

How Does Online Telecommuting Affect Teachers' Work? The Relationship Between Workplace Flexibility and Job Involvement: A Moderated Mediation Model

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Abstract

In the context of online telecommuting, based on conservation of resource theory, boundary theory and role pressure theory, the research conducted a survey on 690 teachers from 16 senior high schools in China, and verified the relationship between workplace flexibility and job involvement. The results show that: 1) Workplace flexibility has a significant positive impact on work-family conflict; 2) Workplace flexibility has a significant negative impact on job involvement; 3) Work-family conflict has a significant negative impact on job involvement; 4) Work-family conflict partially mediates the relationship between workplace flexibility and job involvement; 5) Job demands positively moderate the relationship between workplace flexibility and work-family conflict; 6) Job demands play a positive role in moderating the relationship between workplace flexibility and job involvement through work-family conflict.

Keywords: workplace flexibility, work-family conflict, job involvement, job demands, online telecommuting

1. Introduction

Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 in 2019, in response to the impact of the epidemic, numerous industries have adopted more flexible working methods to coordinate the epidemic prevention and development, and we have gradually entered the post epidemic era. At the same time, with the rapid development of Internet technology, work can more and more easily get rid of the shackles of fixed places and time, while online office mode

has become the norm. For the need of epidemic prevention and control, online teaching has become the teaching method of most schools, and school teachers also undertake a lot of non-teaching work in the way of online telecommuting. Undoubtedly, this has brought challenges to parents, teachers and schools. For teachers, online telecommuting breaks the boundary of the workplace and make working hours more flexible. Many schools implement

flexible working policies, which, to a certain extent, improve teachers' work autonomy. The starting point of the policy is good. It can enable individuals to take into account their family and work responsibilities and decide on their own progress in completing their work tasks. Previous studies have shown that workplace flexibility can mitigate the negative impact of medical workers due to work and family needs (Tveito & et al., 2014). In addition, workplace flexibility has a positive predictive effect on work-family adaptation (Clarke & et al., 2004), individual mental health (Jacob & et al., 2008), and family cohesion (Steven & et al., 2006).

However, under the requirements of high-level job demands, whether the flexible working policy can play its due role still remains to be discussed. High-level job demands make the penetration of work into family more serious, further blurring the boundary between work and family. Therefore, under the requirements of high-level job demands, flexible work arrangements have become a "reasonable" way to occupy extra time. Occupying non-working hours means that work roles interfere with family roles, which may lead to a higher level of work-family conflict, especially when electronic communication is so convenient. The development of Internet communication technology makes the boundary between work and family gradually weaken and disappear. Although it is conducive to the implementation of work for schools to contact teachers in their non-working hours by electronic means, its essence is a kind of interference to individuals through technical means, making them still need to deal with work tasks in their private time. Work connectivity behavior after-hours increases the work-family conflict level of individuals (Wu & et al., 2018). Therefore, flexible working policies make it more common for online telecommuting after-hours. The implementation of workplace flexibility policy has brought about overlapping work and family roles, creating a scene of work-family mixture. In this mixed work-family scenario, it is necessary to study the antecedents of work-family conflict and explore the boundary conditions under which these antecedents play a role. On the one hand, parents need to take part of the responsibility of care originally undertaken by the school. On the other hand, it brings great

challenges to the work of teachers (especially senior high school teachers with high-level job demands). The research believes that under the high level of job demands, the work flexibility policy may bring more work to family interference to teachers, making the policy not only play a role in reducing the level of work-family conflict, but also may affect teachers' cognition of the flexible working policies, and affect their recognition of work and organization. A higher level of work-family conflict will have an important impact on individual work decisions. For example, the improvement of work-family conflict level will further enhance the negative emotions generated in work, which will interfere with work behavior and produce work behavior that are not conducive to task completion (Judge, Iris, & Scott, 2006). Duxbury and Higgins (1991) believed that work-family conflict would increase turnover intention. Therefore, the research suggests that this may also reduce the level of job involvement to some extent.

To sum up, the research believes that workplace flexibility blurs the boundary between work and family, which makes teachers' work roles and family roles intertwined, forming a reasonable occupation of personal time under the condition of high-level job demands. This makes workplace flexibility unable to play its preset effect, but may cause more interference from work to family, thus increasing the individuals' work-family conflict level. At the same time, by virtue of the negative impact of work-family conflict, the work-family conflict brought by workplace flexibility will have a negative impact on individual work decisions. The research focuses on the teachers' job involvement level.

2. Concept and Relevant Researches

2.1 Workplace Flexibility

2.1.1 Concept

Scholars have defined workplace flexibility from the perspective of organization and individuals. The organizational perspective implicitly or explicitly conceptualizes workplace flexibility as "organizational characteristics include a certain degree of flexibility to enable organizations to adapt to changes in the environment" (Dastmalchian & Blyton, 2001). It is reflected by flexible "just in time" production system (Beyers

& Lindahl, 1999) and dynamic adjustment of labor force scale through the use of contract workers or temporary workers rather than permanent full-time individuals (Huang & Cullen, 2001). On the basis of previous scholars' research, Hill et al. (2008) defined the concept of workplace flexibility as the ability of an organization to modify aspects and factors in the workplace that give priority to organizational profitability by employing contract workers, quality circles and job rotation. Workplace flexibility from the perspective of organization focuses more on the adaptability of the organization to the dynamic environment. From the perspective of individuals, workplace flexibility more emphasizes the right of individuals to actively choose in the organization, such as the extent to which individuals can independently choose working hours, tasks and locations (Hill & et al., 2001; Hill & et al., 2008). In addition, it also refers to the extent to which individuals can select and adjust key aspects of their work and life. When individuals have the opportunity to use the flexible policy, they can obtain more resources and better control their work tasks to achieve work-related goals (Halbesleben & Buckley, 2004). The internal logic of individuals' perspective is that individuals have other role needs besides work. They can better meet their other needs through the flexibility of the workplace, so they can participate in the work more actively and show higher organizational identity and organizational commitment. The motivation of workplace flexibility between organizations and individuals may conflict with each other. The motivation to implement workplace flexibility is to better respond to changing conditions and better achieve organizational goals. Individuals seek flexibility to balance work and family. In this sense, the motivations of both for workplace flexibility may match, or there may be conflicts. For example, the flexibility of the workplace meets the needs of individuals (such as handling family tasks), but it may conflict with the needs of the organization (such as team members needing common time and space to complete team tasks) (Taskin & Devos, 2005). This study selects the definition of employee perspective and defines workplace flexibility as a right that individuals have to decide their own commuting time, work at home or work in the workplace.

