

# **Work-Family Conflict Chinese Style**

**Shujie Chen**

**Faculty of Health and Life Science**

**09/2023**

**A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the University's requirements for the Degree of Doctor  
of Philosophy**



To the best of my knowledge, I confirm that the work in this thesis is my original work undertaken for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Faculty of Health and Life Science, De Montfort University. I confirm that no material for this thesis has been submitted for any other degree or qualification at any other university.

## ABSTRACT

This thesis aimed to examine work-family conflict within China by conducting two studies. This thesis utilised 536 participants, 16 of whom participated in the semi-structured online interviews of Study 1 which explored the lived experience of work-family conflict in China. A further 520 participants participated in the online questionnaire in Study 2a and b (shared the same dataset), which developed an integrated work-family conflict model applicable in China, and secondly, from a gendered-life course perspective investigated the moderating and the interaction effects of age and gender on the developed model.

Creswell's (2013) phenomenological method guided the collection and analysis of qualitative data in Study 1. In Study 2a, R software, specifically the Lavaan package, was employed for structural equation modelling to develop and test an integrative model of work-family conflict in a Chinese context. Study 2a has been published in *Current Psychology* (Chen et al. (2023). Developing and testing an integrative model of work-family conflict in a Chinese context. *Current Psychology*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-023-04431-5>). Lastly, in Study 2b, Hayes' PROCESS v4.0 was utilised to examine the moderation and interaction effects of age and gender on the relationships between work-family conflict and its associated variables.

The findings of the thesis identified the dynamics peculiar to Chinese employees in the experience of work-family conflict, which included the standpoint of Chinese people towards work-family conflict (e.g., just a lived experience or a minor problem in life – Study 1), the process and outcomes of work-family conflict (e.g., family support positively related to time spent on family responsibilities; behaviour-based antecedents of work-family conflict only predicted work-to-family conflict; positive relation between work-family conflict and life satisfaction – Study 2a), and evidence that the work-family conflict within China has become skewed towards adult males (males were more prone to the impact of the antecedents of work-family conflict – Study 2b). In addition, by cross-validating, the qualitative and quantitative findings, the potential reasons why work-family conflict is considered a minor problem in life were found (i.e., female employees could not escape

from family responsibilities, thereby viewing work-family conflict as an unchanged “part of life”; male employees less likely to talk about work-family conflict due to the influence of traditional masculinity).

These findings highlighted the importance of further investigating work-family conflict under different cultural backgrounds, enriched the field of work-family conflict study by broadening our understanding of work-family conflict outside the overwhelming Western perspective, and set a reminder for future work-family conflict studies shall be cautious in the selecting of Western developed theories/models when conducting work-family conflict study outside the West, since Western theories/models may not be suitable in different cultural backgrounds. Additionally, the findings of the thesis provided greater insights for policymakers, employees, employers etc., who can modify their approach, acknowledge the changing societal needs, and help address the growing, changing, and challenging work-family conflict issues.

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## Acknowledgement

I sincerely thank my parents for their selfless love and support. It wasn't until I had to manage household chores and work to make a living myself that I truly understood how much my parents have sacrificed for me.

I genuinely thank my supervisors: Dr Mei-I Cheng, Professor Shira Elqayam, and Dr Mark Scase. Thank you for your invaluable support, guidance, and constructive criticism. I would also like to express my gratitude for your valuable feedback and constructive criticism during the publication of three papers (appendix Z, AA, and BB), two working papers under review, and one working paper in production. Your insights have significantly enriched my research journey. A special thanks goes to Mei-I Cheng, thank you for always believing in me and supporting me; without your help, I wouldn't have come this far.

I want to express my gratitude to all the lecturers and professors in the Faculty of Health and Life Sciences at De Montfort University. Thank you all for your unwavering support and for guiding me through my master's degree; without your generous assistance, I might have switched back to a business major. A special thanks goes to Dr Hui Yu and Professor Shira Elqayam; thank you for taking time out of your busy schedules to help me improve my SEM and R software skills.

Last but not least, I want to thank all my friends and the kind people I have met. Even though we may not know each other very well or even know each other's names, I want you to know that I remember all your support and assistance. It was a blessing to get to know you, and I'm grateful. A special appreciation goes to all my friends in China. Completing a PhD degree in a foreign country is challenging, and the pandemic made it even more so. I sincerely thank you all for remembering me, encouraging me, and caring for me during this challenging time, despite not meeting in person for years.

# 1. Overview

## 1.0. Introduction

The challenging economic conditions during and after World War II (1930s–1970s) resulted in a substantial number of women entering the workplace to help share the family's financial burden (Korabik, Lero, et al., 2008). Such a social/workplace development has conflicted with the beliefs that men should be the main breadwinners and only focus on the work role, whereas women should be the caregivers of the family and assist their husband's work (i.e., the traditional gender role); thereby giving rise to the work-family conflict phenomenon – a role conflict due to the incompatibility between work demands and family responsibilities, and contributed to the research of work-family conflict as early as in the 1980s (e.g., Korabik, Lero, et al., 2008; Bellavia & Frone, 2005; Xie et al., 2021; Erdogan et al., 2021). Nevertheless, this only happened in the West, work-family conflict was less well known to Eastern scholars until the 2000s due to social changes, such as the increasing population of dual-career couples and/or single parents, which have resulted in the work-family conflict experience becoming increasingly common in Eastern countries (e.g., Yang et al., 2000; Ling & Powell, 2001; Spector, Sanchez, et al., 2004; Lu & Cooper, 2015).

Consequently, over 95 per cent of work-family conflict studies are based on Western samples and studies on the work-family conflict that use Asian samples are rare, which made the field of work-family conflict study dominated by Western perspectives (e.g., Chang et al., 2010; Lu & Cooper, 2015). Accordingly, work-family conflict studies conducted worldwide heavily rely on the theories and/or models that are based on and developed by the individualist West and overlook the influence of different cultural backgrounds on such a phenomenon (e.g., Spector et al., 2007; Powell et al., 2009; Hill et al., 2014).

It is no secret that culture plays an important role in the experience of work-family conflict. *Culture* as a general term that reflects the “shared beliefs, attitudes, norms, roles, and behaviors” (Triandis, 1995, p. 4) of a nation/group might affect work-family conflict and its related variables between countries (Aycan, 2008). For example, Aryee et al. (1999) adopted and tested a work-family conflict model developed by Frone et al. (1992) in Hong Kong employees; by comparing the results

with the original study (American samples), Aryee et al. (1999) found that culture affected the relationship between work-family conflict and overall wellbeing in that work-to-family conflict had a stronger impact on life satisfaction in Hongkong samples. In contrast, the life satisfaction of Americans was more likely to be affected by family-to-work conflict. Moreover, a recent Sino-U.S. comparative study by Lai et al. (2020) demonstrated that the effect of workplace flexibility (e.g., flexible work hours) in the management of work-family conflict became weaker when other sources of support are available; consequently, the greater level of family support in China might cause the Chinese employees to benefit less from workplace flexibility in managing work-family conflict issues than the employees from individualist West.

However, Powell et al. (2009) pointed out that despite the importance of cultural influence in the experience of work-family conflict, culture-related work-family conflict studies (i.e., work-family conflict studies conducted outside the U.S. or cultural comparison studies) are scarce. Their report further claimed that the number of culture-related work-family conflict studies was too small to carry out a meta-analytic review; in addition, due to the insufficient studies that investigating the cultural influence on work-family conflict, the term *culture* was not recognised as a work-family conflict-related factor in the work-family conflict meta-analysis studies (Powell et al. 2009). This is evident in Byron's (2005) meta-analytic report; after reviewing over 60 work-family conflict studies, Byron (2005) did not find any studies that included cultural factors as the antecedent or moderator of work-family conflict. A similar conclusion was made by Allen et al. (2015) – the awareness of cultural influence on work-family conflict experience has gradually increased the number of such studies, yet it is still scarce. This was evident in Kengatharan's (2015) systemic review; after screening 535 papers from 2506 journal articles generated by the initial search strategy, only 23 studies out of the total 535 work-family conflict publications were culturally related. Such limitation was named "an elephant in our field" (Ollier-Malaterre et al., 2013, p. 434).

Thus, to capture a more comprehensive understanding of work-family conflict, a wider range of groups and settings under different cultural backgrounds should be investigated (Lu & Cooper,

2015). Therefore, this thesis aims to systematically investigate the experience of work-family conflict in China (a country in the East with a completely different cultural background from the West) from two different studies. Study 1 is a phenomenological qualitative study to explore the lived experience of work-family conflict in China, to provide an in-depth understanding of work-family conflict, the perception of Chinese employees towards work-family conflict, and to make suggestions on the potential factors related to the experience of work-family conflict in China.

After exploring such a phenomenon, Study 2a is to develop an integrated work-family conflict model that is applicable in China, with the consideration of the suggested factors from Study 1, to further verify the accuracy of the findings of Study 1, mapping out the process of work-family conflict in China and draw a blueprint to examine: how the work/family environment relates to the experience of work-family conflict, what factors predict/create work-family conflict, and how the experience of work-family conflict affect Chinese employees' wellbeing.

Finally, Study 2b shifts the focus to the individual level to investigate the effects of age and gender on the final work-family conflict model of Study 2a. To provide an in-depth understanding of how work-family conflict is experienced differently between men and women and different ages in China, and shed light on which groups of employees (e.g., older or younger, male or female) have a higher risk of experiencing work-family conflict in China.

## **1.1. Definition of Major Terms**

This section briefly defines the major terms used in the present thesis. More details are discussed thoroughly throughout different chapters.

### **1.1.1. Work-Family Interface**

The work-family interface is a broader term that describes the connection between work and family domains which can be split into a positive side (work-family enrichment), a negative side (work-family conflict), and balance (work-family balance) (e.g., Lu & Cooper, 2015; Korabik, Lero, et al., 2008). The present thesis focuses on the negative side: work-family conflict.

### 1.1.2. Work-Family Conflict

An inter-role conflict between work and family roles. It is found that work-family conflict has two directions: work-to-family conflict (work demand interference with family responsibility) and family-to-work conflict (family responsibility interference with work demand). In addition, work-family conflict comes in three forms: time-based, strain-based, and behaviour-based, and that each form of work-family conflict has its unique antecedents (e.g., Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Frone et al., 1997).

- The time-based antecedent of work-family conflict: time-related situations/factors that create work-family conflict (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). For example, the imbalance of time allocation between work and family domains (e.g., long working hours affects the time available for family members).
- The strain-based antecedent of work-family conflict: the mental, physical, and emotional strain (e.g., stress, fatigue, sadness) experienced in one domain affects the individuals' performance in another domain (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). For example, the employee has no energy left to help with domestic chores after a long working day.
- The behaviour-based antecedent of work-family conflict: the behaviour patterns that facilitate in one domain but conflict with the behaviours required in the other domain (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). For example, a soldier might need to be tough and less emotional; nevertheless, such behaviour patterns might conflict with the behaviours required in the family domain because the soldier's family members might want him/her to be gentleness and emotionally open.

### 1.1.3. Work Schedule Flexibility

Work schedule flexibility can be defined as the level of control of the employee regarding the access to flexible work schedules (e.g., choices about work shifts) and workplace (e.g., being able to work from home) (Carlson et al., 2010).

#### 1.1.4. Work/Family Support

The instrumental, tangible, and emotional support provided by the in-group members from the work and/or family domain, such as the support from co-workers, supervisors, elderly parents, siblings, and spouses (e.g., Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2001; Choi & Ha, 2011).

#### 1.1.5. Overall Wellbeing

Wellbeing is a multifaceted construct encompassing wellness, health, and happiness (Diener et al., 2009). Several influential models contribute to our understanding of the complexity of wellbeing. For instance, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow, 1962) posits that wellbeing is a continuing journey, beginning with the satisfaction of basic physiological needs and ending in self-actualisation, where individuals realise their full potential. The PERMA model (Martin Seligman, 2011), which identifies five key elements—positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment—underscores the importance of a holistic approach that integrates positive emotions, interpersonal connections, and a sense of purpose for overall wellbeing. The Wellbeing Wheel model (Myers & Sweeney, 2008) categorises wellbeing into physical, social, emotional, career, and financial dimensions. This model recognises the interconnectedness of these life domains and their collective impact on an individual's overall wellbeing. Additionally, the biopsychosocial model (Engel, 1977) offers a holistic perspective, considering biological, psychological, and social factors that influence wellbeing, emphasising the interplay of physical health, mental and emotional states, and social influences.

Despite the differences in these models, they all share similar concepts. It encompasses positive emotions, satisfaction with life, and positive functioning (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2018).

Given that this research focuses on work-family conflict, the concept of wellbeing in this thesis will specifically focus on work- and family-related wellbeing, particularly emotional wellbeing (i.e., work-family guilt) due to the lack of studies in this area (Korabit et al., 2017). Additionally, work- and family-related performance will also serve as wellbeing outcomes (in the form of positive functioning) of work-family conflict, to investigate how work-family conflict affects individuals'



functioning. Lastly, previous studies (e.g., Kim et al., 2021; Adam et al., 1996; Naami & Mahmoodikia, 2019; Perrewe et al., 1999; Prajogo, 2016) have consistently suggested using subjective wellbeing, such as life or job satisfaction as the wellbeing outcome of work-family conflict, and Yuan et al. (2022) posited that there is a need to investigate the effect of work-family conflict on life satisfaction due to insufficient studies in this topic within a Chinese context. Therefore, this research will take into consideration the effect of work-family conflict on life satisfaction.

#### *1.1.5.1. Work-Family Guilt*

The guilty feeling is generated from the belief that involvement in one role adversely affects participation in the other (Korabik et al., 2017). For example, the guilty feeling generated from the belief that being a good family member has wronged the organisation (e.g., showing up late at work due to provide care for sick family members) (i.e., family-to-work guilt), or being a good employee has violated being a family member (e.g., missed child birthday due to work overtime) (i.e., work-to-family guilt).

#### *1.1.5.2. Work/Family Performance*

Work and family performance describe how well the individual performs in work and family roles, such as the quality (e.g., competence) and quantity (e.g., productivity) of work (i.e., work performance), and help with domestic chores and providing emotional support for family members (i.e., family performance) (e.g., Chen et al., 2014; Andrade et al., 2020).

#### *1.1.5.3. Life Satisfaction*

Personal assessment of the extent to which their fundamental needs, objectives, and desires have been met (Cheung & Chan, 2009).

Details of the relationship between work-family conflict and wellbeing can be found in Chapter 2, and Chapters 5 further discuss the relationships between work-family conflict, work- and family-related performance, work-family guilt, and life satisfaction.

## 1.2. Purpose, Objectives, Research Questions

This research aims to enrich the field of work-family conflict study by investigating the experience of work-family conflict in China. In addition, it sheds light on the experience of work-family conflict, helps to understand how work-family conflict acts in the work-family interface, and provides an in-depth understanding of the effect of age and gender on the work-family conflict experience in China. Accordingly, it is hoped to help Chinese employees cope with work-family conflict better and make suggestions for employers, health professors, and lawmakers to enact/create family-friendly policies/work environments.

### 1.2.1. Research Objectives

The aims and objectives of this research are:

- To explore the work-family conflict phenomenon in China and the perception of Chinese employees toward work-family conflict. This allows us to identify the potential factors that are associated with the experience of work-family conflict and its negative impact on Chinese employees.
- Based on the suggested factors, develop an integrated work-family conflict model applicable in China and understand the work-family conflict in China. Given that most existing integrated work-family conflict models are based on and developed by the West, this limits our scope and the level of understanding of such a phenomenon. Developing a work-family conflict model that is applicable in China and comparing this model with the Western models allows us to understand how work-family conflict acts in China's work-family interface and generalise our understanding of work-family conflict across cultures.
- To investigate the effect of age and gender on the experience of work-family conflict. This allows us to identify which group of Chinese employees will have a higher risk of experiencing work-family conflict (e.g., male/female employees at a younger age or male/female employees in middle age), and the underlying reasons why different groups of Chinese employees experienced work-family conflict differently.

### 1.2.2. Research Questions

The research questions of this thesis are:

1. What does work-family conflict mean to Chinese employees?
  - 1.1. Is it a stressor or just a lived experience?
  - 1.2. What factors affect the experience of work-family conflict?
  - 1.3. How does work-family conflict affect Chinese employees' life and wellbeing?
2. How does the work-family conflict experience in China?
  - 2.1. How does a supportive work/family environment affect the antecedents of work-family conflict?
  - 2.2. How do strain-based/time-based/behaviour-based factors create work-family conflict?
  - 2.3. How does work-family conflict affect Chinese employees' work/family performance and life satisfaction?
3. How do age and gender affect the process of work-family conflict?
  - 3.1. How do the age and gender of the employees affect the relationships between work/family environments and the antecedents of work-family conflict?
  - 3.2. How do the age and gender of the employees affect the relationships between work-family conflict and its antecedents?
  - 3.3. How do the age and gender of the employees affect the relationships between work-family conflict and its consequences?
4. Which group of Chinese employees have a higher risk of experiencing work-family conflict?
  - 4.1. What makes this group of Chinese employees have a higher risk of experiencing work-family conflict?

### 1.3. Research Approaches

An exploratory sequential mixed-method approach was used to meet the research objectives. Specifically, a qualitative semi-structured online interview method was used to explore the lived experience of work-family conflict in China from the participant's explanation (Study 1).

Creswell's (2013) phenomenological analysis is adopted in Study 1. Creswell's (2013) phenomenological method focuses on general questions, such as what they experienced (e.g., what is the experience of work-family conflict?) and how they experienced it (e.g., what contexts or situations have typically influenced the experience of work-family conflict?), thereby suggesting the potential factors that related to work-family conflict for model development (Study 2).

Moreover, the goal of Study 2a was to develop an integrated work-family conflict model applicable in China, whereas Study 2b was based on the final model of Study 2a to further investigate the gender and age differences in the experience of work-family conflict. Hence, both Studies 2a and b are non-experimental quantitative studies that used different statistical methods but shared the same dataset. The quantitative method can identify/determine whether there is a relation between two variables (e.g., the path relation in the work-family conflict model) by analysing the collected numeric data (Rutberg & Bouikidis, 2018), thereby increasing the reliability and the generalisability of the work-family conflict model and the accuracy of the findings (Carminati, 2018). In addition, the statistical method used in Study 2a was Structural Equation Modelling (SEM), which allows the researcher to develop and test a pre-assumed causal model (Civelek, 2018), whereas Study 2b used a moderation method that allows the researcher to investigate how a third variable affects the relationship between a set of variables, such as how age and/or gender affect the relationships between work-family conflict and its antecedents (Hayes, 2018). More details are discussed in chapter 3 (general methodology).

In sum, by using an exploratory sequential mixed-method, the findings from the qualitative study can help to inform the collection of the data for later studies and favour knowledge creation, thereby increasing the validity of the findings and having a more profound and comprehensive understanding of the work-family conflict phenomenon in China (McKim, 2017).

