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AN EXAMINATION OF WORK-LIFE BALANCE, LISTENING SATISFACTION, AND RELATIONSHIP DISSOLUTION AMONG MARITAL AND COHABITING COUPLES

The high demands placed from a society on individuals may impact the perceived work-life balance of individuals in cohabiting and married relationships. Work-life imbalances may lead to poor communication, which can impact the feelings of wanting to dissolve the relationship due to dissolutionment. Also, when partners are dissatisfied with the listening behavior in their relationship, this may lead to relationship dissolution. To examine the relationships between work-life balance, listening satisfaction, and relationship dissolution among cohabiting and marital couples, this study analyzed data from the National Center for Family and Marriage Research at the Bowling Green State University (2010). Instruments included the Marital Disillusionment Questionnaire and the Work-Family Conflict Scale. The study included 2,150 individuals, including 1,075 couples with 50% of females and 50% of males, and the average age of participants was 44. Correlation analyses results demonstrated differences among marital and cohabiting couples based on their listening satisfaction and relationship dissolution. Work-life balance was positively related to listening satisfaction, but inversely related to relationship dissolution. Independent t-test results also showed that cohabiting individuals reported higher listening satisfaction than did married individuals. However, married individuals reported being more dissolutioned with their relationship than did cohabiting individuals. Regression results indicated that work-life balance was positively related to listening satisfaction, and inversely related to relationship dissolution. Listening satisfaction partially mediated the inverse relationship between work-life balance and relationship dissolution. The type of relationship moderated the relationship between work-life balance and listening satisfaction, and the inverse relationship between work-life balance and relationship dissolution. Finally, duration of the relationship moderated the positive relationship

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between work-life balance and listening satisfaction. Findings offer insights on the relationships between work-life balance, listening satisfaction, and relationship dissolution in romantic relationships.

Key words: cohabiting relationships, listening satisfaction, marital relationships, relationship dissolution, work-life balance

Introduction

Marital and cohabiting relationships continue to be on the rise for the past several decades in the industrialized nations including the United States. Despite this growth, the odds of dissolution and divorce have been 45% (Schoen & Canudas-Romo, 2006). The instability of cohabiting and marital relationships during the past decade has been widely documented. The economic climate and the cost of living across the US has led to individuals in long-term relationships to work in order to make ends meet such as paying mortgages, food, house supplies, child-care services, and mutual debt. Dual-earning couples in marital and cohabiting relationships experience a strenuous stress within the relationship due to poor communication and work-life balance issues. Working partners devote much of their time to their careers by fulfilling rigorous schedules and career development objectives. However, when partners overcommit to their work obligations and schedules by performing tireless duties, this role may be in a direct conflict with spending time with one's family, and overtime, the relationship may become dissatisfying. If work demands are high, individuals may not devote an adequate amount of time and energy to their children or partners, and this may lead to relationship problems. Individuals who lack the communication abilities such as listening to one's partners' concerns tend to be less empathic, and are perceived to be poor communicators by their relationship partners (Gottman, 1999). Poor listening such as, "stonewalling," or being expressionless and apathetic when one's partner is speaking during conversations has been associated to reduced marital satisfaction and relationship dissolution (Gottman & Levenson, 1992). Because listening satisfaction during conversations has not been investigated in the context of work-life balance and relationship dissolution, the purpose of this study is to explore the relationships between perceived listening satisfaction, work-life balance, and relationship dissolution among marital and cohabiting couples.

Marital and Cohabiting Couples' Perception Differences

Marital and cohabiting relationships experience differences throughout their relationship. Marital relationships have been accepted for many decades as the "status quo," and individuals can be bonded by religious and legal requirements, whereas, cohabiting relationships do not have the clear norms or legal obligations in comparison to marital relationships. Since the 1970s cohabitation has been perceived as a "trial period" prior to marriage, and it is constructed by negotiating partner roles that are established through communication channels (Cherlin, 2004). In our society, cohabiting relationships are also perceived to be short-term relationships, whereas marital relationships represent a long-term commitment with a spouse. Previous studies have documented that cohabiting individuals report having poor relationship quality, and for this reason, they may be more likely to dissolve in comparison to married individuals (Bouchard, 2006). A part of the

reason cohabiting individuals dissolve is explained by their lack of satisfaction in their relationship, and the lack of effective communication within a relationship. When individuals experience high disagreements and conflict, poor communication can be debilitating to the stability of the relationship (Brown, 2004).

However, attentive listening has been documented to facilitate quality relationships among both cohabiting and marital relationships. When a person is satisfied with one's partner listening behaviors, individuals are better able to solve their conflicts and prevent escalation (Gottman & Levenson, 1988). Perceived listening behavior functions to become socially supportive to one's partner, and to indicate shared understanding of one's partner's feelings and experiences. A study by Levenson, Cartensen, and Gottman (1994) has found that those in marital relationships who listen effectively report having quality conversations and being happily married. Also, both husbands and wives have reported being satisfied with their partners' listening skills when their partners' nonverbal expressions are positive, such as smiling (Pasupathl, Cartensen, Levenson, & Gottman, 1999). Interestingly, a study has reported that cohabiting individuals may not be willing to listen effectively to their partners due to the perceived lack of commitment in the relationship (Rhoades, Stanley, & Markman, 2009). Currently, there is a need to examine the differences in listening satisfaction perceptions among married and cohabiting individuals. To develop an understanding of the potential perception differences in listening, this study will examine the following hypothesis:

H1: Married and cohabiting partners differ in their perceived listening satisfaction with their partners.