2.1.2 Relevant Researches

Workplace flexibility gives employees more autonomy, which has many positive effects. Work flexibility has a positive impact on work-family adaptation (Clarke, Koch & Hill, 2004), individual mental health (Jacob, Bond, Galinsky & Hill, 2008), family cohesion (Stevens, Kiger & Riley, 2006), higher work performance and lower turnover rate (Stavrou, 2005). In addition, another study found that there was a significant correlation between workplace flexibility and the increase in the number of preventive care visits for workers (Sabbath, Sparer, Boden, Wagner, Hashimoto & Hopcia, 2018). In the study of family structure related to work and family needs, time flexibility alleviates the pressure between women, single parents and workers with high family responsibilities (Hill & et al., 2008; Jung, Zippay & Park, 2012). In the study of medical workers, Tveito et al. (2014) found that workplace flexibility and other work resources can alleviate the negative health outcomes of medical workers due to work and family needs, such as overweight and obesity (Nelson & et al., 2014). In addition, workplace flexibility has a significant positive impact on employees' organizational citizenship behavior, quality of life, subjective well-being (Uglanova & Dettmers, 2018), etc. However, workplace flexibility measures also have some negative effects. For example, Spieller et al. (2017) found that the use of long-term flexible working hours will affect the completion of work goals. Although flexible work time and work location arrangements can improve the workplace flexibility of employees, due to the differences among individual employees, when faced with more flexibility, employees may encroach on their non work resources (such as family time). Individual employees cannot effectively manage themselves, which may aggravate the work-family conflict to a certain extent (Baumeister & Vohs, 2007).

2.2 Work-Family Conflict

2.2.1 Concept

Scholars have slightly different definitions of family-work conflict. In the early research, Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) based on the perspective of role pressure, defined work-family conflict as "a special form of conflict between

roles.” The reason for this conflict is that individuals cannot handle the pressure brought by work and family roles well. Based on the definitions of Greenhaus and Beutell, the source of work-family conflict is subdivided: the conflict of time allocation between work and family, the conflict of work pressure and family pressure, and the conflict of role behavior. However, scholars have some similarities in defining the concept of work-family conflict. In other words, work-family conflict is essentially a kind of pressure that individuals feel at work, which leads to conflicts between their work roles and family roles (Poelmans & et al., 2005). In the early research of work-family conflict, more attention was paid to the interference of work role to family role, which is a one-way interference. However, with the deepening of research in the field of work and family, scholars began to distinguish the direction of their mutual influence, that is, the interference of work roles to family roles and the interference of family roles to work roles (Carlson & et al., 2006). In addition, Netemeyer et al. (1996) found that work-family conflict and family-work conflict were not only different in the definition of concepts, but also had only a middle level of correlation between individuals’ feelings of them. To distinguish the direction of work-family conflict, we can further refine the interference of work to family and the interference of family to work and discuss its impact in more detail. Moreover, a large number of foreign studies have shown that the work-family conflict experienced by individuals is far higher than that of family-work conflict (Zhang & et al., 2022).

2.2.2 Result Variables

Work-family conflict is an important pressure felt by individuals in modern society, which has many impacts on individuals. In the research on the outcome variables of work-family conflict, the academic community presents a research trend from psychological state to behavior results, from negative to positive, from individual to organization, and from concentration to diversity (Lin Zhong & et al., 2013). Specifically, this paper divides the outcome variables of work-family conflict into work behavior, work performance, individual psychological perception, individual physiology, etc. In terms of work behavior, a large number of studies have shown that when

employees feel a higher level of work-family conflict, they will have a higher level of negative emotions, which has an important impact on the work behavior of individual employees (Judge & et al., 2006). Duxbury and Higgins (1991) believed that work-family conflict would increase employees’ turnover intention. Wei Wu and Ni Hui (2020) have studied that the work-family conflict felt by individual employees will continue to consume emotional resources of employees, bringing high emotional exhaustion to employees. This emotional exhaustion will also have an important impact on the work behavior of individual employees. It has a negative predictive effect on beneficial organizational citizenship behavior and a positive predictive effect on anti-production behavior. In terms of work performance, work-family conflict also has a significant negative impact on employees’ work performance (Netemeyer & et al., 1996). Especially for married female employees, the research of Pupita et al. In terms of individual psychological perception and physiology, Mesmer Magnus et al, it is believed that work-family conflict, as a role pressure, will consume individual resource stock, and then negatively affect individual life satisfaction (Aryee & et al., 1999; Stoeva & et al., 2002). In addition, work-family conflict will also cause certain damage to the physical health of individual employees. For example, Frone, Yardley and Markel (1997) used structural equation to study 372 married employees, and found that depression, hypertension, alcoholism and other personal physical health problems of individual employees are significantly related to their work-family conflict.

2.2.3 Precedent Variables

In terms of work factors, Zayed et al. (2021) found that individual employees’ skill discretion, job needs, decision-making authority, and support from colleagues and supervisors were significantly related to work-family conflict. In addition, the work-family balance policy and leadership support provided by employers in the workplace can significantly reduce the work-family conflict level of employees. For example, Wang Jing and Liu Zhi (2018) found in their research on middle school teachers that the support provided by schools can significantly reduce the level of work-family conflict that

teachers feel. Some studies also show that the leadership style of organizational managers will also affect work-family conflict. For example, relational leadership can significantly reduce the level of work-family conflict, and transformational leadership is negatively related to the level of work-family conflict (Eng & et al., 2010). On the contrary, immoral leadership behavior (such as abusive management behavior) will strengthen the level of work-family conflict. In terms of family factors, family members' support for individual employees is an important factor affecting their work-family conflict level. Especially for married women with children, the level of work-family support can significantly reduce their work-family conflict level (Xu Fengxia & et al., 2021). Especially in the context of the continuous liberalization of two children and three children, whether there is family support has a great impact on the work decisions and work behaviors of dual employee family employees. In terms of individual factors, this study found that the individual demographic characteristics of employees also had a certain impact on their work-family conflict level. For example, Wang Jie and Yan Li (2022) found in the meta-analysis of the influencing factors of nurses' work-family conflict that factors such as nursing age, marital status, fertility and gender of nurses have certain explanatory effects on their work-family conflict level. The research of domestic scholar Han Binru et al. (2021) shows that education, professional title, psychological resilience score and career development motivation also play a certain role in explaining nurses' work-family conflict. In addition, some individual personality traits, emotional state, sense of control over work-family boundaries and control ability (Zhang Lanxia & et al., 2020) will also affect their work-family conflict level.

