



Impact of Work-Family Integration on Subjective Happiness Among Street Vendors: Moderating Role of Defense Styles

Farheen Anjum¹, Alishba Hania²

¹ Lecturer, Department of Psychology, Balochistan University of Information Technology Engineering and manage Sciences (BUIITEMS), Quetta, Pakistan. Email: farheen.anjum@buitms.edu.pk

² Associate Professor, College of Humanities and Education, Nanchang Institute of Technology, China. Email: alishbahania@nut.edu.cn

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ABSTRACT

This paper has discussed how the defense mechanisms (mature, neurotic, and immature) moderate the association between work-family integration (WFI) and subjective happiness in street sellers in Pakistan. The 260 street vendors in Quetta were sampled using a purposive strategy and used standardized forms of self-report to collect data, including the Work-Family Integration Scale, the Oxford Happiness Questionnaire, and the Defense Style Questionnaire (DSQ-40). Moderation and hierarchical regression analyses were done. Findings showed that there existed a positive relationship between work family integration and subjective happiness. Happiness was positively correlated with mature and neurotic defense mechanisms, but negatively correlated with immature defenses. The moderation analysis showed the presence of significant negative interaction effects, which suggested that an increase in the levels of defense mechanisms undermined the positive relationship between WFI and happiness. The effect sizes were small ($R^2 = .06-.08$), but results indicate that the determination of well being in informal workers is very difficult. The study has provided a contribution to occupational mental health literature in the South Asian informal economy scenario.

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Corresponding Author's Email: farheen.anjum@buitms.edu.pk

1. Introduction

Vending is offering small items to people for sale. Street vendors are individuals who work in the informal economy; they run small businesses in the form of stalls or vending machines at street level to earn money for their families. In this regard, their subjective happiness matters as it influences their work efficiency and productivity. Subjective happiness is defined as an individual's overall personal evaluation of life events, which comprises both the individual's situation (how fortunate a person is) and state of mind (whether one feels glad) (Sarıçam, 2015). Happiness and life gratification are considered a "psychological concept of quality of life." A happy mood will lead to good behavior, which can increase sales. A happy person will communicate with customers in an appropriate and effective way, which can raise the sales ratio compared to those who are unhappy (Babinčák & Parkanská, 2016). Research has revealed that happiness cannot only be measured by income level but also by health, people's circumstances, family, and elements of well-being, which are also very important. Overall, happiness is a feeling that is experienced in an individual's situation (Kaklauskas et al., 2020). Working people spend most of their lives at work, and working conditions play a serious role in defining how individual feels, performs, and responds to issues. People can produce desired outcomes when they are happy in the workplace as well as at home (Paige Williams, Margaret L Kern, & Lea Waters, 2016) When workers are emotionally connected to their work, it directly affects their level of happiness; when people are in a good mood, they will experience positive emotions like compassion and happiness. This will facilitate integration between their work and family life (Islam & Goldwasser, 2020). Integration is when skills and experiences obtained from one role may facilitate and ease the quality and accomplishment of another role (Angelo & Egan, 2015). Though early research has

revealed that the balance among family and work is known as a possible mechanism to expect beneficial consequences that will further lead towards contentment (Zhang, Lin, & Wan, 2015). Work-family integration generates positive outcomes, for instance, improved health indicators, job performance, life satisfaction, and job satisfaction (Eddleston & Mulki, 2017). Studies have demonstrated that balance in work and family life is an indicator of improvement in the level of happiness (Michael-Tsabari et al., 2020). Usually, the boundaries of these two realms in an individual's life contain well-defined responsibilities and roles in almost every culture. However, sometimes it's too difficult for people to do justice and perform equally in these domains, as both interface with one another negatively or sometimes positively (König & Cesinger, 2015). Therefore, conflict arises between tasks as well as relationships, causing people to experience uncertain psychological distress, stress, and anxiety, which further leads to the creation of barriers in their lives. Working people, especially street vendors, face many challenges in life; usually, they don't receive any security at their workplace. Due to the challenging nature of their work, they are more vulnerable to being affected psychologically by any traumatic situation. By using defensive methods, they will not only be able to maintain balance in both domains but also maximize happiness and harmony while minimizing conflict, whether it arises at home or in the workplace (Sehgal & Khandelwal, 2020).

