balance. This research tries to analyze how an individual perception of support from his or her organization affects indirectly employees' work-life balance via role conflict. Work-life balance or work-family balance is improved by ensuring that conflicting identities are physically, temporarily, or psychologically separate (Allen, Wilder & Atkinson, 1983; Lobel, 1991). Separating identities are translated into balancing roles between work domain and life or family domain. So this paper tries to examine how role conflict mediates the relationship between workplace social support and work-life balance. In addition, this paper attempts to seek effects of

organizational identification on the relationship between workplace social support and work-life balance. Hall, Schneider & Nygren (1970) defined organizational identification as the process by which the goals of the organization and those of the individual become increasingly integrated and congruent and Patchen (1970) defined it as shared characteristics, loyalty, and solidarity. Because organizational identification is translated into perceived oneness with the organization he or she embedded, this paper attempts to examine the effects of an individual's organizational identification on the relationship between workplace social support and work-life balance. As moderated mediation framework, one of the purposes is to seek whether organizational identification significantly moderates the mediated relationship between workplace social support and work-life balance through role conflict.

Theoretical Development and Hypothesis

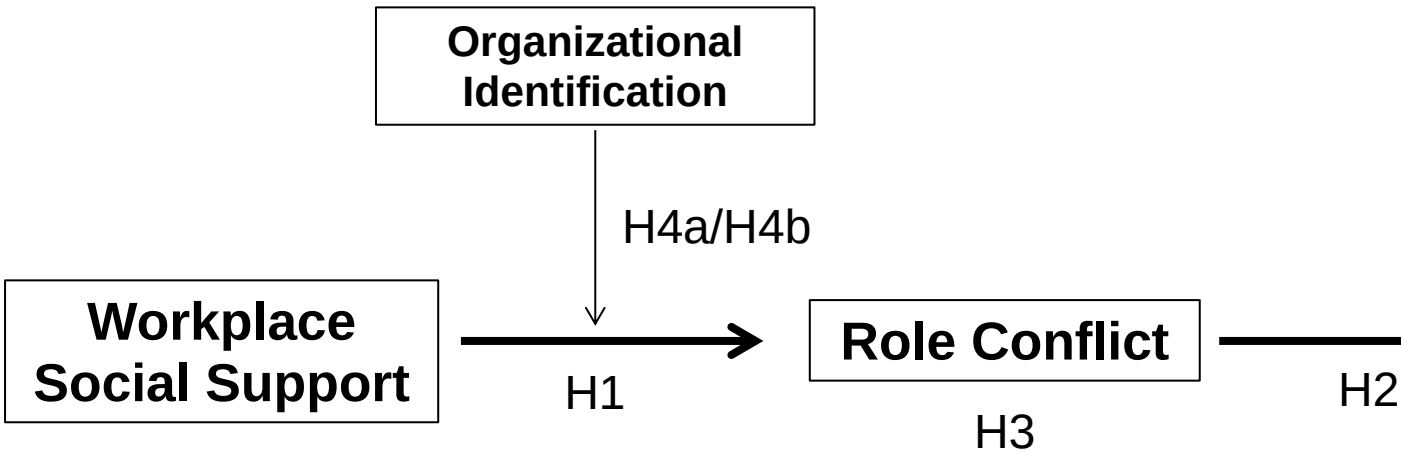

Figure 1. The proposed conceptual model

Workplace social support

Social support is defined as information leading the subject to believe that he is cared

for, loved, and esteemed and a member of a network of mutual obligation (Cobb, 1976) and as an interpersonal transaction that involves emotional concern, instrumental aid, information, or appraisal (House, 1981; Carlson & Perrewe, 1999). Derived from social support, Kossek et al. (2011) defined workplace social support as the degree to which individuals perceive that their well-being is valued by workplace sources, such as supervisors and the broader organization in which they are embedded. According to Kossek et al. (2001), workplace social support has multiple sources, such as supervisors, coworkers, and employing organizations. In addition, they distinguished workplace social support by different types of support such as "content general" or "content specific". General work support is the degree to which employees perceive that supervisors or employers care about their global well-being on the job through providing positive social interaction or resources (Kossek et al., 2011). Also, there are two types of social support, such as work-related social support and non-work social support (Carlson & Perrewe, 1999). Work-related social support could be a supportive supervisor or a number of sources from the organization. On the other hand, supportive social networks in the non-work domain could be such as family domain support. This research determines workplace social support as "content general" and work-related social support.