This article focuses on the mediation role of work-family conflict between workplace flexibility and job involvement. Through the analysis of previous studies, this paper believes that workplace flexibility, as an important work feature, has an impact on the level of work-family conflict. Similarly, job involvement, as an important work attitude, is also a potential impact variable on the level of work-family conflict. Therefore, this paper discusses the mediation role of work-family

conflict.

2.3 Job Demands

2.3.1 Concept

The concept of job demands comes from the job demands resources model. The model is based on work-related factors, such as job nature, task characteristics, etc. The job demands resource model divides the relevant factors faced by individuals into job demands and work resources. Job demands require individuals to spend physical and psychological resources to deal with them, which has a negative impact on the completion of individuals' work. Work resources mainly refer to the organizational and leaders' support that individuals get in the workplace, as well as the resources obtained from other channels, which play a positive role in the completion of individuals' work tasks. Specifically, job demands in this model refer to the need for individuals to continuously consume physical and psychological resources to meet the physical, social and organizational requirements encountered in the work process (Zhou & et al., 2016).

2.4 Job Involvement

2.4.1 Concept

The related research on the definition of job involvement is mainly distinguished from the broad and narrow perspectives. Lodahl and Kejner (1965) defined the concept of job involvement for the first time in a broad sense and elaborated the concept of job involvement from the perspective of psychology: they further explained the concept from the two dimensions of ego Involvement and the interest. From this point of view, job involvement focuses on the psychological recognition of individuals for their jobs and the importance of work in their personal image. On the other hand, job involvement emphasizes the impact of teachers' work performance on their self-esteem. Lawler and Hall (1970), based on the research of Lodahl et al., mainly focused on the first point of view, defined the concept of job involvement as a degree of psychological recognition of individuals for their jobs, and expounded the concept from the two dimensions of "work participation" and "endogenous motivation". On this basis, later scholars further refined the concept of job involvement. For example, Kanungo (1982) thinks

that job involvement can be subdivided into “general job involvement” and “specific job involvement”. “General job involvement” emphasizes an individual’s judgment on the importance of his/her work in his/her personal life. The “specific job involvement” emphasizes the extent to which the dominant needs of individuals are affected by the work they are engaged in. On this basis, Paulay, Alliger, and Stone Romero (1994) further explained the concept of specific job involvement from the three dimensions of cognition, care, and concentration. In addition, job involvement emphasizes vitality and is regarded as a highly satisfactory and work-related positive attitude (Schaufeli & et al., 2002). Some scholars also believe that job involvement is the degree of individuals’ focus on organizational goals, culture and tasks (Joiner & Bakalis, 2006), and their complex dependence on direct work (Khan & et al., 2012).

In the research of job involvement, three concepts (job involvement, work engagement and job embeddedness) are often confused. It is necessary to distinguish these three concepts. At present, the research on work engagement is carried out from four perspectives: psychological state, employee work performance, employee cognition and employee work state. Job embeddedness was first proposed by Mitchell (2001). Yao, Lee, Mitchell, Burton (2004) believed that job embeddedness was a comprehensive force to prevent individuals from leaving their jobs; Lee, Mitchell, Sablinski, Burton, Holtom, (2004) further divided work embeddedness into two dimensions: on the job embeddedness and off the job embeddedness. Wang Yanfeng (2007) believes that job involvement is a more stable state, measuring a static psychological state of individuals, which emphasizes individuals’ initial motivation and cognition for work. Work engagement is a more flexible state, and the degree of individuals’ engagement in work will increase or decrease with the change of time. In addition, job involvement puts more emphasis on individuals’ cognition and motivation of work itself, while job involvement also emphasizes individuals’ psychological and emotional factors. To sum up, this study defines the concept of job involvement as the degree of individuals’ psychological identification with their own work, which reflects the importance of

individuals’ perception of work to their self-worth.

2.4.2 Relevant Researches

In the study of job involvement as a result variable, we can distinguish between work characteristics and individual characteristics. In the dimension of work characteristics, it can be further subdivided into flexible working atmosphere, rigid working system and physical environment. In terms of flexible work atmosphere, scholars have found that work intensity and organizational support (Eisenberger & et al., 2002), work pressure (Hackman & Lawler, 1971), job satisfaction, job burnout, and organizational career management (Zhou & et al, 2006) all affect the level of job involvement. Emotional commitment and superior support will positively affect employees’ job involvement (Yang Hui & Li Yongxin, 2007). The psychological contract level of employees also has a positive predictive effect on employees’ job involvement (Gong Hui, 2007). In addition, the leader’s style will also affect the employee’s job involvement level. He Li and Ling Wenyong (2012) found on Chinese state-owned enterprise employees that transformational leadership style has a positive predictive effect on the employee’s job involvement level, while transactional leadership style has a weak positive predictive effect on the employee’s job involvement level. On the other hand, the internal office environment, work characteristics such as task richness and autonomy (Sarros & et al., 2002). Li Min et al. (2013) believed that employees pay great attention to the work in the workplace. If the workplace has a higher level of procedural fairness or a higher level of distribution fairness, employees will have a positive feeling towards the organization, which will improve their job involvement level. From the analysis of individual characteristics, demographic factors such as sex, age and education level of individual workers are correlated with their job involvement level (Hall & Mansfield, 1975; Rabinowitz & et al., 1977). However, the research conclusions of scholars do not fully agree with the relationship between demographic characteristics and job involvement. Zhou (2006) found that age, working years and job involvement were correlated, but gender, education, rank and so on could not make a significant prediction of job involvement. Brown (1996) also supported the conclusion of Zhou by

using meta-analysis results. In addition, the personality, temperament and personality of individual workers (Bowling & et al., 2006; Roberts & et al., 2003; Chen & et al., 2004) will affect the level of job involvement of employees. In addition, if employees have a high level of professional ethics, their job involvement level may also be higher. Langelan, Bakker, Van Doornen and Schaufeli (2006) found that employees with low neuroticism and high extraversion have a higher level of job involvement. The research of Chinese scholars also found that there is a positive correlation between active personality and job involvement. Employees' own values will also affect their job involvement level. For example, there is a correlation between the level of employees' professional ethics and job involvement, that is, a high level of professional ethics will have a higher job involvement (Brockner, Grover & Blonder, 1988). Values such as professional ethics identification, self-esteem and internal motivation also affect job involvement (Brown, 1996).

