

# The Link Between Work-family Conflict and Well-being in Reducing Turnover Intention: The Moderating Role of Supervisor Support

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## Abstract

Work-family conflict (WFC) is a common problem faced by nurses (Pien, 2021; Zhang, 2020). Nursing is a female-dominated profession in China, and female nurses play a vital role in the healthcare system. The high turnover rate and shortage of female nurses in China has become an agenda that cannot be ignored, and hospitals at all levels are trying to actively adopt reform measures to improve job satisfaction and reduce turnover rates by balancing work-family conflicts. Work-family conflict may lead to a decrease in well-being (WWB), thereby enhancing turnover intention (TI). The purpose of this paper is to develop a conceptual framework to establish a link between WFC, WB and TI. In addition, this study examines the role of supervisor support (SS) as a moderator. Primarily a conceptual paper, this study draws on a database of past research and literature reviews in the field of work-family conflict. Furthermore, this study suggests future research to empirically test the proposed relationships discussed in this paper.

**Keywords:** Work-family Conflict, Well-being, Turnover Intention, Supervisor Support

## Introduction

Work-family conflict (WFC) is a common problem faced by caregivers (Pien et al., 2021; Zhang et al., 2020). Studies have shown that workplace characteristics such as high workload (Xue, 2022; Pien, 2018), high psychological work demands, night shift/shift work system Bora (2021), staff shortage (McKnight et al., 2020) and other workplace characteristics of nurse work, possibly making the nursing profession associated with high levels of WFC (Pien et al., 2021). Women are considered not only to cope with work pressure, but also to take on more family responsibilities (Zhang et al., 2016; Gutek et al., 1991). Therefore, as a female-dominated profession, female nurses may experience high levels of WFC (Hwang et al., 2021, Zhang et al., 2020).

Theoretically, WFC is a stressor that may affect employee well-being (WB) (Hunsaker et al., 2021; Bayhan, 2020; Lizano, 2014). WFC leads to worsened physical and emotional health among female nurses (Hwang et al., 2021). For example, female nurses suffer from

depression, anxiety, insomnia, cardiac arrest, and chronic diseases (Hwang et al., 2021). Chronic exposure to workplace stressors can lead to job burnout, where employees tend to distance themselves from their work in an effort to resist workplace stress (Maslach, 1993). Employees who lack WB may predict greater turnover intentions (TI) (DiPietro et al., 2019; Tnay et al., 2013).

Nurses' turnover due to unsatisfactory and stressful work environments can create a shortage of nurses and have adverse impacts on healthcare systems (Bora et al., 2021). For example, a shortage of nurses may lead to a heavy workload (Zhang et al., 2020), affecting work efficiency, patient safety, quality of nursing services, and development of the nursing discipline (Zhou, 2018). The severe shortage of nurses is a worldwide problem, and China is also deeply affected by the high turnover rate and shortage of nurses (Zhang et al., 2020). Due to the aging population, the growth of chronic diseases, and the continuous emergence of new health needs, the demand for nurses has continued to increase in recent years. At the same time, the "shortage of nurses" has become a medical problem that needs to be solved urgently (Cao et al., 2021; Zhou, 2018). Reducing nurse turnover is a potential coping strategy for the nurse shortage (Chan & Morrison, 2000).

Reducing stress and dissatisfaction is important to reduce the negative impact of high turnover and shortage problems (DiPietro et al., 2019). Because it can help organizations improve employees' WB, thereby reducing turnover (Grant, 2019; Brunetto, 2012). WFC as one of the main sources of stress and dissatisfaction (Achour, 2017), especially for female nurses (Pien, 2021). Balancing WFC may have a positive impact on reducing stress and dissatisfaction among female nurses, thereby reducing turnover and shortage of female nurses. Therefore, the paper will focus on WFC and WB.

This conceptual paper is devoted to studying the effect of WFC on WB and how it will affect turnover intention (TI) of female nurses. Furthermore, this paper also aimed to examine the role of supervisor support (SS) as a moderator, which would strengthen the relationship between WFC and WB.

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows. It begins with a review of the relevant literature on which to build propositions and frameworks. Next, proceed to describe the research methodology of this study, followed by discussions and conclusions.