Role Conflict

According to Rizzo, House, & Lirtzman (1970), role conflict is defined in terms of the dimensions of congruency-incongruency or compatibility-incompatibility in the requirements of the role, where congruency or compatibility is judged relative to a set of standards or conditions which impinge upon role performance. It results when the worker is subjected to inconsistent expectations as a result of conflicting demands from multiple roles

(e.g., worker, team leader, parent), incompatible requirements of a single job, and incompatibility between what the worker is required to do and his or her values (Daft & Noe, 2001; Ghorpade, Lackritz, & Singh, 2011). Thus, role conflict is derived from role strain and time demands in multiple domains.

In the organizations, if an individual perceive that his or her supervisor or broader organization care about their well-being and provide positive social interaction or resource (Kossek et al., 2011), their time demands or role strain could be mitigated rather than others who perceive low workplace social support. This kind of social support had a direct effect on increasing perceived control, as well as reducing work-family conflict (Thomas & Ganster, 1995).

The basic tenet of conservation resources theory (Hobfoll, 1989) is that individuals strive to obtain, retain, protect, and foster those things that they have. In this theory, resource is explained as what they have. Resources are delineated into their object, condition, personal characteristics, and energy sources which are time, money and knowledge they allowing one to acquire other resources (Hobfoll, 1989). Thus, according to the theory, the experience of stress is caused when they perceive loss of their resources or the threat of such a loss. In this context, if an employee perceives that his or her supervisors or organization care about their well-being or provide positive resources, incompatibility in the requirements of the role is attenuated and loss of resources is decreased. Therefore, it is expected that workplace social support would be negatively related to role conflict.

Hypothesis 1: Workplace social support will be negatively associated with role conflict.

Work-Life Balance

As the number of women employees grew, working female employees with family responsibilities and dual earner families were focused on the ‘work-family’, ‘family-friendly’, or ‘work-life’ research (Lewis & Cooper, 1999; Lewis, Gambles & Rapoport, 2007). According to Allen, Wilder, & Atkinson (1983) and Lobel (1991), work-life balance may achieve by ensuring that conflicting identities are physically, temporally, or psychologically separated or by applying consistent personal values across both identities. By separating identities from multiple domains, work-life balance could be achieved. However, the recent working environment is more intensified. In addition, the working environment causes feeling of pressures, lack of time (Gambles, Lewis, & Rapport, 2006; Lewis et al., 2007) and work-life imbalance. That is, being balancing between domains become more difficult. As mentioned above, incompatibility in the requirements of the role by conflicting identities could be negatively associated with work-life balance.

According to capacity theory (Kahneman, 1973), there is a human limitation on the ability to respond to multiple stimuli or activities simultaneously. That is, total amount of attention that people can devote to different tasks is limited. Since demanding roles and time demands between multiple domains can act as multiple stimuli or activities and an individual’s attention capacity is limited, role conflict or strain could negatively affect an individual’s work-life balance. Also, resource conservation theory (Hobfoll, 1989) can explain that if an individual perceive loss or their resources or the threat of such a loss because of role conflict, it cause the experience of stress between two domains, family domain, and work domain and then it decrease work-life balance. As individuals have source

of role conflict in domains, they often cause interference in a competing domain and result in work-family conflict (Carlson & Perrewe, 1999).

It is also explained as spillover and crossover theory. Spillover is a within-person across domains transmission of strain from one area of life to another (Bakker, Westman & Emmerik, 2009). For example, worker may experience a strain-based conflict (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985), when confronted with something unfair and upsetting that happened during the day at work, about which he or she cannot stop thinking at home. In the workplace, role conflicts or role strain could hinder work-life balance or lead to work-life conflicts. In contrast, crossover is similar but distinct from spillover in that spillover is intra-individual transmission of stressors or strain but crossover is a dyadic, that is, inter-individual transmission of stressors or strain (Westman, 2001; Bakker et al., 2009). According to Westman (2001), stressful job demands have a negative impact on the wellbeing of the partner because of the sharing of another person's emotional state. Role conflict employees perceive could be a stress and then this stress or strain negatively affects partner's emotional state. Therefore, it is expected that role conflict would be negatively related to work-life balance.

Hypothesis 2: Role conflict will be negatively associated with work-life balance.

Hypothesis 1 predicts a negative relationship between workplace social support and role conflict, and Hypothesis 2 also predicts negative relationship between role conflicts and work-life balance. Together, these hypotheses specify a model in which workplace social support indirectly improve work-life balance by decreasing role conflict. That is, favorable

workplace social support elicits low role conflict, in turn, improving and increasing employees' work-life balance. Accordingly, this paper anticipates the lower role conflict mediates the relationship between workplace social support and work-life balance.

