Telecommuting on Women's Work-Family Balance through Work-Family Conflicts

Mindfulness

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Abstract: This study draws on the work-family border theory to examine the impact of telecommuting on work-family balance through work-family conflicts and managing psychological borders. Since telecommuters lack physical boundaries and work within psychologically created borders, it is more challenging for women telecommuters to balance work and family responsibilities while working from home as telecommuters. Although available literature has illuminated this concern, there is a dearth of literature on managing psychological borders. Addressing this gap, this study explores the impact of telecommuting on work-family balance (WFB) through the bi-directional nature of the mediating effect of work-family conflict and the moderating impact of mindfulness, which will be empirically tested. The research adopted a cross-sectional survey strategy to conduct quantitative research on women telecommuters in the information technology industry in Sri Lanka. Interestingly, the findings of this study reveal that telecommuting has an impact on WFB, and that the trait of mindfulness was found to impact women telecommuters' WFB significantly. The study contributes to the existing literature by incorporating mindfulness as a moderator and highlights the importance of developing the trait of mindfulness, since it is not innate in most people.

Keywords: Telecommuting, Women, Work-family balance, Work-family conflict, Mindfulness

Introduction

With the increasing number of telecommuters globally (Golden *et al.*, 2006), telecommuting has become a pervasive alternative work mode that permits employees to be spread across remote sites (Auryn & Marion, 2022; Gajendran & Harrison, 2007; Leung & Zhang, 2017; Priyashantha *et al.*, 2022a). In the past, most computer-based work performed by telecommuters was regular, clerical tasks done by a few people. However, as information technology has advanced, telecommuters' ranks have been expanded by a considerable number of professional-level workers who perform a part of their responsibilities outside the company's physical boundaries, using information technology as their primary tool for operation and communication (Bailey & Kurland, 2002; Wessels *et al.*, 2019). Telecommuting, also called homework, remote work, virtual work, telework, or distributed work, entails working a portion of the time away from the conventional workplace, frequently from home, and communicating through computer technology (Bailey & Kurland, 2002; Baruch, 2001). Moreover, many employees allocate extra working hours to work on office-related activities from home rather than working specific hours at the office (Toniolo-Barrios & Pitt, 2021).

Sri Lanka is a middle-level-income country in South Asia, with a 52% female population (Department of Census and Statistics, 2021). Of the 8.9 million economically active population, 65.7% are men, and 34.3% are women (Department of Census and Statistics, 2021). However, substantial progress has been made in introducing more women into male-dominated industries, such as the automobile, transportation, and logistics. In many fields, including law, medicine, banking, finance, ICT, and education, women have contributed substantially to the development of the country. (Twigg & Arunasalam, 2023). In addition, Sri Lankan labour laws and policies have been revised to reduce obstacles to women's workforce participation. In addition, the nation's annual GDP is projected to increase by 14% ($20 billion) by 2025 due to increased female labour-force participation. (Arudpragasam, 2022).

When women entered the workforce in more significant numbers (Kailasapathy & Jayakody, 2018), balancing Work and Family became a challenge; and essential when they perform their duties at home (Kulatunga, 2020). According to a survey conducted among 15 leading Sri Lankan companies, including banking, IT, and finance, women who work from home as telecommuters and have additional family-related responsibilities confront difficulty balancing work and family obligations. Therefore, the survey findings highlight that the bi-directional nature of the work-family conflict (work to family and family to work) causes the work-family imbalance (Pathirana, 2020), and this has become a challenge for women telecommuters compared to men (Cook, 2021; Dissanayake, 2017; Jyothi & Jyothi, 2012; Mousa & Alas, 2016; Pathirana, 2020).

Studies on the impact of telecommuting on work-family balance have yielded contradictory findings. Some researchers have claimed that telecommuting enables individuals to balance the competing needs of work and family, minimizing conflicts (Rau & Hyland, 2002; Tremblay, 2002). Other scholars have contended that it creates conflict as a result of increased work and family obligations arising from greater proximity and accessibility (Bailey & Kurland, 2002; Golden *et al.*, 2006; Novianti & Roz, 2020). The primary challenge to telecommuting is blurring the boundaries between work and family (Belzunegui-Eraso & Erro-Garces, 2020; Pattnaik & Jena, 2020; Toniolo-Barrios & Pitt, 2021). Consequently, to prevent conflicts between work and family, telecommuters must be able to manage psychological borders. To address this problem, the present study examines the impact of telecommuting on work-family balance to comprehend how psychological boundaries can be managed when working as a telecommuter.