## Literature Review

### Underpinning Theories

#### *Conservation of resources theory (COR)*

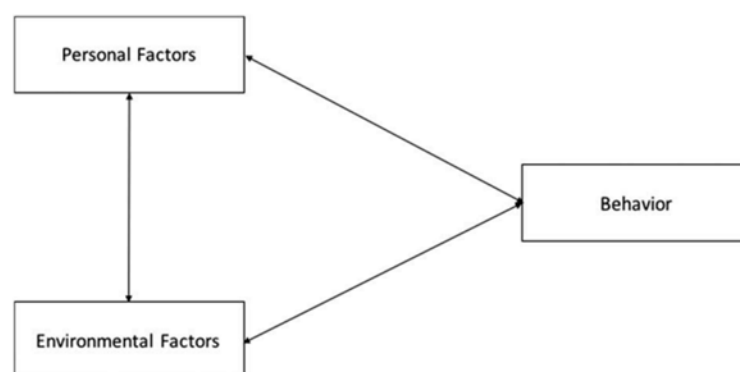
The conservation of resources theory (COR) Hobfoll (1989) believes that stress comes from objective facts rather than cognitive construction, and understands stress coping as a dynamic resource exchange process between the individual and the situation, which is a situation-oriented stress response theory (Hobfoll, 1989; Bliese et al., 2017). COR broadly defines resources as all valuable things for individual survival and development, including material resources (such as residence), conditional resources (such as work), individual characteristic resources (such as self-esteem), and energy resources (such as time) (Hobfoll, 1989). Driven by evolution, human beings always strive to acquire, protect, and build these resources, and regard resource loss and its risks as threats. Stress occurs when people lose resources, perceive that they may lose resources, or do not get the expected return after investing resources (Hobfoll, 1989). When stress occurs, individuals may adopt two different behaviors to cope with psychological tension: immediately stop resource consumption to preserve existing resources (resource conservation); or invest certain resources (resource investment)

to obtain valuable resources returns, offsetting losses incurred (Hobfoll, 1989; Hobfoll et al., 1990). After the pressure is activated, if the individual cannot effectively block the resource loss and has no chance to get timely compensation, the resource loss will proceed at an accelerated rate, forming a loss spiral, and the sense of pressure will increase.

COR is often used in research topics such as self-regulation, interpersonal interaction, and work-family conflict in the workplace. The key mechanism of work-family conflict is the resource loss vortex (Liao et al., 2022). According to COR, work-family conflict is the individual's excessive consumption of resources in one field (such as work) leads to his inability to invest resources in another field (such as family) (Grandey & Cropanzano, 1999). Continuous family-work conflicts infiltrate and intensify work pressure and family role pressure, forming long-term stress, which has a destructive impact on behavior and health (Demerouti et al., 2004).

### *Social Cognitive Theory*

Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) (Bandura, 1986) defines human behavior as a dynamic relationship between action or behavior, the environment, and personal characteristics (Bandura, 1977, 1986; Bassett-Jones et al., 2005; Font et al., 2016). SCT stipulates a three-factor reciprocal causation model, that is, personal attributes such as internal cognition, emotional state, and physical attributes, external environmental factors, and explicit behaviors all affect each other in two directions (Figure 1) (Bandura, 1986; Mulvaney, 2011). In other words, a person's behavior will not be independent of the environment or their personal characteristics (Ginter & White, 1982). Thinking of behavior as the co-determinant of this interaction, it is argued that through explicit behavior, individuals can influence situations, which in turn affect people's thinking, emotions, and behaviors (Bandura, 1986). In this interaction, humans are products and producers of the environment (Martin, 2004). Thus, there is a dynamic interplay between personal factors, environmental factors, and the behavior that people exhibit in the workplace.



**Figure 1.** Social cognitive theory model (Bandura, 1986).

### *Research Variables*

#### *Work-family Conflict (WFC)*

Work-family conflict has been described as a form of role conflict in which role pressures in the work and family spheres are in some way incompatible (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). Conflict between work and non-work roles occurs when work and life roles are out of balance (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). Netemeyer et al (1996) divided work-family conflict into two aspects: work-family conflict (WFC) and family-work conflict (FWC). WFC has been defined as

a form of inter-role conflict in which the general demands of the job, the time devoted to it, and the stress caused by the job interfere with the fulfillment of family-related responsibilities (Netemeyer et al., 1996). FWC has been defined as a form of inter-role conflict in which the general demands of the family, time devoted, and family-induced stress interfere with the performance of work-related responsibilities (Netemeyer et al., 1996). This study takes WFC as one of the variables and retains this definition.

#### *Well-being (WB)*

In general, WB refers to an individual's general mental health or state of mind Goldberg et al (1972), with specific reference to employees' levels of well-being, anxiety, stress, and depression. Another study defined WB as "an individual's subjective and overall judgment of the relative presence of positive emotions, relative absence of negative emotions, and satisfaction with life" (Diener, 1984).