3. Theoretical Basis and Research Assumptions

3.1 Workplace Flexibility and Work-Family Conflict

In the study of work-family relationship, scholars have explained their conflicting and balanced relationship with the help of boundary theory. Work and family are important areas of activity for individuals. Under normal circumstances, there is a boundary between work and family. Clark (2000) and Ashforth et al. (2000) introduced the concept of boundary for the first time in their research on work-family relations, and formally put forward the boundary theory: There is a boundary between work and family as an important activity field of individuals. Individuals have their own roles and responsibilities in both fields, and there are different operating rules and mechanisms. Individuals need to follow the corresponding rules and fulfill their responsibilities in their own fields, communicate with personnel groups in their respective fields, handle the corresponding relationship, and maintain the boundary between the two. However, this boundary is not a physical boundary with strict limitations. It is a psychological feeling of individuals on the allocation of energy and resources, which means that the results of individuals' handling of work-family boundaries

will produce different situations: segmentation, spillover and compensation (Burke & et al., 1987). Overflow means that the boundary between work and family has been destroyed, and the roles of the two have overlapped. However, this spillover is not balanced, and it will lead to asymmetric penetration according to the strength of their demands (Frone & et al., 1992). This overlapping and infiltration of roles has both positive and negative effects. When negative spillovers occur, the roles of work and family will interfere with each other. When the instability of the work becomes more serious, the influence of the work field will affect the rules and role expectations of the family field through boundary permeability, which disrupts the daily balance in the family field and forms a work-family conflict.

Workplace flexibility gives individuals flexibility in working hours, working places and work progress (Hill & et al., 2001; Hill & et al., 2008). This flexibility enables individuals to have a certain degree of work autonomy. However, some scholars believe that some domestic Internet companies impose invisible overtime on their individuals in the name of flexible work (Sun & et al., 2020). This autonomy blurs the line between family and work. Some scholars have found that in terms of alleviating work-family conflict, working at home may blur the psychological and physiological boundaries between work-family roles (Kossek & Michel, 2011). These boundaries are considered important because they tell individuals when to perform family roles when to perform work roles (Ashorth & et al., 2000). The boundary between work and family roles becomes more permeable, which may increase the chances of conflict between work and family (Lapierre & Allen, 2006). Therefore, this study focuses on the interference of work to family in work-family conflict, that is, work-family conflict. We propose the following assumptions:

H1: Workplace flexibility has a significant positive impact on work-family conflict.

3.2 Job Demands, Workplace Flexibility and Work-Family Conflict

Scholars also introduced the role pressure theory and the conservation of resources theory (COR) to explain the source of work-family conflict. Role stress theory is an important perspective for the

early interpretation of work-family conflict. The role pressure theory believes that individuals need to assume multiple roles, and each role responsibility is consuming individual resource stock and increasing individual role pressure. This means that individuals cannot take into account every role they play, which leads to conflicts between roles. The work-family conflict is the result of the conflict between work and family roles (Greenhaus & et al., 1985). Researches on COR mainly focus on pressure and motivation. When individuals face resource consumption, they will adopt different behavior to adapt. The resource conservation theory emphasizes that individuals have limited physiological and psychological resources. When undertaking work and family roles, they need to acquire and allocate resources to achieve the balance between acquisition and consumption. Therefore, resource loss and acquisition are the basis of COR. Resource depletion will lead to pressure, and individuals need to allocate their own resources reasonably. Combined with role pressure theory, when an individual consumes too many resources in one role, the resources allocated to another role will inevitably decrease (Edwards & et al., 2000). Therefore, when individuals are faced with the loss of work resources and are unable to meet the responsibilities and requirements of multiple but incompatible roles from work and family at the same time, whether subjective or actual, work-family conflict occurs (Jin & et al., 2013).

The concept of job demands refer to the continuous consumption of physical and psychological resources by individuals to meet the physical, social and organizational requirements encountered in the work process. This means that high job demands will consume the physical and psychological resources owned by individuals, and the resources allocated to family roles will be reduced. On the basis of the blurring work-family boundaries brought about by workplace flexibility, high-level job demands require individuals to occupy family role time, thus bringing a higher level of work-family conflict. Therefore, we propose the following assumptions:

H2: Job demands positively moderate the relationship between workplace flexibility and work-family conflict.

H3: Job demands play a positive role in

moderating the relationship between workplace flexibility and job involvement through work-family conflict.

3.3 Work-Family Conflict and Job Involvement

As mentioned above, work-family conflict measures the degree of mutual interference between work and family. Individuals have preference differences between work and family. This mutual interference has an important impact on individuals' decision-making. For example, the interference of work to family will affect their judgment of work value. Individuals who can't enjoy the happiness brought by family will be disgusted with work. Work-family conflict has a serious negative impact on individuals, increasing individual stress (Ziner & Sharoni, 2014), damaging mental health (Nigatu & Wang, 2018; Sun & et al., 2020), reducing work engagement (Liu & et al., 2020), enhancing job burnout (Jerg Bretzke & et al., 2020; Medrano & Tró golo, 2018; Smith & et al., 2018; Terry & Woo, 2020; Heras & Osca, 2021) and emotional exhaustion (Wang & et al., 2012). At the same time, it will also cause individual dissatisfaction with work and life (Hang yue & et al., 2005; Mansour & Tremblay, 2018). Work-family conflict also has a negative impact on performance (Butt & Hussin, 2021). In addition, some scholars found that work-family conflict was negatively correlated with job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Mesmer Magnus & et al., 2005). As mentioned above, many negative impacts brought by work-family conflict, as well as the interference of work-family conflict itself with work roles and family roles, will affect individuals' judgment of work value, and thus affect their job involvement level. Therefore, we propose the following assumptions:

H4: Work-family conflict has a significant negative impact on job involvement.

