MANAGING EMOTION AT WORK AND AT HOME: THE ROLE OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE, EMOTIONAL LABOR AND HARDINESS

ABSTRACT

The importance of managing emotions has been increasingly recognized. In parallel, the researchers of work and family study have been searching for more specific antecedents that would predict work-family conflict and facilitation. Building upon the fourfold taxonomy of work-family balance (Frone 2003) and several emotion theories, this study proposes a theoretical model that investigates the role of emotional intelligence, hardiness and emotional labor in the work-family interface.

Keywords: emotion, stress and stress management, work-family life balance

Hong Kong has been generally recognized as a high stress city, characterized by employees working for long hours. The effect of working in a stressful environment gives rises to adverse impacts such as poor physical and mental health (Bogg & Cooper 1995). According to a research conducted by the Hong Kong Mood Disorders Center and the Chinese University of Hong Kong in 2006, four percent of the participants in Hong Kong aged 15-65 are suffering from the Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD), affecting over 200 thousands people. Long working hours have been considered to be associated with higher risk of mental health problems (e.g., Kanazawa, Suzuki, Onoda, & Yokozawa 2006). With an increasing number of employees alleging overtime work (Hong Kong Census & Statistic Department 2003), more assistance should be given to employees on work stress and emotions management. Unfortunately, most of the employees in Hong Kong have not received adequate training on emotion management. Only 13.8 % of them have received training on interpersonal and intrapersonal skills (Census and Statistic Department 2004). Although the government has taken the initiative to help employees managing work and family life by launching a series of policies (e.g. Five-day work policy), many rooted values and culture (e.g., the pattern of long working hours) of Hong Kong are hard to be altered by external policies. Thus, alternate measures are needed to help employees to manage their stress.
and emotions. In this manuscript, we propose a theoretical model which could be used as a framework to find out how internal factors such as emotional intelligence and cognitive hardiness could help employees to manage their family and work lives.

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

**Work-Family Conflict and Facilitation**

In the past, the inter-relationship between the work and family domain was mainly presented by work family conflict (Greenhaus & Parasuraman 1999; Hass 1999). However, the preoccupancy of the conflict perspective has triggered the need for recognizing the positive effect of combining work and family roles (e.g. Frone 2003; Grzywacz & Bass 2003; Wayne, Musisca, & Fleeson 2004). Thus, in addition to work family conflict, recent literature has placed more emphasis on work family facilitation (e.g., Frone 2003). Work–family conflict is a form of inter-role conflict in which the demands of work and family roles are incompatible in some respects so that participation in one role is more difficult because of participation in the other role (Greenhaus & Beutell 1985). It is bidirectional and can take two forms: work-to-family conflict (occurs when work roles interfere with family roles) and family-to-work conflict (occurs when family roles interfere work roles). From a scarcity perspective, with the fixed amount of resources (e.g. time and human energy), participation in multiple roles would exhaust resources and would generate strain such as work-family conflict. From the expansion-enhancement perspective, work-family facilitation is a net positive gain from multiple roles’ involvement (Marks 1977; Sieber 1974). It is “the extent to which participation at work (or home) is made easier by virtue of the experiences, skills, and opportunities gained or developed at home (or work)” (Frone 2003: 145). Similar to work-family conflict, work-family facilitation also has a bidirectional dimension, where work can facilitate family life and vice versa.

**Work domain Psychological Demand: Emotion Labor**

Emotion labor is a kind of emotional regulation which postulates one’s emotion is regulated in order to comply with social norms as an exchange of wage (Hochschid 1983). It is considered as work demand
because employees are required to pay extra emotional efforts in order to align their emotion with the
display rule of the organization (Wharton & Erickson 1993). According to Cross (1998), emotion
regulation can occur relatively early during the unfolding of an emotion, namely deep acting strategy or
relatively late during the unfolding of an emotion, namely surface acting strategy, (Grandey, 2000; Gross