#### 1.4. Thesis Structure

This thesis consisted of seven chapters. *Chapter one* has provided a general introduction, research purpose, objectives, and research questions, along with the research approach and the thesis structure.

*Chapter two* introduces the background of work-family conflict and its impact on wellbeing, along with the major theoretical foundations and previous integrated models addressing work-family conflict. This exploration aims to enhance understanding of the concept. Additionally, the discussion encompasses the cultural, economic, and social aspects of China, shedding light on potential work-family conflict issues currently faced in the country.

*Chapter three* highlights the rationale for this research. It covers the general methodology of this research detailing why exploratory sequential mixed-method is used and how it is implemented for this research.

*Chapter four* is the first study of this research – a phenomenological study that explores the lived experience of work-family conflict in China. This chapter starts with a brief introduction and the conceptual framework for this study, continuing to highlight the necessity of exploring work-family conflict in China using a qualitative method. Crewell's (2013) phenomenological analysis was used to emerge the themes. The themes described how Chinese employees view, experience, and handle work-family conflict, and identified the potential factors related to the experience of work-family conflict in China for the following studies of this thesis.

*Chapter five* is the second study (a) of this thesis – develop an integrated work-family conflict model applicable in China. The qualitative findings from Study 1 are considered as the antecedents/consequences of work-family conflict during model development, to increase the contextual relevance of the proposed model and to further verify the qualitative findings.

*Chapter six* is the second part of Study 2(b) – investigates the effect of age and gender on the experience of work-family conflict. This chapter provides a literature review of the life course and the gendered-life course approach to understand how age and gender are related to the

experience of work-family conflict. This chapter demonstrated the age and gender differences in the experience of work-family conflict and confirmed the group of Chinese employees that would have a higher risk of experiencing work-family conflict.

*Chapter seven* provides the General Discussion of this thesis. This chapter compares the similar and different findings between the qualitative (Study 1) and quantitative studies (Studies 2 and 3), to deliver an explicit explanation of the work-family conflict experienced in China. In addition, it reviews the implications and limitations of the research and recommendations for future studies.

## 2. Backgrounds of Work-Family Conflict and China

### 2.0. Introduction

Societal, cultural, and individual contexts affect individuals' attitudes and interpretations of the relationship between work and family (Kossek et al., 2011). For example, parents with a newborn baby might shift their focus from the work role to the family role, workaholics might feel less distress when working long hours, and people from different cultural backgrounds might view work and family differently, resulting in different work-family conflict experiences.

Kossek et al.'s (2011) point of view is backed up by previous work-family conflict scholars who focused on cultural differences and found that the Chinese cultural and societal backgrounds, such as the family structures (e.g., three generations living together), sources of support (e.g., elderly parents take care of the adult child), and/or individual values (e.g., collective/family priorities), have resulted in the work-family conflict experienced in China different from the West (e.g., Gao, 2020; Jaw et al., 2007; Lu & Cooper, 2015; Lin, Ju et al., 2013; Lu et al., 2006). For example, Western-based studies (e.g., Behson, 2002; Grzywacz & Marks, 2000; Golden et al., 2006; Bakhsh et al., 2020) found that individuals with a larger household size experience greater work-family conflict due to the increased expectations, demands, and strains; in contrast, Chinese-based studies (e.g., Zhang & Wu, 2021; Xu et al., 2007; Chen & Cheng, 2023) suggested that the family collectivism orientation created a more supportive relationship between family members in China, resulting in a larger household size could help to mitigate work-family conflict

As such, it is necessary to introduce Chinese cultural and societal backgrounds, to help thoroughly understand why there is work-family conflict, what caused such a conflict, and how it is uniquely experienced in China (e.g., Lu & Cooper., 2015; Liu & Cheung, 2015). This chapter will introduce work-family conflict, along with the Confucian and collectivist culture, since China is identified as the birthplace of Confucianism and a collectivist country (e.g., Elman et al., 2002; Hang, 2011). In addition, the economic and social development in China will be introduced, because previous studies (e.g., Liu et al., 2008; Lu, 2007; Chen et al., 2018) acknowledged that China's economic reform and opening-up in 1978 boosted the economy, simultaneously, changed the way

Chinese employees work and live dramatically, resulting in an unprecedented level of work-family conflict. Last, the background information will then be used to shed light on Chinese work and family values and the potential work-family conflict experienced in China.

### 2.1. Background of Work-Family Conflict

Traditionally, society assigned males to be the main breadwinner of the family and only focused on the work role, whereas females were the housekeepers and only focused on the family role (Korabik, McElwain, et al., 2008). As society developed, such traditional gender roles conflicted with the workplace structure due to the increased number of dual-career couples, single parents, and female employees (Korabik, Lero, et al., 2008). The extra role demands for both genders, such as the wife having to go to work to share the family financial burden and handle domestic chores, created tension between work and family roles and contributed to the start of work-family conflict research (e.g., Korabik, Lero, et al., 2008; Lu & Cooper., 2015).

The concept of work-family conflict has changed over time. Kahn et al. (1964) vaguely defined work-family conflict as “the simultaneous occurrence of two or more sets of pressures such that compliance with one would make compliance with the other more difficult” (p. 19). Later, Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) provided the most widely cited definition of work-family conflict “A form of inter-role conflict in which the role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect. That is, participation in the work (family) role is made more difficult by virtue of participation in the family (work) role” (p. 77). Based on Greenhaus and Beutell’s (1985) definition, researchers have acknowledged two directions of work-family conflict: work-to-family conflict and family-to-work conflict. Both types of conflicts have their unique causes; work-to-family conflict occurs when work demand interferes with the family domain, whereas family-to-work conflict occurs when family responsibility interferes with the work domain (e.g., Byron, 2005; Frone et al., 1992).

In addition, Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) suggested that work-family conflict comes in three major forms: time-based, strain-based, and behaviour-based conflicts. In general, the



imbalance time allocation between work and family will lead to the experience of time-based conflict; for example, an employee who spends more time at work will have less time available for family, thus, creating work-to-family conflict (Bruck et al., 2002). Strain-based conflict can be explained as the demands from one role affecting another role's performance (Netemeyer et al., 1996); for example, an employee may have no energy left to help with domestic chores after a long working day (i.e., burnout). Last, behaviour-based conflict can be defined as the behaviours required in one role is incompatible with another role (Bruck et al., 2002); for example, being a soldier may need to be harsh and shows less emotion; however, such behaviours are not expected by the family members, the family members may expect his/her parent, spouse and/or child to be warm and show more emotions, etc.

#### 2.1.1. Work-family Conflict and Its Impact on Wellbeing

Work-family conflict, as a stressor, has been consistently associated with various negative outcomes. A growing body of research has explored the potential negative impact of work-family conflict on individuals' different aspects of wellbeing.

Studies have shown that work-family conflict can lead to a range of physical health issues, affecting workers' wellbeing. For instance, Frone et al. (1997) found that the stress associated with work-family conflict can lead to fatigue, as individuals struggle to meet the demands of both work and family life. Crain et al. (2008), Peeters et al. (2004), and Neto et al. (2018) claimed that sleep disturbances are another common consequence of the conflict experience, with individuals often sacrificing sleep to fulfil work and family responsibilities. In addition, work-family conflict as a chronic stressor, has also been linked to health disorders, such as cardiovascular disease and a weakened immune system (Schnorpfeil et al., 2003), as well as contributing to changes in body mass, which was evident in Roos et al.'s (2007) study, indicating a correlation between work-family conflict and weight gain.

Moreover, work-family conflict was also found to negatively affect mental health, encompassing both psychological and emotional wellbeing. Studies (e.g., Netemeyer et al., 2004;

Swanson & Power, 1999; Kelloway et al., 1999) suggested that Psychological-, Work-, and family-related strain are the most common negative responses to work-family conflict. The stress and strain caused by this conflict can lead to mental health issues such as anxiety, depression, and distress. As evidenced in Zhao et al.'s (2023) study, which found that work-family conflict was significantly associated with anxiety among nurses in maternal and child health institutions. Additionally, a study by Liu et al. (2007) found a positive association between work-family conflict and depression, which in turn, was negatively related to job performance; and a study by Molina (2020) found an association between work-family conflict and distress, suggesting that managing work-family conflict is a major challenge in our society.

In addition to the negative impact of work-family conflict on psychological wellbeing, emotional wellbeing also seems to be affected by work-family conflict. For example, Judge et al. (2006) found that work-family conflict would affect workers' emotional wellbeing in that the conflict experience was positively associated with anger at home and workplace settings. Similarly, Gu et al. (2022) found a negative correlation between work-family conflict and happiness; individuals experiencing high levels of work-family conflict are likely to report lower levels of happiness. Furthermore, studies by Korabik (2015), Korabit et al. (2017), and Morgan and King (2012) all found a positive association between work-family conflict and emotional distress – work-family guilt.

Lastly, the negative impact of work-family conflict on individuals' subjective wellbeing has also been well-discovered. For example, a study by Dilmaghani et al. (2022) found that nurses experiencing high levels of work-family conflict reported lower levels of quality of life, a key component of subjective wellbeing. Additionally, studies also found that work-family conflict affects individuals' subjective wellbeing in the form of perceived satisfaction. For instance, A meta-analysis study conducted by Ford et al. (2007) found a negative correlation between work-family conflict and work and family satisfaction. Their findings were similar to the findings of Voydanoff (2005), which discovered negative relationships between work-family conflict and job and marital satisfaction. Furthermore, several studies have examined the association between work-family conflict and life

satisfaction (e.g., Greenhaus et al., 2003; Perrewe et al., 1999; Cardenas et al., 2004), and provided evidence of the negative impact of the conflict experience on life satisfaction.

In summary, existing studies consistently demonstrate that work-family conflict has profound effects on individuals, influencing various aspects of their overall well-being, including subjective, physical, mental, and psychological dimensions.

### 2.1.2. The Major Theoretical Basis of Work-Family Conflict

Bellavia and Frone (2005) argued that the experience of work-family conflict might not be simply understood by one single theory due to the complexity of the work-family interface. Some theories are essential in understanding the work-family conflict including the role theory, conservation of resources theory, boundary theory, ecological systems theory, and decision process theory (Greenhaus & ten Brummelhuis, 2013). Introducing these theories can provide basic understanding of work-family conflict from different theoretical angles and help to better understand the model developed in this study.

#### 2.1.2.1. *Role Theory*

Role theory defines roles as “the result of the anticipations of others about what is proper behavior in a particular position” (Zhang et al., 2012, p.698). Kahn et al. (1964) argued that the expectations from the role senders (e.g., individual’s family members or employer) and/or the values that the individual believes regarding his/her job or family role requirements (e.g., being a good parent or being a good employee) might create or increase the role demands of the individual. Role demand refers to the stressors that are related to a particular role (Kahn et al., 1964). The incompatible demands from multiple roles might lead the individual to experience inter-role conflict (Kahn et al., 1964). Thus, because work-family conflict emphasises the interference between work demand and family responsibility, the work-family conflict has been identified as one type of inter-role conflict (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985).

#### 2.1.2.2. *Conservation of Resources Theory*

The conservation of resources theory (COR) defines resources as “objects, states, conditions, and other things that people value” (Halbesleben et al., 2014, p. 2) and assumes that people have

limited resources and that people will purposely protect and enlarge their resource pool. Individuals might vary in the value they ascribe to different resources; for example, an employee who prioritises work might think that work hours are an important resource; on the other hand, an employee who prioritises family might consider spending time at work is a threat to his/her family time (i.e., another resource).

Hence, the COR theory provides a more in-depth explanation of the process of work-family conflict; when applying the COR theory to the study of work-family conflict, work-family conflict is viewed as a loss cycle (Greenhaus & ten Brummelhuis, 2013). The loss cycle begins with the stressor or increased demand the individual experiences in one domain; to handle the stressor or the increased demand, the individual has to put on more resources in this domain; however, because resources are limited, investing more resources in one domain might influence the performance in other domains. For example, when work demands increase, the employee may have to spend more energy or time at work (i.e., personal resources), consequently impacting his/her performance in family life (e.g., avoiding housework, being unable to spend quality time with family members).

#### 2.1.2.3. *Boundary Theory*

Bellavia and Frone (2005) introduced boundary theory (sometime labelled border theory) as arguing that “each of a person’s roles takes place within a specific domain of life, and these domains are separated by borders that may be physical, temporal, or psychological” (p. 120). The boundary theory sheds light on how the employee manages the borders or boundaries between his/her work and family roles by introducing the concepts of flexibility and permeability, and arguing that the flexibility and permeability of the boundary between the work domain and family lives might affect the difficulty of the individual in transitioning between work and family role; the level of work and family roles segmentation or integration; and as a result, reflect on the entire work-family conflict (Greenhaus & ten Brummelhuis, 2013).

Flexibility refers to the feasibility of one role’s activities performed outside of the specific role settings or times (Bellavia & Frone, 2005); for example, fixed or flexible working hours and

working from home or the workplace. Permeability is defined as “the degree to which a role allows one to be physically located in the role’s domain but psychologically and/or behaviourally involved in another role” (Ashforth et al., 2000, p. 474). For instance, an employee who works from home might have a more permeable boundary because it is easier for the employee to alternate between work demands and fulfilling family needs.

Moreover, the boundary theory highlights that the flexibility or permeability of the boundary might lead to either role integration or segmentation, which might affect the level of work-family conflict (Greenhaus & ten Brummelhuis, 2013). When the work and family role boundaries are more flexible and permeable, work and family roles are more likely to be integrated. Although the integration between work and family roles facilitates the transition from one role to another, it increases the risk of experiencing work-family conflict (Ashforth et al., 2000). For instance, an employee who works from home might shift between work and family roles easily and quickly; nevertheless, the employee’s job might be more likely to be interfered with by family needs and lead to the experience of family-to-work conflict. In contrast, work and family roles tend to be segmented when the work and family boundaries are inflexible and impermeable. The role segmentation makes the transition between work and family roles more difficult and lessens the chance of cross-role distractions, thereby likely decreasing the experience of work-family conflict (Greenhaus & ten Brummelhuis, 2013; Frone, 2003). For example, an employee who must go to the workplace might need to spend more time or effort shifting between work and family roles; however, compared to the employee who is working from home, this employee might experience less interference from family while he/she is at work, thereby decreasing family-to-work conflict.

#### 2.1.2.4. *Ecological Systems Theory*

Ecological systems theory suggests that the development of individuals is a lifelong process; therefore, examining the reciprocity between the traits of the individual and the characteristics of the individual's surrounding environment can help to understand better the development of the individual (Bronfenbrenner, 1989). In other words, ecological systems theory focuses on the

relationship between the individual and his/her surrounding environment. The ecological systems theory has heavily influenced the study of work-family conflict and provided a framework for the role theory and the boundary theory (Bellavia & Frone, 2005). According to Bronfenbrenner (1989), the individual's environment is separated into five different environmental systems: the microsystem, the mesosystem, the exosystem, the macrosystem, and the chronosystem. All systems interconnect with each other and influence individuals' daily lives.

The microsystem as the most proximal system that surrounds the individual, is defined as “a pattern of activities, roles, and interpersonal relations experienced by a person in a network of face-to-face relationships, which occur in settings such as the workplace, the family, and the community” (Voydanoff, 2008, p. 38). Second, the mesosystem is the system that interlinks multiple microsystems, for example, the linkage between an individual's family and workplace (Bronfenbrenner, 1989). Third, the exosystem is similar to the mesosystem but does not involve the participation of the individual; instead, this system means the external environment that has an indirect influence on the individual; for example, the relationship between the family life of the individual and his/her spouse's job (Bronfenbrenner, 1989). Fourth, the macrosystem means the influence of cultural or subcultural elements on the microsystem, mesosystem, and exosystem (e.g., Voydanoff, 2007; Bronfenbrenner, 1989). The first study of the present thesis – how culture might influence the experience of work-family conflict in China, can be seen as one of the examples of this system. The fifth and final system is the chronosystem. This system brings the dimension of time to all the ecological systems and means “the effect of time on the behavior and on the context in which that behavior takes place” (Barboza et al., 2009, p.103). For example, the major life transitions (e.g., getting married, being a parent) may change the behaviours of the individual, the change in family structure may influence the lives of the individual, and the attitudes toward work and family may change over time.

#### 2.1.2.5. *Decision Process Theory*

Recently, the focus of work-family conflict study is shifting from examining the influence of work/family demands to the association of individual characteristics with work-family conflict. For example, the association of personality with the experience of work-family conflict (Priyadharshini & Wesley, 2014); how different role values might influence the experience of work-family conflict (Carlson & Kacmar, 2000); and the age differences in the experience of work-family conflict (Huffman et al., 2013). All these work-family conflict studies that focused on the role of individual characteristics have highlighted how the individual's actions affect the environmental demands and resources, consequently indirectly influencing the interconnection of work domain and family lives and the experience of work-family conflict. To explain how individual characteristics might influence work-family conflict, Poelmans (2005) developed a decision process theory based on the human action theory. The decision process theory argues that individuals might make different work-family decisions during their lifespan; such decisions might influence the nature and the level of work-family conflict (Poelmans, 2005). For example, an individual who prioritises family may decide to spend more time on the family domain, thereby influencing the experience and level of family-to-work conflict.

In sum, role theory addresses work-family conflict by explicating how role model and their demands affect the conflict; boundary theory uses flexibility and permeability to explain the transition between work and family roles respectively; the COR theory explains how individuals use their resources to manage work-family conflict; the ecological systems theory from a macro level to examine how different system influence the experience of work-family conflict; and decision process theory moved the focus from the influence of the system to the influence of individual characteristics on work-family conflict, providing a deep understanding of the work-family conflict (Roth & David, 2009).

#### 2.1.3. Major Integrated Models of Work-Family Conflict

This section briefly reviews three major integrated work-family conflict models (Bellavia & Frone, 2005), which can help better understand the process of work-family conflict.

### 2.1.3.1. First-Generation Model

The first work-family conflict model that included both the antecedents and consequences of work-family conflict can be traced back as early as 1983, developed by Kopelman et al. (1983) (see Figure 2.1). This model is based on the role conflict theory and proposes that the work and family conflict (i.e., work/family role pressures) might create inter-role conflict (i.e., work-family conflict), thereby affecting job or family satisfaction and consequently influencing life satisfaction. This model indicated that work and family-induced conflict affects job/family satisfaction both directly and indirectly via inter-role conflict. In other words, the centre of this model was the idea that work-family conflict is a mediator connecting the work-family interface (Bellavia & Frone, 2005).