According to the work-family border theory (WFBT), telecommuters have no physical borders, and the concept of borders is no longer applicable (Clark, 2000; Leung & Zhang, 2017). This creates a borderless and less time-consuming experience for telecommuting employees. WFBT conceptualizes work and family as two distinct but interactive domains, each with its own rules, emotions, values, behaviours, and thoughts (Clark, 2000). According to the WFBT, telecommuters must adhere to psychological boundaries. Psychological borders are rules formed by individuals that specify when specific ways of thinking, behaviours, and emotions are appropriate for one domain but inappropriate for another (Clark, 2000; Karassvidou & Glaveli, 2015). Borders demarcate the separation between work and family, allowing an individual to concentrate more on the domain that is now stronger (Karassvidou & Glaveli, 2015). Although this theory's central emphasis is on the borders between the work and family domains, it has yet to explain how the psychological borders required for achieving the desired balance between work and family are to be managed. This has also been identified as the theoretical gap of the present study.

The association between telecommuting and work-family balance has been highlighted in the recent literature (Bailey & Kurland, 2002; Golden *et al.*, 2006; Greenhaus *et al.*, 2006; Leung & Zhang, 2017). Also, telecommuting and its impact have been studied in relation to work-family conflict (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007; Golden *et al.*, 2006) as one concept. Further, it has been discovered that, when working from home, telecommuters face conflicts between work and family, as questions on these conflicts may entail challenges related to the roles of the individual (Soares *et al.*, 2022). Therefore, this situation will cause the creation of an imbalance between work and family (Mustafa & Gold, 2013). Hence, work to family conflict and family to work conflict have mediated the relationship between telecommuting and work-family balance. Moreover, only a few researchers have studied the impact of telecommuting in

relation to work to family conflict (Vander Elst *et al.*, 2017; Golden, 2006; Hornung & Glaser, 2009), while some have stated that work has a more negative effect on family-related activities than the family has on work-related activities (Darcy & Mccarthy, 2007). Therefore, many researchers have focused only on telecommuting and its impact on work to family conflict and reported more frequently on work to family conflict than on family to work conflict (Golden, 2006).

Against the backdrop of increased research attention on telecommuting and the work-family balance construct (Belzunegui-Eraso & Erro-Garces, 2020; Pattnaik & Jena, 2020), the current study sought to make two significant contributions. First, this paper addresses the lacuna in empirical studies examining the impact of telecommuting on work-family balance through the bi-directional nature of work-family conflicts, since the lack of empirical evidence to date validates Clark's (2000) work-family border theory. Second, the study makes a significant theoretical contribution by examining the moderating impact of mindfulness and the bi-directional nature of the mediating roles of work-family conflicts to explain the impact of telecommuting on work-family balance in the extant literature. Further, this study emphasises the importance of managing psychological borders that supports the work-family balance of telecommuters. Therefore, the current study addresses the lacuna in empirical findings and theoretical explanations, building on the aforesaid theory to examine the work-family balance of women telecommuters in Sri Lanka.

The rest of this paper is structured as follows: in the subsequent sections, the existing literature related to work-family balance, the bi-directional nature of work-family conflicts, and mindfulness is reviewed, and hypotheses are advanced, followed by the conceptual framework. Next, the research methodology is presented since the study was undertaken to identify the method of managing psychological borders while working from home. The data analysis, the findings, and the implications follow this. Finally, limitations and reflections for further research and the concluding remarks are presented.

Hypotheses & Conceptual Framework

The extent of telecommuting and work to family conflict

With the development of technology, telecommuting has become a widespread alternative mode of employment. Although telecommuting is often thought of as a means to balance work and family life better (Toniolo-Barrios & Pitt, 2021), it frequently exacerbates work-family conflict (Bailey & Kurland, 2002). Since teleworkers perform their duties from home, research has shown that telecommuting has sometimes exacerbated work-family conflicts. (Vander Elst *et al.*, 2017; Golden, 2006). The most fundamental challenge of telecommuting is the blurring

of work and family borders. After completing their office domain at home, women must also attend to their family domain. There is a requirement for psychological detachment between work at home and home at work, since there are no physical or temporal borders between these two domains (Vander Elst *et al.*, 2017). Therefore, the most incredible difficulty of working from home is not being able to disconnect after office hours and working more hours (Toniolo-Barrios & Pitt, 2021). Thus, the following hypothesis is advanced based on theoretical reasoning and empirical evidence:

H1:   The extent of telecommuting impacts work to family conflict.

The extent of telecommuting and family to work conflict

Telecommuting allows employees to manage their family demands while working from home. Although better able to manage family needs through working from home by allocating time and emotional energy saved, telecommuters also face the challenge of increasing pressure, some of which is self-imposed, and more involvement in the family role that could interfere with work (Golden *et al.*, 2006). For example, telecommuters may take the family responsibilities of home care to play a more significant role in child-caring activities. For example, they may feel that, rather than sending their family to medical appointments, they should accompany the family member to the meeting to provide emotional support, since they have blurred their office roles through telecommuting. Because of involvement in these family activities, telecommuters may increasingly encroach upon work time for family work because of not having boundaries separating the work and family domains (Ashforth *et al.*, 2000) and making themselves more accessible to becoming involved in family needs. Further, it has been found that family members are more inclined to disturb teleworkers when they perform their duties from home (Bailey & Kurland, 2002). Thus, the following hypothesis is advanced based on theoretical reasoning and empirical evidence:

H2: The extent of telecommuting impacts family to work conflict

Work to family conflict and work-family balance

WFC (Work to Family Conflict) causes work-family imbalance (Allen *et al.*, 2000; Leung & Zhang, 2017). When work activities interfere with family activities, it causes a role imbalance in both domains, and, as a result, an individual faces the problems of work-family imbalance. On the other hand, balanced involvement in the work and family domains will reduce work to family conflict (Allen *et al.*, 2000). Work to family conflict arises when an individual allocates more time to work-related activities, which causes conflicts with family-related activities and demands. Therefore, when more time is given to work-related tasks, there will be a resultant imbalance between work and family (Madsen, 2011). Further, this situation can be very

demanding for an individual, rushing through urgent activities and realigning a schedule to handle the opposing demands of family-related activities (Ramya *et al.*, 2022). In this situation, an individual will likely find it challenging to establish a satisfying balance between work and family (Soomro *et al.*, 2018). Thus, the following hypothesis is advanced based on theoretical reasoning and empirical evidence:

H3: Work to family conflict impacts work-family balance.

Family to work conflict and work-family balance

When telecommuters perform their office-related work from home, time spent in the family role becomes insufficient due to increased work burdens (Greenhaus *et al.*, 2003). It has been mentioned that, when telecommuters work from home, they do not have any physical borders, and family members can enter the working place. Thus, there might be the possibility of creating a disturbance (Clark, 2000), and a negative situation may lead to work-family imbalance (Boyar *et al.*, 2005).

Previous studies have found that FWC (Family to Work Conflict) could create adverse outcomes in work-family domains and cause negative emotional health, lack of physical wellbeing, and unsatisfactory lifestyles (Boyar *et al.*, 2005). Accordingly, FWC can reduce the balance between work and family. For example, an individual's family-related issues spilling over into the work realm can cause that employee to waste time at work and reduce concentration on work-related activities (Hammer *et al.*, 2011). As a result, that individual must realign his/her schedule to meet the opposing demands arising from family-related activities (Bobbio *et al.*, 2022). Further, Bhende *et al.* (2020) found that, when family activities interfere with work, there is a disturbance in objectives, demands, and thoughts on work matters. This gives rise to consequent challenges for employees. Thus, the following hypothesis is advanced based on theoretical reasoning and empirical evidence:

H4: Family to work conflict impacts work-family balance.

The mediating impact of work to family conflict and family to work conflict

When telecommuters work from home, work and family obligations can interfere due to the lack of physical boundaries that telecommuting creates (Clark, 2000). Work-family conflict significantly impacts the development of an imbalance between the work and family domains, according to Frone *et al.* (1992). Since work and family objectives and cultures are unique (Clark, 2000), employees' personal lives may impact their work culture when they work from home. Similarly, the challenges experienced at work may affect family-related activities (Greenhaus *et al.*, 2003). Although working long hours helps complete work-related activities,

it decreases family time (Bobbio *et al.*, 2022). On the other hand, it has been found that working from home causes a balance between the work and family spheres while fulfilling family responsibilities (Dissanayake, 2017). Therefore, balancing family and work obligations while working from home has positive and negative implications. Thus, the following hypotheses are supported by both theoretical reasoning and empirical evidence:

H5:   WFC mediates the relationship between the extent of telecommuting and work-family balance.

H6:   FWC mediates the relationship between the extent of telecommuting and work-family balance.

The moderating impact of mindfulness on the relationships between work-family balance and conflicts from work to family and family to work

Generally, mindfulness is defined as being aware of and paying attention to whatever is occurring in the current moment (thoughts, bodily sensations, surroundings) without judging them (Brown & Ryan, 2003). Mindfulness enables individuals to perceive what is occurring within and around them in the present moment without attaching meaning to what is observed (Shapiro *et al.*, 2006). Nearly everyone has the potential to be aware of and pay attention to the present moment, which is a defining attribute of mindfulness (Brown & Ryan, 2003; Mesmer-magnus *et al.*, 2017). However, individuals differ in their overall propensity or willingness to be mindful; mindfulness is neither a transient nor an individual quality (Brown & Ryan, 2003; Mesmer-magnus *et al.*, 2017). The blending of work and personal life makes it increasingly challenging for many individuals to unplug and disconnect from their work (Toniolo-Barrios & Pitt, 2021). Therefore, individuals performing office work from home may need help to avoid thinking about work after hours and when engaged in family-related activities. Psychological detachment is the ability to disconnect from work-related concerns during family and family-related activities during office time (Firoozabadi *et al.*, 2018). The more a person can separate psychologically from work and family outside work hours, the better he or she will feel, leading to a work-family balance (Park & Nam, 2020). Therefore, employees derive more significant advantages from their family and work time if they can disengage from their office and family work. The following assumptions are therefore offered based on theoretical logic and empirical evidence:

H7:   Mindfulness moderates the relationship between work to family conflict and work-family balance.

H8:   Mindfulness moderates the relationship between family to work conflict and work-family balance.