Boundary-Spanning Psychological Resources: Emotional Intelligence (E.I.) & Cognitive Hardiness
Emotional Intelligence is considered as a boundary-spanning psychological resource in the work-family
interface. It is first introduced and defined by Mayer and Salovery as “the ability to perceive emotions, to
access and generate emotions so as to assist thoughts, to understand emotions and emotional knowledge,
and to reflectively regulate emotions so as to promote emotional and intellectual growth” (Mayer and
Salovery, 1997, p.5). Besides, hardiness is also considered as another species of boundary-spanning
psychological resource in the work-family interface. Kobasa (1979) define hardiness as a personality
variable which has both cognitive and behavioral aspects. It is conceptualized into three interrelated
personal characteristics (1) Control (2) Commitment (3) Challenge. Control is based on the belief life
individual experience is predictable and controllable. Wiebe (1991) noted that the belief of influence in
life has to be within reasonable limit and the individual has diversified choices to choose from.
Commitment reflects a belief in the importance, interest value and meaningfulness of life’s activities
(Wiebe, 1991). Challenge reflects the belief that change is normal in life. It refers to an outlook that
enables individuals to view change as a normal part of the life for promoting growth and development
(Orr & Westman, 1990). According to Kobasa’s (1979) theory of hardiness, hardy individual believe they
can control event happen in their lives; recognize their goals, values, priorities in life and are committed to
activities and interpersonal relationship they engaged; view changes as challenge. Therefore, people
who have high hardiness express less psychological response in experiencing stressful situation as these
three characteristic acts as appraisal processes that buffer the deleterious effects of stressful life situation.
Knowledge Gap

Although work family researchers have started to draw more attention to the need of complementing the focus of work family conflict by examining how work and family experiences could enrich lives of individuals through the conceptual lens of work family facilitation (e.g. Greenhaus and Powell 2006; Grzywacz & Bass 2003; Grzywacz & Marks 2000; Wayne et al. 2004), very few studies have focused on the prevalence and predictors of both work-family conflict and facilitation (see for example, Aryee, Tan & Srinivas 2005 and Balmforth & Gardner 2006). Frone (2003) suggested that comprehensive understanding of the work–family interface should include both components of conflict and facilitation. Thus, more empirical investigations are needed to confirm the role of the putative antecedents and moderators of work- family interface, especially when work-family conflict and work-family facilitation co-exists.

Based on the meaning of work-family balance, Frone (2003) presented a four-fold taxonomy which included work to family conflict, family to work conflict, work to family facilitation and family to work facilitation. Grzywacz and Marks (2000) reported factor-analytic results supporting the full four-fold taxonomy of work-family balance. Although Frone (2003)'s framework offers a more comprehensive and integrated view on the work-family interface (Ayee et al. 2005), this integration approach has not been thoroughly examined, especially in Chinese context. Most studies were carried out in the West (Grzywacz & Bass 2003; Grzywacz & Marks 2000) and hence have not taken into consideration the cultural deviances in studying the work-family interface due to regional discrepancy. Cultural differentiation encourage and reinforce emotional response, resulting in differences in which emotional responses are sanctioned depending on circumstances (Kitayama, Markus, & Kurokawa 2000; Markus & Kitayama 1991; Matsumoto 1990;). Confucianism laid down the social ethics of the Chinese society (Hofstede 1980; Hofstede & Bond 1984; Trompanaars 1993). Chinese employees are concerned about the social relationship among co-workers in the workplace (Bond, 1996; Earley 1997; Ting-Toomey 1988).
As suggested by many other researchers, cultural differences are related to emotional regulation by which different habitual emotion regulation pattern and needs are introduced (e.g. Kitayama, Karasawa, & Mesquita 2004; Miller 2002). Western European encourages open emotion expression while Asian values harmony relationship and encourages emotion suppression in a broader range of situations (Butler, Lee, & Gross 2007). Consequently, Chinese employees will hold some negative opinions against their supervisors, peers or even customers, in order to maintain a harmonize working environment. They tend to conform to the decision made by the majorities even if they disagree with them. Under this situation, the demand for emotional regulation would be larger for Asian.