Perceptions of relationship dissolution among cohabiting and marital partners may also differ. Relationship dissolution is defined as the "informal or legal separation" that terminates romantic relationships (Dush, 2013, p. 91). While both marital and cohabiting relationships dissolve, it may be due to different factors. For instance, cohabiting individuals have reported less investment in their relationship, lower levels of commitment, and decreased satisfaction in comparison to married individuals (Dush, 2013; Stanley, Whitton, & Markman, 2004). Also, cohabiting relationships are easier to dissolve than marital relationships. For instance, marital relationships may need to deal with courts, sharing children, sharing resources, such as a house or a bank account, which make them more difficult to dissolve (Dush, 2013; Wu & Penning, 2018), whereas cohabiting relationships may dissolve over an intense disagreement or conflict with no severe consequences. A study has found that cohabiting relationships are likely to dissolve with an average of less than two years over perceived disagreements, dissatisfaction, and dissolutionment (Brown & Snyder, 2006). Because the dissolution costs are higher for marital couples, marital relationships are more likely to make amends in the marriage in comparison to cohabiting relationships (Percheski & Meyer, 2018). With these findings in mind, the following hypothesis will be examined.

H2: Married and cohabiting partners differ in their perceived feelings of relationship dissolution.

Work-Life Balance and Listening

The work-life balance (WLB) literature has been examining communication outcomes in marital and cohabiting romantic relationships. Work-life balance is defined as the “satisfaction and good functioning at work and home, with a minimum of role conflict” (Clark, 2000, p. 751). Studies have found that individuals who perceive their partners engaging in effective listening behaviors when discussing difficult work-life issues report being more satisfied in their relationship (Doohan, 2007; Pasupathi et al., 1999). Additionally, when individuals engage in work-life balance, they are able to communicate emotional support to their partners in stressful conditions (Gudmunson, Danes, Werbel, & Loy, 2009). Also, when individuals adopt effective communication skills in marital and cohabiting relationships, partners report being satisfied with the relationship, and are willing to engage in the problem-solving process (Perrone & Worthington, 2001). When individuals are able to effectively negotiate their work-life roles, they may become more available to engage in quality communication behaviors with their partners, which can enhance the overall marital quality (Li & Fung, 2011). By listening attentively to one’s spouse, couples are more likely to have positive interactions, such as mutual self-disclosure, empathy, and conflict resolution (Perrone & Worthington, 2001). Previous literature has not directly examined whether an individuals’ work-life balance perceptions relate to their listening satisfaction with their partners. In order to understand this underlying connection, this study will investigate the following hypothesis:

H3: After controlling for demographic variables, work-life balance is positively related to listening satisfaction.

Work-Life Balance and Relationship Dissolution

The dissolution of marital and cohabiting relationships can be explained by perceptions of work-life balance in a family household. Several correlational studies have noted that when work hours exceed the number of hours devoted to one’s partner, it can escalate the conflict and lead to feelings of relational dissolution in marital and cohabiting relationships (Spitze & South, 1985; Voydanoff, 1998; Yucel, 2012). In particular, a longitudinal study has found that wives’ excessive work hours positively correlate with marital dissolution. However, this study has not controlled for any demographic variables, and examined only marital couples (Yucel, 2012). A lack of work-life balance highlights the inability to manage energy and time effectively, due to partners’ work schedules in order to stabilize their long-term relationships (Tausig & Fenwick, 2001). Relationships with the inability to manage work-life balance are more likely to suffer from relational dissatisfaction, and stress, which may lead to relationship dissolution (Neff & Karney, 2007; Schaer, Bodenmann, & Klink, 2008). Couples who experience poor work-life balance also experience mental health issues, such as burnout and irritation

that can lead to conflict that reduces the quality of their relationship (Schaer et al., 2008). While previous work has examined specific work-life balance factors, such as work hours and time expended, no study has clearly examined work-life balance as a uniform construct in the context of marital and cohabiting relationships that link this construct to relational dissolution. Although previous research highlights that the lack of work-life balance places a relational strain in marital and cohabiting relationships, studies have not examined how it relates to relational dissolution. To examine the underlying relationship, while accounting for demographics including sex, age, ethnicity, type of relationship, and duration of the relationship, the following hypothesis will be examined:

H4: After controlling for demographic variables, work-life balance is inversely related to feelings of relationship dissolution.

Listening Satisfaction as a Mediator of Work-Life Balance and Relationship Dissolution

The inverse association between work-life balance and relationship dissolution may be influenced by a partner's listening satisfaction. Prior studies have noted that partners who maintain work-life balance in their family life are more likely to use effective listening behavior in the context of their romantic relationships (Pasupathi et al., 1999; Perrone & Worthington, 2001). In turn, partners who listen effectively to their partners' concerns at work are also more satisfied with their relationship, which can help them to engage in quality interactions about their work-life balance issues (Doohan, 2007). However, partners who report suffering from a work-life imbalance experience work stress and their relationship becomes less satisfying overtime, which leads to relationship dissolution (Debrot, Siegler, Klumb, & Schoebi, 2018; Yucel, 2012). When relational partners perceive that their partner is listening to them to understand their situation, they are more likely to experience "we-ness" and relationship satisfaction, which may reduce the likelihood of relationship dissolution (Reid, Dalton, Laderoute, Doell, & Nguyen, 2006; Ahmad & Reid, 2008).