Telecommuting and work-family balance

Telecommuting has several advantages (Irawanto *et al.*, 2021; Nakrosiene *et al.*, 2019), yet some researchers have highlighted that telecommuting can have detrimental effects on balancing work and family life as well (Novianti & Roz, 2020; Wessels *et al.*, 2019). According to Clark (2000), telecommuting has the potential to blur the boundaries between work and family, which could lead to an increase in issues at family and at work and an imbalance between work and family (Allen *et al.*, 2015; Gajendran & Harrison, 2007; Onyemaechi *et al.*, 2018). However, Auryn & Marion (2022) stated that several family-related problems are resolved due to the new telecommuting system, and several researchers have mentioned (Rau & Hyland, 2002; Sarbu, 2018; Tremblay, 2002) that telecommuting reduces the imbalance between work and family. Therefore, the current study suggests the following hypothesis based on the findings:

> H9: Telecommuting impacts work-family balance.

Work-Family Border Theory (WFBT)

Work-family border theory (WFBT) conceptualizes "Work" and "Family" as two distinct, interactive domains. Clark (2000) explains in the WFBT that there are boundaries between work and family, which must be appropriately managed to achieve a desirable balance. Physical, temporal, and psychological boundaries define the beginning and end of work and family. Psychological borders are rules individuals create to decide when specific thought patterns, behaviours, and emotions are appropriate for one domain but inappropriate for another, allowing them to concentrate on the current, more robust domain (Karassvidou & Glaveli, 2015). When employees work from home, there are no physical borders, and they must manage activities in two domains (Clark, 2000). However, this theory has not explained individual factors related to managing psychological borders, and this omission is a notable gap in this theory.

Conceptual Framework of the Study

Figure 1 depicts the conceptual framework of the study based on the presented theory and hypotheses.

Methodology

The current research is categorized as a single, cross-sectional study in which data is collected and analyzed at a specific point in time. A positivist perspective has been adopted in adhering to the research onion (Saunders *et al.*, 2020). Initially, the study followed a deductive method

to identify the gaps by analyzing current theories and concepts. Thereafter, using the survey method, a self-administered questionnaire was used to collect data from respondents. In performing the research, a sample of 350 women telecommuters in the IT industry in Sri Lanka was collected using a method of purposive sampling, and the data were analyzed using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) and AMOS 23.0 software.
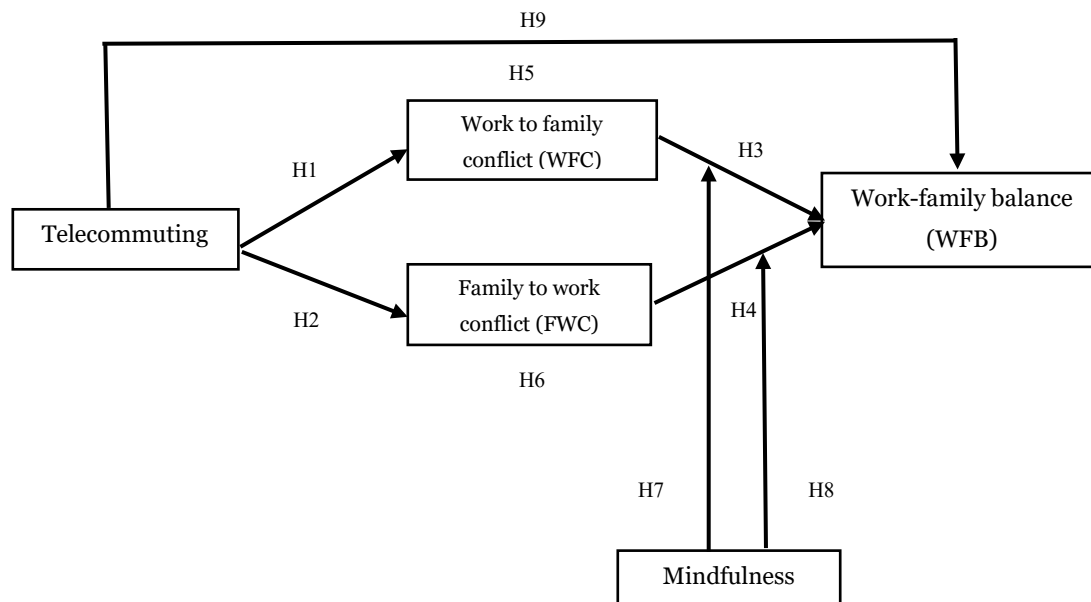

Figure 1. Conceptual framework of the study (Source: Author)

Study data overview

The study was conducted in information technology (IT), and women IT telecommuters were considered for this study, due to the performance gap observed for this study in the IT sector, where telecommuting is already in place. Therefore, the current study focused on women telecommuters in the IT industry. As a result, 380 respondents from the IT industry were selected, and 350 usable questionnaire responses were obtained, resulting in a 92% response rate. The sample comprises 35 (10%) managerial-level teleworkers, 186 (53.10%) non-managerial-level teleworkers, and 129 (36.7%) technical-level teleworkers. Therefore, the majority of the sample consists of non-management-level women teleworkers. Regarding the number of years teleworkers have been employed, 141 (40.3%) have 1-5 years of experience, 145 (41.4%) have 6-10 years of experience, and 64 (18.3%) have 11-15 years of experience.