3.4 Workplace Flexibility and Job Involvement

Under the high-level job demands, the flexibility provided by the organization to control work time, work place and work progress seems to be a false flexibility. The flexibility of time and place has resulted in the mutual penetration of the boundary between family and work (Kossek & Michel, 2011). High-level job demands make individuals have to break through family

boundaries and take on more work tasks outside of normal working hours. During the blockade of the COVID-19 epidemic, online telecommuting forced individuals to work at home (Anderson & Kelliher, 2020). The blurring of the boundaries between work and family made individuals face a higher level of work-family conflict. In addition, in daily life, in order to complete family support activities, many workers need additional time to complete work tasks, whether it is early or late (ILO 2021). A recent study by Tavares et al. (2020) confirmed that the proportion of Portuguese workers who feel overworked during forced telework is high. In addition, research conducted by Andrade and Matias (2021) in Portugal showed that the use of ICT for work purposes during off hours increased people's perception of the use of technology in family conflicts. Modern online telecommuting makes the workplace flexible policy provided by the organization become a policy that takes up individuals' free time, affects individuals' work-family conflict level, and thus affects individuals' involvement in work. Therefore, the paper proposes the following assumptions:

H5: Workplace flexibility has a significant negative impact on job involvement.

H6: Work-family conflict mediates the relationship between workplace flexibility and job involvement.

The assumption model of the research is as follows:

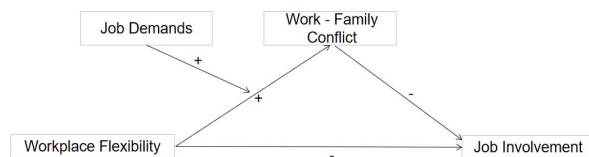


Figure 1. The assumption model of the research

4. Research Design

4.1 Measurement

The measurement of workplace flexibility draws on seven questions raised in a previous study (Thomas & Ganster, 1995). The interviewees were asked seven questions, including vacation, working hours, working hours, ability to answer personal phone calls at work, opportunities to

work at home, etc. We calculated the average score of seven items for analysis. Previous studies using the workplace flexibility scale used the average score of the project (Sabbath & et al., 2018). Cronbach's in this paper α is 0.796. The two-way work-family conflict questionnaire (Bi directional Scale of work-family Conflict) provided by Zhao et al. (2011). According to the research needs of this study, this paper mainly selects the work-family conflict dimension for measurement with six questions. Cronbach's in this paper α is 0.964. The job demands and job control (JD-JC) provided by Gonzalez Mul é et al. (2017) were used for the measurement of job demands. The job demands in the scale mainly focus on the workload, focus needs and time pressure related to individual work completion; work control mainly focuses on the freedom of individuals to make decisions about their own work. In this study, 1-9 items for measuring job demands are selected as needed, and 6-8 items are reverse scoring items. Cronbach's in this paper α is 0.828. Job involvement uses the job involvement 10 questionnaire developed by Kanungo (1982). The scale has good applicability in China. The questions include "I am fully committed to my work", "Most of my life goals are work oriented", etc. Cronbach's α is 0.893.

4.1.1 Control Variables

In the review of previous researches, we found that some demographic variables may have an impact on the model, especially on work-family conflict. For this reason, this paper controls factors such as gender, age, education, children, and parents' help to the family to reduce the impact of non core variables on the model results.

4.2 Sample

Through the communication platform of the school, the research conducted a survey on 690 teachers from 16 senior high schools in a Chinese city in August 2022 and collected questionnaires by self-reporting. In order to reduce the concerns of the respondents and obtain more authentic results, all questionnaires are anonymous and their purpose is explained to the respondents. At the same time, reverse items are set to check the seriousness of the answers. A total of 800 questionnaires were collected in the study, and 690 actual effective samples were obtained by

removing the samples of abnormal values, abnormal answering time, and lie test errors, with an effective recovery rate of 86.3%.

In terms of gender, the distribution of men and women is relatively balanced, with men accounting for 48% of the total sample and women accounting for 52% of the total sample. In terms of age, all samples are between 21-60 years old, of which 56.7% are 21-30 years old, 37.4% are 31-40 years old, and 2.2% are 51-60 years old. In terms of education background, the proportion of undergraduate education background in the sample group reached 70.9%, the proportion of master's degree sample was 24.1%, and the proportion of doctoral degree accounted for 5%. There is an important relationship between the situation of having children and the level of individual work-family conflict. 67.4% have children and 32.6% have no children. In terms of parents' help to deal with housework, the degree of parents' help accounted for 47.6% in "always", 12% in "often", 17.8% in "sometimes", 15.7% in "seldom", and 7% in "rarely". Parents' help to families can significantly reduce children's family responsibilities, which has an important impact on their work-family conflict level. To sum up, the overall distribution of the sample is relatively balanced, and the distribution of the sample's age, education level and other conditions are consistent with the professional characteristics of senior high school teachers, which is well representative.

5. Result

5.1 Bias Test

Since all the data in this study have been answered by the interviewees themselves, common method bias must be considered. In this paper, Harman's single factor test is used to conduct KMO and Bartlett's spherical test on the sample data, and principal component analysis is conducted on 32 items involved in this study. The KMO value is 0.93 and the Bartlett's spherical test result is 0.00 ($p < 0.001$), indicating that the questionnaire has good structural validity. The principal component factor analysis showed that there were 6 factors with eigenvalues greater than 1, accounting for 66.26% of the total variance. The first factor explained 31.25% (<40%) of the total variance (as shown in Table 1). Therefore, statistical analysis shows that there is no serious

problem of homologous bias in this study.

Table 1. CMV Test (principal component analysis)

Component	Total	Percentage of Load	Cumulative Percentage
1	10.00	31.25	31.25
2	5.26	16.43	47.68
3	1.96	6.12	53.80
4	1.67	5.20	59.00
5	1.21	3.79	62.79
6	1.11	3.47	66.26

5.2 Reliability Analysis

This paper uses SPSS26.0 to conduct Cronbach test on the scale used in the study. The analysis results are shown in the following table. The Cronbach's alpha of the five variables involved in the model are higher than 0.8 (as shown in Table 2). Therefore, main variables in the model studied in this paper have good reliability and meet the basic requirements of empirical research.