From a behavioral science perspective, happiness is defined as the fulfillment of an individual's goals, wishes, and needs through the realization of one's capabilities and lifestyle (Emerson, 1985). WB is sometimes used in conjunction with other terms, such as well-being, quality of life, and satisfaction. The meaning of objective well-being and subjective well-being depends on the discipline and may differ when discussed in the fields of ethics, theology, political science, economics, and psychology (Fahri and Mary, 2004). The concept of happiness is ambiguous and difficult to measure due to various interpretations and lack of a universally accepted definition (Achour, 2013). However, the bottom line of happiness is often viewed as a description of the state of people's living conditions (McGillivray, 2007).

In this paper, the measurement of WB is based on a subjective approach that focuses on human perception (Achour, 2013; Alicia et al., 2011). Therefore, objective methods of measuring WB through some observable facts such as economic, social and environmental statistics are not used (Achour, 2013). Following the subjective approach, WB was assessed based on respondents' self-reported experiences rather than researchers' judgment (Rojas, 2013). People who experience more positive emotions and fewer negative emotions tend to be more satisfied with their lives (Alicia et al., 2011; Rojas, 2013).

#### *Turnover Intent (TI)*

Turnover intention (TI) is defined as the employee's attitude or behavioral tendency to leave the current organization or work (Weisberg & Sagie, 1999). The determinants of turnover can be divided into three aspects, namely work-related factors, personal factors and External factors (Cotton & Tuttle, 1986). TI has been shown to be one of the most reliable predictors of turnover (Griffeth et al., 2000), presenting an estimate of the chance of leaving an organization at a specific point in the near future (Asghar, 2018). Therefore, this indicates that by changing their intention to resign, employees are expected to stay or continue working in a particular organization (Khan et al., 2014).

#### *Supervisor Support (SS)*

Supervisor support (SS) can be defined as employees' perception that their contributions are valued by their superiors, and that their superiors support and care about their well-being (Eisenberger et al., 1986). Supervisor support helps to develop employees' positive attitudes towards the organization (Eisenberger et al., 2002; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). In addition, research by Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002) found that employees who perceived high levels of supervisor support were more likely to experience positive affect than those who perceived

supervisor support to be low. Supervisor support plays a crucial and essential role in the career development of employees (Moquin et al., 2019). Therefore, unperceived supervisor support may weaken the employer-employee relationship (Karani et al., 2022).

### **Research Proposition**

In this section, the relationship between the independent and dependent variables will be discussed to form a conceptual framework for the proposed study.

WFC has been defined as a form of inter-role conflict in which the general demands of the job, the time devoted to it, and the stress caused by the job interfere with the fulfillment of family-related responsibilities (Netemeyer et al., 1996). WFC is a common problem faced by nursing staff (Pien et al., 2021; Zhang et al., 2020). Nursing is a female-dominated profession, and female nurses may experience high levels of work-family conflict (Hwang et al., 2021; Zhang et al., 2020). Studies by Hunsaker et al (2021); Bayhan (2020); Lizano (2014) confirmed WFC as a stressor that may affect employee WB. In addition, a recent study by Hwang et al (2021) indicated that WFC resulted in worsened physical and emotional health among female nurses. Based on the above discussion, this study proposed that:

**Proposition 1:** WFC has a negative effect on WB.

In general, WB refers to an individual's general mental health or state of mind (Goldberg et al., 1972), specifically referring to employees' levels of happiness, anxiety, stress, and depression. Chronic exposure to workplace stressors can lead to job burnout, where employees tend to distance themselves from their work in an effort to resist workplace stress (Maslach, 1993). Employees lacking WB may predict stronger turnover intention TI (DiPietro et al., 2019; Tnay et al., 2013). Therefore, this study proposed that:

**Proposition 2:** WB has a negative impact on TI.

SS can be defined as employees' perception that their contributions are valued by their superiors, and that their superiors support and care about their well-being (Eisenberger et al., 1986). WFC can negatively impact employee WB (Yeh et al., 2021). When SS increases, WFC decreases (Yorulmaz and Sevinc, 2021). Research by Karatepe et al (2007) demonstrated that SS can reduce job stress and allow people to better cope with specific job demands or buffer stressors (eg, WFC). Furthermore, studies by Xu (2021); Hämmig (2017) found that SS had a positive effect on WB. The roles of supervisors and management are important to increase employee satisfaction at home and work, thereby increasing WB (Wan Edura et al., 2012). In conclusion, it can be determined that SS is a key component in reducing WFC and that SS has a large impact on reducing WFC (Talukder, 2019). This buffers the deleterious effects of work-family conflict on employees' WB (Achour et al., 2017). Based on the above discussion, this study proposed that:

**Proposition 3:** SS positively moderate the relationship between WFC and WB.

Figure 2 depicts the proposed model and the relationship between variables. In this study, the proposed endogenous variable is TI. The exogenous variables in this model are WFC and WB. SS is modeled as a moderator strengthening the relationship between WFC and WB practices.

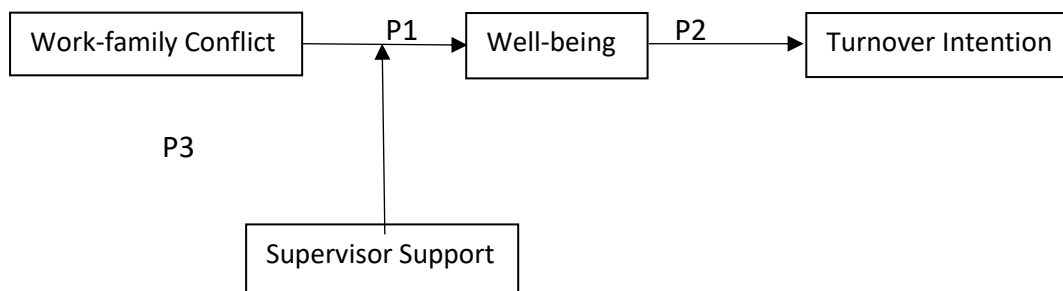


Figure 2: Conceptual Framework

## Methodology

### Sample and Data Collection

The target population of this study is planned to be female nurses in tertiary hospitals in China. Therefore, the unit of analysis is female nurses in a tertiary hospital. Female nurses with work-family conflict will be selected as respondents for this study. The inclusion criteria are that female nurses must be at least nurses who are willing to participate in this study and have clinical work experience. The main method of data collection will be a self-administered questionnaire. Before the questionnaire was distributed, respondents received an invitation letter to explain the purpose and assure respondents of the confidentiality of the questionnaire they completed.

### Measures

In assessing WFC, this study will use the scale of Netemeyer et al (1996), consisting of 5 items. Items for the WB will be taken from a simplified version of the General Health Questionnaire (GHQ) by Goldberg & Williams (1991), namely the GHQ-12, which contains 12 items. TI is taken from the scale of Blomme et al (2010) and consists of 3 items. For SS, the Anderson et al (2002) scale consisting of 6 items was used.

### Data Analysis

The collected data will be analyzed using the social science statistical packages IBM SPSS Statistics (SPSS) and SmartPLS version 3 (Ringle et al., 2015). SPSS was used for data screening, normality testing, and evaluation of common method bias. And generate descriptive analysis results. The measurement model will then be evaluated by checking the validity and reliability of the items with SmartPLS version 3. The structural model of this study will be checked after the validity and reliability of the structure is determined, as shown in Figure 2.

## Discussion

This paper provides insights into the impact of WFC on WB, which in turn will impact on TI of female nurses in Chinese tertiary hospitals. SS in this study is modeled as a moderator, which will strengthen the relationship between WFC and WB. Hospitals adopting reform measures on work-family conflict among female nurses. In the context of this study, it will be possible to improve the female nurses' decreased well-being due to work-family conflicts, and then reduce the high turnover rate caused by high work pressure and low work emotions. As more and more hospitals begin to pay attention to the work-family conflict of female nurses, becoming a hospital that cares about the well-being of female nurses may retain more female nurses and break the dilemma of nurse shortage. Supervisor support will also accelerate the transition from WFC to WB.

### Limitation and Future Recommendation

First, the literature review of this study proposition is based on a relatively small literature base, which is limited in scope and breadth. More study and research in depth are needed before the results of this study can be generalized. Second, the study has not been empirically tested. This research would suggest that future researchers test empirically the relationship proposed in this framework.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, in this conceptual paper, the influence of the relationship between WFC and WB on TI of Chinese female nurses has been identified. This paper also postulates the importance of SS in strengthening the relationship between WFC and WB. Three research propositions have been formulated to examine the relationships proposed in this study. More importantly, this paper provides an insight into the scholarly research in the fields of human resources and women's work-family conflict.

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