Measurements

Work-Family Balance (WFB)

The construct of work-family balance was assessed using the most relevant and widely used scale in the literature, which was developed by Carlson *et al.* ([2009](#)). Six items were used to measure the construct, which was anchored on a seven-point Likert scale as in the original

scale. Sample items include: "I am able to negotiate and accomplish what is expected of me at work and in my family", "I do a good job of meeting the role expectations of critical people in my work and family life", and "People who are close to me would say that I do a good job of balancing work and family".

The extent of telecommuting

The extent of telecommuting was assessed using an item scale suggested by Vander Elst *et al.* (2017). It was measured using two items: "How many days a week do you, on average, work from home?" and "On a typical day, how many hours do you spend working from home?".

Work to Family Conflict (WFC)

The study used five items anchored on a five-point Likert scale adopted from Netemeyer *et al.* (1996) to measure the construct of work to family conflict. Sample items included: "The demands of my work interfere with my home and family life", "The amount of time my job takes up makes it difficult to fulfil family responsibilities", and "Things I want to do at home do not get done because of the demands my job puts on me".

Family to Work Conflict (FWC)

The construct of family to work was also measured using the scale adopted from Netemeyer *et al.* (1996). The study used five items anchored on a five-point Likert scale. Sample items included: "The demands of my family or spouse/partner interfere with work-related activities", "I have to put off doing things at work because of demands on my time at home", and "Things I want to do at work do not get done because of the demands of my family or spouse/partner".

Mindfulness

The construct of Mindfulness was assessed using the most relevant scale in the literature, which was developed by Brown and Ryan (2003). Fifteen items were used to measure the construct anchored on a seven-point Likert scale, as in the original scale. Sample items included: "I break or spill things because of carelessness, not paying attention, or thinking of something else", "I find it difficult to stay focused on what is happening in the present", and "I tend not to notice feelings of physical tension or discomfort until they grab my attention".

Presentation of data

First, Harman's single-factor test was conducted, and it was confirmed that no common method bias existed in the study. The first factor described by the analysis is 34.85%. Accordingly, the fact that the most significant factor explained less than 50% of the covariance reflected the reality that no single factor reported most of the covariance, and the absence of

common method bias in the current study was concluded. The multivariate assumptions were tested, and the appropriateness of the data for drawing valid conclusions was ensured. Cronbach's alpha was also calculated, and all the scales reported values above 0.8. According to the first-order measurement model, the data fit the model, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Indices of Goodness of Fit for the final model of measurement

Absolute fit					Incremental fit			Parsimony adjusted measures		
CMIN/DF	GFI	AGFI	RMR	RMSEA	IF	TLI	CFI	PRATIO	PNFI	PCFI
2.28	0.797	0.771	0.116	0.066	0.946	0.942	0.946	0.927	0.848	0.877

Source: Survey Data

Furthermore, the factor scores, average variance extracted (AVE), composite reliability (CR), and correlation versus square root of AVE were calculated and analyzed to establish the convergent and discriminant validities. The results of the descriptive statistics, reliability, and validity tests are given in Tables 2 and 3.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of the Variables of the Study

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Cronbach's Alpha	CR	AVE
WFC	3.118	1.079	0.932	0.934	0.738
FWC	3.138	0.833	0.943	0.951	0.797
WFB	3.738	1.772	0.977	0.978	0.880
Mindfulness	3.715	1.908	0.991	0.991	0.881

Source: Survey Data

Table 3: Correlation Matrix along with evidence for discriminant validity

Variables	WFC	FWC	WFB	M
WFC	0.738			
FWC	0.558	0.797		
WFB	0.880	0.591	0.880	
Mindfulness	0.764	0.520	0.817	0.881

Source: Survey Data

According to Saunders *et al.* (2020), the AVE for all constructs should exceed the SMC (Simple Matching Coefficient) between the construct and any other recognized discriminant validity. As indicated in Table 2, this criterion was used to assess the discriminant validity of the measures in this study. These findings indicate that the data can be used to run a structural model.

Structural model for direct relationships

Five hypotheses reflect direct relationships: the extent of telecommuting on WFC (H1), the extent of telecommuting on FWC (H2), WFC on WFB (H3), FWC on WFB (H4), and the extent of telecommuting on WFB (H9).