Additionally, couples who perceive quality listening responsiveness skills with their partners are more likely to be satisfied in their relationship, and may be less likely to dissolve their romantic relationship (Cartensen, Gottman, & Levenson, 1995). Couples who perceive effective listening, such as using vocal backchannels, "mmms," report being more satisfied with each other, which aids in the stability of their relationship (Gould & Dixon, 1993). Partners who are satisfied with the listening responsiveness in their relationship, especially when trying to cope with stressful events, engage in dyadic coping mechanisms, which may reduce the likelihood of relationship dissolution (Kuhn, Bradbury, Nussbeck, & Bodenmann, 2018). Although the correlation relationships among these constructs have been established separately, no previous study has examined listening satisfaction as a possible mediator between work-life balance and relationship dissolution in mar-

ital and cohabiting relationships. By exploring listening satisfaction as an exploratory mediator, this study seeks to explore whether listening satisfaction plays a role in the relationship between work-life balance and relational dissolution perceptions. Thus, the following research question will be examined.

RQ1: Does listening satisfaction mediate the inverse relationship between work-life balance and relationship dissolution?

Method

Sample and Procedure

This national sample from the National Center for Family and Marriage Research at the Bowling Green State University (2010) included (50% women and 50% men, $n = 2,150$), a total of 1,075 couples. The average age of the adult participants was 44 ($SD = 11.95$; range = 18-64). The racial background of the participants was comprised of 80.5% White, Non-Hispanic, 5% Black, Non-Hispanic, 7.8% Hispanic, 1.8% two or more Races, Non-Hispanic, and 4.9% Other, Non-Hispanic. The educational background of participants was composed of 34.8% Bachelor's degree or higher, 36.6% some college, 23.3% high school, and 5.3% less than high school. The marital status of the participants includes 69.4% married, 0.2% divorced, 0.9% never married, and 29.4% living with a partner. Out of these participants, 70% reported being married, and 30% reported cohabiting in the household. The average duration of relationships across participants was 14.5 years. Additionally, the average duration of cohabitation prior to marriage within the subsample of married couples was two years. When indicating about the number of children under the age of 18, 59.9% of the couples reported being childless, while 40% reported having at least one child or more in the household. The employment status of the sample included 60.7% working (as a paid employee), 9.9% working (self-employed), 1.6% not working (on temporary layoff), 6.8% not working (looking for a job), 5% not working (retired), 5.8% not working (disabled), 10.3% not working (other). Lastly, the average household income of the sample ranged from \$50,000 to \$59,999 per year.

An online survey was conducted by the National Center for Family and Marriage Research at the Bowling Green State University in 2010, in order to examine married and cohabiting couples' relationship quality. Participants were recruited by using Knowledge Networks to ensure that the sample was representative of the U.S. population using a random-digital dial (RDD) and address-based sampling (ABS) methods. The inclusion criteria of the sample included being at least 18 years old, and reporting their relationship status (e.g., married, cohabiting). Once recruited, participants were randomly selected to complete a 25-minute online survey including demographic and measure-specific questions (e.g., work-life balance, listening satisfaction).

Instruments and Measures

The Marital Disillusionment Questionnaire (Niehuis, 2007). This was a 12-item scale which was used to assess feelings of dissolution in romantic relationships. Niehuis (2007) included items that were worded to be applicable to cohabiting couples as well. Sample items, “*I am very disappointed in my marriage/relationship*” and “*If I could go back in time, I would not marry/cohabit with my partner.*” Participants indicated whether they agreed with each statement on a scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). The alpha reliability of this instrument in this study was .93.

Listening Satisfaction (Mansfield, 2011). Listening satisfaction was assessed with one-item, which included, “*How satisfied are you with how well your spouse/partner listens to you?*” Participants indicated their agreement from 1 (*very dissatisfied*) to 5 (*very satisfied*). This one-measure item was developed in order to assess listening satisfaction among couples.

Work-life Balance. Mansfield’s (2011) adapted items from the Work-Family Conflict Scale developed by Netemeyer, Boles, and McMurrian (1996), and this instrument included items using a 5-point Likert scale. Sample items included

“*How much conflict is there in balancing work and family life?*”, “*How fair is the division of paid work and work around home in your household?*” “*Does your spouse/partner have a conflict in balancing work and family?*” “*How fair is division of work and work around home according to your spouse/partner?*” The alpha reliability of this instrument was .70.

Demographic Variables. To assess the control variables, demographic variables were measured including age, sex, ethnicity, relationship type, and duration of relationship.

Results

Descriptive Statistics, Correlations and Differences between Married and Cohabiting Partners

The analyses were conducted by using SPSS 22.0 and Process v5. The means, standard deviations, and zero-order correlations of the variables are displayed in Table 1. Work-life balance was weakly and positively associated with listening satisfaction, $r = .07$, $p < .01$, with a power of 0.75, and a small Cohen’s d effect of 0.21. However, work-life balance was weakly inversely associated with relational dissolution, $r = -.10$, $p < .01$, with a power of 0.98, and a small Cohen’s d effect of 0.31. Additionally, listening satisfaction was moderately and inversely associated with relational dissolution, $r = -.65$, $p < .01$, with a power of 0.99, and a small Cohen’s d effect of 0.33.

Table 1
Reporting means, standard deviations, and zero-order correlation matrix

Measure	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Age	1						
2. Sex	-.72**	1					
3. Ethnicity	-.18**	-.02	1				
4. Relationship Type	-.29**	.01	.11**	1			
5. Relationship Duration	.70**	-.01	-.04	-.21**	1		
5. Work-Life Balance	.03	-.04	-.01	-.08**	.02	1	
6. Listening Satisfaction	.01	.16**	-.02	.10**	.08*	.07**	1
7. Relationship Dissolution	-.02	-.06**	-.01	-.12**	-.08*	-.09**	-.64**
<i>M</i>	43.08	1.50	1.45	1.30	14.51	0.27	1.88
<i>SD</i>	11.95	0.50	1.02	0.46	10.29	0.21	0.97

Note. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Independent sample t-tests were conducted to assess whether married and cohabiting partners differed in their perceived listening satisfaction and relationship dissolution. Findings revealed that cohabiting individuals, $M = 2.02$, $SD = 1.04$, reported being more satisfied with how well their spouse/partner listened to them in comparison to married individuals, $M = 1.82$, $SD = 0.92$; $t(2139) = -4.31$, $p < .001$, with a small Cohen's d of 0.20, and a power effect of 0.10. Additionally, an independent sample t-test revealed that married individuals, $M = 3.96$, $SD = 0.71$, reported being more dissolutioned with their relationship than did cohabiting individuals, $M = 3.76$, $SD = 0.80$; $t(1078) = 5.30$, $p < .001$, with a Cohen's d of 0.26, and an effect size of 0.13.

Relation of Work-Life Balance, Listening Satisfaction and Relationship Dissolution

Hierarchical multiple regression analyses were conducted to analyze Hypotheses 3 and 4 by using bootstrapping analyses with 5,000 samples. The summary results of the findings for hypothesis 3 are located in Table 2. The third hypothesis predicted that after controlling for the demographic variables, age, sex, ethnicity, relationship type, and duration of relationship, work-life balance would be positively related to listening satisfaction. The multiple regression analysis provided a significant model, $R^2 = .04$, $F(4, 2360) = 21.94$, $p < .001$, after putting the controlling variables in the first block, and work-life balance in the second block. The first block on Table 2 ($R^2 = .05$) shows that age, sex, relationship type, and duration of relationship were positively related to listening satisfaction. However, ethnicity

was not found to be related to listening satisfaction. In the second block, after accounting for the demographic variables ($\Delta R^2 = .04$), work-life balance, $\beta = .10$, $p < .001$, positively related to listening satisfaction. Thus, the third hypothesis was supported.

Table 2

Results of multiple regression analysis between the demographic and WLB variable and listening satisfaction

	Listening Satisfaction			
	<i>t</i>	β	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>
Block 1	($R^2 = .05$)			
Age	2.24	.10***	.40	.01
Sex	7.88	.17***	.17	.01
Ethnicity	-0.16	-.01	-.01	.38
Relationship Type	5.14	.11***	.09	.01
Duration of Relationship	1.75	.09*	.70	.04
Block 2	($\Delta R^2 = .04$)			
Work-Life Balance	2.60	.10***	.09	.01

Notes. β - standardized beta coefficients; *t* - value of t-test; *r* - correlation coefficient.

* $p \leq .05$. ** $p \leq .01$. *** $p \leq .001$.

The fourth hypothesis predicted that after controlling for demographic variables, work-life balance would be inversely related to relationship dissolution. The summary results of the fourth hypothesis are provided in Table 3. The multiple regression analysis revealed a significant model, $R^2 = .04$, $F(4, 2070) = 11.57$, $p < .001$, after putting the controlling variables in the first block, and work-life balance in the second block. In the first block ($R^2 = .02$), age, sex, relationship type, and duration of relationship were found to be negatively related to relationship dissolution. However, ethnicity was not found to be related to relationship dissolution. In the second block, after accounting for the demographic variables, the model accounted for four percent of the variance in the negative relationship between work-life balance, $\beta = -.11$, $p < .001$, and relationship dissolution. Thus, the fourth hypothesis was supported.

Table 3

Results of multiple regression analysis between the demographic and WLB variable and relationship dissolution

	Relationship dissolution			
	<i>t</i>	β	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>
Block 1		$(R^2 = .02)$		
Age	-2.74	-.06**	-.02	.01
Sex	-2.96	-.10**	-.06	.01
Ethnicity	-0.11	-.01	-.01	.91
Relationship Type	-6.09	-.14***	-.12	.01
Duration of Relationship	-1.84	.10*	-.10	.03
Block 2		$(\Delta R^2 = .04)$		
Work-Life Balance	-3.07	-.11***	-.11	.01

Notes. β - standardized beta coefficients; *t* - value of t-test; *r* - correlation coefficient.

* $p \leq .05$. ** $p \leq .01$. *** $p \leq .001$.

A mediation analysis was conducted by using Hayes' (2013) Process v5 to explore research question one, which predicted that listening satisfaction mediated the relationship between work-life balance and relationship dissolution (See Figure 1).

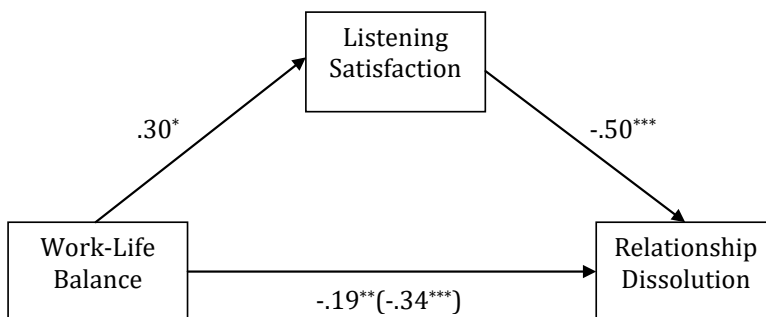


Figure 1. Mediation model relating to work-life balance, listening satisfaction, and relationship dissolution.

Notes. The values represented are standardized regression coefficients (β). The value in the parenthesis denotes the direct effect of work-life balance on relationship dissolution with listening satisfaction as the mediator.

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

The results of the mediation are summarized in Table 4. In Step 1 of the mediation model, the regression analysis results, ignoring the mediator, indicated that work-life balance was a significant predictor of listening satisfaction. Step 2 showed that work-life balance, accounting for listening satisfaction (mediator), was a significant negative predictor of relational dissolution. In Step 3, listening satisfaction (mediator), controlling for work-life balance, was a significant predictor of relational dissolution. Step 4 also revealed that work-life balance was a significant predictor of relational dissolution. A Sobel test was conducted, and found partial support for the mediation in the model, $Z = -2.84, p = .004$. Approximately 42% of the variance in relational dissolution was accounted by the predictors. As such, listening satisfaction mediated the relationship between work-life balance and relationship dissolution.

Table 4
Results of model coefficients for the work-life balance: mediation analysis

Outcome	Consequent							
	Listening Satisfaction			95%CI	Relationship Dissolution			95%CI
	β	$t(SE)$	p	Lower, Upper	β	$t(SE)$	p	Lower, Upper
Work-Life Balance	.30	2.85 (0.10)	< .01	0.09, 0.50	-.19	-3.27 (0.06)	< .01	-0.30, -0.08
Listening Satisfaction	—	—	—	—	-.49	-32.7 (0.02)	< .001	-0.52, -0.46
Constant	1.80	0.04	< .001	1.73, 1.87	4.89	155.3 (0.03)	< .001	4.83, 4.95
	$R^2 = 0.01, p < .001$				$R^2 = 0.42, p < .001$			

Notes. 95% CI (lower/upper) – lower and upper bound of a 95% confidence interval. Regression weights for a (Work-Life Balance to Listening Satisfaction), b (Listening Satisfaction to Relationship Dissolution), and c' (Work-Life Balance to Relationship Dissolution) are illustrated in Figure 1.

To better understand the relationships between work-life balance, listening satisfaction, and relationship dissolution, post-hoc moderation effects were explored by using relationship type and relationship duration as potential moderators using Hayes' (2013) Process v5 (Baron & Kenny, 1986). The first moderation effect examined whether relationship type moderated the relationship between work-life balance and listening satisfaction, and the relationship between work-life balance and relationship dissolution (See Figure 2).

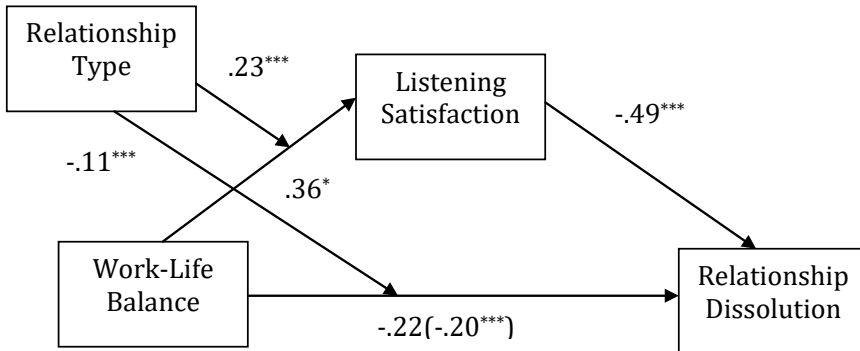


Figure 2. Moderated mediation model relating to relationship type as the moderator of work-life balance, listening satisfaction, and relationship dissolution.

Notes. The values represented are standardized regression coefficients (β). The value in the parenthesis denotes the direct effect of work-life balance on relationship dissolution with listening satisfaction as the mediator.

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

The results of the first moderation test using relationship type are summarized in Table 5. Results demonstrated a positive moderating effect of relationship type on the positive relationship between work-life balance and listening satisfaction. Additionally, relationship type had an inverse moderating effect on the inverse relationship between work-life balance and relationship dissolution. The overall model supported listening satisfaction as the mediator of the inverse relationship of work-life balance and relationship dissolution, while accounting for the moderating effect of relationship type.

Table 5
Results of model coefficients for the work-life balance: moderated mediation analysis

Outcome	Consequent								
	Listening Satisfaction			95%CI		Relationship Dissolution			95%CI
	β	t(SE)	p	Lower, Upper	β	t(SE)	p	Lower, Upper	
Work-Life Balance	.36	3.55 (0.10)	<.001	0.16, 0.55	-.22	-3.68 (0.06)	<.001	-0.34, -0.10	
Listening Satisfaction	—	—	—	—	-.49	-37.38 (0.01)	<.001	-0.51, -0.46	
Relationship Type	0.23	4.89 (0.04)	<.001	0.14, 0.31	-.11	-3.86 (0.03)	<.001	-0.16, -0.05	
Constant	1.88	88.90 (0.02)	<.001	1.84, 1.92	4.82	174.3 (0.02)	<.001	4.77, 4.87	
$R^2 = 0.02, p < .001$				$R^2 = 0.42, p < .001$					

Note. CI (lower/upper) – lower and upper bound of a 95% confidence interval. Regression weights for a (Work-Life Balance to Listening Satisfaction), b (Listening Satisfaction to Relationship Dissolution), c1' (Work-Life Balance to Relationship Dissolution), and a2, c2' (Relationship Type) are illustrated in Figure 2.

The second post-hoc moderation analysis examined the moderating effect of duration of the relationship in the relationship between work-life balance and listening satisfaction, and the relationship between work-life balance and relationship dissolution (See Figure 3).

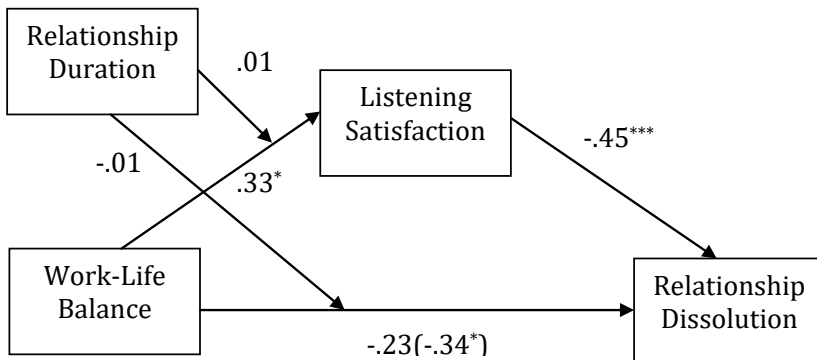


Figure 3. Moderated mediation model relating to relationship duration as the moderator of work-life balance, listening satisfaction, and relationship dissolution.

Notes. The values represented are standardized regression coefficients (β). The value in the parenthesis denotes the direct effect of work-life balance on relationship dissolution with listening satisfaction as the mediator.

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

The results of the second moderation test using duration of the relationship are summarized in Table 6. It was found that relationship duration had a positive moderating effect in the relationship between work-life balance and listening satisfaction. However, relationship duration did not have a moderating effect on the inverse relationship between work-life balance and relationship dissolution. The overall model supported listening satisfaction as a mediator of the inverse relationship between work-life balance and relationship dissolution, accounting for the moderating effect of relationship duration.

Table 6

Results of model coefficients for the work-life balance: moderated mediation analysis

Outcome	Consequent							
	Listening Satisfaction			95% CI	Relationship Dissolution			95% CI
	β	$t(SE)$	p	Lower, Upper	β	$t(SE)$	p	Lower, Upper
Work-Life Balance	.33	54.25 (0.03)	< .05	0.03, 0.62	-.23	-2.39 (0.09)	< .05	-0.42, -0.41
Listening Satisfaction	—	—	—	—	-.45	-19.28 (0.02)	< .001	-0.49, -0.41
Relationship Duration	.01	2.07 (0.01)	<.05	0.01, 0.01	-.01	-1.15 (0.01)	< .05	-0.01, -0.01
Constant	1.87	54.26 (0.03)	<.001	1.80, 1.94	4.79	97.87 (0.05)	<.001	4.69, 4.88
	$R^2 = .01, p < .05$				$R^2 = .35, p < .001$			

Note. CI (lower/upper) – lower and upper bound of a 95% confidence interval. Regression weights for a (Work-Life Balance to Listening Satisfaction), b (Listening Satisfaction to Relationship Dissolution), $c1'$ (Work-Life Balance to Relationship Dissolution), and $a2, c2'$ (Relationship Duration) are illustrated in Figure 3.

Discussion

The purpose of this study has been to explore the relationships between listening satisfaction, work-life balance, and relationship dissolution. The results from this study extend prior scholarship by examining differences among marital and cohabiting couples, and by exploring listening satisfaction as a mediator of the relationship between work-life balance and relationship dissolution. The findings can also guide future scholarship about the perceived listening satisfaction in marital and cohabiting relationships, and how it is associated with constructs such as work-life balance and relationship dissolution. Additionally, this study has tested the moderating effects of relationship type and duration of the relationship to further understand the interrelationships between the main constructs.

The findings of this study challenge the findings of previous scholarship indicating that marital and cohabiting partners differ in their listening satisfaction. First, cohabiting individuals have indicated being more satisfied with the listening abilities of their partners than have been marital individuals. Previously, there have been mixed findings, such as a study by Rhoades et al. (2009), who have found that cohabiting individuals might not be willing to listen effectively, based on the commitment levels of their relationship. Additionally, it has been found that marital partners exhibit effective listening capabilities (Pasupathi et al., 1999). Conversely, the reasons cohabiting individuals practice effective listening behaviors may be to maintain open communication, trust, and relational maintenance. By listening effectively to each other in conversations, cohabiting individuals are more likely to be satisfied in their relationship. Additionally, marital individuals might have perceived poor listening abilities from their partners, since overtime, married individuals might exhibit poor listening behaviors such as “stonewalling,” interrupting, and the silent treatment, to win arguments during conflicts (Haase, Holley, Block, Verstaen, & Levenson, 2016).

Additionally, married individuals have reported being more dissolutioned with their relationship than have been cohabiting individuals. Previously, research has documented that cohabiting individuals may be less invested, committed, and satisfied with their relationship in comparison to married individuals (Dush, 2013; Stanley et al., 2004). However, this study has found that married individuals are more dissolutioned with their partners, and this may be due to several reasons. First, since married individuals are legally bonded with each other, even if they are dissatisfied with their relationship, married individuals may choose to stay in poor quality relationships, and experience dissolutionment or the desire to terminate their relationship. Second, married individuals may judge their partners based on previous expectations. For instance, if partners appear to be more desirable in the early stages of marriage, or if their behavior has been more civilized, then partners’ dissolutionment may emerge, which may lead to relationship dissolution (Bae & Wickrama, 2019). Third, cohabiting partners might appreciate their partners to a greater extent than married individuals because of their perceived agency in their decision to stay in the relationship, and the expectations of their partner might be lower since there are no pre-established standards for cohabiting relationships in comparison to marital relationships (Cherlin, 2004).

Another finding is that work-life balance has been positively correlated to listening satisfaction among married and cohabiting couples. Studies have found that communication skills including listening behaviors are positively related to work-life balance (Li & Fung, 2011). Couples who perceive effective work-life balance may be more satisfied with the listening behavior of their partners. One reason may be that individuals who perceive work-life balance may devote more time and energy in conversing with their partners. When partners communicate regularly, partners may be better able to listen to each other’s problems and concerns (Perrone & Worthington, 2001). Another reason may be that partners of individ-

uals who effectively manage their work and life roles may exhibit the desirable listening behavior, which may enhance the quality of communication. However, when partners perceive poor work-life balance they also perceive poor listening capabilities from their partners. Partners who are overcommitted with work duties may rush through conversations with their partners, and this may lead to being dissatisfied with the listening behavior of their partners.

Additionally, work-life balance has been inversely related to relationship dissolution among married and cohabiting couples. Similar to previous studies, couples who perceive effective work-life balance in their lives are less likely to suffer from the factors that lead to relationship dissolution than those with poor work-life balance (Neff & Karney, 2007; Schaer et al., 2008). Couples with perceived work-life balance may be better at maintaining their relationship and avoid dissolution feelings toward their partners. On another note, couples who perceive poor work-life balance indicate being dissolutioned with their partners, and desire dissolution of the relationship. One reason for this finding may be that a lack of work-life balance may negatively impact the quality of the relationship, which may lead to relationship dissolution (Schaer et al., 2008). Additionally, low work-life balance can take a negative toll in the time and energy invested in the relationship, which can lead to relationship dissolution.

Another contribution of this study is that listening satisfaction serves as a partial mediator of the inverse relationship between work-life balance and relationship dissolution. Individuals in relationships that have experienced work-life balance report being satisfied with the listening behavior of their partners, and as a result, they are less likely to have a desire for relationship dissolution. Because work-life balance implies that couples are better able to divide their labor at home, and manage their time and energy resources, the couples with effective work-life balance skills may be more equipped to practice effective listening behaviors, which can lead to listening satisfaction. If partners are satisfied with their partners' listening behaviors, this may reduce perceptions of relationship dissolution. As such, listening satisfaction, an understudied phenomenon, may play a mediating role in reducing perceptions of relationship dissolution. By engaging in the listening process during conversations, couples may be able to potentially halt marital dissolution. Yet, if partners are not satisfied with the listening behavior of their partner, this may weaken the relationship between work-life balance and relationship dissolution.

This study has also shown that relationship type and duration of the relationship have moderating effects on the relationships between work-life balance and listening satisfaction, and work-life balance and relationship dissolution. In particular, relationship type, whether a couple is married versus cohabiting, have an effect on the relationship between work-life balance and listening satisfaction, and this may be because cohabiting couples report being more satisfied with their partners' listening behaviors than the married couples do. One explanation may be due to the enhanced work-life balance that is reported by cohabiting couples,

given that cohabiting couples may be more likely to fairly share home responsibilities and duties in comparison to married couples (Hakansson, Milevi, Eek, Oudin, & Wagman, 2019). Similarly, because married individuals are less likely to equally divide the labor in the home in comparison to cohabiting individuals (Baxter, 2005) this can explain why relationship type has had a negative moderating effect on the inverse relationship between work-life balance and relationship dissolution. Lastly, it has been found that duration of the relationship has a moderating effect in the positive association of work-life balance and listening satisfaction. Such individuals with perceived work-life balance, in longer relationships, may be more satisfied with the listening behavior of their partners than those in shorter relationships. This moderating effect may be explained in the fact that lengthier romantic relationships tend to become more interdependent and intimate, and partners learn how to read each other's communicative feedback and appraisals better than in shorter relationships (Campbell, Lackenbauer, & Muise, 2006; Swann, De La Ronde, & Hixon, 1994).