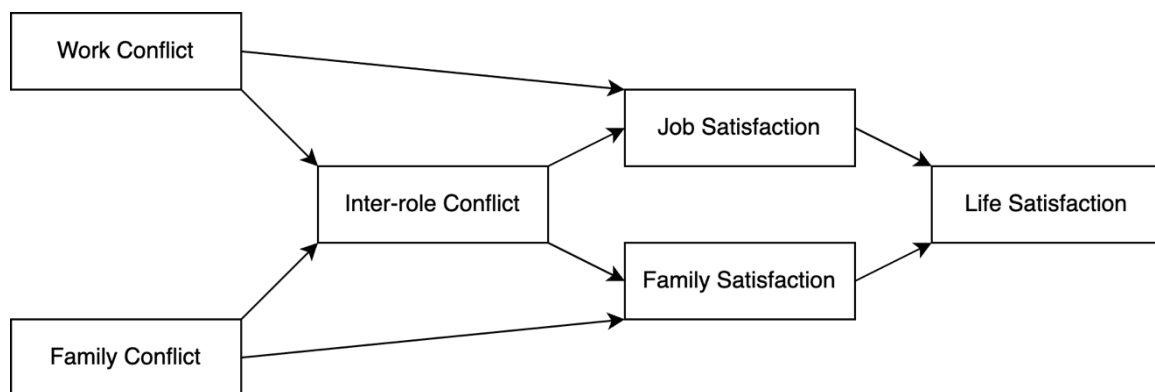


Figure 2.1 A Model of Work, Family, and Inter-Role Conflict (Kopelman, Greenhau & Connolly, 1983).

However, one major limitation should be noted. Work-family conflict was simply treated as an inter-role conflict in this model, and no bidirectional relation of work-family conflict was recognised (i.e., work-to-family conflict and family-to-work conflict). This has limited our understanding of work-family conflict and influenced the accuracy of the results of previous studies that adopted this model (Bellavia & Frone, 2005). For example, Bedeian et al. (1988) adopted this model in their study and found that work-family conflict was not related to job satisfaction but significantly related to family satisfaction. In contrast, other studies that used a more detailed model (i.e., measured both work-to-family and family-to-work conflict) have found that work-family conflict impacts both family and job satisfaction (e.g., Huffman et al., 2013; Namasivayam & Mount, 2004).

### 2.1.3.2. Second-Generation Model

A more integrative work-family conflict model was developed by Frone et al. (1992) and is known as the second-generation model (Bellavia & Frone, 2005) (see Figure 2.2). The most



significant improvement of this model was that it demonstrated the bidirectional and reciprocal nature of the work-family conflict. According to this model, work-to-family conflict occurs when work demands interfere with family responsibilities, and family-to-work conflict occurs when family responsibilities interfere with work demands (Zhang et al., 2019). The reciprocal nature meant that people would not only experience one type of conflict, but the level of conflict might be different (Lu & Cooper, 2015). For example, parents might experience a greater level of family-to-work conflict due to childcare responsibility; managing family-to-work conflict might deplete parents' personal resources (e.g., energy), thereby having fewer personal resources left for the work domain and increasing the risk of experiencing work-to-family conflict.

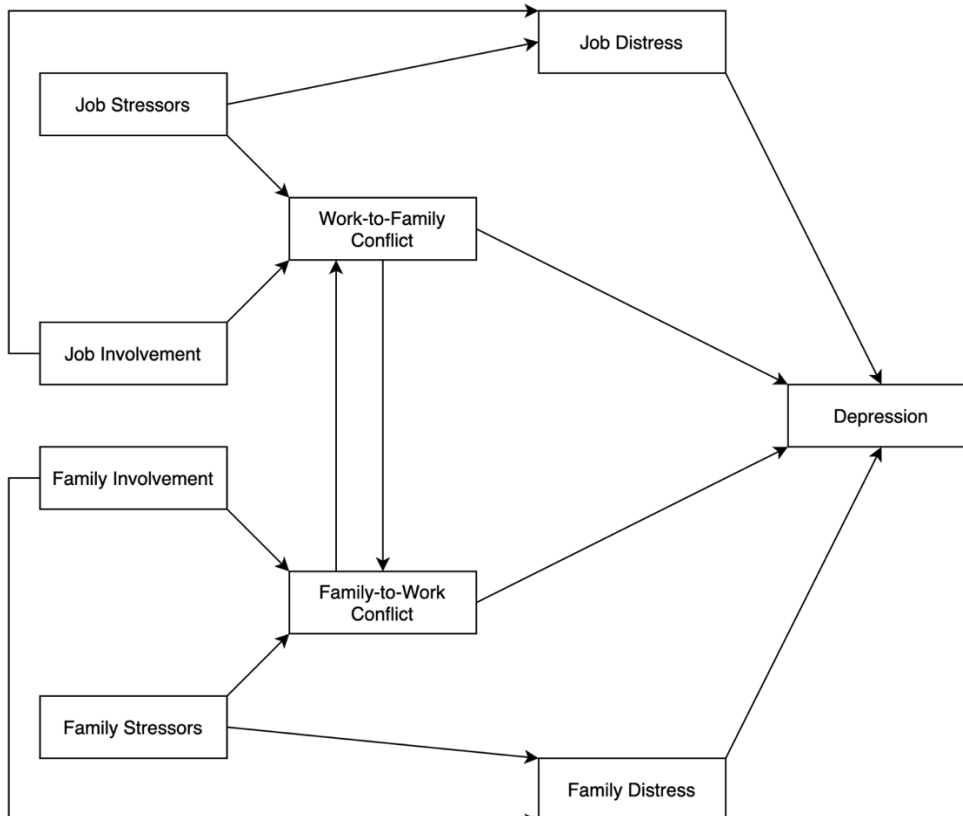


Figure 2.2 A Conceptual Model of the Work-Family Interface (Frone et al., 1992).

This model provided a much clearer mediation process for these two types of work-family conflict in the work-family interface. This refinement helped improve the accuracy of the research findings regarding the cross-role relationship between work and family domains (Bellavia & Frone, 2005). Several studies have wholly or partly examined this model. For example, Aryee et al. (1999) tested this model with a Hong Kong sample and found that work-to-family conflict had a stronger

impact on life satisfaction than family-to-work conflict did, which was the opposite of Frone et al.'s (1992) findings. However, one limitation is noteworthy: the within-domain outcomes of work-family conflict measured in this model (i.e., job distress and family distress) were only focused on psychological wellbeing, and how work-family conflict might influence individuals' behavioural intentions (e.g., work/family performance) was not studied (e.g., Roth & David, 2009; Cerrato & Cifre, 2018).

#### 2.1.3.3. *Third-Generation Model*

Frone et al. (1997) improved the second-generation model to create a more detailed work-family conflict model (see Figure 2.3). The contributions of this model included: first, this model explained that the reciprocal nature of work-family conflict is not direct, rather, it is indirect and mediated by different mechanisms. For example, work distress creates work-to-family conflict and results in family distress, and the increased family distress then leads to or exacerbates family-to-work conflict and thereby causing work distress. Second, this model subdivided the antecedents of work-family conflict into different categories based on the concept of that work-family conflict comes in different forms, and each form of conflict has its unique antecedents (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985); for example, work distress is the strain-based antecedent of work-to-family conflict, whereas the work hours are the time-based antecedent of work-to-family conflict. Third, this model considered the environmental effect on the experience of work-family conflict by using social supports (e.g., supervisor support) as the indirect antecedents of work-family conflict (i.e., distal predictor). Last, this model investigated how work-family conflict might influence individuals' behavioural patterns (i.e., work/family performance).

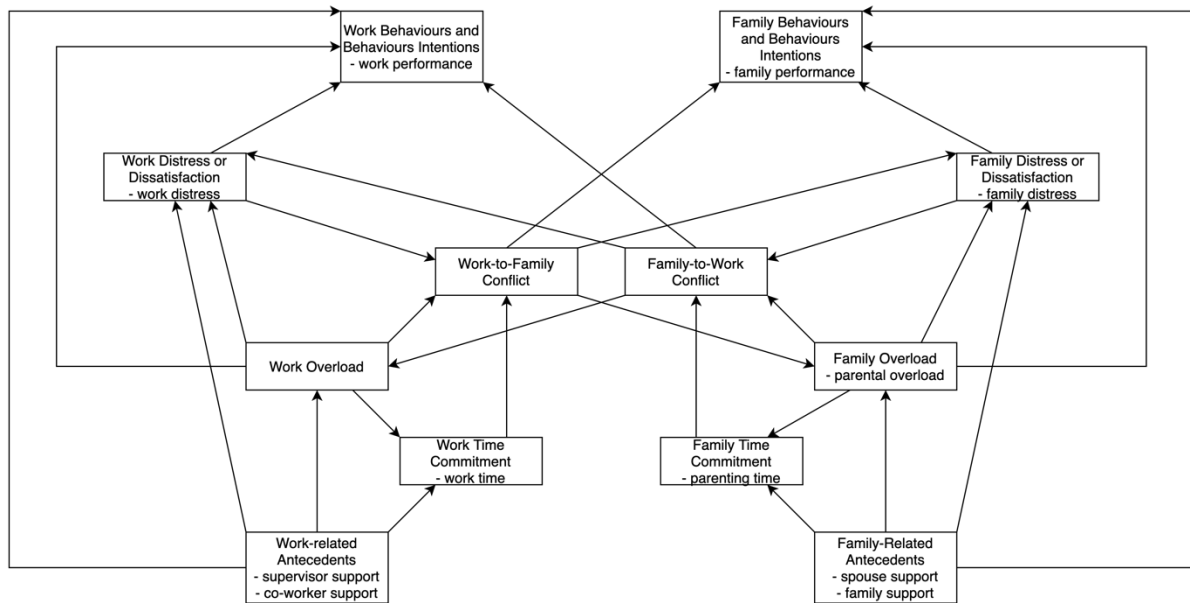


Figure 2.3 Conceptual Model of The Work-Family Interface (Frone et al., 1997).

This conceptual model is the closest to the theoretical definition of work-family conflict. The relationships between variables in this model presented a clear and full-range capture of how work-family conflict acts in the work-family system. The effect of the surrounding environment (support) on work/family-related stressors, the process of the bidirectional and reciprocal relationship of work-family conflict, as well as how work-family conflict affects individuals' wellbeing and behavioural patterns were all mapped out in this model in detail.

Nevertheless, this model also has its limitations. First, as pointed out in their paper, this model did not examine how work-family conflict might affect wellbeing (Frone et al., 1997). Second, is the variable consideration and the connections between variables. Frone et al. (1997) only recognised two types of unique direct antecedents of work-family conflict (i.e., time-based and strain-based antecedents); in addition, based on the idea that role overload can be identified as both time and strain-based antecedents of work-family conflict, Frone et al. (1997) included role overload as the third direct antecedent of work-family conflict, and that role overload directly influenced work-family conflict and indirectly affected work-family conflict via its time/strain-based antecedents.

In contrast, Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) argued that, 1) there are three forms of work-family conflict: time-, strain-, and behaviour-based; 2) each form of work-family conflict has its

unique antecedents; and 3) time-based factors might indirectly predict work-family conflict via strain-based factors, for example, working long hours might cause work distress, thereby creating work-to-family conflict. In other words, the third-generation model omitted the behaviour-based antecedent of work-family conflict and the direction of, for example, work overload → work time → work-to-family conflict might be theoretically correct but inappropriate in an integrative work-family conflict model.

## 2.2. Background of China

This section will first introduce Confucianism and collectivism and followed by the economy and social development in China.

### 2.2.1. Confucianism

Confucianism is an ideology that plays a religious role in China; as the core of Chinese culture and value system, it provides social ethics and moral principles for individuals to practice benevolence (Tang 1995). Confucianism was founded by Confucius during the Spring and Autumn War Period (770-476 BC) in the late ancient Chinese era; during this wartime, societal and interpersonal relationships became chaotic (Gao, 2020). Hence, Confucius put forward the idea of “benevolence” to adjust and rebalance ill personal, societal, and moral relationships (Guo & Tao, 2012).

The philosophy of Confucians was concentrated into 12 words: *benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom, sincerity, loyalty, filial piety, respect, integrity, reciprocity, bravery, and modesty*. Each of these words is a symbol that represents one Confucian thought and all these thoughts are interrelated. For example, the word *reciprocity* means to treat others the way you want to be treated in Confucianism, which interreacts with the word *loyalty*. The word *loyalty* represents a positive personal relationship with others, which means people should try their best to help others in Confucianism philosophy. Hence, the practice of *reciprocity* develops *loyalty*, and the development of *loyalty* fulfils *reciprocity* (Hang, 2011). The diversification, absorbability, and practicability of Confucianism have made Confucianism keep pace with the social and political changes (e.g., Hang, 2011; Elman et al., 2002). Within the continuous development of Confucianism

during the past 2,500 years, it is believed that Confucianism influenced modern Chinese society and drastically, or at least largely “confucianised” the whole East Asian region (Elman et al., 2002).

A growing body of research has posited that the values of Confucianism have penetrated the consciousness of the Chinese people and have influenced their work and family domains (e.g., Elman et al., 2002; Park & Chesla, 2007; Hang, 2011). For example, Confucianism emphasises the importance of social relations and believes that business or future development can benefit from strong social ties. This has resulted in the Chinese people highly valuing the *guanxi* (i.e., interpersonal connections) with others, such as workplace interpersonal relationships; consequently, Chinese employees are likely to spend time with co-workers or business partners after work in order to maintain or strengthen the societal relationships (e.g., Dunning & Kim, 2007; Park & Chesla, 2007).

Moreover, the Confucian belief regarding the family as the fundamental unit of society has contributed to the strong intergenerational relationships between parent and child, strengthened family ties and created supportive relationships between family members (Park & Chesla, 2007). Nevertheless, such family ties are guided by the traditional gender norm and parent-child relations (Tang, 1995). For example, the word *filial piety* in Confucian philosophy defines children's obligation toward their parents, and the concept of “san cong” (The Three Obediences) – “women obey the father before the marriage, obey the husband after marriage, and obey the first son after the death of husband” (Gao, 2003, pp. 116), are all contributors to the exacerbated work-family conflict in the form of eldercare responsibility and gender inequality in domestic chore (e.g., Gao, 2003; Park & Chesla; Hang, 2011).

### 2.2.2. Collectivism

Collectivism and individualism are referred to as the two ends of a continuum in the culture theory (e.g., Hofstede, 2001; Arpacı et al., 2018). Individualism is defined as “the degree to which a person acts as an individual rather than as a member of a group” (Hofstede, 1994, p.6) and places higher importance on independence and autonomy (Hofstede, 2001). Collectivism, on the other end,

is defined as “the degree to which individuals are integrated into groups” (Hofstede, 1984, p.83), which places greater importance on interdependence and group orientation (Hofstede, 2001).

Liu (2017) claimed that Chinese collectivism formed in ancient China’s political system. Ancient Chinese made their living in agriculture, the land became the most valuable asset for survival and gave rise to the land distribution system. During the late Xia dynasty (1989 – 1916 BC), the king of Xia started to allocate the land to his own relatives as a political reward; this political system constituted the first large collective-feudal hereditary country in the history of Chinese civilisation and collectivism gradually formed under such a political system (Liu, 2017). In addition, previous studies argued that the philosophy of Confucianism, such as taking care of and having respect for elders, the importance of family and kinship groups, avoiding conflicts and harmonising relationships with others, and the obligations to help relatives and friends, are all emphasising the importance of group orientation and contributing to the development of collectivism in China (e.g., Wong, 2001; Chen, 2013).

As collectivism emphasises the cohesion between individuals and posits that individuals are subordinate to society and that the needs of groups should have priorities over self (Hofstede, 1994), people in a collectivist cultural background who conform to these values would receive more social support than people from individualist cultures because keeping harmonious relationships with in-group members (e.g., families, co-workers) is important in collectivism (e.g., Billing et al., 2014; Yang et al., 2000). Apart from having a more supportive relationship with families, individuals in collectivist culture seem to highly value the importance of work because collectivists think of work as one way to improve the family wealth; consequently, collectivists are likely to take on more work responsibilities or spend more time at work, thereby increasing the risk of experiencing the interference between work and family domains (Billing et al., 2014).

### 2.2.3. Economy and Social Development of China

The policy of economic reform and opening-in at the end of 1978 transitioned China’s economic system from a planned economy to a socialist market economy and dramatically changed

China's life and work environment, structure, and conditions (e.g., Lin et al., 1996; Chow, 2015). Before the economic reform in 1978, the planned economic system was implemented in China. Under the planned economic system, all enterprises belonged to the government, and the enterprise could neither operate independently nor bear its own profits and losses (Lin et al., 2014). The enterprises' production quantity, variety, price, supply, and sales were all under the control of the government planning department and relevant administrative authorities (e.g., Qian & Weingast, 1996; Xu et al., 2014). Moreover, the government's labour and personnel agency arranged the individuals' employment and job positions according to the plan. Furthermore, individuals as consumers were also "arranged" by the government planning department, such as the necessities of life were provided by tickets (food coupons, cotton coupons etc.) and housing was provided by the workplace (Lin, Tao, et al., 2013).

Since the economic reform and opening-up in 1978, China's economy has proliferated. According to the National Bureau of Statistics of China [NBS] (2020a), China quintupled the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) from 67.91 billion yuan to 367.87 billion yuan and increased the real GDP per capita from 119 yuan to 385 yuan during 1952-1978. However, when compared with the same periods of time (26 years) after the economic reform and opening-up from 1978 to 2004, the GDP increased nearly 43 times from 367.87 billion yuan to 16,184.02 billion yuan and the real GDP per capita from 385 yuan up to 12,487 yuan. At the end of 2019, China's GDP and real GDP per capita were 99,086.51 billion yuan and 70,892 yuan respectively (NBS, 2020a). Such data proved that the economic reform and opening-up boosted economic development and shed light on social change in China.

The growth of the economy (the growth of GDP) in one nation would improve technology development, production mode, modernisation, and urbanisation, consequently changing individuals' lifestyles (Lopez, 2011). Sachs (2005) gave an example and argued that the set-up of modern industries in urban areas provided job opportunities for people from rural areas; this job opportunity would provide more income, a better living environment for the employees from rural

areas (e.g., moving to urban cities), and gave the opportunities to the employees to make decisions that are traditionally made based on his/her parents and relatives (e.g., how to spend the income, who to date, marry and when to have a child). Therefore, more and more people from rural areas crowd into the urban city for a better job and life. This labour mobility is evident in the NBS (2020a); NBS (2020a) showed that fewer people tended to stay at home in rural China. Specifically, between the years 1978 and 2012, in rural areas in China, the number of average residents per household decreased from 5.7 people per household to 3.9 people per household (where 'resident' is defined as a person who frequently stays at home or resides there for more than 6 months throughout the year).