Structural model used to test the direct hypotheses

A structural model, depicted in Figure 2, was created to investigate the direct relationships.
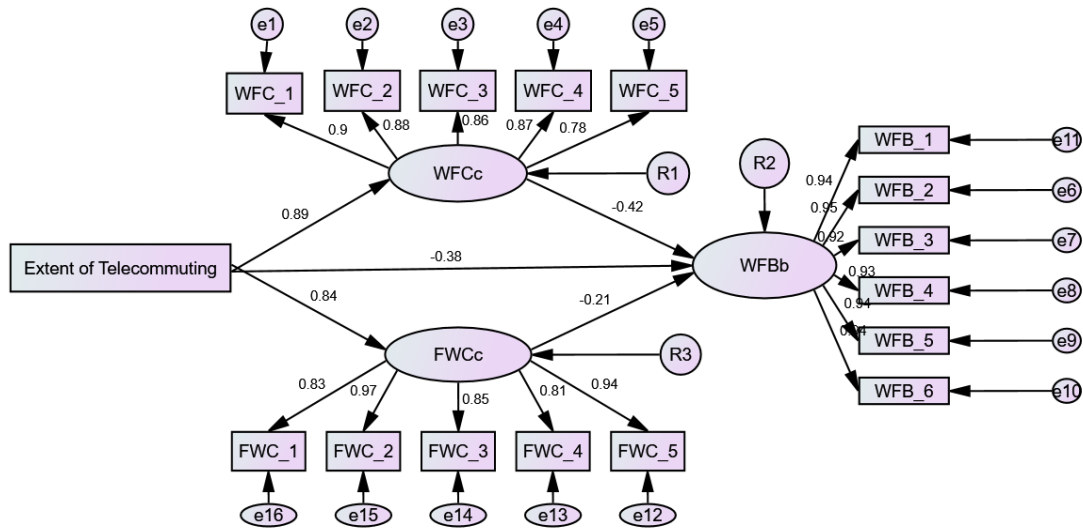

Figure 2. Structural Model for Direct Hypotheses (Source: Survey data)

The statistics associated with the five direct hypotheses of the study are shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Results of the five direct hypotheses

Path	Hypothesis	Beta value	P-value	Decision
Tele → WFB	H9: Telecommuting on work-family balance	-0.382	0.015	Supported
Tele → WFC	H1: Telecommuting on Work to family conflict	0.880	0.012	Supported
Tele → FWC	H2: Telecommuting on Family to work conflict	0.838	0.003	Supported
WFC → WFB	H3: Work to family conflict on work-family balance	-0.424	0.009	Supported
FWC → WFB	H4: Family to work conflict on work-family balance	-0.211	0.004	Supported

Source: Survey Data

The mediating effect of WFC

As shown in Figures 3 and 4, a structural model was developed to examine the mediating effect of WFC and FWC on the relationship between the extent of telecommuting and work-family balance.
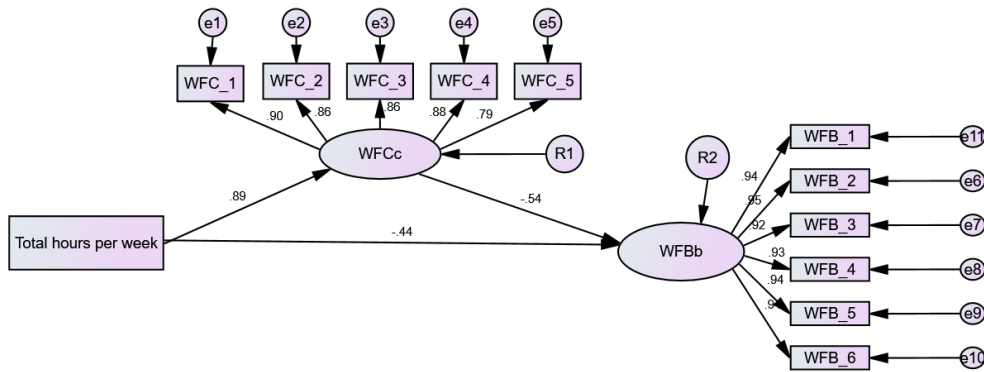
Figure 3. Mediation effect of WFC (Source: Survey data)
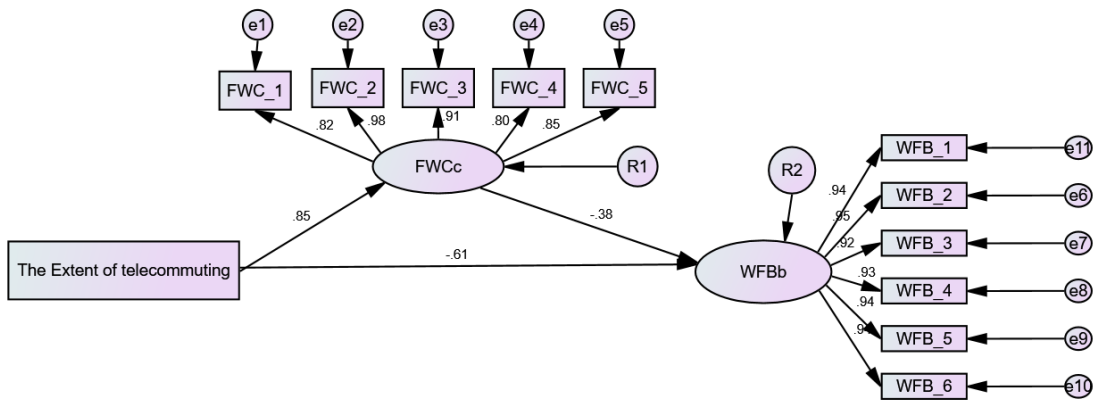
The mediating effect of FWC

Figure 4. Mediation effect of FWC (Source: Survey data)

Table 5 represents the summarized results of the indirect and direct path analysis reflecting the mediation analysis of WFC and FWC on the relationship between the extent of telecommuting and work-family balance.