Table 2. Reliability analysis

Variable	Cronbach's α	Items
Workplace Flexibility	0.80	7
Work-family Conflict	0.96	6
Job Demands	0.83	9
Job Involvement	0.89	10

5.3 Validity Test

In order to ensure the discriminant validity among the variables involved in this study, this study calculates and verifies the discriminant validity between workplace flexibility, work-family conflict, job demands, and job involvement by means of variable level by level merging. The results of confirmatory factor analysis show that the assumed four factor model performs best in terms of chi square degrees of freedom and CFI. Although the values of RMSEA and SRMR are not lower than 0.05 (the best effect), they are also within the reasonable range of 0.05-0.08. By comparing the validation results of four factor model and three factor, two factor and one factor

model, the four factor model proposed in this paper has better fitting degree and is superior to

other models. The specific test results are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Confirmatory factor analysis

Model	χ^2	df	χ^2/df	CFI	RMSEA	SRMR
Four factor model	1616.35	458	3.53	0.88	0.07	0.07
Three factor model	2075.75	461	4.50	0.83	0.09	0.09
Two factor model	4004.39	463	8.65	0.62	0.13	0.15
Single factor model	4610.21	464	9.94	0.56	0.14	0.16

5.4 Correlation Analysis

Pearson correlation analysis was used to analyze the correlation between variables and preliminarily verify the research hypothesis. Table 4 shows that the independent variable (workplace flexibility) is positively correlated with the mediating variable (work-family conflict) ($r=0.524$, $p<0.01$), indicating that with the improvement of workplace flexibility, it will positively affect individuals' work-family conflict level. Workplace flexibility was negatively correlated with job

involvement ($r=0.223$, $p<0.01$). Work-family conflict is negatively correlated with job involvement ($r=0.252$, $p<0.01$). Thus, a high level of work-family conflict will reduce job involvement. It can be inferred that the relationship between workplace flexibility, job demands, work-family conflict and job involvement is consistent with the theoretical assumptions of this study. In order to further test the relationship between variables and verify the model of this study, hierarchical regression analysis will be used for further analysis.

Table 4. The result of correlation analysis

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Gender	-								
Age	0.06	-							
Education	0.07	-0.70	-						
Children	0.08	0.41**	-0.03	-					
Parents' help	0.02	-0.27**	0.01	-0.06	-				
Workplace Flexibility	0.04	0.07	-0.04	-0.12**	0.02	-			
Work-family Conflict	0.07	0.06	-0.01	-0.05	0.12**	0.43**	-		
Job Demands	0.10*	-0.04	0.03	-0.22**	0.17**	0.52**	0.64**	-	
Job Involvement	-0.11*	0.07	0.01	0.32**	-0.02	-0.22**	-0.01	-0.25**	-

* $p<0.05$, ** $p<0.01$.

5.5 Correlation Analysis

5.5.1 Test of Main Effect and Mediating Effect

For the test of intermediary effect, we used the hierarchical regression method to test. The specific operation is divided into the following two parts. The first part takes work-family conflict as a dependent variable: first, put the control variables into the regression equation, and then put the independent variable (workplace flexibility) into

the regression equation to verify whether the independent variable (workplace flexibility) has a significant impact on the mediating variable (work-family conflict). The second part takes job involvement as a dependent variable: First, put the control variables into the regression equation; secondly, place workplace flexibility into the regression equation to verify whether it has a significant impact on job involvement. At the last level, the mediating variable (work-family conflict)

is added to verify whether it has a significant impact on the dependent variable (job involvement). At the same time, when the independent variable (workplace flexibility) and the mediating variable (work-family conflict) are in the hierarchical regression equation at the same time, we can verify whether it is a full or partial mediating effect. If the direct effect of workplace flexibility on job involvement is not significant

after the work-family conflict is added, it can be considered that the work-family conflict plays a full mediating role. If the direct effect of workplace flexibility on the dependent variable (job involvement) still exists, we need to further verify whether the directions of the direct effect and the indirect effect are the same. If they are the same, the work-family conflict plays a part of the mediating role. Otherwise, it is a masking effect.

Table 5. Results of main effect analysis and mediating effect regression analysis

	Work-family Conflict			Job Involvement	
	Model1	Model2	Model3	Model4	Model5
Gender	0.11*	-0.09*	-0.14***	-0.13***	-0.12***
Age	0.11*	0.03	-0.07	-0.04	-0.04
Education	0.02	0.04	0.30	0.02	0.03
Children	-0.27***	-0.17***	0.36***	0.33***	0.31***
Parents' help	0.18***	0.15***	-0.01	0.00	0.02
Workplace Flexibility		0.50***		-0.17***	-0.12*
Work-family Conflict					-0.12*
R^2	0.10	0.33	0.13	0.16	0.17
Adjusted R^2	0.09	0.32	0.12	0.15	0.15
ΔR^2	0.10	0.24	0.13	0.03	0.01
F	9.55***	37.40***	13.33***	14.06***	12.83***

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

The specific verification results are shown in Table 5. In Model 2, there is a positive correlation between workplace flexibility and work-family conflict ($r = 0.50$, $p < 0.01$), so suppose 1 is true. In Model 4, there is a negative correlation between workplace flexibility and job involvement ($r = -0.17$, $p < 0.01$), so Hypothesis 5 is verified. In Model 5, there is a negative correlation between work-family conflict and job involvement ($r = 0.12$, $p < 0.05$), so Hypothesis 4 is verified. At the same time, in model 5, there is still a negative correlation between workplace flexibility and job involvement ($r = 0.12$, $p < 0.05$). Therefore, it can be concluded that the mediation effect of work-family conflict is valid, and hypothesis 6 is verified. In order to further verify the mediation role of work-family conflict between workplace

flexibility and job involvement, this paper uses Bootstrap method for more accurate verification. The verification results after 5000 samples of Bootstrap are shown in Table 6. The direct effect between workplace flexibility and job involvement is significant (effect = -0.147, confidence interval CI = [-0.273, -0.021]). The indirect effect of work-family conflict between workplace flexibility and job involvement is significant (effect = -0.046, confidence interval CI = [-0.087, -0.005]). This proves that the mediation effect of work-family conflict is significant and partial, which further verifies hypothesis 6.