Though the improvement in modernisation and urbanisation and the transition of production mode provided a better life, such as a better living environment and public facilities, life also became harder. The increasing population crowding into urban cities has intensified the competition in the labour market, partially contributing to the raised cost of living (e.g., housing price) (e.g., China Institute for Employment Research [CIER], 2020; Cao, 2009), and led to the work-family conflict phenomenon (e.g., Liu et al., 2008; Lu et al., 2002; Siu et al., 2005). On one hand, the competitive labour market has created a workplace with long working hours, greater performance pressure, and substantial workload issues. On the other hand, the high cost of living forced more families to become dual-earner families to share the financial burden, thereby exacerbating the tension between work demands and family responsibilities, and making it harder than ever for Chinese employees to manage work-family conflict (e.g., Lu et al., 2002; Siu et al., 2005; Zhang et al., 2019; Zhao et al., 2019; Liu et al., 2008; Lu, 2007).

## 2.3. Work and Family Values in China

### 2.3.1. Work Values

Schwartz (1999) explained that work values refer to “the goals or rewards people seek through their work, and they are expressions of more general human values in the context of the work setting” (p. 41) and suggested that cultural values would influence the work values, thereby influencing the work-related attitude, actions, and decision making (Jaw et al., 2007).



As discussed in the previous section, Chinese values are influenced by Confucianism and collectivism, which all emphasise the importance of group orientation. Lu (2007) argued that such collective living and working environments had led individuals in China to rank community respect as one of the most important achievement goals. This finding is similar to Holt and Keats (1992), which found that Chinese work values are associated with a higher income level, community respect, and fulfilling the family's needs due to the influence of Chinese traditional culture.

Moreover, Lu and Cooper (2015) pointed out that due to the influence of Confucianism, Chinese people think of their job as more important than personal enjoyment because the job can provide a better life for the family. In addition, the Chinese work values emphasise that Chinese employees focus on *guanxi* (interpersonal connections with others), have greater endurance, and are hardworking (Siu et al., 2005). As a result, socialising with co-workers or business partners after work and working long hours are common and more acceptable by Chinese employees to achieve a higher income level and to meet family needs. Although working long hours are more acceptable to Chinese workers, when the employee spends more time at work, he/she might have a higher risk of experiencing work-family conflict (Matthews et al., 2010).

### 2.3.2. Family Values

Family values refer to the cultural or traditional values related to the family structure, beliefs, roles, attitudes, and moral principles (Frey, 2019). Collectivism emphasises that individuals are subordinate to society, and the needs of groups should have priorities over self; therefore, the family, as the first group that appeared in an individual's life, attached great importance to the Chinese people (Lu & Cooper., 2015). Moreover, the philosophies of Confucianism highlight the importance of family and that individuals should take care of and respect family members (e.g., Lu & Cooper, 2015; Lao et al., 1977). Because of such cultural beliefs and value systems, individuals in China often rank the family as the most important thing during their lifespan; the family is put in a much higher position by the people in China compared with other modern societies (Lu, 2007).

The influence of Chinese traditional cultures, such as having a more supportive relationship with family members, might help to reduce work-family conflict, (Yang et al., 2000). Nevertheless, the Chinese traditional culture has its negative sides. For example, as Chinese individuals highly value community respect, Chinese individuals are terrified of losing face (i.e., losing respect from others or being humiliated in public). Consequently, Chinese individuals are unlikely to share their own problems with others, especially with family members, which might increase the lack of communication and decrease the perception of emotional support to some degree (Lu & Cooper, 2015). Moreover, the traditional Chinese culture has influenced the intergenerational relationship vertically because of *filial piety* and influenced the husband-wife relationship horizontally because of the gender role expectation (e.g., Hu & Scott, 2016; Lu, 2007).

In traditional Chinese values, *filial piety* not only highlights that children should provide care for the elderly but also prescribes the obligations between the children and parents, such as the children are subordinate to their parents, and they should obey and honour their parents (Hu & Scott, 2016). A recent study by Zhang et al. (2020) found that, due to the influence of *filial piety*, Chinese people might tend to sacrifice their own interests in order to fulfil their parent's wishes or when experiencing "filial piety dilemmas" (p.227); moreover, Lai (2010) argued that the belief of *filial piety* made the Chinese families would not consider using the formal caregiving services because it is seen as avoidance of own responsibility. Consequently, the self-sacrifice and caregiving responsibilities often held by family members might increase family-to-work conflict. Furthermore, traditional Chinese culture expected that men should be the providers and that women should take care of the family and assist their husbands' work (e.g., Lu, 2007; Hu & Scott, 2016). However, with the development of the economy, more and more women enter the workplace to share the family's financial burden; as a result, married women might have less leisure time because the wife has to spend more time on family responsibilities after work, and the husbands are unlikely to help out with domestic work due to the gender role expectation, thereby resulting in married women might experience greater work-family conflict (Lu & Cooper, 2015).

## 2.4. Work-Family Conflict in China

### 2.4.1. Work Conditions and Environment and Work-to-Family Conflict in China

#### 2.4.1.1. *The Laws and the Practice of a Family-Supportive Work Environment in China*

Although there are laws that made specific provisions for the work conditions of Chinese employees (e.g., the Labour Law in 1995, the Labour Contract Law in 2008, the State Council's Regulations on Working Hours of Employees in 1995, the Ministry of Labour and Social Security's Minimum Wage Regulations in 2004) and that the coverage of social insurances and the security insurances in China has continued improving (Liu et al., 2008), such as the participation rates of basic endowment insurance from 77.59 per cent increased to 82.02 per cent and unemployment insurance from 59.25 per cent up to 60.65 per cent between 2015-2018 (Chu, 2019).

Nevertheless, only holiday-related family-friendly policies are protected and imposed by labour law in China, such as the holiday for pregnancy and breastfeeding, and for visiting family members. For example, the Special Rules on the Labor Protection of Female Employees (2012) stipulated the protections for pregnancy and breastfeeding, such as providing maternity leave, not allowed to dismiss or reducing the wage of female employees for pregnancy, childbirth or breastfeeding reasons, and encouraged the organisations to give time and facilities for breastfeeding. Moreover, the Resolution of the Standing Committee of the Fifth National People's Congress Approving the Provisions of the State Council for Home Leave for Workers and Staff (1981) emphasised that employees who have been working in the state agencies, trade unions, and state-owned organisations more than one year, can apply a holiday for visiting family members under different premise (e.g., not living with a spouse, not living with a parent, etc.). Other family-friendly policies, such as flexible working hours, are also common in China's workplace. However, as it is not backed up by relevant laws and regulations, the implementation of flexible working hours is different between organisations. According to He (2017), the flexible working hours system is become more prevalent in recent years in China; nevertheless, some employers are using flexible working hours as an excuse to require employees to work overtime without payment due to the lack of legal support.

As such, Despite the Chinese social security system and labour law providing protections and guidelines for Chinese employees to seek help and practice a family-friendly work environment, such a system and law regulations are yet to be perfected. Firstly, it is arguable that loopholes exist in the implementation of the regulations. For instance, the Special Rules on the Labor Protection of Female Employees (2012) pointed out that female employees whose new-born child is under 1 year old can have at least one-hour breastfeeding leave every working day; however, the premise is the female employee is experiencing difficulties (e.g. no one can feed the child or the new-born child has a disability which needs extra care, etc.) and breastfeeding leave must be approved by the organisation. In other words, providing breastfeeding leave is not a statutory obligation, the employers can choose to not approve the breastfeeding leave.

Secondly, the coverage of the regulations could be problematic. For example, as for the regulation regarding holidays for visiting family members mentioned above, such regulation only applies to the employees working in state agencies, trade unions, and state-owned organisations; thus, the employees from small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) might not benefit from this regulation, if the SMEs do not belong to any trade unions. Nevertheless, employees working in SMEs might be the population that needs this family-friendly policy most, since the majority of the workers in SMEs are internal migrant employees (e.g., rural-to-urban migrants) (Zeng et al., 2014) and the number of internal migrant employees has kept rising from estimated 263 million to 1.39 billion between 2012-2017 (e.g., NBS, 2012b, 2017).

That is to say, one of the issues that cause Chinese employees to experience work-to-family conflict might be the imperfect law regulations on the practice of a family-supportive work environment.

According to Thomas and Ganster (1995), a family-supportive work environment represents the organisation's assistance and support for the employees who need to fulfil family responsibilities, and to help the employees to manage family responsibilities easier (e.g., flexible working hours, family leave, onsite childcare, telecommuting, and parenting seminars). In addition, a

lack of an organisation supportive environment might decrease the perceived organisational support of the employee (e.g., Cortese et al., 2010; Lembrechts et al., 2015; Ghislieri et al., 2016).

Perceived organisational support is defined as an employee's belief that the organisation values the employee's contributions to the organisation and truly cares about the employee's wellbeing (Eisenberger et al., 1986), and that perceived organisational support is valued as "an assurance that aid will be available from the organisation when it is needed to carry out one's job effectively and to deal with stressful situations" (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002, p. 698). Thus, a decrease in perceived organisational support might increase employees' work distress, consequently leading to the experience of work-family conflict (e.g., Ghislieri et al., 2016; Frone et al., 1997). In addition, previous studies have found that perceived organisational support can ease the experience of work-family conflict. For example, Gurbuz et al. (2012) found that perceived organisational support is negatively related to work-family conflict; Casper et al. (2002) found that a higher level of perceived organisational support can reduce the harmful effects of both types of work-family conflict; Ghislieri et al. (2016) found that perceived organisational support can mitigate work-family conflict among the nursing profession. Thus, the lack of a family-supportive environment in China might lead Chinese employees to experience and/or influence the level of work-family conflict.

#### 2.4.1.2. Salary

Since the economic reform, the average salary of Chinese employees has grown from 1,459 yuan per year in 1987 to 68,380 yuan per year in 2018 (e.g., Liu et al., 2008; NBS, 2019a), and the disposable income per capita also reached 32,189 yuan in 2020 (NBS, 2020b). However, the household consumption level is continuing to increase. According to NBS (2020a), the household consumption level increased from 183 yuan in 1978 to 27,563 yuan in 2019 (see Table 2.1). The increase in household consumption level might have equalled out the rise in average salary and disposable income to some degree (Liu et al., 2008).

**Table 2.1** Household Consumption Level by Years in China.

Year	Household consumption level (Yuan)		
	Total residents	Urban areas residents	Rural areas residents

1978	183	387	138
1990	803	1686	571
2000	3397	7402	2037
2010	10550	16260	4851
2019	27,563	35,716	15,023

*Source: National Bureau of Statistics (2020a).*

Liu et al. (2008) argue that China pursued a highly centralised planned economy before the economic reform and opening-up; the plan was seen as absolute. People's lives under such an economic system were arranged by the government. The positive side is that people under such a system have less stress because social security and welfare were relatively well structured, and the government basically bore the life of the individual, everything must occur according to the "plan", arranged, and paid for by the government, making life easier and more affordable. However, since the economic reform and opening-up in 1978, though wealth and standard of living increased, people are facing more challenges. For example, the things that used to be arranged (e.g., housing, medication, children's education, etc.) by the government now became self-responsibilities, which increases the family's financial burden and the stress in life, ultimately, exacerbating the work-family conflict phenomenon in China (Liu et al., 2008).

The effect of income level on work-family conflict is mixed. Ciabattari (2007) found that female employees with a higher income might experience a lower level of work-family conflict compared to lower-income female employees. This is in line with the findings of Rembulan et al. (2016), that the higher the income of an employee, the lower the employee's work-family conflict. However, McGinnity and Calvert (2009) found that in professional jobs, the income level might be positively related to work-family conflict. This finding is similar to Lu et al. (2009), which was based on 189 employed parents in China and found that income level is positively associated with work-family conflict since jobs with higher incomes usually come with more demands, thereby more likely to distress the employees and leading to work-family conflict.

#### **2.4.1.3. Work Hours**

The Chinese labour law has relatively comprehensive regulations on working hours and payment. For instance, Article 36 of China's labour law stipulates that the average working hours per

week should not exceed 44 hours, and employees should work less than 8 hours per day.

Additionally, Article 41 allows employers, for production or operational purposes, to negotiate with employees regarding extending working hours, with the stipulation that the extended working hours should normally be less than 1 hour per day (Labor Law of People's Republic of China (2018 amendment), 2018).

Despite these regulations, as of October 2023, the average working hours for full-time employees in China were approximately 49 hours per week (Statista, 2023). This indirectly demonstrates that the labour law has not fulfilled its intended purpose, as working long hours remains a common practice in China (Hang, 2021). Notably, the high weekly working hours in China contrast starkly with those in other Confucian heritage countries like Japan and Korea. Literature suggests that countries with shared work values may also exhibit similar attitudes toward their work roles, influencing working hours. For example, Confucian-related work values, including diligence, commitment, and respect for authority, may contribute to the prevalence of long working hours in these countries (e.g., Jaw et al., 2007; Kuchinke et al., 2008). However, despite the similar work values, China shows significantly higher weekly working hours compared to Japan (approximately 31 hours per week) and Korea (approximately 37 hours per week).

Although other factors also can affect the length of work hours, for example, Centre for Economic Policy Research [CEPR] (2019) explained that workers in developing countries tend to have longer working hours due to economic necessity. Nevertheless, the case of China appears to be an outlier even within this context, with its working hours surpassing those of other developing countries. Based on the data from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2023), the average working hours in China exceed those of Colombia, the highest-ranked developing country within the 38 OECD member countries, by approximately 3 hours per week. Furthermore, the working hours in China are approximately 6 and 8 hours longer per week than those of Mexico and Costa Rica, respectively, which are the second and third highest-ranked developing countries in terms of working hours (OECD, 2023) (see Table 2.2)

Table 2.2 The Average Working Hours of Full-Time Employees in China, Japan, Korea, and the Top-Three Developing Countries in OECD

Countries	Average working hours per week	Average working hours yearly (52 weeks)
China	49	2548
Japan	31	1612
Korea	37	1924
The top-three developing countries with the longest working hours in the OECD		
Colombia	46	2392
Mexico	43	2236
Costa Rica	41	2132

Source: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2023) <https://data.oecd.org/emp/hours-worked.htm>. Note: The data presented in this table pertains exclusively to full-time employees in China, Japan, Korea, and the top-three developing countries in the OECD. Working hours for part-time or other employment arrangements are not included in these figures

The long working hours issue in China has risen concerns about its negative impact on employees' health. The Japanese term *Karoshi*, which referred to overwork to death, was mentioned in the Blue Book of Chinese Talents: Report on the Development of Chinese Talents (No.3). This report claimed that over 70 per cent of the Chinese intellectuals (i.e., non-physical, skill- and knowledge-based workers) were walking on the edge of *Karoshi* (Pan & Wang., 2006). However, the combination of Confucian work values (e.g., emphasising total dedication) with the consequences of rapid economic growth (e.g., increased productivity demands) has caused employers to overlook the health concerns associated with long working hours, persisting in overburdening their employees (Nie et al., 2015).

Long working hours have long been found to be associated with several mental health problems, such as psychosomatic symptoms and depression, and are also positively related to work-family conflict (e.g., Rembulan et al., 2016; Major et al., 2002). According to Major et al. (2002), inter-role conflict might occur when the individual is only focusing on one role; therefore, working long hours has a higher risk of experiencing work-to-family conflict. This is evident in Adkin and Premeaux (2012), Anafarta (2010), and Ciabattari's (2007) studies. All these studies have found that long working hours correlate with work-family conflict; the positive relationship between long working hours and work-family conflict might be more significant when there were fewer flexible working hours.



One thing that should be noticed is, the impact of long working hours might depend on the meanings of work in different cultural settings (e.g., Spector, Sanchez, et al., 2004; Thornthwaite, 2004; Wallace, 1997). In different cultural contexts, the effect of long working hours on work-family conflict can vary. In China, influenced by traditional values and workplace culture, the effect of long working hours on the level of work-family conflict might not be as strong as in the West. Huang and Jin (2019) argued that enterprises' encouragement and promotion of work overtime and Chinese values, such as hard work should be honoured because it is for better family life, have all contributed to the abnormal development of long working hours value in China. Under this cultural background, Chinese employees might be more willing to sacrifice their personal time to work longer hours for their families (Zhang et al., 2009). This is in contrast to the West, where there is a strong emphasis on individualism and personal achievement (Hofstede, 1980). This Western cultural value often translates into a desire for personal time and a balanced life outside of work (Thilagavathy & Geetha, 2023). As such, Western employees may be less willing to work overtime, as it could infringe upon their personal time and disrupt their work-life balance (Dong & Yan, 2022).

Furthermore, when Chinese employees experience work-to-family conflict caused by long working hours, they might receive more understanding and supports from their family members, such as keeping them away from doing housework, so that the employees can fully devote themselves to work, thereby minimising the risk of experiencing work-to-family conflict due to work overtime (Zhang et al., 2009). Contrastingly, when Western employees experience work-family conflict due to overtime work, they might receive less familial support compared to China (Znidarsic & Bernik, 2021). This lack of support could exacerbate the effect of working hours on the level of work-family conflict (e.g., Adams et al., 1996; Thilagavathy & Geetha, 2023).

In sum, economic reform and opening-up have changed the work environment in China. The imperfect law regulations regarding the practice of a family-supportive work environment, issues related to the income and consumption level, and the long working hours in China might all contribute to the experience of work-to-family conflict (e.g., Bhave et al., 2012; Frone, 2003; Lu et

al., 2015). However, because of the influence of Chinese cultures, such as receiving more family support or being more willing to devote themselves to work in order to provide for the family, the negative effect of work stressors (e.g., work hours) on work-to-family conflict might not be as strong as the West (Lu et al., 2015).

#### 2.4.2. The Change in Population and Family Structure and the Family-to-Work Conflict in China

Since the economic reform and open-up, the change in China's population and family structure can be characterised as:

- **Postponement in the Age of First Marriage and First Childbirth and the Declining Total Fertility Rate**

According to a report by the Department of Social, Science and Technology, and Cultural Statistics, National Bureau of Statistics of China (2019), Chinese employees tend to focus on work and put off marrying and having a child. This report highlighted that Chinese female's average age of first marriage is postponed for 4 years, from 21.4 years old in 1990 to 25.7 years old in 2017; along with the postponement of the age of first marriage, the average age of first childbirth increased from 23.4 years old to 26.8 years old between 1990-2017. Moreover, according to Ren (2019), the pressure of living and the one-child policy also influenced the fertility rate in China, the total fertility rate in China from 6 dropped to 1.6 births per woman between 1950-2015, below the world average of 2.5 births per woman (Ren, 2019).

A report by Liu et al. (2008) argued that the pressure from work might be one of the most critical factors affecting the age of first marriage and childbirth in China. This report showed that 57.2 per cent of the Chinese married female participants would give up having a child if they must choose between work or childbirth. On one hand, the low fertility rate eased the pressure of the rapid population growth and decreased the young-age dependency ratio in China, on the other hand, the low fertility rate has partially contributed to the shrinking in family size and the ageing problem in China (Ren, 2019).