The growing importance of quality services in the 20th century suggests that employees are expected to control their emotions at work (Wharton & Erickson 1993). Emotion management has become a necessary skill which enables employees to fulfill their job requirements. Regarding the family domain, studies suggest that family roles of parents and spouses include an emotion management component which contributes to the quality and stability of family life (Wharton & Erickson 1993). Unfortunately, very little conceptual and empirical attention has been devoted to understand the role of emotion and its management in the work and family interfaces. Failure to properly manage emotion would eliminate its positive effect and amplify its negative effect on human (Bogg & Cooper 1995). Thus, it is crucial to understand the role of emotion and its regulation in the work-family interface.

**Purpose of Study and Objectives**

Recognizing the nature of emotion and work-family interface, As an initial step in addressing this issue, we propose a model that would help (1) investigating the direct effect of emotional labor, hardiness on work-family interface; (2) examining the moderating role of emotional intelligence and cognitive hardiness on the effect of emotional labor and work-family interface. For the purpose of testing the model, possible operationalizations of variables and data collection approaches would be examined. This study contributes to the work-family and emotion literature and theory in four ways. Firstly, we extend
the literature by proposing a model that helps to understand how emotional labor, emotional intelligence and cognitive hardiness would affect both work-family conflict and facilitation. Secondly, to highlight the role of emotional intelligence and hardiness as a source of emotional regulation abilities, which help buffering the effects of the stressors on work-family interface. Research findings concerning the extent to which various forms of support in the workplace moderate the stressor-strain relationship has always been inconsistent. Some research showed that social support, from supervisors, co-workers buffer the stress-strain relationship (e.g., Russell, Altmaier & Van Velzen, 1987; Greenglass, Burke & Konarski, 1997; Pines, Ben-Ari, Utasi & Larson, 2002), some found no significant results (e.g. Cheuk and Wong, 1995; Konariek and Dudek, 1996). The inconsistent results showed in the past lead us to consider factors that would help to buffer the stressors and strain relationships. Third, the proposed study helps to validate Frone (2003)’s fourfold taxonomy and measures of work-family variables. Last, this study can serve as guidelines for the government and organizations to develop policies and training for their employees effectively.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND DEVELOPMENT

To understand the dynamics of individual differences such as Emotional Intelligence and hardiness in work-family interface, we developed a model (see Figure 1), incorporating both work-family conflict and facilitation. Regional variation over social and cultural conditions in Hong Kong, for instance, Based on western theories, we take into consideration various social and cultural conditions in Hong Kong, the lack of emotional management skill training, greater need to maintain harmonic relationships at work and a more stressful environment due to long working hours were taken into account in interpreting Western Theory. The basis for our model is Frone’s (2003) four-fold taxonomy of the work-family interface. [Insert Figure 1 here]. The proposed model was building upon the integration of two competing perspectives of work-family domain – the scarcity and expansion-enhancement. In this study, we use the scarcity perspective to explain how the demand in emotional display at work will exhaust an individual’s resources
and impair one’s function. Expansion-enhancement perspective is adopted to explain how emotional resources, could be used to enhance one’s psychological functioning. To explain the proposed moderating effect of emotional intelligence and hardiness on emotional labor, we used branch model of emotional intelligence and Kobasa’s (1979) hardiness theory.

