

The impact of Telecommuting on Work – Family Balance: Mindfulness and Family Supportive Supervisory Behaviour

Edward Rebecca

*Department of Human Resource Management, Faculty of Commerce and Management Studies,
University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka.*

**Postgraduate Institute of Management, University of Sri Jayewardenepura, Sri Lanka.*

ABSTRACT

Purpose: The COVID-19 epidemic and recent global crises have altered the entire world, requiring many professionals to telecommute from home. Women telecommuters face a bigger struggle in managing work and family compared to men, since telecommuters lack physical borders and work within psychologically created borders. Although the prevailing literature has been highlighting this concern, there is a dearth in the literature on the manner in what factors causes to managing psychological borders. Addressing this gap, this study explores the impact of telecommuting on the work-family balance. Further, mediating effect of the bi-directional nature of work-family conflict, and the moderating impact of mindfulness and family-supportive supervisory behaviour will be empirically tested with the support of the Work – Family Border Theory and the Social Support Theory.

Design/Methodology: The research adopted a cross-sectional survey to conduct quantitative research on a sample of 350 women telecommuters in the information technology (IT) industry in Sri Lanka. A sample of women telecommuters was selected using a method of purposeful sampling, and a self-administered questionnaire was used to collect the data, which was then analysed using the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) and AMOS.

Findings: The empirical findings of the current study indicate that telecommuting has a statistically significant detrimental influence on balancing both work and family domains. The mindfulness trait was found to impact telecommuters' ability to manage work positively–family balance through work to family conflict and family to work conflict. In addition, it was found that family supportive supervisory behaviour (FSSB) plays a positive influenceable role in telecommuting and conflicts between work and family to work. Also, it has been found that mediating impact of work to family conflict is higher than the impact of family to work conflict on balancing work – family balance. In addition, it was discovered that FSSB has a beneficial influencing function between telecommuting and bi – directional way of work – family conflict.

Theoretical implications: The study contributes to the existing literature by incorporating the trait of mindfulness as moderator of managing psychological borders when working from home as a telecommuter. In addition, according to the Social Support Theory, the beneficial moderating impact of family supportive supervisory behaviour (FSSB) on the relationship between work– family balance and bi-directional nature of work – family conflicts have been identified. Further, through this study,

it has been found that work to family conflict has a greater impact on the relationship between telecommuting and work-family balance than family to work conflict.

Managerial implications: This implies the importance of developing mindfulness and suggests that organisations, training institutions, and counselors can focus on strengthening this trait by implementing various personality training programmes since mindfulness is not innate. Further, management can follow family supportive supervisory behaviour to achieve a work-family balance while performing duties from home by minimising the consequences of conflicts of work to family and family to work. Furthermore, organisations should introduce and implement new policies and procedures pertaining to this expanding flexible working system, as existing policies and working scheduling practices may be outdated or were developed decades ago based on employee beliefs and face-to-face supervision systems.

Originality/Value: This study reveals the impact of telecommuting on work-family balance and, conceptualised and proposed the moderating role played by the trait of mindfulness in managing psychological borders to validate Work-Family Border Theory further. Further, this study asserts that FSSB moderates the impact of telecommuting on bi-directional nature of the conflicts which causes work – family imbalance.

Keywords: Telecommuting, Work-family balance, Work to family conflict, Family to work conflict, Family supportive supervisory behaviour, Mindfulness.