- **Shrinking in the Size of Family Households and the Diversified Family Structure**

Since the economic reform and the one-child policy released in the 1980s, the household size gradually decreasing, from an average of 5.3 people per household in the 1950s to 4.41 people per household in 1982 and continuing to fall to 3.09 people per household in 2012 (e.g., NBS, 2012a; Liu et al., 2008; Guo Jia Wei Sheng Ji Sheng Wei Jia Ting Si, 2015). The percentage of one-person households, two-person households, and three-person households is 8.5 per cent, 32.4 per cent and 29.3 per cent respectively (Liu et al., 2017). The trend in shrinking family size has changed the traditional big family structure (e.g., three generations living together) in China to a more diverse family structure.

In recent decades, the family structure in China from traditional multigeneration living together changed to 4 major family structures: the nuclear family – parents live with unmarried children; the stem family – multigeneration living together (e.g., a married couple living with their elderly parents is called two-generation stem family); the compound family – people with blood relationship living together (e.g., living with siblings, aunts, etc); and the single-person family – married, unmarried or divorced adult living alone (see Table 2.3).

**Table 2.3** *The Different Types of Family Structure Analysis Based on the Censuses.*

	Nuclear family	Stem family	Compound family	Single person family
1982	71.98%	17.81%	0.99%	7.97%
1990	73.80%	17.90%	1.15%	6.32%
2000	68.15%	21.73%	0.57%	8.57%
2014	59.5%	24.2%	1.8%	14.4%

*Sources: Wang, Z. L. (2019). Survey report on the size and structure of Chinese family households; Liu, B, Zhang, Y., & Li, Y. (2008). Reconciling work and family: issues and policies in China.*

On the one hand, the diverse family structure might have increased the diversity of the work-family conflict phenomenon in China; for example, compared to single-person families, nuclear families might experience more types of work-family conflict due to increased family responsibilities, such as childrearing (Liu et al., 2008). On the other hand, the shrinking family size might indirectly indicate that Chinese people received less family support when compared to the traditional Chinese big family structure (Liu et al., 2017).

- **The Ageing Problem in China**

Modernisation and urbanisation have decreased the mortality rate and increased life expectancy from an average of 44.6 years old to 75.3 years old between 1950-2015 (World Health Organization [WHO], 2016). With other factors, such as the decrease in fertility rate, the population is ageing in China. A white paper issued by the State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China (2006) reported that according to the international criteria for the ageing population (i.e., 10 per cent of the total population in the country or region is aged 60 and above), China is entering the ageing stage. The recent data from NBS (2020a) revealed that, as of 2019, China had over 175 million population aged 65 and above, accounting for 12.5 per cent of the total population. In addition, a report by WHO (2016) claimed that China's population ageing process seems to be faster than in countries. In the next 25 years, the aged 60 and above population in China is expected to more than double, increasing to over 402 million by 2040 and in 2050, the population aged 80 and above may increase to over 90.4 million and China will become the country with most elderly people in the world (WHO, 2016).

The increase in the ageing population and average life expectancy has led to a rise in the elderly dependency ratio in China (Liu et al., 2008). According to NBS (2020a), the old-age dependency ratio up from 9.9 per cent to 17.8 per cent between 2000-2019. In addition, according to the Analysis Report of the National Health Services Survey in China (Center for Health Statistics and Information, 2013), the prevalence of chronic diseases among the Chinese elderly population aged 65 and above has reached 89.4 per cent in urban cities and 65.4 per cent in rural areas, respectively. In other words, the increase in life expectancy does not precisely mean that elderly people in China have a better and healthier later life; instead, providing care for elderly parents might become harder. Consequently, the ageing problem in China might cause employees to have more family burdens regarding eldercare responsibility, especially when elderly parents are in bad health. The increase in eldercare responsibility might interfere with the work domain and result in the experience of family-to-work conflict (Gui & Koropecjy-Cox., 2016; Barrah et al., 2004).

In general, from a family perspective, the significant change in fertility patterns; shrinking family size; the diversified family structure; the ageing population; the increase in the elderly dependency ratio, and the decrease in the young-age dependency ratio might all contribute to the experience of family-to-work conflict in China, especially in childcare, eldercare, and household responsibility.

#### *2.4.2.1. Childcare Responsibility*

A growing body of studies found that parental status is related to the experience of work-family conflict. For example, Huffman et al. (2013) found that the level of work-family conflict is related to the age and the number of children and that parents who have younger or more children might have a greater work-family conflict due to the increased time needed for childcare. From this perspective, the shrinking family size and the change in fertility patterns due to the influence of the one-child policy in China might reduce the level of family-to-work conflict.

However, the reality might be different. According to Chao (2000), childrearing might be influenced by different cultural values, socialisation beliefs, norms, and goals. Relevant traditional values include there is strength in numbers (Le & Xiao, 2016), and honouring the family and making the family proud through personal achievement (Xu et al., 2005). Thus, Chinese individuals generally believe that it is a blessing to have more children because it means having more help for the family and more children to provide care when parents are old; more importantly, the children should be helpful in society or have to be a success to bring glory to the family (e.g., Spector, Cooper, et al., 2004; Le & Xiao, 2016; Leung & Shek, 2011). These have contributed to Chinese parents generally having higher expectations of their children (Zhou, 2012). When the sibling system collapsed due to the one-child policy, Chinese parents placed all their expectations on the only child. The increase in expectation of the only child might have increased the parental-related family-to-work conflict in China (e.g., Zhou, 2012; Xu et al., 2005).

Parental expectation can be defined as parents' beliefs about their children's future which are often associated with the areas related to objective achievements such as the children's school

educational achievement, future job title, and income (Zou et al., 2013). Previous studies on Chinese childrearing have found that because Chinese parents have higher expectations of their children, therefore, Chinese parents spend more money and time, and place a higher premium on their children's education; the education of children is somehow more like an investment for the family (e.g., Zou et al., 2013; Cheng & Sally, 2009).

For example, Zou et al. (2013), conducted a study that involved 322 middle-class Chinese families that have children in primary school via online questionnaires and randomly interviewed 30 parents from this sample, found that 89.8 per cent of the parent participants were involved in children's daily homework supervision and over 70 per cent of the parent participants spent more than 30 mins every day on supervision; in addition to the homework supervision, a total of 296 parent participants (92 per cent) claimed that they signed up after-school courses for their children, mainly academic courses to improve educational achievements, whereas 175 parents reported that their children engaged in at least 2-3 different subjects' after-school-courses, and spent an average of 7,800 yuan (around 800 pounds) yearly for these courses.

Therefore, the expectation toward the only child might have led to and/or exacerbated the family-to-work conflict in China. When an employee's income has not improved or the time needed for work cannot be adjusted, the increased spending on after-school courses to improve school grades and the amount of time that contributes to children's homework supervision might increase the employee's stress on family responsibility and result in a greater family-to-work conflict.

#### 2.4.2.2. *Eldercare Responsibility*

The Confucian belief in eldercare responsibility (i.e., filial piety) is deeply rooted in China in that it influences the law system, as Article 261 of the Criminal Law of the People's Republic of China (2020 Amendment) (2020) stipulated that those refusing to provide eldercare could be sentenced the imprisonment of up to 5 years (Zhang & Goza, 2005).

Providing eldercare can be stressful, especially since the belief in *filial piety* made the use of community service rare because providing eldercare to elderly parents is considered the children's

own responsibility (e.g., Liu et al., 2008; WHO, 2016). When most Chinese families only have one child on account of the one-child policy, the change in family structure/size might indirectly increase the family-to-work conflict in China; for example, the only child might have to spend more time on eldercare responsibility when compared to the children who have siblings (e.g., Dautzenberg et al., 2000; Gui & Koropecj-Cox, 2016).

Even the thought of *filial piety*, might stress out Chinese individuals and lead to the experience of family-to-work conflict. Gui and Koropecj-Cox (2016) argued that the belief in *filial piety* had put Chinese employees in a difficult position; the development of society has provided more opportunities for employees to pursue a higher and better personal achievement in a broader world; however, the traditional Chinese family values regarding the eldercare responsibility have forced the Chinese workers to more focus on their family members instead of personal achievement, thereby, created a conflict between the cultural obligations (e.g., caring for elderly parents) and the development of society, consequently, might increase the strain between work and family domains and lead to the experience of work-family conflict.

#### 2.4.2.3. *Household Responsibility*

The change in family structure in China might increase the household responsibility of Chinese employees and cause the Chinese employees to experience a greater family-to-work conflict. A Shanghai-based survey conducted by Xu (2004) found that among the traditional big family in Shanghai (i.e., three generations living together), over 26 per cent of these families' domestic chores, such as cooking, cleaning, and childcare responsibility, are done by the elderly parents. When Chinese individuals tend to only live with spouses, they might have to take on more household responsibilities, increasing the needed time for family responsibilities and increasing the level of family-to-work conflict (e.g., Xu, 2004; Lu, 2007). A recent study by Cerrato and Cifre (2018) found that the time required for housekeeping is one of the most important factors that might increase family-to-work conflict. This study further pointed out that employees who take on more household chores might increase the employees' family-to-work conflict and might create marital

conflict, thereby creating distress and frustration towards his/her spouse and as a result, the spouse might also experience a greater family-to-work conflict (Cerrato & Cifre, 2018).

As such, when dual-earner couples become more common in Chinese society, the female might experience greater family-to-work conflict than the male because females generally have to take on more household responsibilities, but their work demands cannot be omitted (Lu et al., 2015). Simultaneously, the increased family-to-work conflict in females might lead to marital conflict with the spouse and increase the male employees' family-to-work conflict due to the crossover effect of work-family conflict (Cerrato & Cifre, 2018).

## 2.5. Conclusion

In conclusion, the Chinese cultural and societal contexts have influenced the work and family values as well as the workplace and family structures, and contributed to the work-family conflict. China's economic reform and opening-up have sped up its development and improved production mode, modernisation, and urbanisation. Simultaneously, traditional Chinese values (e.g., *filial piety*) started to become incompatible with social development and might have exacerbated the work-family conflict phenomenon in China (Gui & Koropecjy-Cox, 2016).

Specifically, the cultural context and change in Chinese society have affected the workforce and family structure in China; on the one hand, the Confucianism and collectivist cultures have created a more supportive family environment which might have helped to ease the experience of work-family conflict in China; on the other hand, the traditional Chinese cultures, such as the *filial piety* (e.g., eldercare responsibilities) and the expectation towards own child (e.g., after-school courses to improve educational achievement) have added a heavy burden on the Chinese employees and might lead to the experience of work-family conflict. All of these have made the work-family conflict hard to predict and urged the need to further investigate such a phenomenon in China (Liu et al., 2008).



### 3. General Methodology

#### 3.0. Introduction

The previous chapter reviewed the work-family conflict, China's cultural background and societal development, and the potential work-family conflict experienced in China. This chapter highlights the rationale for this research, explains the use of exploratory sequential mixed methods, and outlines the implementation of such a research methodology.

#### 3.1. The Rationale for this Research

In general, the rationale for investigating the work-family conflict in an Eastern country stems from the insufficient work-family conflict studies conducted outside the West. According to Lu and Cooper (2015), only five per cent of the work-family conflict studies used Eastern samples. Although studies using East Asia samples (e.g., China, Japan) have gradually increased over the past few years, the field of work-family conflict is still seeming to be dominated by the West (Allen et al., 2020). Moreover, previous studies found that work-family conflict is different between the Individualist West and Collectivist East (e.g., Aycan, 2008; Korabik, Lero, et al., 2008; Lu & Cooper, 2015). Studying work-family conflict in an Eastern background can provide a better understanding of work-family conflict, help to identify how and why work-family conflict is experienced differently between countries and help develop evidence-based recommendations for better management of work-family conflict issues in the multicultural working environment. In addition, China is chosen for this research specifically because of the following reasons:

- China's background differs from Western countries and there is historical evidence showing that it inspired and influenced other Eastern countries to some degree. As the birthplace of Confucianism, Confucian philosophy has a certain degree of influence on the culture of other Confucian heritage culture countries in Asia, such as Japan, Korea, and Singapore (Phuong-Mai et al., 2005). Examining work-family conflict in China thus can help understand the work-family conflict phenomenon in China and, to some extent, shed light on the work-family conflict experienced in the Confucian heritage countries.

- China has the biggest workforce and the largest population that endorses Eastern values worldwide. Therefore, it is informative to carry out work-family research using Chinese samples and make comparisons with the Western findings, to outline and understand how work-family conflict is experienced differently between Eastern and Western countries (e.g., Tang et al., 2014; Lu & Cooper, 2015).
- The work environment in China, such as the heavy workload and long working hours issues, creates a great platform for researching work-family conflict (Zhang et al., 2019). Such a stressful work environment also urges the need to examine work-family conflict in China to help Chinese employees and employers better cope with such phenomena (e.g., Zhang et al., 2019; Zhao et al., 2019; Liu et al., 2008).

Three key points should be considered when investigating the work-family conflict in a different cultural setting outside the West. First, Shaffer et al. (2012) pointed out that it is important to explore/identify culturally specific variables (the unique factors/situations/contexts that are related to the work-family conflict in a cultural setting) and their influence on work-family conflict; since this allows a deep understanding of what affects work-family conflict in the specific cultural setting. Second, Frone et al. (1992) proposed that to capture how work-family conflict interacts and processes in the work-family interface, it is necessary to investigate work-family conflict using an integrated work-family conflict model that includes: 1) The unique antecedents of work-family conflict (i.e., time, strain, and behaviour-based antecedents); 2) Two directional dimensions of work-family conflict (i.e., work-to-family and family-to-work conflict); and 3) The consequences of work-family conflict (e.g., work performance, life satisfaction). Last, it is necessary to investigate the influence of gender and age in the experience of work-family conflict since role demands are associated with gender and age, which could affect work-family conflict (e.g., Korabik, McElwain, et al., 2008; Moen, 2011). For example, a female might have more family responsibilities due to the influence of traditional gender roles (Moen & Chesley, 2008), and people at younger ages might have fewer eldercare responsibilities since their parents are still relatively young (Huffman et al.,

2013). All these could influence the level of work-family conflict (e.g., Moen & Chesley, 2008; Huffman et al., 2013; Korabik, Lero, et al., 2008).

For these reasons, this study adopted an exploratory sequential mixed methods approach, both qualitative and quantitative methods were used. First explore the work-family conflict phenomenon and its related factors, followed by examining the relationships between work-family conflict and its antecedents and consequences, and the influence of age and gender on the experience of work-family conflict in China. The aim was to shed light on the unique work-family conflict experienced in China and which group of Chinese employees has a higher risk of experiencing work-family conflict. The exploratory sequential mixed methods approach is described in the following section.

### 3.2. Research Methodology

The research methodology used in this research was an exploratory sequential mixed methods approach. This section provides a description of the exploratory sequential mixed methods approach and why this approach was selected. The next sections cover the explanation of the analysis methods used in various parts of this study and how the exploratory sequential mixed methods approach has been implemented.

#### 3.2.1. Exploratory Sequential Mixed Methods Approach

The exploratory sequential mixed methods approach is categorised as the mixed method that starts with a qualitative study, followed by one or more quantitative studies, and with a final stage that integrates both the qualitative and quantitative findings (e.g., Mayoh & Onwuegbuzie, 2015; Mayoh & Onwuegbuzie, 2014). Starting from an exploratory qualitative study can set the stage and provide direction for the following quantitative studies and grounding for the quantitative data collection; it maximises the contextual relevance of the quantitative study, thereby ensuring the quantitative studies are carried on in accordance with the lived experience of the participants; in addition, the quantitative studies can in an explanatory manner examine the qualitative findings and help enhance the quality and generalisability of qualitative findings (e.g., Mayoh & Onwuegbuzie, 2015; Robbins & Vandree, 2009). Furthermore, the final stage of the exploratory sequential mixed

methods can improve the credibility of the findings by cross-validating the qualitative and quantitative findings and providing an explicit explanation for the phenomenon of interest (Mayoh & Onwuegbuzie, 2015).

In the case of this study, starting with a qualitative study aimed to explore the lived experience of work-family conflict and identify the specific contexts (culturally specific variables) that are related to the experience of work-family conflict in China. The qualitative findings allowed Study 2a's proposed model to be more appropriate and contextually relevant to the lived experience of work-family conflict in China by identifying and considering the Chinese-specific variables that are associated with the experience of work-family conflict. Study 2(b), which investigates the age and gender differences in the developed model aimed help understand the prevalence and dynamic of work-family conflict in China. Last, integrating the qualitative (Study 1) and quantitative findings (Study 2a and b) thereby provided an in-depth understanding of the work-family conflict experienced in China.

### 3.3. Creswell's (2013) Phenomenological Method (Study 1)

Creswell's (2013) Phenomenological method was used in Study 1. In general, there are two types of phenomenology – interpretive and descriptive phenomenology. Interpretive phenomenology focuses on interpreting what a phenomenon means to the participants based on the researcher's expert knowledge of such a phenomenon (Mayoh & Onwuegbuzie, 2015). On the other hand, descriptive phenomenology focuses on describing the participant's lived experience based on the participants' explanations and minimising the role of the researcher (Mayoh & Onwuegbuzie, 2015). In other words, interpretive phenomenology seeks from the point of view of the researcher to understand the conscious reasons for a phenomenon, behaviour, and action of the participants, and descriptive phenomenology captures and explores the nature of a lived experience from the participants' explanation (putting the researcher into participant's shoes) (Mayoh & Onwuegbuzie, 2015).

Creswell's (2013) phenomenological method is closer to descriptive phenomenology. Creswell (2013) defined phenomenological research as studies describing what a particular lived experience of a phenomenon or concept means to a group of people. Such a method explores the participant's shared experiences of a phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). In addition, this phenomenological method explores the phenomenon of interest from two general questions: "What have you experienced in terms of the phenomenon? What contexts or situations have typically influenced or affected your experiences of the phenomenon?" (p. 61). Because Creswell's (2013) phenomenological method broadly explores and describes the common contexts (factors) that affect participants' experience of a phenomenon, therefore, it fits well in exploratory sequential mixed methods study. Study 1 starting from Creswell's (2013) phenomenological method aimed to openly explore the phenomenon of interest and provide suggestions for developing a theoretical framework, such as assigning the phenomenological findings to a work-family conflict model. (e.g., Mayoh & Onwuegbuzie, 2015; Creswell, 2013; Sulistiyani & Harwiki, 2016)

### 3.3.1. Procedures of Creswell's (2013) Phenomenological Method

The procedures of Creswell's (2013) phenomenological method are as follows:

- The researcher ensures that the phenomenological method is appropriate for examining the research problems.
- Identify the phenomenon of interest.
- The researcher has a basic understanding of the phenomenon of interest, such as how this phenomenon might be experienced (the objective reality and/or individual experiences). To describe participants' experience of the phenomenon without biases, the researcher must bracket his/her expertise of the phenomenon of interest as much as possible. Bracketing is a technique that requires the researcher to putting aside his/her own belief/knowledge about the phenomenon as much as possible during the investigation, thereby reducing bias and helping to increase the trustworthiness and rigour of the findings.