Studies explored that defense mechanisms hold six significant characteristics that are; (a) defense mechanisms are ease mental distress that rising from psychological representations & emotions related with one's inner clash; (b) generally defense mechanisms are 'unconscious'; (c) defense mechanisms are separate from each other; (d) defense mechanisms are alterable & dynamic; (e) it's not essentially pathological, somewhat they could be adaptive, or creative as well and (f) an individual is unable to perceive them because they are invisible (Reh, Wieck, & Scheibe, 2021). Currently, it's obligatory to acknowledge those issues that are involved in relationship conflicts, thus harmful to mental health, and a person may suffer from stress, depression, or other psychological problems. However, defense mechanisms can buffer the impact of a clash and lead to establishing harmony (Kim et al., 2020). Studies have explored that defense style (neurotic, immature, mature) would significantly predict happiness and life satisfaction in a non-clinical sample, and the contrast between immature and mature defense styles would affect life satisfaction and happiness (Nash, 2018). The hierarchy of defense mechanisms was categorized and measured on a range from adaptive to pathological. The three levels, along with their respective individual defenses, are (a) "Immature" which includes (schizoid fantasy, projection, acting out, and passive aggression); (b) "Neurotic" which includes (repression, intellectualization, reaction formation, displacement, and dissociation); and (c) "Mature" which consists of (anticipation, suppression, altruism, sublimation, and humor), as presented by Vaillant (1971). Therefore, reviewing the defense styles seems to have an important and positive implication for understanding an individual's happiness (Gieorgica, 2016).

The street vendors are a part of the informal sector and often they have to work in unstable and high-stress environments. Their psychological health is a significant issue hence. Subjective happiness is the general assessment of a person on their life situation and mood (Sarıçam, 2015). According to the previous studies, happiness affects productivity, interpersonal communication, and overall functioning (Paige Williams, Margaret L. Kern, & Lea Waters, 2016).

Work family integration (WFI) is a manifestation of the permeability and amalgamation of work and family. In contrast to work organizations that focus on strain, integration may lead to the development of resource sharing and facilitating of roles (Angelo & Egan, 2015). But in less formalities where boundaries are permeable, integration can also establish support and interference at the same time.

Defense mechanisms, theorized in terms of psychodynamic theory (Vaillant, 1971), are unconscious mental functions that are applied to deal with internal conflict and external demands. They are divided into mature, neurotic and immature styles. It has been found that the defense styles are linked to well-being outcomes because of past studies (Nash, 2018).

Although there is increasing literature on the dynamics and happiness of work and family, none of the literature has explored the moderating potential of defense mechanisms among the Pakistani street vendors. This paper fills this gap.

1.1. Rationale

The key purpose of this research was to ponder the correlation between subjective happiness and defense styles (mature, neurotic, immature), work-family integration and subjective happiness, as well as the moderating effect of defense styles among street vendors. To achieve stability simultaneously between family and work is a tough task because energy, time, dedication, and concentration are needed separately to perform the tasks of both domains (Mustapha, 2013). If stress arises in one domain, it will automatically influence the other domain. Similarly, productivity and positivity in one realm lead to an upsurge in positivity and harmony in the other area, and vice versa. Thus, along with their constant struggle to do their best in both domains, if they add defense mechanisms into it, it will lead to an increase in their life satisfaction and happiness, which enables them to gain maximum pleasure from their life. Therefore, they can organize their life as well as compose their personality to function in both domains (Donaldson, Dollwet, & Rao, 2015). Moreover, the objective of this study is to help policymakers formulate such plans in their local languages for the future that must be beneficial and protect poor people with small businesses from any threats or traumatic situations (Ahmed, Azhar, & Mohammad, 2024; Mohammad, 2015). Because they work in uncertain situations, some safety measures should also be taken at the government level to ensure their safety, and some financial support should be given to them so that they can ensure work-family integration and subjective happiness. Generally, this study will help society in the advancement of knowledge.