Table 5: Bootstrap test for WFC and FWC

Variable	Direct path	Indirect path	Decision	Total effect
WFC				
Beta value	-0.444	-0.483	Partial mediation	Direct effect + Indirect effect (-0.927)
P value	0.007	0.010		
Decision	Accepted (p<0.1)	Accepted (p<0.1)		
FWC				
Beta value	-0.606	-0.321	Partial mediation	Direct effect + Indirect effect (-0.927)
P value	0.013	0.008		
Decision	Accepted (p<0.1)	Accepted (p<0.1)		

Source: Survey Data.

Moderating impact of mindfulness

As shown in Figure 5, a structural model was developed to examine the moderating impact of mindfulness on the relationship between WFC and work-family balance.
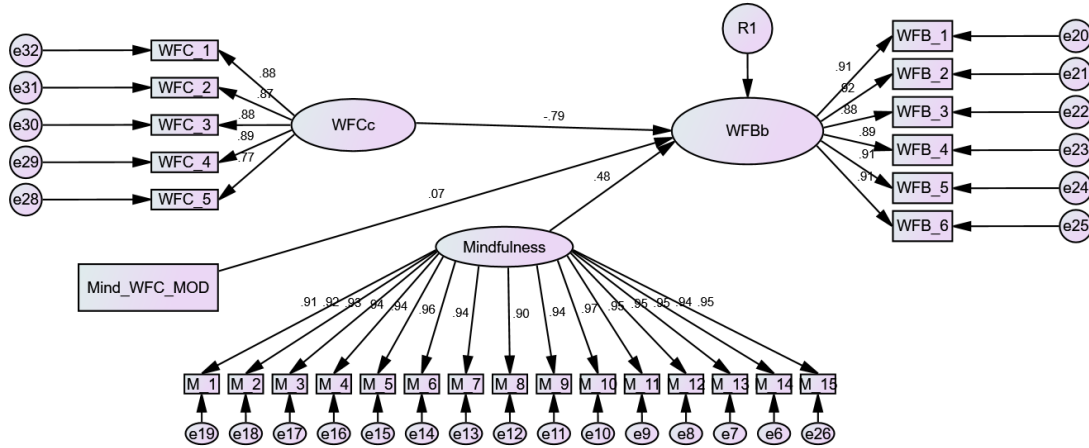

Figure 5. The moderating impact of Mindfulness on WFC and WFB (Source: Survey data)

As depicted in Figure 6, a structural model was developed to examine the moderating impact of mindfulness on the relationship between FWC and work-family balance
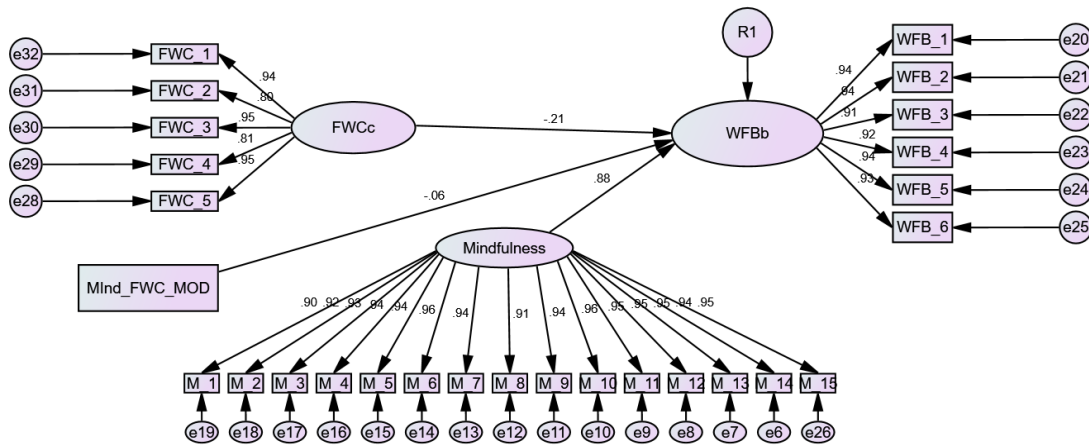

Figure 6: The moderating impact of Mindfulness on FWC and WFB (Source: Survey data)

The results of the bootstrap analysis for the trait of mindfulness with the work-family balance and conflicts from work to family and family to work are presented in Table 6.