Table 6. The Result of Mediation Effect

Effect Size	SE	95% Interval	Confidence
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			Minimum	Maximum
Direct Effect	-0.147	0.064	-0.273	-0.021
Indirect Effect	-0.046	0.021	-0.087	-0.005

5.5.2 Moderating Effect Test

This study uses the hierarchical regression provided by SPSS 26.0 to verify the moderating effect of job demands between workplace flexibility and work-family conflict. First, put the control variables into the regression equation. Second, put workplace flexibility and job demands into the regression equation at the same time to

verify their impact on work-family conflict. Third, put the interaction term between workplace flexibility and job demands into the regression equation to verify its impact on work-family conflict. The validation results are shown in Table 7. Model 2 results show that workplace flexibility has a positive effect on the level of work-family conflict ($r=0.30$, $p<0.01$), and there is a positive correlation between job demands and work-family conflict ($r=0.49$, $p<0.01$). Model 3 results show that the interaction item was positively correlated with work-family conflict ($r=0.10$, $p<0.01$). Based on this, it can be concluded that job demands can positively strengthen the positive predictive effect of workplace flexibility on work-family conflict.

Table 7. The result of moderating effect

		Work-family Conflict		
		Model1	Model2	Model3
Control Variable	Gender	0.12*	0.07*	0.06
	Age	0.11*	-0.01	80.01
	Education	0.02	0.03	0.03
	Children	-0.27***	-0.16***	0.18***
	Parents' help	0.18***	0.09*	0.08*
Independent Variable	Workplace Flexibility		0.29***	0.30***
Moderating Variable	Job Demands		0.49***	0.50***
Interaction	Workplace Flexibility*Job Demands			0.10***
	R^2	0.10	0.52	0.53
	Adjusted R^2	0.09	0.51	0.52
	ΔR^2	0.10	0.43	0.01
	F	9.55***	70.34***	63.63***

* $p<0.05$, ** $p<0.01$, *** $p<0.001$.

In order to further verify the influence trend and direction of job demands as moderating variables, this study continues to draw the moderating effect diagram of job demands. As shown in Figure 2, when individuals feel high -level job demands in the workplace, workplace flexibility has further strengthened its positive predictive effect on work-family conflict, and job demands have further strengthened the positive correlation between workplace flexibility and work-family

conflict. Therefore, Hypothesis 2 is verified.

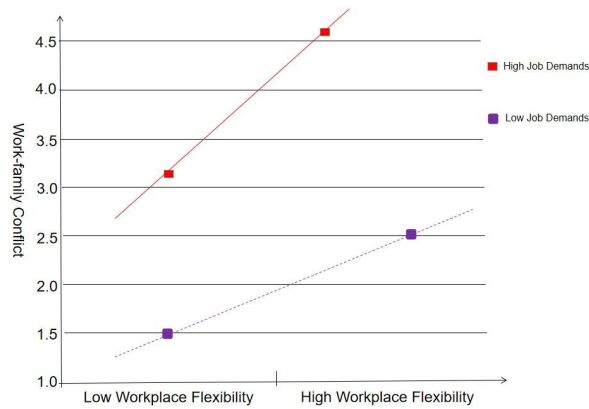


Figure 2. The moderation of job demands

5.5.3 Moderated Mediation Model Test

Model 7 of the auxiliary plug-in process of SPSS 26.0 is used to further verify the moderated mediation model. We include workplace flexibility and job demands into the analysis model and integrate the mediation and moderation. As shown in Table 8, when the job demands are at a low level, the indirect effect between workplace flexibility and job involvement is significant. The 95% confidence interval CI= [-0.067, -0.002], and the indirect effect value is -0.029. When job demands are at a high level, the indirect effect between workplace flexibility and job involvement is significant. The 95% confidence interval CI= [-0.119, -0.005], and the indirect effect value is -0.058. Based on this, we can think that when job demands are at a high level, their indirect effect value is greater than the absolute value at a low level. Therefore, it can be concluded that when job demands are at a high level, the negative correlation between workplace flexibility and job involvement is partially mediated by work-family conflict. Moreover, the moderated mediation index is -0.021, and the confidence interval CI= [-0.050, -0.001]. Therefore, hypothesis 3 is validated.

Table 8. The influence of different levels of job demands on mediating effect

Job Demands	Indirect Effect	SE	95% Confidence Interval	
			Minimum	Maximum

Low	-0.029	0.017	-0.067	-0.002
Middle	-0.043	0.022	-0.090	-0.004
High	-0.058	0.029	-0.119	-0.005

6. Conclusion

In the context of online telecommuting, based on resource conservation theory, boundary theory and role pressure theory, the research conducted a survey on 690 teachers from 16 senior high schools in China, and verified the relationship between workplace flexibility and job involvement. The results show that: 1) Workplace flexibility has a significant positive impact on work-family conflict; 2) Workplace flexibility has a significant negative impact on job involvement; 3) work-family conflict has a significant negative impact on job involvement; 4) work-family conflict partially mediates the relationship between workplace flexibility and job involvement; 5) Job demands positively moderate the relationship between workplace flexibility and work-family conflict; 6) Job demands play a positive role in moderating the relationship between workplace flexibility and job involvement through work-family conflict.

7 Discussion

7.1 Negative Influence of Workplace Flexibility

Previous studies on workplace flexibility have focused on its positive impact. However, with the prevalence of online telecommuting, especially in the context of the COVID-19 epidemic, more schools are implementing home office, giving individuals the flexibility of office location. However, as Spieller et al. (2017) found, the use of long-term flexible working hours will affect the achievement of work goals. We should also consider whether the flexible working policy can have a positive impact when it is implemented. Especially with high-level job demands and tension of teachers from senior high schools, whether the flexible working policy really brings flexibility to teachers is a question worthy considering. Under this background, the study verified the negative impact of workplace flexibility under the background of high-level job demands. The research takes senior high school teachers with high intensity work background as the research object. At the same time, schools generally implement flexible working policies

when the epidemic is serious and give teachers the right to choose their own working hours and places. The study found that workplace flexibility does not play a positive role. When they have the flexibility of office time and office location, it also means that their work task intensity dominates their daily work process. As the existing research shows, this workplace flexibility may lead to an invisible overtime. The higher the workplace flexibility of the sample group is, the more likely it is to cause conflicts between their work and family boundaries. In addition, this study also found a negative relationship between workplace flexibility and job involvement. To sum up, this study theoretically expands the cognitive perspective of “workplace flexibility”, focusing not only on the positive impact of workplace flexibility, but also on the negative impact of workplace flexibility in some contexts.