- Data must be collected from people who have experienced the phenomenon of interest.
- Ask the participants the two general questions: “What have you experienced in terms of the phenomenon? What contexts or situations have typically influenced or affected your experiences of the phenomenon?” (Creswell, 2013, p. 61), and other open-ended questions that relate to these two questions.
- Analyse the data, highlight the significant statements, formulate the meanings of the statements, and cluster the formulated meanings into themes.
- Describe the themes
- Discuss the essence (common) of the phenomenon from the themes.

### 3.4. General Introduction to Study 2

Study 2 was a quantitative study made up of two parts. Quantitative research design aims at investigating the causal relationships between a set of variables within a theoretical framework, and can provide a greater generalisability (Yilmaz, 2013), making it ideal for the purposes of Study 2. Part one (2a) aimed to develop an integrative work-family conflict model that is applicable in China, which specified the process of work-family conflict and how it interacts in the work-family interface. Part two (2b) aimed to re-analysed the same dataset, in order to investigate the age and gender difference in the final model of Study 2a, to shed light on which group of Chinese employees has a higher risk of experiencing work-family conflict. Online questionnaires were used to collect the data. To clarify, data was collected once and analysed twice, and the same dataset was analysed twice. The next sections discuss the reason for double analysis and outline the explanation of analysis methods used in Study 2a and b.

#### 3.4.1. Structural Equation Modelling (Study 2a)

Structural equation modelling (SEM) was used in Study 2a for model development. SEM is a statistical method for analysing the relationships between a set of variables (Civelek, 2018). The strength of SEM is that it is able to support causal inference, test a pre-assumed causal model, and analyse its path relationships, which makes SEM particularly useful for model development and

examining the structure and path relationships of the model (Ullman & Bentler, 2003; Przybyla et al., 2018).

#### 3.4.1.1. *Software for Structural Equation Modelling*

The software used for SEM in Study 2a was R Studio, an open-source software for statistical programming, computing, and graphics (Rosseel, 2012). The Lavaan package was used; this package was developed specifically for SEM in R (Rosseel, 2012).

#### 3.4.1.2. *Performing Structural Equation Modelling in R Studio*

R Studio uses syntax to build the model; each package has its unique syntax (Rosseel, 2012).

SEM covers both measurement and structural models. The measurement model can be simply understood as the scales used to measure the variables in the model (Brown & Moore, 2012). For example, the scale used for measuring work-family conflict is one measurement model in a work-family conflict model. The structural model is the study's proposed model (e.g., the integrated work-family conflict model) (e.g., Brown & Moore, 2012; Fan et al., 2016). The Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), a statistical technique for verifying the construct of the measurement, is first conducted to verify the quality of the measurement model; the next step is to verify the structural model (Byrne, 2016). Both the measurement and structural models must be identified. Identification (over-identified, just-identified, under-identified) highlights whether there is enough information to generate the parameter estimate (e.g., the value of the relationship between variables): the model must be over-identified or just-identified to provide model coefficients (Byrne, 2016).

R Studio generates the results/details of the measurement and proposed model once they are identified. Before examining the path relationships in the proposed model, the model must fit the data (model evaluation), and a poor fit model must be modified (Byrne, 2016). Model evaluation is based on the fit indices provided in the results; the use of fit indices is flexible, and each fit indices has its recommended cut-off point (Fan et al., 2016). In addition, it is recommended to use at least two different fit indices, because it increases the reliability of model evaluation (Fan et al., 2016).

Below lists the common fit indices and their cut-off points as suggested by previous studies (e.g., Byrne, 2016; Fan et al., 2016; Taylor et al., 2003; Boateng et al., 2018):

- Chi-square test ( $\chi^2$ ):  $\chi^2$  estimates the discrepancy between the matrixes of the observed covariance and model-implied covariance. The cut-off point for  $\chi^2$  is a value greater than .05.
- Comparative Fit Index (CFI): An incremental fit index that calculates the variance in a covariance matrix and its recommended cut-off point is a value greater than .90 is considered a good-fitting model.
- Chi-square divided by the degrees of freedom ( $\chi^2/df$ ): “The ratio of the chi-square to its degrees of freedom” (Taylor et al., 2003, p.279). A ratio that is between 1 and 5 indicates a good-fitting model.
- Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA): A badness of fit index that calculates the discrepancy between the proposed model from a well-fitting model. The cut-off points are a value less than .05 indicates a good-fitting model, in between .05 and .08 indicates a reasonable fit, in between .08 and .10 indicates a mediocre fit, and greater than .10 indicates a poor fit.
- Standardised Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR): SRMR measures the different correlations between the proposed and final models. A value less than .08 indicates a good fit.
- Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI): An incremental fit index that “comparing the proposed factor model to a model in which no interrelationships at all are assumed among any of the items” (Boateng et al., 2018, p. 12). The cut-off point is a value greater than or equal to .95.

Because  $\chi^2$  is sensitive to sample size (Fan et al., 2016), Study 2a used the CFI, RESEA, SRMR, and  $\chi^2/df$  for model evaluation. After the model is evaluated (good-fitting, reasonable-fitting, or mediocre-fitting), the researcher can use the results to examine the proposed model and identify the final model.



### 3.4.2. Moderation Analysis (Study 2b)

To investigate the age and gender difference in the experience of work-family conflict, the same dataset from Study 1a was re-analysed using moderation analysis. This was to prevent the interference of the effect of age and gender on the final model, because SEM treats all variables in the proposed model as a whole (Ullman & Bentler, 2003). In other words, including age and gender during model development might have created a final model that only fits with the effect of age and gender and missed the purpose of Study 2a: investigate how the work-family conflict processes and interacts in China's work-family interface.

Moderation only happens when the relationship between two different variables is modified by a third variable (a moderator), such as the third variable affecting the direction or strength of the relationship between the dependent and independent variables (Hayes, 2018). Investigating the age and gender difference in work-family conflict experience by using moderation analysis sheds light on how age and gender interact and moderate the strength of the relationships between work-family conflict and its related variables, such as which genders benefit from the social support most in handling work-family conflict (Drummond et al., 2016) or employees in what age might have a higher risk of experiencing work-family conflict (e.g., age moderates the strength of the relationship between work-family conflict and its antecedents) (Matthews, Bulger et al., 2010).

#### 3.4.2.1. *Software for Moderation Analysis*

The software used for moderation analysis in Study 2b was SPSS. Hayes Process macro, an SPSS add-on module was used. Hayes Process macro was developed specifically for mediation, moderation, and conditional process (e.g., moderated-mediation) analysis (Hayes, 2018).

#### 3.4.2.2. *Performing Moderation Analysis in Hayes Process Macro*

Hayes Process macro has a total of 92 built-in models allowing the users to choose these models according to the goal of their study. For example, the built-in model 2 (see Figure 3.1) allows a study to investigate the moderating effect of age (W) and gender (Z) and their interaction effect (W\*Z) on the relationship between work-family conflict (X or Y) and its related variables. Hence making Hayes Process Macro ideal for Study 2b.

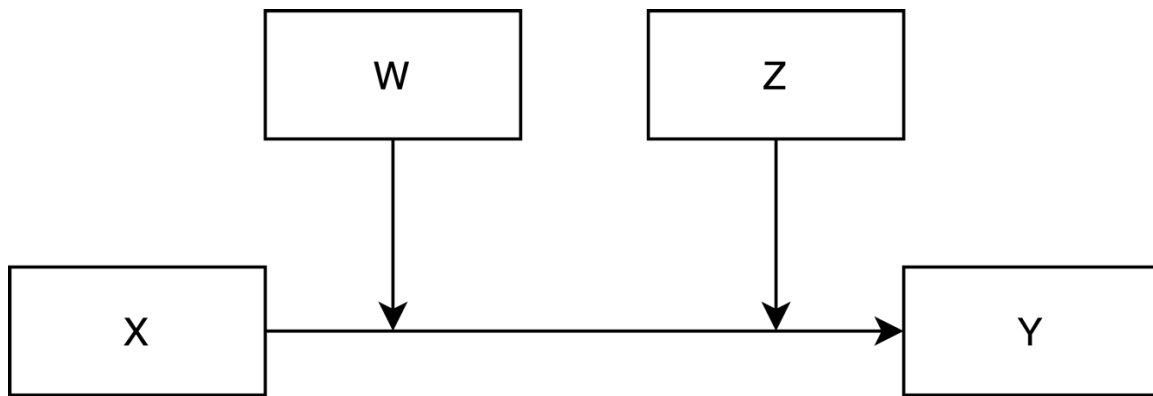


Figure 3.1 Hayes Process Model 2.

### 3.5. Data Collection and Analysis

Both qualitative and quantitative techniques were used in this research to collect the data. A purposive snowball sampling was used to recruit the participants. This method allows the researcher to recruit the participants based on inclusion criteria (Parker et al., 2019), such as having experienced work-family conflict, thereby allowing the data collection follows Creswell's (2013) phenomenological method (i.e., data must collect from people who have experienced the phenomenon of interest). Semi-structured online interviews were used to collect the qualitative data, and Creswell's (2013) phenomenological method was used to analyse the qualitative data. In addition, online questionnaires were used to collect the quantitative data for Study 2, the dataset was used in Study 2a and re-analysed in Study 2b. Several quantitative data analysis methods were used to analyse the quantitative data, such as descriptive statistics, Cronbach's alpha (reliability test), CFA, SEM, and moderation. More details were provided in the method sections under different studies (see *Chapters five and six*).

### 3.6. Studies of the Research

This research involved two studies to ensure the objectives were met (see Chapter one).

Study 1 focused on exploring the lived experience of work-family conflict. This study would employ semi-structured online interviews, identifying the potential culturally specific contexts (variables) that are relevant to the experience of work-family conflict in China for the detailed quantitative analysis in Study 2.

Study 2 consists of two parts. Study 2a focused on developing and testing an integrated work-family conflict model that is applicable in China. Online questionnaires would be used to collect the data on variables (e.g., work-family conflict) that form the proposed work-family conflict model, emerging from the phenomenological findings and literature review. SEM analysis was completed to verify the quality of the measurement model and the structure of the proposed work-family conflict model. A final work-family conflict model that is applicable in China was produced.

Study 2b focused on investigating the moderating and interaction effects of age and gender on the path relationships in the final work-family conflict model. This study re-analysed the same data collected from Study 2a's online questionnaires. This study confirmed the moderating and interaction effects of age and gender on the relationships between work-family conflict and its antecedents and consequences. This explained how work-family conflict experience is affected by employees' age and gender and suggested which group of Chinese employees have a higher risk of experiencing work-family conflict.

### 3.7. Ethical Considerations

The ethical consent of this research was granted by De Montfort University's ethics committee in May 2020 for Study 1 and June 2021 for Study 2. The researcher adhered to the British Psychological Society (BPS) Code of Human Research Ethics (British Psychological Society, 2014), the BPS code of Ethics and Conduct (British Psychological Society, 2018), and the BPS Ethics Guidelines for Internet-Mediated Research (British Psychological Society, 2017). The ethical considerations were provided thoroughly in different studies' method sections.

### 3.8. Conclusion

This chapter provided the general methodology of this research, explained the implementation of the exploratory sequential mixed methods approach, and outlined each study's methodology. The next chapter starts the first study of this thesis to explore the work-family conflict phenomenon and its related culturally specific variables.

## 4. “It is not possible to balance it easily”: A Phenomenological Study Exploring the Experience of Work-Family Conflict in Contemporary Chinese Society

### 4.0. Introduction

Work-family scholars (e.g., Agars & French, 2011; Kossek et al., 2011) interested in cultural differences believe that the contextual factors (e.g., social norms, cultural factors, and/or one’s gender, age, and unique experience) influence the experience of work-family conflict. Yet, the influence of contextual factors on work-family conflict is overlooked, the overwhelming Western focus on work-family research has restricted the scope of work-family conflict studies outside the West to repeatedly examine the Western-developed theories/models (Allen et al., 2020). Thus, to meaningfully address and help comprehensively understand the work-family conflict issues in China, a qualitative study may be a good place to start, to explore the experience of work-family conflict and its contextual factors in China and integrate these contextual factors into model development (e.g., Agars & French, 2011; Kossek et al., 2011; Shaffer et al., 2011).

It is helpful to explore the work-family conflict phenomenon in China from the standpoint of Aycan’s (2008) cross-cultural perspective. Aycan’s (2008) cross-cultural perspective places “specific emphasis on the extent to which and ways in which *cultural context* influences the observed phenomenon” (pp. 354) in an international comparison or single-nation study. Aycan (2008) further explained the cross-cultural perspective using a cross-cultural cultural and work-family conflict model (see Figure 4.1). This model first suggested that culture mainly affects work-family conflict, role demands, and sources of support. This effect is due to cultural influences on individuals’ values (e.g., which one is more important? Work or family?), beliefs (e.g., is work-family conflict a problem, or just a lived experience), and norms (e.g., should I take on more family responsibilities because I am the wife?) toward work-family conflict (Aycan, 2008). Second, culture also influences the relationships between work-family conflict and its antecedents and consequences. For example, Chinese cultural beliefs, such as “job is for improving the family’s wealth”, may affect how Chinese

people think of working long hours (work demand), thereby affecting their impact on work-family conflict (Zhang et al., 2009).

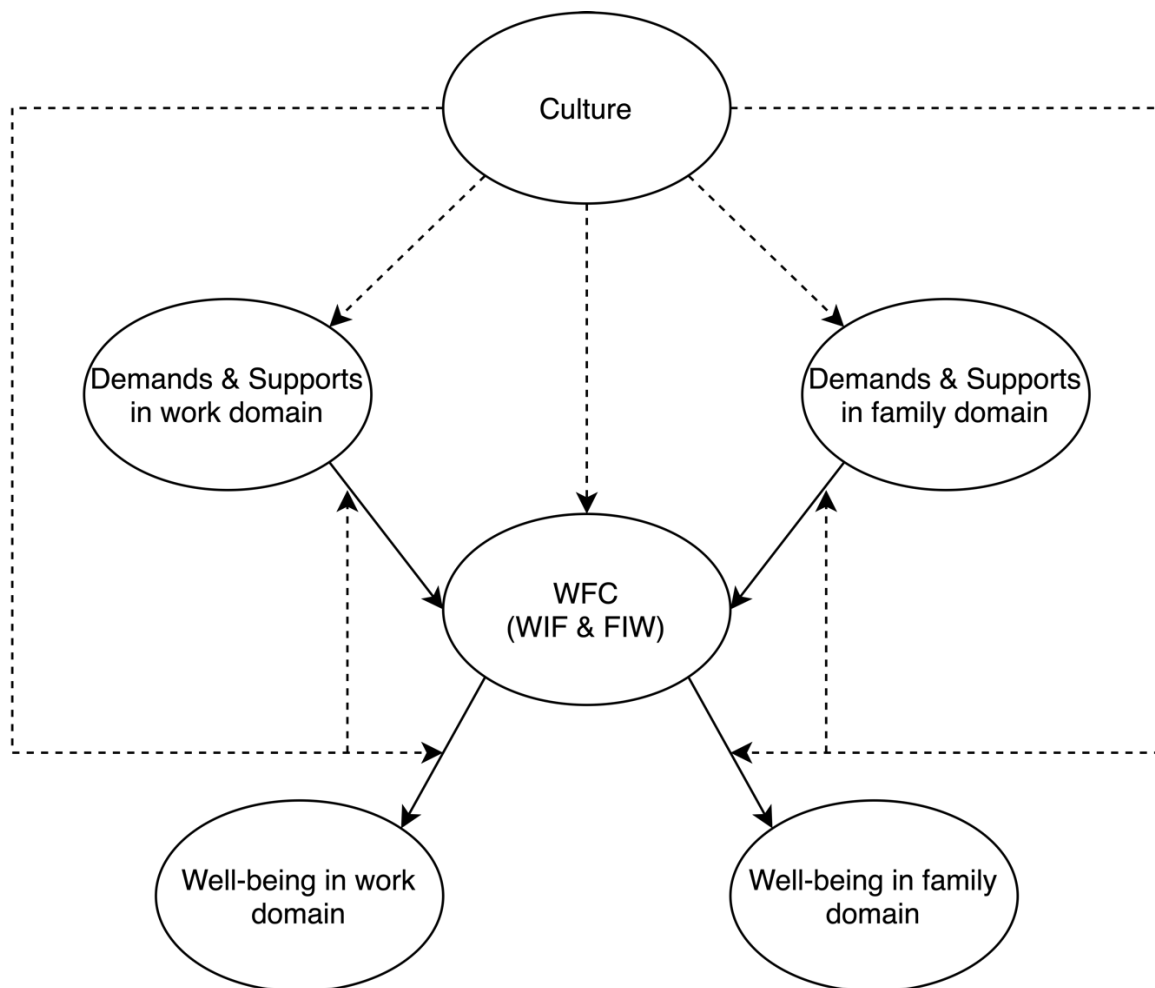


Figure 4.1 A Cross-Cultural Model of Culture and Work-Family Conflict (Aycan, 2008).

Thus, exploring work-family conflict in China from Aycan's (2008) perspective could shed light on how people perceive work-family conflict and what are the unique experiences/factors related to the work-family conflict in China, thereby increasing the contextual relevance of Study 2a and providing a direction for model development, such as suggesting antecedents of work-family conflict for Study 2a. To openly explore the work-family conflict in China, the research questions that guide this study are 1. What have Chinese individuals experienced in terms of work-family conflict? And 2. What perceived contexts or situations do individuals in China see as typically influencing or affecting experiences of work-family conflict?

## 4.1. Methodology

### 4.1.1. Study Design

Semi-structured online interviews via WeChat (a Chinese-developed app that included messaging, social media, and mobile payment, which is similar to the combination of Facebook, WhatsApp, and PayPal) were adopted in this study. The main reason for choosing online interviews was due to the COVID-19 outbreak; all interviews were conducted at the beginning of the COVID-19 outbreak, and no face-to-face research was allowed (British Psychological Society, 2020). In addition, China is a relatively large country, and the participants in the present study are living in different cities across China; an online interview provides wider geographical access and is less time-consuming (Opdenakker, 2006).

In addition, Creswell's (2013) phenomenology approach was used in this study. Creswell's (2013) phenomenology method openly explores and describes the nature of a particular phenomenon from participants' descriptions, providing an in-depth understanding of a lived experience of a concept, what the phenomenon of interest means to individuals or groups, describing what they have in common when they experience the phenomenon, and what contexts or situations influence their experience of the phenomenon of interest. Hence, makes it ideal for the research questions of the present study.

### 4.1.2. Participants

A purposive snowball sampling was used in this study; a total of 16 participants (9 males and 7 females) participated voluntarily, and no participants were paid or rewarded for participating in the interview. All the participants in this study have met the following inclusion criteria (a) over 18 years old, (b) Chinese nationality and living in Mainland China (grew up in China), (c) Full-time employed, (d) Have a family (spouse/partner and/or children living at home) or living with parents, (e) Have experienced the conflict between work and family. The average age of the participants was 34 years old in that the youngest participant was 24 years old and the oldest participant was 53 years old. Ten participants are married, one is divorced, two participants are in a relationship, and three are single. Moreover, nine participants have at least one child in this study. In addition, due to

the anonymity of the present study, the 16 participants were coded P1 (the first participant) to P16 (the 16<sup>th</sup> participant), respectively (see Table 4.1).