**Direct Effects**

In this paper, we propose to include emotional labor as the domain-specific antecedents and cognitive hardiness and emotional intelligence as domain spinning antecedents. According to the control theory of emotional labor (Diefendorff & Gosserand 2003), an individual’s self perception of emotional display is matched continuously against the organizations. If discrepancy exists, emotional regulation strategies would be used by the individual (e.g., deep acting or surface acting) to align. Resource is expended to level off the discrepancy that exits between the perception of one’s emotion display and the organizations after careful analysis and adoption of relevant strategy. Brotheridge and Lee (2002) argued that in response to the emotional demands of work roles (e.g., display rules); employees expend resources in performing surface and deep acting. Emotional strains results when an imbalance occurs between the resources available to meet the demands. However, past research found a significant positive relationship between surface acting and strain but not deep acting type of emotion regulations (Glomb & Twes 2004; Holman, Chissick & Totterdell 2002). Though surface acting is generally considered to be more effortful and with higher emotional dissonance and its relationship with stain is more observable then deep acting, both of them are considered to be drawing one’s emotional resources. Thus, by applying Hobfoll’s (1989) conservation of resource theory, emotional labor, a form of excessive demand at work, will result in stressful outcomes such as work-to-family conflict. For example, Schulz, Cowan, Pape Cowan and Bernnan (2004) found that negative emotional arousal at work predicted angrier marital behavior for women. And Montgomery Panagopolou & Benos (2003) found that emotional job demand was the most significant predictor of work-to-family conflict. Thus, we propose the following:
Proposition 1: Emotional labor (a) surface acting and (b) deep acting will positively predict work-to-family conflict

As mentioned, both surface acting and deep acting used in emotional labor are considered to be drawing one’s emotional resources. Employment of either strategy would reduce the amount of resources available in a particular role, which eventually will affect work-family facilitation. Thus, we propose:

Proposition 2: Emotional labor (a) surface acting and (b) deep acting will negatively predict work-to-family facilitation

According to Mayer and Salovey’s ability theory of emotional intelligence, emotional intelligence is “the ability to perceive emotions, to access and generate emotions so as to assist thoughts, to understand emotions and emotional knowledge, and to reflectively regulate emotions so as to promote emotional and intellectual growth” (Mayer and Salovey 1997: 5). This theory is underpinned by four branches of emotional processing abilities identified by Mayer and Salovey (1997). Perception/Expression of Emotion is the most elementary dimension of emotional intelligence which refers to the ability of one’s awareness in emotion to accurately express emotional needs to others (Mayer, Salovey & Caruso 2000). The second level is the ability to view things from different perspectives and to choose from options in order to facilitate the cognitive processes. After that, individuals would have the ability to understand both determinants and consequences of mood and emotions and how they evolve over time (Mayer, Salovey & Caruso 2000). The final branch of emotional intelligence is the skill by which one regulates or manages feelings of oneself and others based on openness to all sort of emotions, reflection on experienced emotions, and goal-oriented emotional behavior (Mayer & Salovey 1997).

Emotional Intelligence theoretically includes the ability to understand and regulate others as well as one’s own emotions, thus, emotional intelligence is conceptualized as sets of skills. By applying Hobfoll (1989)’s conservation of resource theory and expansion-enhancement perspective theory, emotional intelligence, which is a form of extra boundary spinning resource and skills that would facilitate the
performance in another role. Research found that individuals with higher Emotional Intelligence were better able to maintain a positive mood and self-esteem when faced with a negative state induction (Schutte, Malouff, Bobik, Coston, Greeson, Jedlicka, Rhodes & Wendorf, 2001). Therefore, individual with higher emotional intelligence will experience less work-to-family conflict and family-to-work conflict. Therefore, we propose:

Proposition 3: Emotional Intelligence will negatively predict work-to-family conflict and family-to-work conflict

According to Greenhaus and Powell (2006), skills are broad sets of task-related cognitive and interpersonal skills, coping skills and multitasking skills. According to expansion-enhancement, the generation of skills in one role would facilitate the performance in another role. Emotional intelligence is considered to be a set of skills that includes interpersonal skills, coping skills and task-related cognitive skills. Many scholars have theorized that high Emotional Intelligence contributes to success in various aspects of life including work and relationships (e.g., Goleman, 1995; Salovey and Mayer, 1990). Thus, we propose:

Proposition 4: Emotional Intelligence will positively predict work-to-family facilitation and family-to-work facilitation

Cognitive hardiness Hardiness is described as a personality variable which has both cognitive and behavioral aspects (Kobasa 1979; Kobasa & Puccetti 1983). Referring to the three characteristics of hardiness as defined by Kobasa, control characteristic of hardiness is based on the belief that the life which an individual experiences is predictable and controllable (Wiebe 1991). Individuals who are high in control characteristic are able to influence events through what they imagine, say and do (Klag & Bradley 2004). Commitment reflects a belief in the importance, interest value and meaningfulness of life’s activities (Wiebe 1991). Individuals who are high in commitment enjoy being in all aspects of life and find that the activities they are performing in their lives are meaningful. Challenge reflects the belief that
change is normal in life. It refers to an outlook that enables individuals to view change as a normal part of
the life that help one to promote growth and development (Orr & Westman 1990). So Individuals who are
high in challenge would see challenge as normal part of their life and could help them with their growth
and development. Personality characteristics have been noted to not only influence how individuals
interpret and react to a situation but also proactively shape the environment (Parasuraman & Greenhaus
2002; Watanabe, Takahashi & Minami 1997). A hardy person is considered to have sets of skills that help
to reduce stress as they have different perceptions on stress events then a non hardy person. Thus, we
propose:

Proposition 7: Cognitive hardiness (a) Control (b) commitment (c) Challenge will negatively predict
work-to-family conflict and family-to-work conflict.

From the perspective of expansion-enhancement, psychological resources not only influence how
individuals interpret and react to a situation but also proactively shape the environment (Parasuraman &
Greenhaus 2002; Watanabe, Takahashi & Minami 1997). For instance, personal hardiness generated in one
role will result in facilitating performance in another role. Thus, we propose:

Proposition 8: Cognitive hardiness dimensions of (a) Control (b) commitment (c) Challenge will
positively predict work-to-family facilitation and family-to-work facilitation.

Moderating Effects

According to the four branch model of emotional intelligence, emotional intelligence is defined as the
ability to (1) accurately perceive emotions in oneself and other people; (2) use emotions to facilitate
thinking (3) understand emotions (4) manage emotions. The ability to use emotion accurately would result
in strains reduction from emotional labor effort since emotional intelligence person use various
perspectives at their disposal to reduce the actual felt dissonance (Morris & Feldman 1996). Besides,
individual’s level of emotional knowledge and understanding could affect the quality of surface acting
(Mayer, Salovey & Caruso 2000). Thus, better understanding of emotion contributes to easier performance
of emotional work, therefore generating less strain. Grandey (2000) acknowledged a possible moderating effect of individual characteristics, such as emotional intelligence, in relationships between emotional labor efforts and outcomes. Lam and Kirby (2002) indicated that future research may seek to uncover the impact of emotional intelligence on interaction processes. So to better understand the role of emotional intelligence, we propose:

*Proposition 5: Emotional intelligence moderates the relationship between emotional labor and the work-to-family conflict inversely. The relationship will be weaker for individual with high emotional intelligence.*

*Proposition 6: Emotional intelligence moderates relationship between emotional labor and work-to-family facilitation directly. Relationship is stronger for individual with high emotional intelligence.*

According to hardiness theory proposed by Kobasa (1979), hardy individuals believe that they can control and influence events in their lives; recognize their goals, values, priorities in life and commit to activities and interpersonal relationships, and view change as a challenge. These three characteristics act as appraisal processes that buffer the deleterious effects of stressful life situations. As a buffer, it moderates stress-strain relationship when stressors are high, but has little impact on the relationship when stressors are low. Theoretically, hardiness can reduce the vulnerable effects of stress process by reducing the chance of stress perception (Kobasa 1979). Through influencing the appraisal of stress, hardiness would have an indirect effect on stain. With reference to the emotional labor process, a hardy person would perceive emotional labor as not such a stressful demand of the job, with the belief that they can influence their emotion and negate emotional dissonance from performing emotional labor. Thus, we propose:

*Proposition 9: Hardiness will moderate the relationship between emotional labor and the work-to-family conflict such that the relationship will be weaker for individuals with high level of hardiness.*
**Proposition 10:** Hardiness will moderate the relationship between emotional labor and the work-to-family conflict facilitation such that the relationship will be stronger for individuals with high level of hardiness.