7.2 Mediation of Work-family Conflict

As an important variable of organizational behavior, work-family conflict has become a mature concept. There are many researches on work-family conflict, and the antecedents and outcome variables have been fully studied. The research mainly focuses on one aspect of work-family conflict, the interference of work to family, namely work-family conflict. It is found that workplace flexibility will blur the boundary between work and family. In this case, the roles of work and family are mixed together, and the effect of the antecedents on work-family conflict is ambiguous. The same work feature may have a different impact on the work-family conflict level in two cases. As the research in this paper found, the workplace flexibility policy was originally proposed to enable individuals to better handle work and family tasks, thereby reducing the conflict between work and family roles. However, in the work roles with high job demands, the workplace flexibility will lead to the penetration interference of work roles to family roles and improve the level of work-family conflict. Based on this, this paper provides a new perspective to examine work-family conflict in the context of work-family mix. When work and family situations and roles are mixed, the effect of the antecedents of work-family conflict will vary. In addition, this study links work-family conflict with job involvement. Work-family conflict is an

important influencing factor for individual work decisions. For example, Duxbury and Higgins (1991) believed that work-family conflict would increase turnover intention. For individuals, they have different preferences for work and family. When work interferes with family, it will significantly affect their feelings about work. On this basis, this paper expands the result variables caused by work-family conflict. To sum up, this study theoretically expands the influencing factors and results of work-family conflict, and also provides a new perspective on the impact mechanism between workplace flexibility and job involvement.

7.3 Moderation of Job Demands

Previous studies have mostly studied job demands as an important antecedent variable. Some scholars have found that job demands also have some positive effects, such as improving individual innovative work behavior (Chen Hao, 2011). There is little research on the moderating effect of job demands. This study is mainly based on the work characteristics of senior high school teachers to study the moderating effect of job demands. The results show that workplace flexibility has a positive predictive effect on teachers’ work-family conflict level. Especially in the context of generally increasing work intensity, the level of job demands will significantly affect the implementation effect of various policies in the workplace. In conclusion, this study provides a new perspective on the role of “job demands” variables and enriches the relevant theoretical framework.

7.4 Enlightenment

With the development of online telecommuting, office space and office hours are not limited to the workplace and working hours. This is very important for parents, teachers and schools in school education. With the development of technology, more schools began to implement flexible working policies. Especially since the outbreak of the COVID-19 epidemic, the flexible working policy has been rapidly promoted. Teachers can complete daily work tasks at home, reducing commuting time on the road, and also giving consideration to the role and tasks of work and family to a certain extent. However, the improvement of workplace flexibility also means

that superiors can contact teachers anytime and anywhere to assign tasks, and they can also arrange more tasks for teachers to complete independently. Based on this, workplace flexibility may cause motivation conflict. Based on the research conclusions of this paper, we need to re-examine the practical significance of workplace flexibility.

First of all, we should pay attention to the interference of workplace flexibility on teachers' work and family and be careful to guard against the hidden overtime implemented by managers with the help of workplace flexibility policy. When implementing the workplace flexibility policy, schools need to do a good job in measuring and allocating work tasks. Excessive task allocation will lead to the penetration of work into families, resulting in teachers needing to deal with excessive work tasks, working hours will be extended, and even work tasks need to be completed at home. Second, clearly define working time and non-working time. Workplace flexibility means that working hours are not fixed, but it does not mean that working hours are unlimited. It is necessary to reasonably set the daily necessary working hours according to the characteristics of its own work content and reduce the interference during non-working hours. Third, help teachers adapt to workplace flexibility policy. The starting point of workplace flexibility is to improve work freedom and give consideration to work and family. If the policy is not well used, it may lead to low work efficiency and unnecessary extension of working hours. The school can carry out corresponding training, such as time management ability training, to help teachers better complete their daily work, so as to fully enjoy the convenience brought by workplace flexibility policy.

For teachers, in the context of the gradual mixing of work and family, how to better control each other's boundaries is crucial for their work and family. Individuals need to improve their border control ability and time management ability. For boundary control ability, individuals need to handle the boundaries of work tasks and family tasks well. When dealing with work tasks, it is necessary to reduce the interference of family tasks on work, especially when working at home. If one needs to deal with family tasks during work,

it will cause low work efficiency. At the same time, border control also means that work cannot impact families. As for time management ability, it is mainly reflected in the control of the time progress of various work tasks. When individuals have more autonomy in work, they need to set the completion time of each work task by themselves to prevent the accumulation of tasks. In addition, time management ability also means that individuals need to improve the efficiency of time utilization, especially whether they can have high time utilization when there are no external management restrictions, which determines whether individuals can truly enjoy the benefits of workplace flexibility.

8. Limitations and Future Directions

The research is a positive exploration of workplace flexibility. It studies the negative impact of workplace flexibility in the new industry background and employment environment and discusses the impact mechanism of workplace flexibility on work-family conflict and job involvement under the background of high-level job demands. It has certain theoretical contributions and significance. However, this study inevitably has some research limitations.

First, in terms of research methods, the research data in this paper are all from self-statement, and there is inevitably a problem of common method bias in individual self-reported data, which increases the correlation between various research variables. Although this study has used statistical methods to verify and exclude the impact of common method bias, it still cannot completely avoid its impact. Secondly, cross section data is used for data collection. In real work scenarios, there may be seasonal differences in school work tasks, and their impact on individuals may change over time. In future research, we can properly track the samples for a period of time to explore the impact of changes in job demands, and then more fully explore the impact of workplace flexibility on work-family conflict and job involvement. Furthermore, the measurement of workplace flexibility is collected in the form of self-report, which is inevitably subjective. It is suggested that more objective measurement indicators be selected for workplace flexibility in future researches.

Second, in terms of research content, work-family conflict, as an important organizational behavior variable, has various influencing factors. In this study, only variables such as gender, age, education children, and parental support are controlled. More control variables can be added in future studies to more accurately study the antecedents of work-family conflict. In addition, there are more alternatives to the selection of moderating variables, such as internal competition, individual work-family preferences, and individual border control ability, which may moderate the impact of workplace flexibility on work-family conflict. Therefore, in future researches, we can continue to add corresponding boundary conditions to more fully study the boundary conditions where workplace flexibility plays a role. In addition, this study mainly focused on the impact of work to family interference on teachers' work experience and work decision-making but did not study the effect of family interference on work. In the future related research, scholars can supplement the research on family-work conflict and make a comparative study on the effects of work-family-work conflict and family-work conflict to form a more complete conclusion.

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