**Table 4.1** Background Information of the Participants in the Present Study.

	Gender	Age	Occupation	Income (per month)	Marital status	Child	Living with
P1	Male	29	Pet shop owner; part-time Didi driver (similar to Uber driver)	Average 7,000RMB	Married	A 2-year-old daughter	wife and daughter
P2	Male	28	Owner of business plan services company	4,000RMB	In a relationship	No child	Girlfriend and elderly parents
P3	Female	24	Work at an exhibition company	7-8,000RMB	Single	No child	Elderly mother
P4	Female	28	Work at bank	8,000-10,000RMB	In a relationship	No child	Elderly parents
P5	Male	34	Insurance broker	No comment	Married	An 8-month-old boy	Wife, child, and elderly parents
P6	Male	35	Insurance broker	At least 8,000RMB	Married	No child	Wife and elderly parents
P7	Female	39	University English lecturer; owner of an English learning studio	10,000RMB (university salary)	Married	A 12-year-old son	Husband and child
P8	Female	35	Financial planner	At least 20,000RMB	Divorce	Two sons, one is 3 years old, and the other is 1 year old	The younger son and elderly parents
P9	Female	26	Primary school teacher	10,000-20,000RMB	Single	No child	Elderly parents
P10	Female	38	Restaurant owner	No comment	Married	A 5-year-old daughter	Daughter, older sister, and elderly mother
P11	Male	26	IT company owner	50,000-100,000RMB	Single	No child	Elderly parents
P12	Female	42	Nurse	33,000RMB	Married	Two daughters, both are 6 years old	Husband, daughters, and nanny
P13	Male	26	News reporter	10,000-20,000RMB	Married	No child	Wife
P14	Male	46	Government officer	Around 22,000RMB	Married	A 14-year-old daughter and a 3-year-old son	Wife and children
P15	Male	53	Sales	7,000RMB	Married	A 22-year-old daughter and a 13-year-old son	Wife and children
P16	Male	41	Sales	No comment	Married	A 6-month-old daughter	Wife, child, and elderly parents

#### 4.1.3. Procedure

After receiving the ethics approval from De Montfort University, the researcher posted the recruitment letter (see Appendix A) on the mainstream social media platforms in China (i.e.,

WeChat, Weibo, Zhihu, and QQ). People who met the inclusion criteria and were interested in participating contacted the researcher directly via WeChat, Weibo, Zhihu, QQ, or email the researcher. The researcher then checked if he/she met all the participants' inclusion criteria. All interviews were conducted during a two-month period from August 2020 to October 2020.

An information sheet (see Appendix B) was provided once the participants showed interest in participating in this study. A consent form (see Appendix C) was signed and returned to the researcher before the interview. The researcher asked about the participant's willingness to participate in this study again at the beginning of the interview. Background information of the interviewee was asked at the beginning of each interview. All the interviews lasted between 30 and 60 minutes. The length of the interview depended on the living status of the interviewee. For example, an interviewee with no child might have never experienced and responded less to child-related work-family conflict; therefore, the interview was shorter. Questions related to this study's research questions were asked during the interviews. At the end of the interviews, the researcher asked the participants to recommend someone that met the inclusion criteria. A debriefing form (see Appendix D) was followed once the interviews were finished. All the interviews were audio-recorded. The interview schedule (see Appendix E) is as follows (see Table 4.2).

**Table 4.2** Interview Schedule.

<b>Background information</b>	
1.	Gender
2.	Age
3.	Marital status (single, married, years of married, divorce)
4.	Child (number of children, age of children)
5.	Living situation (live by her/herself or live with parents, spouse, or children)
6.	Does your other family member(s) work? If so, full-time or part-time?
7.	Brief job description
<b>Work-to-family conflict</b>	
1.	Do you encounter any difficulties at work? If yes, what difficulties do you have in your work?
2.	Can you describe the work-to-family conflict you are experiencing?
3.	Does the work-to-family conflict you mentioned earlier affect you the most? Or do you think another work-to-family conflict is much worse? Can you give me an example?
4.	How often do you experience work-to-family conflict?
5.	Can you describe how it affects you both mentally and physically?
6.	How do you cope with this type of work-to-family conflict? Does or did anyone or anything help you improve these problems?
In the above questions, If the participants are unclear, I will offer more details, such as:	
"Please think of a time in your life when you are experiencing work-to-family conflict; when you have a situation in mind, please describe it to me."	
"Did the difficulty at work influence your family role, such as not having enough time for family members or fulfilling home responsibilities?"	



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#### Family-to-work conflict

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1. Do you encounter any difficulties at work? If yes, what difficulties do you have in your work?
  2. Can you describe the work-to-family conflict you are experiencing?
  3. Does the work-to-family conflict you mentioned earlier affect you the most? Or do you think other work-to-family conflict are much worse? Can you give me an example?
  4. How often you experience the work-to-family conflict?
  5. Can you describe how it affects you both mentally and physically?
  6. How do you cope with this type of work-to-family conflict? Does or did anyone or anything help you improve these problems?
- 

In the above questions, If the participants were unclear, I would offer more details, such as:

“Please think of a time in your life when you are experiencing work-to-family conflict; when you have a situation in mind, please describe it to me.”

“Did the difficulty at work influence your family role, such as don’t have enough time for family members or fulfilling home responsibilities?”

#### 4.1.4. Ethics

This study has received ethics approval from De Montfort University’s ethics committee. To protect the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants, all the information that could identify the participants was removed from the transcripts. An identification code was given to each participant (e.g., participant one was referred to as P1) and used in this study for the purpose of quotation identification.

#### 4.1.5. Language Translation

Language is the fundamental tool in qualitative research because it allows the interviewer and interviewee to interact and would also affect the interpretation of the results (Hennink, 2008). The most common difficulty during cross-cultural studies is the researcher cannot speak the native language (Liamputtong, 2010). In this qualitative study, because English is not the native language in China, all interviews were conducted speaking Chinese. The researcher can speak both Cantonese and Mandarin fluently; thus, the participants can choose to speak Cantonese or Mandarin, whichever makes them feel comfortable. In general, a total of 11 participants spoke Cantonese and 5 participants spoke Mandarin during interviews.

This study adopted Shavarini’s (2006) translation strategy, which only translates the significant statements that are used as quotations in writing. Data were analysed in the original language (both Cantonese and Mandarin). Analysing the data in the original language help to minimise the interpreting bias and the change in the meaning of findings during translation, because some concepts/words cannot be properly translated between languages (e.g., Hennink, 2008;

Liamputtong, 2010). After analysing the data, the significant statements that would be used in writing were translated into English by the researcher, and the translated statements were checked by the researcher's first supervisor, who speaks both Chinese and English fluently and specialises in occupational psychology. Not using a professional translator or interpreter is first because working with a professional translator or interpreter might be less efficient if the researcher him/herself is a bilingual (bicultural) researcher who is more familiar with the topic of interest (Ryen, 2002); second, Kaufert and Putsch (1997) argued that a translator or interpreter is "a gatekeeper who has the power to elicit, clarify, translate, omit, or distort messages" (p. 72), which might interfere the findings.

#### 4.1.6. Data Analysis

Creswell's (2013) phenomenology analysis strategy was used in this study. First, the researcher transcribed the interview's audio recorded into transcripts. Second, the interview transcripts were read several times so that the researcher could gain a deeper acquaintance with the transcripts. Third, significant statements directly related to the lived experience of work-family conflict were identified in each transcript. Fourth, the meanings of each significant statement were formulated. Fifth, all the formulated meanings were then generalised into themes common in the participant's transcripts. Last, the themes were used to provide a detailed and in-depth description of the work-family conflict phenomenon in China.

#### 4.1.7. Trustworthiness

The trustworthiness of this study was fulfilled by literature searches and following the steps of Creswell's (2013) phenomenology method.

#### 4.1.8. Result

From 16 transcripts, a total of 297 significant statements were found. The examples of significant statements and their formulated meanings are listed below (see Table 4.3).

**Table 4.3** Examples of Significant Statements and their Formulated Meanings.

<i>Significant statements</i>	<i>Formulated meanings</i>
If I am not in this kind of occupation; if I am not a salesman, and my job requires me to work from 9 AM to 5 PM, nine-nine-six (9 AM to 9 PM, 6 working days per	Flexible working hours at work helps to decrease the family-to-work conflict.

week), or my work time is fixed. I will have no control over dealing with things at home.	
I keep telling myself don't bring back the emotion at work to my family. I mean, like the bad emotion at work. But I am just a human, so I couldn't just let it stop.	It is hard not to let the emotion at work affects the emotion at home.
If you are an only child, you probably need to take care of eight elderly people. Your parents, your grandparents, your spouse's parents, and your spouse's grandparents.	An only child has more eldercare responsibility.
It is impossible! I mean, she (my daughter) has to go to school in the morning at 8 AM, but I am already working at that time, then school is over at 4 PM, and I am still at work, so what can I do?	An incompatible between work demands and family needs.

The formulated meanings were then clustered into 6 Themes and 19 sub-themes (see Table 4.4).

**Table 4.4** Themes and Subthemes of this Study.

Theme	Sub-theme
That is life	Turn a blind eye
- This theme focused on the interviewees' attitudes toward work-family conflict	Self-coping
Part of the culture	Work is for family
- This theme focused on the Chinese culture/values that related to work-family conflict	United relationship
	Traditional gender role
	Filial piety
Family first and work second	Health of family members
- This theme focused on family-related experiences that are related to family-to-work conflict	Having children
	Parental expectation
	Being the only child
No such thing as free lunch	Money is the cure
- This theme focused on work-related situations that to work-to-family conflict	Occupational difference
Emotional turmoil and strain	Work distress
- This theme focused on the psychological/emotional aspects that related to work-family conflict	Display of anger
	Guilty feelings
Struggle to balance	A vicious cycle
- This theme focused on the outcomes that related to work-family conflict	Denied opportunities
	Become lazy
	Family atmosphere

**Theme 1: That is life.** Focusing on the beliefs and attitudes toward work-family conflict, most of the participants in this study mentioned that the conflict between work demands and family needs is just a "part of life"; it is a "life experience" that everyone has to go through. For example, participant 4 (P4) said, "all of these [different types of work-family conflicts] are life experience, [...] it is just a very common phenomenon, I think the experience of conflict [between work and family] has actually become normalised." In contrast, some of the participants think that work-family

conflict is considered a problem that affects their lives; however, compared to other difficulties in life, it was just a minor problem that is not worth mentioning. P13 said, “maybe it is a problem, but I don’t think it has a strong negative effect.” P16 stated, “it is a problem, just not a big deal. I mean, a simple example, your work and family are actually like a scale, it is not possible to balance it easily.”

It appeared that because of such a standpoint toward work-family conflict (i.e., just a life experience or just a minor problem in life), most of the participants tended to *turn a blind eye* when the work-family conflict happened. P8 remarked, “life goes on. So, you cry about it, then just keep moving forward.” P10 said, “it is not like I don’t think about it; it is what is the point of thinking about it?” And P1 also reported as follows:

Just don’t think about it and ignore it, it is common in every household. Maybe everyone will deal with it differently; but for me, I would just act as if nothing happened. Give it a couple of days, and everything will be okay again.

It also appeared that when the work-family conflict happened, most of the participants in this study were not willing to talk about it with others and would choose to resolve the impacts of work-family conflict through *self-coping*. P6 stated, “actually, I think it mainly relies on self-regulation.” And P11 said, “you have to adjust it by yourself slowly, it really depends on yourself, [...] and most importantly, you have to digest it, fix it, and adjust it by yourself.” And P10 stated, “the key to fixing this problem, do you know where the key is? It is in your hand, do you understand?”

**Theme 2: Part of the culture.** In this cluster, interviewees described the Chinese culture and beliefs associated with work-family conflict. All the participants showed a very strong sense of family and thought *work is for family*. A strong sense of family was evident during P6’s interview; he stated, I think if you have to stop your work because you have to provide care for your family members, I actually don’t think it is a conflict, it is just a thing that you must do for your family, it is a responsibility.

Similar responses were found during the interview with P11; he said, “actually, things like my job are not that important if you compared it to my family. It is not even worth mentioning.” And

during P3's interview, she stated, "you can find another job, but you only have one family, so their health or other family issues are definitely more important."

*Work is for the family* was endorsed by most of the participants. Only three participants in this study reported that work is for themselves, and it is a way to achieve self-worth. For example, P2 stated,

Because my work is for myself, so other things have relatively little impact on my work [...] it is very personal, I mean, you can't say it (my job) is my hobby; it is like, I think it is one of the tools to achieve your self-worth.

Other participants all described work as a way to make money so that he/she can provide a better life for their families. It seems that this thought has restricted their *choice of career* to some degree. P12, who is a nurse and has to spend 2 hours on a daily commute, said,

It is a good-paying job. So even though it (being a nurse) is very stressful, maybe even more difficult than other types of work, and it is far away from my home. Still, I am willing to sacrifice because the income can give my child, or the family a better future.

P6, who is an insurance salesman, also stated,

I mean, I hope that I can be successful at work; that's what everyone wants. I will definitely choose the job that I love, just at the same time, this job has to provide income. I mean, you can't just because you love this job, then affect the income of the family.

Additionally, Chinese families seem to have a more supportive and *united relationship* which might ease the work-family conflict experience from different aspects, such as elderly parents would take care of their adult children or grandchildren's daily life and/or financially support their adult children. For example, P4 said,

I am still living with my parents right now, so lots of things happened in my family; for example, my grandmother was in hospital recently, and other family emergencies, it is basically taken care of by my parents or other relatives. I mean, most of the things that happened at home, they will handle it.

P7, who is living with his son and husband, said,

When I needed to buy a house [parents gave us money]; I didn't have time to take care of the children; or if I had a business trip, or my husband had a business trip and I had to work, then they (parents) would come to help us [to take care the child].

P5, who is living with his parents, stated,

My mom's pension is a lot, [...] so she will pay for most of the things in our daily lives, so it is kind of like we (my wife and I) are saving, and they (elderly parents) are paying for the supplies, food, things like that. So, it is actually like they are subsidising us.

P4, who is 48 years old and living with his wife and two children, stated, "they (elderly parents) will cook for us and take care of the children for us. Instead of us taking care of them, they help us." When the researcher asked, "what is your thought about your parents still helping you out instead of you taking care of them?" later during the interview; he stated, "nothing, it is good. I mean, that is the case in our Chinese families. Parents are always the provider; I think it is just a common phenomenon."

Except for the help from elderly parents, Chinese spouses seem to have a one-sided supportive and "mutual understanding" relationship. "She understands I have to work" and "She understands I am tired" were mentioned by some married male participants during the interviews. However, P12, who is a married female participant, said, "because my husband does nothing [at home], I mean my husband, he can't share [the housework] with me, so I feel like I have more things to do." In other words, the male seems to receive more support and understanding from his wife, which might ease the family-to-work conflict; however, on the other side, the female appears to have more family-to-work conflict because of family responsibility.

It seems that such one-sided support was due to the influence of the *traditional gender role*; the inequality in gender roles was endorsed by most of the participants, especially among the married participants or the participants who were still living with their parents. Participants described this gender role as part of the "society", "culture", and "tradition". P8, a woman with two

children, said, “the society, I mean even right now, [...], people still think that women should stay at home and be the caregiver; this thought is deeply ingrained in belief.” And P14, a husband with two children, said, “the domestic chore should be done by the wife, that’s just part of our culture.”

It appeared that women would have more family responsibilities, such as providing care for the children and taking on more housework. P2, who is living with his parents and girlfriend, stated, “[housework] basically is done by my mum and my girlfriend.” P5, who is married and still living with his elderly parents, also said, “in general, my mum does most of it (housework), then my wife will finish the rest, mainly take care of the child’s daily lives.”

Subsequently, men and women seem to get used to this gender role, which leads to women having more family responsibilities and being more willing to take on more family responsibilities, thereby letting their husbands or adult children focus on the work domain. For example, P1 stated, “sometimes I got off work very late, around 1 AM or 2 AM, she (my wife) finished all the housework, she didn’t leave any things for me to do.” And P7, who is married and has a son named N, said, “I am quite busy [at work], then my husband, hopes that I could spend more time at home to help N with his homework, but I might..., so I have to take some time off [from work].” And when the researcher asked her how she felt about she has more family responsibilities later during the interview; she stated,

I feel like it is just part of my life, I already get used to it [...] it is always me who takes care of his (the son’s) daily life [...] I, I don’t seem to feel anything anymore, I just feel like it is just my responsibility.

As a sub-theme of the part of the culture, *filial piety* was endorsed by all participants in this study. All the participants believed that taking care of elderly parents is a way to fulfil their obligations as children. As P12 stated, “you, as the child, must take care of them (parents), not just financially support them, but also emotionally care about them.” Although most of the participants’ parents in this study are still relatively young and in good health, the thought of having to take care of their parents when they are older has negatively affected most of the participants to some

degree. In P10's interview; she stated, "right now, it is still no problem at all, [my parents are around] 50, 60 years old, so what I most worry about is when they become older." And P11 also stated,

[Having to take care of parents] is pressure, because right now, it's not like I am doing very well at work, still not achieving my [occupational] goal; I mean, I am not rich enough, but my parents are getting older and older, so I just feel so much pressure.

P6 explained the reason how the thought of filial piety impacted him and what he was worried about; he said,

As they (elderly parents) get older, they may start to have some health issues; then the first [thing I am worried about] is the medical treatment [needs money], second is I have to provide care, which means I have to take some time off from work, and then my income will be affected.

**Theme 3: Family first and work second.** In this theme, participants described the family-related factors/experiences associated with family-to-work conflict.

It appeared that due to the strong sense of family, most of the participants in this study claimed that the only reason they would stop their work was the *health of family members*. The participants often mentioned two types of family members; some participants said the only thing that stopped their work was their children's health; for example, P1, who has a 2-year-old daughter, said, "my child was suddenly sick, then I [left my work and] went back home." P7, who has a 12-year-old son, stated, "if he (my son) feels sick, I will definitely stop everything at work and take him to the hospital." And P16, whose newborn baby girl (6 months old) was diagnosed with congenital heart disease, said, "because my child has this disease, so I become more focused on the family domain [instead of work]."

Some said the health of their elderly parents had stopped their work. For example, P6 stated, "my parents were both ill a while ago; I stopped my job to take care of them." P8 said, "my mom was ill and had to have surgery, so I left my work for two months." And P14 stated, "if parents



are sick, then I will stop everything I am doing at work, take them to the hospital immediately; that's it, that's nothing to talk about, I can lose my job, but I can't lose my parents."