Hypothesis 3: Role conflict will mediate the relationship between workplace social support and work-life balance.

Organizational Identification

Scholars defined organizational identification as "the process by which the goals of the organization and those of the individual become increasingly integrated and congruent" (Hall et al., 1970), as "shared characteristics, loyalty, and solidarity" (Patchen, 1970), and "the perception of oneness with or belongingness to some human aggregate (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). If someone belongs to multiple domains, his or her social identity is likely to consist of mixture of identities (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). As mentioned above, however, work-life balance is satisfaction and good functioning at work and at home with a minimum or role conflict and it is achieved by ensuring that conflicting identities are physically, temporally, and psychologically separate (Allen et al., 1983; Lobel, 1991). The more demanding roles an individual have to perform, the more role conflicts derived from amalgam of identities from multiple domains. Although employees perceive that their boss or broader organizations care about or set a high value on their well-being, keeping balance between work and family domain is more difficult when the degree of organizational identification is high rather than low organizational identification. According to work-family border theory (Clark, 2000), people are daily boarder-crosser between the domains, 'work'

and ‘family’. The two domains constitute different spheres which influence each other physical, temporal and boarders are lines of demarcation between domains. One of the Clark’s (2000) propositions, “Border-crossers whose domain members show high commitment to them will have higher work-family balance than border-crossers whose domain members have shown low commitment to them”. Mowday, Steers, & Porter (1979) defined commitment as “the strength of an individual’s identification with an involvement in a particular organization”. That is, it is explained that the high levels of organizational identification is high commitment. So, if someone is highly organizational identified, he or she would attach more importance to organization he or she embedded than their family or life. In addition, previous research found when an individual is highly identified with more than one role and tries to fill both roles at once, conflict results and balance is threatened (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Hall, 1972). Therefore, I hypothesize a strong negative relationship between workplace social support and role conflict for individuals who low levels of organizational identification, whereas I predict a weak negative relationship between workplace social support and role conflict for an individual who are highly organizational identified.

Hypothesis 4a: The inverse relationship between workplace social support and role conflict will be weaker under high organizational identification than under low organizational identification. Specifically, when organizational identification is high, the negative effects of workplace social support on role conflict will be lower than when organizational identification is low.

Assuming individuals' organizational identification moderates the association between role conflict and work-life balance, it is also likely that an individual' organizational identification will conditionally influence the strength of the indirect relationship between workplace social support and work-life balance. Because I predict a weak (strong) negative relationship between workplace social support and role conflict when organizational identification is high (low), I expect the following,

Hypothesis 4b: Organizational identification will moderate the indirect effect of workplace social support on work-life balance via role conflict. Specifically, negative role conflict will mediate the indirect effect when organizational identification is high but not when it is low.

Expected Results

Consistent with expectations, workplace social support will be negatively related to role conflict. Results will indicate that role conflict is negatively associated with work-life balance.

Tests of Mediation

Hypothesis 3(mediation) will be supported. Supporting Hypothesis 1, workplace social support is negatively associated with role conflict. Also, in support of Hypothesis 2, the negative relationship between role conflict and work-life balance, controlling for workplace social support, was supported. And, workplace social support will be found to have an indirect effect on work-life balance. This indirect effect will be positive, as we hypothesized.

Tests of Moderated Mediation

We predicted that the inverse relationship between workplace social support and role conflict would be weaker when organizational identification is high than when low organizational identification. The slope of the relationship between workplace social support and role conflict will relatively weak and negative for an individual high organizational identification, whereas the slope was relatively strong for an individual low organizational identification.