2. Literature Review

The studies have revealed that happiness correlates with the defense styles. An example is a study of Brazilian psychiatrists which has found that those who reported greater levels of happiness were more apt to employ mature defense mechanisms to deal with the psychological discomfort (Carlquist et al., 2017). Likewise, adaptive defense styles have been associated with satisfactory working conditions (Flett et al., 2021). The idea of happiness has two significant philosophical roots: hedonic perspective is based on the need to experience pleasure and avoid unpleasantness, and the eudaimonic perspective that is built on self-fulfillment and purpose (Vasquez, 2016). Hedonically, defensive measures can be used by the individuals to reduce stress and maintain emotional stability (Moirangthem & Panda, 2018). According to other theoretical approaches, subjects can be happy because of goal achievement and life satisfaction, and that subjective happiness has a relatively constant set point which may be manipulated by personal regulation (Kieny et al., 2022; Nash, 2018). The empirical data has shown that work-family integration is related to positive results, such as psychological well-being, health and job satisfaction (Rajadhyaksha, Korabik, & Aycan, 2015).

The mediation process of emotional support and subjective happiness has also been reported to take place through work-family balance (Leung, Mukerjee, & Thurik, 2020). Moreover, however, when working tasks increase, the role pressures also increase, and people need to use psychological processes to manage stress and establish balance (Giovazolias, Karagiannopoulou, & Mitsopoulou, 2017). Defense mechanisms are an unconscious mental process that occurs when there is a conflict inside or when there is some outside pressure (Ragmoun, Alfalih, & Alfalih, 2017; Ragmoun & Alwehabie, 2020). They decrease emotional, cognition, and physiological responses to anxiety and allow them to preserve psychological stability (Tudor, 2021). The hierarchical model of defenses hypothesizes that the development of mechanisms is lifespan-central and is the main factor in adjustment and maturation (Ortiz et al., 2019). The adaptive functioning is typically accompanied by mature defenses, whereas psychological distress is related to immature defenses (Di Giuseppe et al., 2019). The study also indicates that defensive styles also affect personal differences in reaction to stressful conditions (Babl et al., 2019). Despite the literature existing on the work-family integration as moderately influenced by defense mechanisms in clinical and occupational contexts, the moderating impact of defense mechanisms in the work-family and subjective happiness relationship among street vendors in Pakistan has not been explored. Due to the stress and pressure of psychologically informal working conditions, it is of theoretical and practical importance to know how defensive functioning determines well-being.

2.1. Hypotheses

Through literature, following hypothesis were developed:

H1: Work family integration is related positively with subjective happiness.

H2: There is a significant relationship between defense mechanisms (mature, neurotic, immature) and subjective happiness.

H3: Defense mechanisms moderate the correlation between work-family integration and subjective happiness.

2.2. Conceptual Framework

The proposed study is that work-family integration has a direct impact on subjective happiness. The defense mechanisms are moderators, which modify this relationship in terms of its strength and direction. The work-family experiences are likely to be influenced by psychological coping processes in informal economic settings, and this process would determine the overall well-being.

2.3. Research Methodology

In this study, the cross-sectional correlational research design was used. The target population of the study was street vendors from different areas of Quetta. The purposive sampling method was used in the research because data were specifically taken from street vendors. A sample of 260 street vendors aged 10-95 years were selected. The underage vendors were selected because due to financial problems, mostly poor families' children sell things for their bread and butter. It is unethical but unfortunately it also another phenome in the area.

2.4. Procedure

It was carried out where the researcher went to each respondent, sought their consent and made sure that every item was filled in on each questionnaire. The ethical considerations were put into consideration during the data collection process. The respondents were correctly made aware of their rights; all was not forced on them. In the case of participants under the age of 18 years, parents or legal guardians who gave informed consent to participate in the study were asked to do so beforehand. The level of participation was voluntary, the confidentiality of the respondents was guaranteed and the respondents were made aware of the fact that they could pull out of the study any time without being penalized.

2.5. Measures

All scales were in English, however, they were translated into Urdu and checked by professionals as per the requirements. The cultural and religious things were put into consideration. All the instruments were translated through forward-backward translation process. The scales were first translated into Urdu through the use of bilingual professionals after which they were translated back into English by independent translators so as to maintain semantic and conceptual consistency.

Work-Family Integration Scale reliability was $\alpha = .84$, Oxford Happiness Questionnaire (OHQ) was $\alpha = .74$, and Defense Style Questionnaire internal consistency was $\alpha = .94$, with.

3. Results and Discussion

The purposive sampling method was used in this research because data was specifically taken from street vendors. The age of the participants (N=260) ranged from 10 to 95 years.

Table 1: Mean and Standard deviation of Age, education, family income, vending area & vending type (N=260)

S.No	Demographics Variable	Mean(M)	Standard deviation (SD)	Minimum	Maximum
1	Age	32.5385	15.85365	10	95
2	Education	5.7538	4.66907	00	16
3	Family income	37248.0769	22934.54250	5000.00	95000.00

As revealed in Table 1, the mean age of the participants (N=260) ranged from 10 to 95 years. The current study reports a mean age of (M=32.53, SD=15.85). As far as years of education are concerned, participants ranged from illiterate to 16 years of education (M=5.75, SD=4.66), and the average family income of the participants was Rs/-50,000 to 95,000 (M=37,248.07, SD=22,934.54). On the basis of these means and standard deviations, we divided them into categories: for age, we created six categories: 1 (10-20), 2 (21-36), 3 (37-52), 4 (53-68), 5 (69-84), and 6 (85-95). For education, we made four categories: 1 (0), 2 (1-5), 3 (6-10), and 4 (11-16); we made two categories for living arrangements: 1 (nuclear) and 2

(joint); and for family income, we made four categories: 1 (5,000-23,000), 2 (24,000-46,000), 3 (47,000-69,000), and 4 (70,000-95,000).

Table: 2 Demographic characteristics of the participants (N=260)

Variables	<i>f</i>	%
Age		
10-20	77	29.6
21-36	92	35.4
37-52	73	28.1
53-68	10	3.8
69-84	4	1.5
85-95	4	1.5
Education		
00	55	21.2
1-5	83	31.9
6-10	94	36.2
11-16	28	10.8
Family System		
Joint	154	59.2
Nuclear	106	40.8
Family income		
5000-23000	103	39.6
24000-46000	63	24.2
47000-69000	69	26.5
70,000-95000	25	9.6

As shown in Table 2, most of the participants belonged to the middle age range (21-36). Among them, 55 were uneducated, 28 were highly educated, 83 were at the primary education level, and 94 were at the middle education level. Among the sample, 154 street vendors belonged to the joint family system, while 106 belonged to the nuclear family system. As per the results, most of the participants (103) earn a lower income (5,000-23,000), 63 participants earn (24,000-46,000), 69 participants earn (47,000-69,000), and 25 participants earn the highest income (70,000-95,000).

Table3: Inter-correlation of work-family integration, subjective happiness and defense mechanisms among street vendors (N=260)

Variables	M(SD)	2	3	4	5	6	7
1 Mature defense mechanism	8.33(3.26)	.868**	.759**	-.093	-.150*	-.008	.175**
		.000	.S000	.135	.015	.894	.005
		260	260	260	260	260	260
		1					
2 Neurotic defense mechanism	8.71(3.69)		.748**	-.100	-.169**	-.003	.192**
			.000	.107	.006	.960	.002
			260	260	260	260	260
			1				
3 Immature defense mechanism	7.88(2.72)			-.020	-.044	.008	-.047
				.750	.482	.902	.446
				260	260	260	260
				1			
4 Work-family interface	76.60(11.09)				.703**	.821**	.110
					.000	.000	.078
					260	260	260
					1		
5 Work-family conflict subscale	51.50(6.43)					.171**	-.016
						.006	.796
						260	260
						1	
6 Work-family integration subscale	25.10(8.00)						.165**
							.008
							260
7 Subjective happiness	3.47(.58)						
							1