**DISCUSSION**

Before testing the proposed model empirically, the equivalency of the selected measures should be verified in a Chinese context. Content validation could be done on work-family conflict and facilitation, emotional intelligence, and hardiness measures by conducting a focus group study. Researchers could revise the instruments if items are found to be culturally irrelevant. After the necessary measures are validated, empirical testing of the model in Figure 1 could be proceeded. To enhance the rigor of the study, data should be collected from multiple sources. Collecting matching data from spouses could enable proposed hypotheses to be adequately tested by using multiple sources, which would avoid problem associated with common method variance.

**Suggested Measures**

It is recommended that researchers use existing measures which have good reliability and validity for testing the proposed model. Likewise, *Work-family conflict and facilitation* could be measured by using a 16-item scale developed by Grzywacz and Marks (2000). *Cognitive Hardiness* could be measured by the 30-item Cognitive Hardiness Scale (CHS) developed by Nowack (1990). *Emotional Labor* could be accessed by a two-dimensional measure based on the work of Grandey (2003), Kruml and Geddes (2000) and Diefendorff, Croyle and Gosserand (2005). *Emotional Intelligence* is recommended to be measured by the Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT). Total *MSCEIT* internal consistency reliability, based on consensus scoring, was 0.93.

**Limitations**

There are several limitations in this study. Firstly, although we recommend that the data should be collect from multiple sources so as to minimize the common method variance, measurement of the
individual factors such as emotional intelligence, emotional labor and hardiness still rely heavily on self-reported data which introduces biased and inaccuracy. Longitudinal study could be carried out to improve the situation. Secondly, our proposed model is only limited to investigate the effect of the emotional intelligence, emotional labor and hardiness on work family interface. More research could be carried out to investigate the underlying processes regarding how these variables could affect work family conflict and facilitation. A final limitation is the “implicit assumption that the predictors of work–family conflict and work–family facilitation are similar” (Frone 2003:152).

We would suggest researchers to pay more attention to the impact of different emotion regulation strategies on the work family conflict and facilitation. Different strategies are expected to have different profiles of consequences to stress generation (Grandey 2000; Gross 1998). Therefore, more comprehensive research should be done to examine the impacts of different strategies on the work family interface. Besides, researchers could also examine the moderating role of emotional labor which has not received adequate attention in the work family literature yet. In addition, longitudinal studies should be carried out to minimized the bias and inaccuracy introduced by self-reported measures. This research helps to increase our understanding of the emotional roles on the work family interface. Most importantly, it helps to provide evidence for organizations to justify their provision of emotion management training programs for their employees.

**Conclusion**

Prior thought and research on the work and family interface suggest that participation in one role might facilitate or conflict with another role. However, a model of the process by which facilitation and conflict take place together has been lacking. This study proposes a model, which could be used as a guide for future research on the investigation of the effect of individual factors such as emotional intelligence, hardiness and emotional labor on the work family interface.
Figure 1: A Model of Emotional Intelligence, Hardiness and emotional labor on work family conflict and facilitation

**Work Domain Psychological Demand**
(Self-reports by subjects)

- Emotional Labor

**Boundary-Spanning Resource and skills**
(Self-reports by subjects)

- Emotional Intelligence
  - (Self-reports by subjects)

- Cognitive Hardiness
  - (Self-reports by subjects)

**Work to family interface**
Conflict
Facilitation

(Self-reports by subjects + social reports by family members)

**Family to work interface**
Conflict
Facilitation

(Self-reports by subjects + social reports by family members)
References:


