

# A Literature Review of the Work-family Conflict

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## Abstract

Work and family are the two most common social roles in people's lives. While they support each other, work and family dynamics can also conflict. When employees experience work-family conflicts, it directly impacts their family life satisfaction and personal well-being. Therefore, promoting work-family balance has become a hot topic in current research. This paper reviews the literature on the origins and development of work-family conflicts, their definitions, dimensions, measurement methods, as well as the antecedent and consequence variables, and proposes suggestions for future research directions.

## Keywords

Work-family Conflict; pre-dependent variables; Effect

## Introduction

Work and family are the two most common domains that a person plays in his social life, and they are also the two most common social roles that are played by a person. These two roles support each other in some cases, but they also conflict in some cases (Wang & Huang, 2023). Therefore, seeking the harmony between work and family has become a common pursuit in modern society (Xu, 2022). They are a community of contradictions. Whether the conflict between the two can be properly handled, it can affect the happiness of employees' family life. If employees can not effectively solve the conflict between work and family, then this conflict will bring a series of negative effects on the physical and mental health of employees themselves. Therefore, promoting the balance between work and family has become a topic of interest in many research today (Xu, 2022).

## 1. Sources and development of work-family conflicts

Kahn (1964) first proposed the concept of Work-Family Conflict (WFC), but he focused more on the objective incompatibility between work and family, so it was not recognized by most scholars. Subsequently, scholars Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) proposed that work-family conflict is a special form of inter-role conflict, and that

role pressure from work and family is incompatible in some ways. When individuals participate in work roles, because of family roles or family roles, they intersect and influence each other (Mao, 2018). "Greenhaus", the theoretical view of role conflict proposed by Beutell is objective and comprehensive, which has attracted many researchers to the negative aspects of work and family relationship (work and family conflict) (Xu, 2022). This is the first phase of the study of work-family conflict, at which scholars have only the one-way conflict from work to family, including representative studies (Bedeian et al., 1991; Cook and Rousseau, 1984). In the second stage, Frone (1992) and other scholars, based on the conceptual research of work-family conflict, subdivided work-family conflict into two different directions: work-family conflict and family-work conflict, and explored the mechanism differences of two-way conflict between work-family conflict and family-work conflict. However, at this stage, most scholars emphasize that there is a negative collision relationship between work and family, including related representative studies (Kossek and Ozeki, 1998). Frone (2003) presents a more positive view of the concept of work-family promotion (WFF), which refers to the role enhancement between work and family. The concept points out that in people's roles in the fields of work and home, one role makes the other easier and more comfortable, and there is a positive interaction between work and home. Related studies include Wayne et al. (2004), Greenhaus and Powell (2003). This is the third stage of the work-family study. At this stage, scholars Greenhaus, Collins & Shaw (2003) and Carlson (2009) emphasized that the relationship between work and family should not be either positive or negative, and the study of work and family balance emerged.

## 2. The dimensional structure of work-family conflict

In the 1980s, work and family conflicts were more identified as single-dimensional structure, scholars think only work and family interference (Cooke & Rousseau, 1984). After the 90s, Many scholars have proposed that work-family conflict is a two-way effect, Including work-family conflicts arising when work affects the family (Work-Inference-Family Conflict, WIF), And family impact work family-work conflict (Family-Inference-Work Conflict, FIW), (Frone, Russell, &Coopers 1997; Kelloway, Gottlieb, &Barham, 1999; Shi, 2023). In 1985, Scholars Greenhaus and Beutell propose new division criteria for work-family conflict, they think the work-family conflict have Three dimensions, such as time, stress and behavior. In the 1990s, Scholar Gutek et al. (1991) combined the classification of three working family conflicts and two relative directions, they dividing work-family conflict into six dimensions, And subsequent studies also showed that, The differentiation of different types of work and family conflicts in the three dimensions of time, stress and behavior (Allen et al., 2012; Mao, 2018)

**Table 1.** Work and family conflict 6 dimension table

|  | Based on the time | Based on the Stress | Based on the behavior |
|--|-------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
|--|-------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|

|     |      |      |      |
|-----|------|------|------|
| WIF | TWIF | SWIF | BWIF |
| FIW | TFIW | SFIW | BFIW |

### 3. Measurement of working-family conflict

In terms of the measurement of the working family, the working family conflict involves a very wide range, so many scholars have compiled the corresponding measurement scales based on the different dimensions of the working family conflict. For example, Netemeyer et al. (1996) compiled two subscales, WIF and FIW to measure the level of work and family conflict. Carlson And other scholars (2000) designed the corresponding scale of 18 items based on the six dimensions of work and family conflict, each of which is composed of 3 items, which is measured by Likert five-point scoring method. The study shows that the scale has good reliability and validity, which is widely recognized by the academic circle. Chinese academic circles in the translation and revision of the Carlson scale application, they think it have a good results. Zhao et al. (2021) adapted the Work-Family bidirectional Conflict Scale (Bi-directional Scale of Work-Family Conflict).Haslam et al. of China (2015) designed and developed a working family conflict scale to measure the level of working family conflict among a group of young children aged 2-12, with a total of 10 items. Chinese scholar Liu et al. (2017) tested the reliability and validity of the scale developed by Carlson et al. (2000), and they found achieved good results, which laid a solid foundation for the generation of a large number of empirical research.

### 4. Factors or pre-dependent variables of work-family conflict

In terms of the influencing factors of work family conflict, the existing literature divides the leading variables of work family conflict into four categories according to the main sources of work family conflict, namely work domain, family domain, personality and demographic.

Area of work, The variables related to work stress, work demand, and organization support were good predictors of work-family conflict, Variables such as work engagement, work pressure, work time urgency, task type, burnout, supervisor behavior and perceived organizational support can all influence the generation of work-family conflicts (Greenhaus et al., 1987; Clark, 2000; Grzywacz & Marks, 2000; Nielson et al.,2001; Drummond et al.,2017; Dettmers & Jan, 2017; French et al.,2018; Eddleston et al.,2018). In terms of job requirements, job requirements, work hours, work pressure, work overload, and work flexibility will also affect work and family conflicts (Huang,2016). Hill (2001) and others conducted a study of IBM employees in the United States and found that work flexibility under the premise of controlling work hours can significantly improve the work and family balance, and work flexibility under the same work pressure also has a positive impact on employees to achieve the work and family balance. Zhong and Li (2023) studied caregivers in urban nursing homes, and found that flexible working system can solve the problem of

time poverty and is very important for attracting and retaining caregivers. In terms of organizational support, Behson (2005) divides the workplace support into official support, such as flexible working hours, holidays, etc., and unofficial support, including emotional support between colleagues or superiors. Compared with formal support, informal support is more significant, and colleagues, leadership support is more predictive of WFC. Impact. Zheng (2023) believes that family support leaders play a regulating role between work and family conflicts and job satisfaction, and can alleviate the negative impact of employees' work and family conflicts on job satisfaction, so as to reduce the tendency to leave. Chen (2007) and others found that the implementation of work sharing can alleviate work and family conflicts, promote work and life balance, and reduce work pressure to a certain extent. Huang (2007) research on entrepreneurial women found that the balance of work and family has a role on various performance indicators through job satisfaction, and will be affected by individual characteristics in this process. Some scholars believe that the longer the working time, the greater the working intensity, the greater the work pressure, the more unstable work, management position and work content, workers face higher work-family conflict (Parasuraman & Simmers, 2001; Annink et al., 2016); more friendly working environment, flexible work arrangement helps reduce work-family conflict (Shockley & Allen, 2007). Social support helps to alleviate work-family conflicts among workers. On the one hand, the provision of parental resources and holidays by the state or employer can reduce the worries of workers (Stier et al., 2012). Recently, Min (Maggie) Wan et al. (2022), this study defined the work-family balance as a higher-order structure, including psychological (work-family balance satisfaction) and social (work-family balance effectiveness) dimensions. The results-analysis showed that colleague support played a mediating role in work-family conflict, and when colleague support was high, the negative correlation between work task conflict and work-family balance was weak.

From the perspective of family domain, variables related to family stress and family support predicted better for family-work conflict, such as family input, family support, marital status, number of children (Carlson, 1999; Grzywacz & Marks, 2000; Greenhaus & Powell, 2003, Page et al., 2018). Studies have also found that the size of families, care and housework of preschool children, conflicts with partners, spouse employment and family needs can also affect work and family conflicts. For example, (Grzywacz & Marks, 2000), the more children, the more time spent taking care of children, the greater the impact of family work conflict. Some scholars believe that emotional support and household help from spouses and family members can alleviate work-family conflicts (Eddleston & Powell, 2012). Huang & Peng (2023) suggest that work-family conflict can reduce the parent-child relationship and directly predict the problem behavior of young children, whereas spouse support has a significant regulatory effect on the path of work-family conflict predicting parent-child relationship and problem behavior. Recently, some scholars

have begun to pay attention to the impact of family care on work and family conflicts. Li (2022) divided families into four types of family care load: full-time workers, those with no care load, those who need to take care of the children, those who need to take care of the elders, and those who take care of the children and the elders simultaneously. The research results showed that work and family conflicts, psychological distress and happiness had significant differences between different care loads.

Personality characteristics according to Allen (2012) and other scholars believe that the degree of perception and coping ability of work-family conflict also vary according to the individual temperament of workers (Allen et al., 2012). Personality traits, including neuroticism, self-efficacy, psychological resilience, responsibility, and agreeableness. According to previous studies on personality variables, negative associations with agreeableness, conscientiousness (Wayne et al., 2004), self-efficacy (Biggart, 2010), with neuroticism (Wayne et al., 2004), type A personality (Michel & Clark, 2009), and significantly with psychological control source and coping style (Ahmad & Ngah, 2009). Zhang & Ji (2021) studied the new generation of miners, and found that psychological resilience and work and family conflict, and work and family conflict is the intermediary variable of psychological resilience and work withdrawal of the new generation of miners. Grzywacz And Marks (2000) showed that neuroticism is positively correlated with work-family conflict; Wayne et al. (2007) believed that neuroticism and work-family balance, and individuals with neurotic personality are not good at promoting work-family balance; Zhao (2012) and others studied the influence of emotional regulation strategies on work-family relations to improve individual emotions and promote the balance between work and family, while expression inhibition cannot help individuals to deal with work and family relations, but will increase work-family conflict.

In addition, many scholars have noted the impact of demographic characteristics on work-family conflict (WFC) and family-work conflict (FWC). Karatepe and Baddad (2006) argued that gender was significantly positively associated with work-family conflict, while the study of Karatepe and Bekteshit (2008) showed that there was no correlation between sex and work-family conflict. Karatepe and Kilic (2007) believed that education had a significant negative impact on work-family conflict, but Karatepe and Bekteshit (2008) found that the correlation coefficient between education and work-family conflict was not significant. Kimberly and Powell (2012) studied the working and family balance of male and female entrepreneurs from the perspective of gender and found that female entrepreneurs tend to cultivate the satisfaction of balance between work and family, by creating the synergistic effect of working and family, while male entrepreneurs tend to cultivate the satisfaction of balance with work and family to obtain family support. Zhang and Shi (2019) studied the differences in work and family conflicts between married men and women in 39 countries / regions, including China, and found that under the same conditions,

women face a higher degree of work and family conflict than men. Compared with other countries, work and family conflicts between Chinese men and women are at the middle level, but there are significant gender differences: reducing working hours and improving the division of housework are more helpful to reduce work-family conflicts among Chinese women. A gender equality environment in countries also helps to reduce work-family conflict. The study of Orhan Uludag et al. (2023) showed that work-family conflict was positively associated with women's turnover rate.

In addition, studies found that role-related variables, such as work role conflict, role overload, role ambiguity, and work involvement were significantly related to work and family conflict, and variables related to family role, ambiguity, and involvement were significantly related to family work conflict (Boyar, 2008; Byron, 2005; Li et al., 2023).

## 5. The effect of work and family conflict

Scholars have also carried out many studies on the outcome variables of work and family conflict, which mainly focuses on four levels, including work level, family level, physical and mental health level and individual happiness level. At the work level, the main variables studied were job satisfaction, job burnout, turnover rate, organizational commitment, work performance and so on. Most scholars believe that the impact of work-family conflict is in the workplace, including reducing job satisfaction (Zhao & et.al, 2021; Lin, 2020; Zhang, 2022; Varsha Yadav and Himani Sharma, 2021), organizational commitment (Eby, 2003; Allen et al., 2000; Lin, 2020), job performance (Froone, Russell, & Cooper 1997), improving individual intention to leave (Eby, 2005; Frone, 2010; Orhan Uludag et al., 2022; Zhao et al., 2021; Ilhami Yucel et al., 2023; Huong Le et al., 2022), and absenteeism (Boyal, 2005), leading to less promotion (Hoobler, Wayne & Lemmon, 2009). Carlson (2009) et al. found that work-family balance was positively associated with job satisfaction and organizational commitment, and negatively associated with turnover intention. The research results of Wang Ting (2011) et al. show that all dimensions of work and family balance are significantly related to the relationship between organizational performance. Work and family balance is conducive to the improvement of organizational performance and also promotes employees' job satisfaction. There are scholars through work family conflict of bidirectional research variables, such as Kossek and Ozeki through meta-analysis found that family-work conflict negatively affect work performance and work attitude, work-family conflict will not have negative effects on it, but the two directions of work family conflict will affect career exit intention (Kossek & Ozeki, 1998). Studies point out that work-family conflict positively affects employees' career withdrawal intention, emotional exhaustion and work input; family-work conflict negatively affects service performance, emotional exhaustion and work, and work performance (Xu Zikun, 2022). However, some studies have

found that influenced by traditional Chinese Confucian culture (Kirkbride & Miles, 2008), work and family conflicts not only do not have a significant negative impact on employees' performance and exit intentions, but even some conflicts will improve employees' performance (Choi & Kim, 2012; Muse & Pichler, 2011; Zhao et al., 2011). This may be due to the different cultural backgrounds of the research subjects and the different definitions of work performance (Edwards et al., 2008). However, the relevant supporting research is still relatively scarce, leading to the research problem is still in an imperfect state.

At the family level, the impact of work-family conflicts on family is mainly reflected in the satisfaction of marriage and family (Karatepe & Sokmen, 2006), which reduces satisfaction and family performance (Frone et al., 1997; Zhao et al., 2021; Kubra S € ,ims,ek Demirbag and Orkun Demirba g,2022), and even leads to the decline of the quality of parent-child relationship and the birth of troubled children (Crouter et al., 1999). Allen (2000) et al. found that employees with work family balance had better marriage life and more family satisfaction, Frone (1997) et al. believed that work family balance could significantly improve family efficiency, and Carlson (2009) study found that work family balance could improve family function.

In terms of physical and mental health and personal happiness, Kofodimos (1993) believes that work-family balance improves happiness. Carlson and Kaemar (2000) found that individuals with balanced balance experience satisfaction with work and family roles and reduce role conflict (Jain & Nair, 2013). Li (2022) believes that under different care loads, work and family conflicts can significantly predict psychological distress and happiness, and work and family gain can significantly predict happiness.

Based on the previous elaboration, this chapter will summarize the relationship between the variables of work-family conflict. Work-family conflict, including work and family conflict and family-work conflict (Mao, 2018; Xu, 2022), and work and family conflict has a positive impact, but also has a negative impact (Carlson, 2009). The leading factor variables of work and family conflict include: work field, family domain, personal characteristics and demographic variables. In the work field, work pressure, work input, work duration and work intensity positively affect work and family conflicts (Orhan & Zainab, 2023; Tharindu et al., 2022; Colette, 2007; Kubra et al., 2022), while organizational support, organizational performance and work flexibility negatively affect work and family conflicts (Zhao et al., 2021; Colette et al., 2007; Hill, 2001; Behson, 2005). In the family field, the number of children and family input positively influence family work conflict (Zhao et al., 2021; Grzywacz & Marks, 2000), family support and marriage relationship negatively influence family work conflict (Varsha & Himani, 2023; Huong, 2022), and family structure has a significant correlation with family work conflict (Li, 2022). In terms of personality characteristics, self-efficacy, responsibility and agreeableness were negatively associated with work-family conflict (Biggart, 2010; Wayne et al., 2004), and neuroticism

was positively correlated with work-family conflict (Wayne et al., 2004; Michel & Clark, 2009; Grzywacz & Marks 2000). According to demographics, gender and education level showed significant differences between them and work-family conflicts in some conditions (Zhang & Shi, 2019; Orhan et al., 2023; Karatepe & Bekteshit ,2008; Karatepe & Kilic, 2007). In terms of the outcome variables, work and family conflicts play a certain role in the work level, family level, physical and mental health level and individual happiness level. At the work level, work and family conflicts negatively affect job satisfaction, organizational commitment and work performance(Zhao et al., 2021; Lin, 2020; Zhang,2022; Varsha & Himani, 2023; Carlson,2009; Frone et al., 1997), and positively affect job burnout and turnover intention(Xu,2022; Orhan et al.,2023;Zhao et al.,2021; Orhan et al., 2023; Ilhami et al.,2023; Huong, 2022). At the family level, work-family conflicts negatively affect family performance, family satisfaction and parent-child relationship (Frone et al.,1997; Zhao et al.,2021; Kubra et al., 2022; Crouter et al,1999). In terms of physical and mental health and happiness, work and family conflicts negatively affect physical and mental health and happiness (Lin, 2022; Quan, 2022).

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