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Table 3 reveals, Pearson Correlation examined that mature factor of defense mechanism and its significant positive relationship with happiness ($r = .175^{**}$, $P < .01$) neurotic & immature defense mechanisms ($r = .868^{**}$, $.759^{**}$, $P < .01$), and negatively related to work-family conflict ($r = -.150^{*}$). The neurotic defense mechanism is positively related to Immature defense mechanism and happiness ($r = .748^{**}$, $.192^{**}$, $P < .01$). Neurotic defense mechanism is negatively

related to work-family conflict ($r = -.150^*$) Immature factor is not related to any variable. work-family interface is positively related to work-family conflict and integration ($r = .703^{**}, .821^{**}$ respectively $P < .01$). Work-family conflict is positively related to work-family integration ($r = .171^{**}$, $P < .01$). Work-family integration is positively related to happiness ($.165^{**}$ $P < .01$).

Table 4: Regression with defense mechanisms as determining factors and happiness is dependent variable and then regression along with defense mechanisms, work-family conflict and work-family integration as determining factors and happiness is dependent variable (N=260)

Predictors	Model 1		Model 2	
	B	Beta (SE)	B	Beta (SE)
Mature average	.046	.256*(.022)	.048	.226*(.022)
Neurotic average	.054	.341**(.019)	.055	.348**(.019)
Immature average	-.107	-.497***(.020)	-.110	-.509***(.020)
Work-family conflict subscale	.003	.032 (.005)		
Work-family integration subscale	.012	.167**(.004)		
$R^2 = .13$	$F(3, 256) = 13.19, p < .001.$		$R^2 = .16$	$F(5, 254) = 9.99, p < .001.$

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

According to Table 4, the regression analysis found that both models were significant. According to the table of model summary, we saw that in Model 1, we added defense mechanisms (mature, neurotic, and immature factors) as a determinant and subjective happiness as the dependent variable. The R Square value was 0.13, which means that the change in subjective happiness depends on 13% on defense mechanisms, and the F (13.193***) value showed their significance at the .000 level. Then, in Model 2, when we added work-family integration and work-family conflict subscales along with mature, neurotic, and immature factors as determinants and subjective happiness as the dependent variable, the value of R Square became 0.16, which means a difference of 3%. The F (9.995***) value showed significance at the .000 level. Work-family integration was associated to other variables, but work-family conflict was not related to any other variable.

Table 5: Regression analysis examining the interaction effect of mature defense mechanisms & work family integration on level of happiness (N=260)

Variables	Subjective happiness		
	B	SE	95% CI
Constant		.118	[2.934,3.400]
Work-family integration	.165**	.004	[.003,.021]
Work-family integration x mature factor			
Moderator mature defense mechanism	-.224***	.041	[-.235,-.072]
Work-family integration subscale	.146**	.004	[.002,.019]
R^2	.007		
F	10.703***		

As revealed in Table 5, work-family integration was significantly positively related to total happiness at the (.00) level of significance. However, when we multiplied the independent variable (work-family integration) by the moderator (mature defense mechanism), we found that mature defense mechanisms significantly inversely moderated the relationship between work-family integration and subjective happiness at the (-.224***) level of significance. The R^2 value was 7%, which showed that work-family integration and mature defense mechanisms represented a 7% change in the level of happiness. The F (10.703***) value indicated their significance at the (.00) level.

As revealed in Table 6, the work-family integration was significantly positively related to total happiness at the (.165**) level of significance, but when we multiplied the independent variable (work-family integration) and the moderator (immature defense mechanism), we saw that the immature defense mechanism significantly negatively inversely moderated the association between work-family integration and total happiness at the (-.186**) level of significance. The R^2 value was 6%, which showed that work-family integration and immature

defense mechanisms represented a 6% change in the level of happiness. The F (8.452) value showed their significance level at the (.00) level.