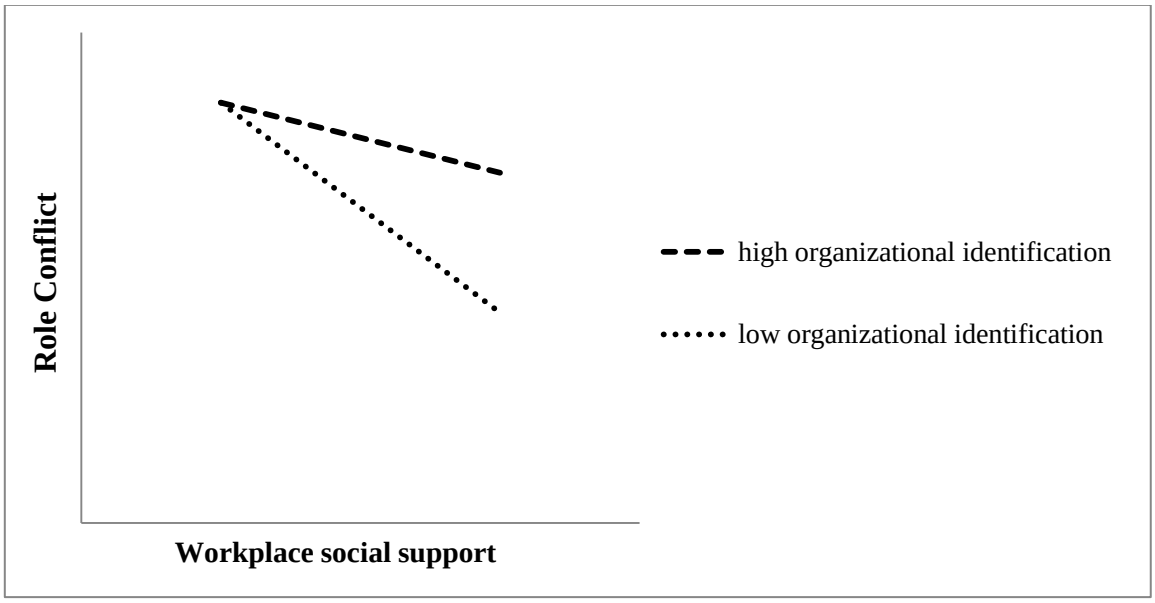

Figure 2. Expected ploting simple slopes

Discussion

This study examined the influence of workplace social support as an individual's perception. As an integrated conceptual scheme, this research is more complicate rather than

prior research which analyzed the effects of each practice or bundles of practice on work-life balance. I predicted role conflict as a mediating variable between workplace social support and work-life balance and organizational identification can attenuate workplace social support-work-life balance relationship. Hypothesized moderated mediation model will demonstrate that the degree of the indirect effect is contingent on organizational identification. If hypotheses are supported, I believe these results would contribute to the literature by extending prior findings in several ways. First of all, finding of Kossek et al. (2011) was that workplace social support is negatively related to work-life conflict. In this research, by extending prior study underlying mechanism between workplace social support and work-life balance was examined. That role conflict mediates workplace social support and work-life balance would be a central contributing point. In addition, prior research has focused on the practices which attract new members and reduce work-life conflict among existing employees (Beauregard & Henry, 2009). However, this study focused on the effects of an individual perception (workplace social support) not each practice or bundles of practices on work-life balance. How perceive organizational support from supervisor or broader organization could be related to work-life balance. Finally, as individual-level study, workplace social support, role conflict and work-life balance are all individual's perception. So as to avoid common method variance, work-life balance is rated by partner or spouse of survey participants. The obvious strategy to avoid same-source bias is using other sources of information for some of the key measure (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). Since partners or spouses rated participants' work-life balance, it could be more rigorous and objective measurement.

In spite of several contributions, this study also has some limitation. This paper explained work-life balance as balancing roles between multiple domains. Actually, these

domains could not be rigorously separated. For example, a man takes family responsibilities. He is salesman at the same time he is a prospective writer. He earns money, takes responsibility and continues writing to be a writer. In his situation, his work-life balance could be different from ordinary breadwinner. Also, the degree of overlapped domain could be contingent on occupation, duty, or job. In this case, because border is not salient, work-family border theory (Clark, 2000) could be inappropriate.

Because this study explained workplace social support is positively related to work-life balance via role conflict, questions will arise. How increase workplace social support? Although managers or organizations think they do their best, employees could not recognize their support. Scandura & Lankau (1997) found that regardless of actual use of work-life practice, the availability of organizational resources has been linked to job satisfaction and organizational commitment for female employees and all employees with family responsibilities. Independent of presence of practices, employees could trust their organization when it will offer their resources for employees. That is, supportive climate or sincere relationship between organizations and employees could be better strategy than various practices or bundles.

It would be worthwhile to consider other antecedents and boundary condition such as family-related variable. As an individual perception, individual personality, needs, and pursuing value could be interesting antecedents to work-life balance. Also, family or non-work situation and factors could conditionally moderate the relationship through spillover or crossover theory. In addition, organizational climate and nationality also could provide more extending research. For example, although workplace social support is high, collectivistic climate could hinder cross borders from separating domains and cross between domains.

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