Table 6. Summary of Bootstrap Test for Mindfulness

Path	Beta Value	P−value	Decision
Mindfulness moderates the relationship between WFC and WFB.	0.073	0.004	(P<0.1) Accepted
Mindfulness moderates the relationship between FWC and WFB	-0.064	0.010	(P<0.1) Accepted

Source: Survey Data.

Discussion

The findings of the current study reflect that, when working from home, there is an impact on women telecommuters' WFB. According to the WFBT, telecommuting creates WFC and FWC due to the absence of physical boundaries which separate the work and family domains (Voydanoff, 2005). Compared to men, women telecommuters confront difficulties balancing work and family responsibilities. Despite the fact that telecommuting is a beneficial concept (Rau & Hyland, 2002; Tremblay, 2002), it has been discovered that its lack of physical boundaries presents some disadvantages. However, a strong effect could be observed from mindfulness on the relationship between WFC and WFB. Also, it has been identified that mindfulness impacts the relationship between FWC and WFB. This implies that the impact of mindfulness on WFB could be explained by referring to both WFC and FWC and that there is a substantial impact of mindfulness on reducing the work-family imbalance of women telecommuters. This is consistent with previous claims (Toniolo-Barrios & Pitt, 2021) that mindfulness influences the balancing of work and family life during telecommuting. This is further confirmed by prior research indicating that mindful employees can effectively balance work and family domains (Allen & Kiburz, 2012; Toniolo-Barrios & Pitt, 2021) by mitigating conflicts between work and family (Voydanoff, 2005).

Theoretical implications

This study makes substantial theoretical contributions in several ways. First, the study identified the personal factors that affect the management of the psychological borders of telecommuters by examining the impact of mindfulness on WFB, which was identified as the gap in the WFBT (Clark, 2000). Accordingly, to fill in the gap, this study proposes mindfulness as a personal trait that facilitates work in the telecommuting field without harming the originality of the theory. This study contributed to the literature on telecommuting empirically by incorporating mindfulness as a moderating variable.

Consistent with the main theoretical contribution, the present study has determined that WFC and FWC mediate the relationship between telecommuting and WFB. The mediating effect contributes to the theory by validating the possibility of emerging WFCs when women are

engaged in working from home. However, available researches have been confined to examining the bi-directional nature of work-family conflict in relation to its impact on telecommuting, and this study has primarily focused on the unidirectional form of conflict (Golden *et al.* 2006; Landolfi & Lo, 2020). Since available literature examines the impact of telecommuting on work-life balance and WFB is rarely tested, this study focuses on work-family balance, one of the sub-categories of work-life balance.

Practical implications

Economic growth is based on technology, innovation and, more broadly, knowledge (Rosenberg, 2004). ICT is a key tool in promoting innovation activities, technology diffusion, and knowledge generation within societies. An estimated 4.1 billion people used the Internet in 2019 (N'guessan, 2020). Among them, 83.9% came from developed countries, while only 19.6% came from the least developed countries. When considering Latin America, although there is a sharp increase in usage of ICT, there is still much room for improvement (N'guessan, 2020). Africa also has the lowest Internet usage rate, and Internet penetration is slowly growing. Sri Lanka is firmly and rapidly establishing itself as a reliable ICT service provider (Saleh, 2023). Sri Lanka's ICT workforce is expanding, and the overall strength of the workforce has grown by 51% in the last five years (Sri Lanka Export Development Board, 2023), with an annual growth of 11%. The study's findings will enhance the IT industry, which has already adopted work-from-home or telecommuting.

Further, this study has several implications for stakeholders, including women telecommuters and organizations responsible for professional conduct and other professional organizations. According to the findings, mindfulness is identified as a possible individual factor that influences WFB. As this trait is not innate, but rather honed through training and development, professional organizations that implement telecommuting should recommend extensive personality development for women telecommuters. This requirement is unavoidable, as the number of women in the labour force is rapidly increasing, and this study proposes the significance of training and developing management-related traits in professional disciplines for telecommuters to develop a broader understanding of adapting to new working systems and balancing work and family through the avoidance of conflicts.

Moreover, work-family conflicts are inevitable with telecommuting. Therefore, organisations must establish new policies and procedures in relation to implementing new working systems, as existing policies were formulated decades ago based on the assumption that employees would have unified work schedules and be supervised face-to-face in their workplaces (Kossek *et al.*, 2006).

Limitations and further research avenue

Several limitations have been recognized, including referencing the current study to contextualize the findings. First, time and resource restrictions dictate the approach employed for determining the sample size. Second, the unit of analysis for the present study was women telecommuters. However, upon realizing that the challenge of telecommuting was not exclusive to women but also applicable to both men and women in the IT industry, the unit of analysis for the present study can be expanded to include both genders. Hence, future researchers could examine the impact of telecommuters on employees' work-family balance without considering gender, as opposed to considering women employees solely. Future research could explore the empirical validation of the proposed conceptual framework in various employment settings that exhibit either high femininity or high masculinity. By examining different contexts, researchers can gain a comprehensive understanding of how telecommuting challenges are influenced by gender dynamics and cultural norms.

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