Table 6: Regression analysis examining the interaction effect of immature defense mechanisms & work family integration on level of happiness (N=260)

Variable	B	SE	%95 CI
Constant		.118	[2.934,3.400]
Work-family integration	.165**	.004	[.003,.021]
Work-family integration x immature factor			
Work-family integration subscale	.160**	.004	[.003,.020]
Moderator immature defense mechanism	-.186**	.038	[-.193,-.042]
R ²	.062		
F	8.452***		

Table 7: Regression analysis examining the interaction effect of neurotic defense mechanisms & work family integration on level of happiness (N=260)

Variable	B	SE	%95 CI
Constant		.118	[2.934,3.400]
Work-family integration	.165**	.004	[.003,.021]
Work-family integration x neurotic factor			
Work-family integration subscale	.149*	.004	[.002,020]
Moderator neurotic defense mechanism	-.228***	.041	[-.238,-.076]
R ²	.079		
F	11.024***		

As shown in Table 7, work-family integration was significantly positively related to total happiness at the (.165**) level of significance. However, when we multiplied the independent variable (work-family integration) and the moderator (neurotic defense mechanisms), we saw that neurotic defense mechanisms significantly inversely moderated the association between work-family integration and happiness at the (-.228***) level of significance. The R² value was 7%, which indicated that work-family integration and neurotic defense mechanisms represented a 7% change in the level of happiness. The F (11.024***) value showed their significance level at the (.00) level

The subjective happiness had a positive correlation with work-family integration, which confirms H1. Happiness was highly associated with the defense mechanisms, which was found in the support of H2.

However, to the contrary, each of the defense styles had a detrimental mediating effect on the WFI-happiness relationship. Even when the defenses are developed later (e.g. suppression, anticipation), emotional restraint and delayed gratification may be involved in economically insecure settings. In the case of chronic stress, overuse of such defenses can reduce the benefits of integration of emotions. In such a way, although defenses operate in an adaptive manner, the psychological consequences of such a phenomenon can be modified by the contextual strain.

4. Conclusion

This paper used moderation analysis, which operates through regression analysis, to investigate the value of defense mechanisms in the interaction between work-family integration and subjective happiness among the Pakistani street vendors. Being informal workers whose activities are greatly influenced by unfavorable economic conditions and demanding environments, street vendors are a psychologically vulnerable, but understudied, group. The results showed that defense mechanisms (mature, neurotic and immature) moderated the relationship between work-family integration and subjective happiness according to significantly negative moderating effects of the defense mechanisms. In particular, work family integration was found to have a positive relationship with happiness; yet, the further the better the defense mechanisms the less positive the relationship. These moderation effects imply that overdependence on defensive functioning of whatever kind might diminish the emotional rewards that are usually obtained through a combination of work and family roles. Instead of explaining these findings by such features of the methods, like sample size or context, the outcomes could

be the result of the long-term stress and financial pressures that informal employment contexts entail. Correlational studies also indicated that mature defense mechanisms correlated positively with subjective happiness, neurotic and immature defenses correlated negatively with work family conflict. Neurotic defenses showed a positive correlation with both immature defenses and happiness, which means that the relationships between defense styles are complex. There was a positive correlation between work-family integration and happiness, and at the same time, it had positive correlations with work-family conflict, indicating that work-family integration in informal settings can be both facilitative to resource sharing and role intrusion.

4.1. Limitations of the study

1. Cross-sectional design constrains causes.
2. Purposive sampling: This limits generalizability.
3. Small R² values indicate other contributing variables.

4.2. Recommendations

Psychological Recommendations

- The stress management programs that are community based should be created to enable the street vendors manage the chronic occupational stress and improve the emotional well-being.
- Emotional regulation training must be implemented which will help the vendors realise and adapt maladaptive defensive reactions in stressful circumstances.
- Intensive coping skills training must be arranged, in an attempt to enhance adaptive styles of defense and psychological awareness of the working and family life balance.

Recommendations at the Policy Level

- A controlled area of vendors should be created by the local authorities to minimize environmental uncertainty, as well as occupational stress in street vendors.
- Protection schemes: The schemes like microcredit facilities and emergency assistance schemes should be put on the board so that the financial instability can be aided.
- The social nets should be extended and offer health coverage and minimal welfare security to informal workers.
- Community support systems should incorporate the provision of accessible and culturally competent mental health to deal with psychological weaknesses among the informal sector.
- Longitudinal research design should be used in future studies to better understand causal relationships and other protective factors like resilience and perceived social support.

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