Implications

Several implications may be derived from the results of this study. From the research perspective, this study suggests that an understudied construct in romantic relationships, listening satisfaction, may be helpful in understanding the inverse association between work-life balance and relationship dissolution. For instance, relationship researchers may examine the role of listening satisfaction in the context of cohabiting and marital relationships by using longitudinal approaches. To add, the moderating effect of relationship type and duration of the relationship have informed the interrelationships between work-life balance and listening satisfaction, and work-life balance and relationship dissolution. The results also provide practical implications for couples and relationship practitioners such as marital counselors. First, this study has shown that cohabiting couples are better able to engage in work-life balance, and have also reported enhanced listening satisfaction. Cohabiting couples who are able to engage in active listening processes may be more mindful and attentive about their partners' work-life balance needs (Perrone & Worthington, 2001), and as a result, may have a reduced likelihood of relationship dissolution. However, marital couples who struggle with work-life balance may also engage in poor listening practices, which can place the couple at risk for relationship dissolution. As such, couples that communicate about their work-life balance problems, and listen and provide feedback to each other may reduce their likelihood of relationship dissolution (Gravningen et al., 2017). Couples' relationship length may also play a role in how individuals perceive their partners' listening behaviors due to their commitment and investment in the relationships, and this can help marital counselors understand why couples who perceive having work-life balance may be more likely to be satisfied with their partners' listening behaviors than those with perceived imbalances.

Limitations and Future Directions

Limitations of this study will be discussed along with directions for future research. First, this study is cross-sectional. Future studies need to adopt a longitudinal perspective to determine if the inverse relationship between work-life balance and marital dissolution becomes stronger over time. Also, a longitudinal perspective may be applied across the relationship of cohabiting and married individuals, to determine the impact of listening satisfaction on the perceptions of relationship dissolution. Second, this study has included only heterosexual couples. Future studies may investigate whether these findings are consistent across LGBT couples. Third, the measure of listening satisfaction is a one-item measure. While one-item measures have been adopted by previous scholars, future researchers need to develop new listening satisfaction scales to capture the complexity of this understudied construct in the context of romantic relationships (Doell, 2003). For example, future researchers can create a new scale based on Doell's (2003) dual concepts of listening, including listening to understand one's partner and listening to respond. Fourth, the perceptions of both partners have not been taken into account in this study. In the future, studies should include the perspectives of both partners to determine how these constructs impact their relationship. Finally, the frameworks examined in this study have been limited to examining the mediation effect of listening among the constructs, and the moderating effects of the type of relationship and duration of the relationship. Future research can broaden this framework with other potential pathways such as personality constructs like narcissism and extroversion, and the nature of the work position.

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RELACIJE IZMEĐU BALANSA PRIVATNOG I PROFESIONALNOG ŽIVOTA I VARIJABLI ZADOVOLJSTVA PARTNERSKIM RELACIJAMA

Visoki zahtevi koje savremeno društvo stavlja pred pojedince mogu uticati na poimanje balansa između privatnih i profesionalnih uloga, kako u vanbračnim, tako i u bračnim zajednicama. Nesklad između privatne i profesionalne sfere života za ishod može imati slabu komunikaciju koja doprinosi udaljavanju i razlazu među partnerima. Osim toga, ukoliko pojedinac nije zadovoljan spremnošću partnera da ga sasluša, to, takođe, za ishod može imati slabljenje i prekid veze. U nastojanju da se ispitaju relacije između usklađenosti privatnih i profesionalnih uloga, zadovoljstva spremnošću partnera da sasluša onog drugog i procene vanbračne, odnosno bračne zajednice kao oslabljene, u istraživanju su analizirani podaci Nacionalnog centra za istraživanje porodice i braka pri Bowling Green State Univerzitetu. Na uzorku od 2150 ispitanika (1075 parova; 50% žena, prosečna starost 44 godine) primenjen je Upitnik prekida partnerske veze i Skala konflikata među životnim ulogama. Usklađenost privatne i profesionalne sfere života ostvaruje pozitivnu povezanost sa zadovoljstvom partnerovom spremnošću da sasluša onog drugog, dok je negativno povezana sa percepcijom oslabljenosti partnerskih relacija. Rezultati t-testa za nezavisne uzorke, takođe, ukazuju na to parovi koji žive u vanbračnoj zajednici izveštavaju o višem zadovoljstvu u pogledu spremnosti partnera da sasluša onog drugog, u odnosu na parove koji su u braku. Sa druge strane, parovi koji žive u braku ispoljili su viši stepen percepcije oslabljenosti partnerskih relacija nego parovi koji žive u vanbračnoj zajednici. Rezultati regresione analize sugerišu da je usklađenost privatnih i profesionalnih uloga pozitivno povezano sa zadovoljstvom u pogledu spremnosti partnera da sasluša onog drugog, dok je negativno povezano sa percepcijom oslabljenosti partnerskih relacija. Zadovoljstvo partnerovom spremnošću da sasluša onog drugog kao medijator ostvaruje indirektni efekat između negativno povezanih varijabli usklađenosti privatnih i profesionalnih uloga i percepcije oslabljenosti partnerskih relacija. Tip partnerske zajednice ostvaruje moderatorski efekat u relaciji između usklađenosti privatnih i profesionalnih uloga i zadovoljstva spremnošću partnera da sasluša onog drugog, odnosno između negativno povezanih varijabli usklađenosti privatnih i profesionalnih uloga i percepcije osla-

bljenosti partnerskih relacija. Naposljetku, dužina trajanja veze moderira relacije između usklađenosti privatnih i profesionalnih uloga i zadovoljstva spremnošću partnera da sasluša onog drugog. Dobijeni nalazi produbljuju shvatanje relacija između usklađenosti privatnih i profesionalnih uloga, zadovoljstva partnerovom spremnošću da sasluša onog drugog i percepcije oslabljenosti partnerskih relacija.

Ključne reči: balans privatnog i profesionalnog života, bračni odnosi, kohabitacija, prekid veze, slušanje od strane partnera