Surprisingly, no married participants in this study mentioned that they would stop their work or could not stay focused on work if their spouse was sick. Although this might be because most of the spouses of the participants in this study are relatively young and in good health, just like the response of P1, he stated, "I mean they (wife and parents) are always in good health, but if they are [sick], I will [stop working and] go back [home]."

It appeared that because of such societal/cultural norms (i.e., I must take care of elderly parents by myself), *being the only child* would exacerbate the negative impact of filial piety on family-to-work conflict. Most participants often mentioned "because I am the only child" during the question regarding taking care of elderly parents. For example, P4 stated, "because I am the only child, will I have the ability to take care of my parents by myself when they are old? [Every time I thought about that] I start to panic, and I start to worry." And P12 said, "if you are an only child, you probably need to take care of eight elderly people. Your parents, your grandparents, your spouse's parents, and your spouse's grandparents."

It appeared that the reason why being the only child would exacerbate the negative impact of caring for elderly parents on family-to-work conflict is because of the *lack of sibling support*. This was evident in P8's explanation; she said, "if you can have a sibling to share [the responsibility] with you, it will be very different." And P15, whose father had a stroke and was paralysed for seven years, said, "I am so grateful that I have a big sister in my hometown to take care of our father for seven years." And P16 also reported as follows:

It's very realistic; you have to deal with it yourself, or you have a sibling to handle it all together.

It won't be the same. I mean, at least, you won't be so stressed [if you have a sibling]. If you have many siblings, things may be much easier; at least you can discuss [with your sibling] when something happens.

As a sub-theme of the family first and work second, *having children* was endorsed by all the parent participants. It appeared that because of the support from elderly parents, all the parent participants in this study claimed that as their children become older, they have more stress in both work and family domains due to *parental expectations*. P5 provided an explanation during the interview; he said,

Because it is kind of like four people to provide care [for my son], daytime is by the elder, and we will take care [the son] at night if my wife and I can [get off work on time]. So it is like at least 3-4 people taking care of one kid, I believe we have enough people [to provide care for the child], it is enough. But other things, like knowledge, really depend on us, the young generation [...] so maybe in the next phase, let's say kindergarten, or school, we will have more responsibilities because of education.

And P1, who has a 2-year-old daughter, said, "because you have to know that the kindergarten charge at least 1,000 RMB per month, that's an extra pressure, so I have to go the extra mile." Also, P7, who signed up for 3-4 after-school classes for her son in order to improve the school grade of her son, reported as follows:

First, I have to take him to and from the after-school classes, so it costs my time; then it makes me a little bit anxious because I have to make sure he absorbs the knowledge, right? So, I have to make sure he does the homework, and I have to give him other assignments to improve his weakness. I have to examine his work, like discuss it with him and communicate with his teacher after class. All of these are like invisible pressure.

And P12, who has two six-years-old daughters, stated,  
I work like 10 hours, and then I finally get back home; I mean, I need to rest, mentally and physically. But I barely have time to enjoy my dinner, my body and my mind are not ready yet, and then I have to help with my children's homework; I just feel like I am a bit out of my depth.

Except for the child's education, the parental expectation was linked with "good job" and "contribute to society" by most of the parent participants. For example, P7, who has a 12-year-old

son, said, "I hope he can find a good but not stressful job, and of course, it is a good-paying job too. So that he can take care of himself and his own family." P14, who has two children, said, "I hope they can get into a good university; I hope they can have good grades in school, be useful, and contribute to society." And P15, who has two children, stated, "I hope they can have good progress at school; I hope they can work for a living and make sure that their life is well-lived when they step into the society."

**Theme 4: No such thing as free lunch.** In this theme, people described the relevant work-related factors affecting work-to-family conflict. Because the job was viewed as a tool to improve family lives by most of the participants; thus, a high level of work demands seemed to be more acceptable. However, it appeared that everything comes with a price, and work-related factors still harm participant's family life. "Definitely" was often used by the participants when the researcher asked, "does your job affect your family life?" For example, P13 said, "it (work) definitely impacted my family life to some degree; if you have a job, plus, you have family, then you definitely will be facing some problems."

As a sub-theme of no such thing as free lunch, *money is the cure* was endorsed by most of the participants. It appeared that income from work has a strong influence on the level of work-family conflict. For example, P1, the main breadwinner of his family, stated, "will it (work-family conflict) get worse? It really depends on the money. To be honest, the biggest problem in my family right now is the money." And P5 stated, "in my family, if I can really solve most of the financial problems, then I think 70,80 per cent [of work-family conflict problems] will be fixed."

As a sub-theme of no such thing as free lunch, the *occupational difference* was endorsed by most of the participants. It appeared that people in different occupations would experience different work-family conflicts and influence the level of work-to-family conflict. For example, P14, who works for the government, stated,

It is not like working in an industry, you have to stand next to the assembly line, and you can't leave. My job is like... once you finished your work and you still have time left, you can just do

your things, like pay your phone bill, pay your utility bills, or something at home is broken, [you can] go back and fix it, that's all acceptable.

P7, who is a university English lecturer, said,

My job is relatively simple, [I] don't have to go to university every day; you only need to be there when you have lectures, and you can leave after finishing the lecture; you don't even need to be in contact with other colleagues [...] when you don't have to be in contact with others, you have fewer conflicts [at work].

It appeared that the working hours have affected the experience and the level of work-to-family conflict. Some participants claimed that *long working hours* at work increased the incompatibility between work demands and family needs. For example, P3, who works from 9 AM to 9 PM, six working days per week, said,

My grandfather is sick and has to stay in the hospital right now. My mom is having a rough day; she really wants someone who can take turns to take care of [my] grandfather with her, but [I] don't have the time to do so.

P10, who owns a restaurant and has to work from 8 AM to 9 PM six days per week and also have to spend a half-day on Sunday at work, stated, "so it is tough for me to fulfil my family responsibilities; it is just impossible to do both, there is only so much time [...], so it is impossible for me to handle the things at my family."

The influence of *flexible working hours* on work-to-family conflict was endorsed by some of the participants. Some participants claimed that flexible working hours have decreased the incompatibility between work demands and family needs. P13 said, "because the work time of my job is quite flexible, it gives me more free time with my family." And P16 stated,

If I am not in this kind of occupation; if I am not a salesman, and my job requires me to work from 9 AM to 5 PM, nine-nine-six (9 AM to 9 PM, 6 working days per week), or my work time is fixed, I will have no control over dealing with the things that happened at home.

In contrast, some participants claimed that the inflexible working hours at work have increased their work-to-family conflict. For example, P4 stated,

If nothing is happening at home, then it is fine; but sometimes, when something happens at home, let's say I promised to have dinner with my family, then it will be a problem [between your work demand and family need]. Because you can't say no to work, so all you can do is break your promise.

And P12, who is a nurse and follows a shift work schedule, stated,

I mean, sometimes, my children's school would arrange things like parent-children activities, parent-teacher conferences, or sports meets; and I, as the parent, am required to attend. But because of my work shift, it is hard for me to change my shift and go to these events that I am supposed to attend.

It appeared that a *supportive work environment* could help to ease the negative experience at work, hence, decreasing work-to-family conflict. For example, P13, who entered the workplace one year ago, said,

The heads of my department, they really care about you, helped me a lot, [...] just like master's supervisor or PhD's supervisor, they are like the supervisors, guide you and teach you step by step [...] because of these bits of help, it made my work easier.

P10, who owns a restaurant, said,

I am so lucky that one of my employees treats the restaurant like is her own business, [...] she is like stand in my shoes to support me, she will do the most difficult things, and do the things that others are not willing to do, so she really helps me a lot at work.

In contrast, when people work in an unsupportive environment, the individuals would experience more work distress, ultimately leading to or increasing the level of work-to-family conflict. For example, P4, who was recently promoted at work, reported as follows:

My team leader said he would take care of me; I mean he promised to guide me, but he had his own work too. So, most of the time, he just gave tasks to me; I had to figure them out by myself; I

was always scared that I would mess it up because lots of the tasks were new to me, [...] so I felt anxious all the time.

**Theme 5: Emotional turmoil and strain.** This theme focuses on the psychological/emotional aspects that are related to work-family conflict. A sense of *work distress* was evident in all the participants. It appeared that work distress has led to the experience of work-family conflict. Work distress as a “physical exhaustion” is found in some of the participants. Sentences like “I am so tired at work.” “My work makes me so tired.” And “I don’t want to do anything when I go back home from work.” were often said by the participants. On the other hand, some participants described this work distress as the “emotion at work”. For example, P6 said, “I keep telling myself don’t bring back the emotion at work to my family. I mean, like the bad emotion at work, but I am just a human, so I couldn’t just let it stop.”

As a sub-theme of the emotional turmoil and strain, *display of anger* was endorsed by some of the participants. It appeared that some participants, especially the young, unmarried participants, would tend to lose their temper at home easily and vent on their elderly parents if they were overloaded at work or had ill-feeling at work. “I get angry for no reason [at home]” or “I will get mad easily [at home]” were mentioned by some participants.

The reason why the participants would vent on their elderly parents was evident in P4’s explanation; she reported as follow:

Actually, I think it is because we get used to venting on the people that are close to us. [...] I mean, you stored your [bad] emotions for all day long; so, when you get back home, it just comes out, you just can’t hide it anymore, so you vent [it on parents] by accident.”

A similar response was also provided by P11; he stated, “because you have to be nice, be gentle, and always smile when you are at work, right? So, when you are at home, you will show your real emotion.”

On the other hand, it appeared that the female participants who are married and have children tended to vent on their children when they were overloaded in both work and family domains. For example, in P12's statement, she said,

Sometimes I had a long day, very tired. Then when I got back home, I had to help with my children's homework, [...] sometimes I cursed, not cursed, I mean I yelled [at my children], [I would say:] 'how could you still not understand? I have taught you so many times!' with a tone of blame. [...] I became angry easily when they didn't know how to do their homework.

And P7, who has a 12-year-old son named N, said, "I became angry, I was mad, mad at N because I would think that he's all grown up; why he couldn't manage himself? I mean, why couldn't he manage his time by himself?"

Additionally, the feeling of being an incompetent family member and the inappropriate behaviours toward family members have caused some participants to have *guilty feeling*. It appeared that some participants would feel guilty when they could not fulfil their family responsibilities due to work demands. For example, P10, who is living with her big sister, daughter, and mother and works over 66 hours per week, stated,

My child is still young; I wish that I could have more time to be with her; everyone would want to spend more time with their kid; but I just couldn't do that [because of the work], [...] [although] I asked my big sister to help me [to take care of my child], but you have to understand, this responsibility, I couldn't just throw it all to my sister, right? After all, she is my baby girl!

And P15, whose parents are left-behind elderly, stated,

I feel guilty. I didn't fulfil the obligation of being their child. All I did was give them money [when I went back to see them], and it was not even a lot of money, so I feel a little bit guilty.

Some participants felt guilty after venting on their family members due to the impact of work-family conflict. For example, P11 mentioned that he feels guilty after he vents on his family members because of the stress at work; he said, "I actually feel very guilty [after I vent on my family members], but I couldn't control it." And a sense of guilt was also evident in P12's statement; when

the researcher asked her, “how do you feel about you venting on your children because you are tired at work?” she responded,

I thought about it afterwards, and then I realised I shouldn't act like that, [...] it's my fault, I should be gentler, no matter how tired I am, I should adjust my emotion before I help with their (children's) homework.

**Theme 6: Struggle to balance.** This theme focuses on the outcomes of work-family conflict. Most of the participants in this study claimed that work-family conflict had negative impacts on both their work domain and family lives. Work-family conflict is like a *vicious cycle* affecting participants' work and family domains. This was evident in P4's interview; she reported as follows:

There was a period of time when I had lots of tasks [at work]. I slept very late, I became moody, [...] it is like a vicious cycle, I was in a bad mood because of the stress at work, then because of my mood, I don't want to eat or do other things [at home], then because of that, I was in bad health, then I was sick.

A similar explanation was provided by P12; she stated, I [usually] get back home [from work] around 8 PM, [...] I only have a half-hour for my dinner, I feel like my time is very tight every day. [After my dinner] then I have to spend some time with my children and help with their homework. Normally children should go to bed before 10 PM, but my children won't go to bed until 11 PM, [...], so I couldn't go to bed until at least midnight, [...] if you don't have enough sleep, you don't have enough energy [at work].

Some participants claimed that they had to *denied opportunities* at work to fulfil their family needs. For example, P2, who is a small business owner and living with his girlfriend and parents, said, My girlfriend doesn't want to live at my home with my parents when I am not there. So, let's say I have a business trip; then I must go back home on the same day. I mean, the business trip must not take more than one day. [...] [can't go on a business trip that takes more than one day] is not just a little bit depressing; it's more like frustration and what a shame [I lost a potential business opportunity because I can't go on the business trip].



In P2's situation, he described the conflict between family needs and work domain have caused him to lose a potential business opportunity. This was similar to the response of P16, who is a salesman and had to stop working for a while due to his daughter's sickness; he said,

The clients will evaluate how you handle one thing from the beginning to the end to see if they can trust you. So, if you didn't do well because of something that happened [at home], [...] it will affect your relationship with the client, [...] If it is just one client, then it is fine; but in the long term, because people talk, it will become a butterfly effect, then your image will be bad in the business.

In addition, P8, who is a single mother with two children, claimed that the conflict between family needs and work domain has caused her to lose the development opportunity at work; she said,

After you left your work [because of family needs] for a while, your company would not treat you the same [when you come back]. I mean, during the period of your leave, lots of opportunities, they gave to other people.

Moreover, most of the participants in this study claimed that the work-family conflict has made them *become lazy*. It appeared that the overwhelming workload or the emotion at work/family affected the emotion and behaviours of the participant in another domain. For example, "Don't want to do housework" was often mentioned by the married male participants. P1 said, "when I came back home [after work], I am so tired, I don't want to do anything." P13 said, "because I am so tired at work, then I don't want to do housework at home; I mean, not always, but occasionally." And P15 said, "I mean, sometimes I worked very long, let's say I had a business trip with the boss, I had to drive a very long time, then I don't want to move anymore [when I came home from work]." In addition, P10, who is the main breadwinner of her family, said, "I will be affected by their (family members) emotions; [...] I would feel very depressed all day [if my family members told me they are in a bad mood], and it would affect my work performance."

Last, as a sub-theme of struggle to balance, the *Family atmosphere* was endorsed by some of the participants. It appeared that when one member of the family was experiencing work-family conflict, other family members' wellbeing would also be affected. It appeared that the negative impact of work-family conflict on the participants would also affect the emotion of other family members. For example, P4 stated, "they (elderly parents) are happy because I look happy, they knew I am unhappy at work, and finally I look happy again." P11 said, "no matter me, or my father, or my mother if something bad happened at work, grievance or unhappy, the whole family will be affected." And P14 said, "[work] affects my mood. When your mood is affected, it definitely would affect the family atmosphere, [the whole family] is like, unhappy."

#### 4.2. Discussion

The present study explored the work-family conflict phenomenon in China from the standpoint of Aycan's (2008) cross-cultural perspective. The findings were consistent with Aycan's (2008) cultural perspective; work-family conflict is a relatively subjective phenomenon, and that culture would influence work and family-related support and demand, thereby affecting the experience of work-family conflict (e.g., Spector, Sanchez, et al., 2004; Korabik, Lero, et al., 2008; Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Bruck et al., 2002).

The participants in this study described that work-family conflict is just a life experience or just a minor problem in life. This standpoint toward work-family conflict has led most of the participants to underrate the negative impact of both types of work-family conflict. However, this neglecting attitude towards work-family conflict did not simply mean that work-family conflict has no negative impact. The negative impacts of work-family conflict on work performance (e.g., Roth & David, 2009), career advancement (e.g., Armstrong et al., 2007), family involvement (e.g., household chores) (e.g., Cerrato & Cifre, 2018), family member's emotion (i.e., the crossover effect of work-family conflict, see Ohu et al., 2019), display anger at home (e.g., Bakker et al., 2008), and individuals' wellbeing (e.g., guilt) (e.g., Livingston & Judge, 2008) were reported by most of the participants.

Instead, such an attitude has limited participants' coping strategies with work-family conflict, resulting in most of the participants choosing to use avoidance coping strategy to cope with work-family conflict (e.g., P1 said, "[...] give it a couple of days, and everything will be fine again"). Subsequently, the negative effect of work-family conflict did not weaken. In addition to the avoidance coping strategy, some participants choose to use a help-seeking coping strategy, especially those with children. In this study, participants who have children often ask their elderly parents to take care of their children when they are at work. Having an extra hand (e.g., support from elderly parents) for childcare responsibilities could decrease the level of family-to-work conflict by reducing the time needed for childcare responsibility (e.g., Michel & Hargis, 2008; Cerrato & Cifre, 2018; Michel et al., 2011).

Based on the descriptions provided by the interviewees, several Chinese cultural values seemed to influence the experience of work-family conflict in China. China's strong emphasis on family collectivism, as exemplified by the profound importance placed on family ties and the responsibility to care for family members (Lu & Cooper, 2015), fosters a deep-seated family-centric ethos that significantly shapes the work values of the interviewees. Consequently, many interviewees held the belief that work serves as a means to enhance family wealth rather than solely as a pursuit of personal achievement.

Moreover, this strong sense of family also exerts influence over the decision-making processes of the participants. In situations where work-family conflict arises, most interviewees expressed a preference for relinquishing their jobs. These findings consistent with Gui and Koropecykj-Cox's study (2016), which posited that Chinese family values can potentially clash with societal development. Despite the ongoing progression of society, including factors like globalisation that offer expanded opportunities for employees, the family orientation collectivism force employees to focus on family responsibilities and obstructing the pursuit of greater personal achievements.

The orientation toward family collectivism also appeared to blend with other Chinese traditional values, contributing to the close and supportive relationships between parents and children, as well as between husbands and wives.

The supportive relationship between parent and child was mutual. On the positive side, a help-seeking coping strategy was observed among most of the interviewees, especially those with children. The interviewees mentioned that their elderly parents would assist with daily life and cover daily expenses. Furthermore, those with children often relied on their elderly parents to care for their children while they were at work. This support from elderly parents not only reduced the participants' time dedicated to family responsibilities but also lowered their cost of living and alleviated concerns about family life. Consequently, it decreased family distress and, thereby, minimized the risk of experiencing work-family conflict (e.g., Lu et al., 2006; Byron, 2005; Drenzo et al., 2011).

On the negative side, the value of filial piety has instilled a sense of obligation to support and care for elderly parents, which has placed significant stress on the interviewees. Participants frequently cited two factors contributing to the stress associated with fulfilling filial piety: the time required to provide care for their elderly parents and concerns about financial matters (financial worries). The time commitment needed to care for elderly parents can lead to an imbalanced allocation of time between family and work, consequently resulting in work-family conflict (e.g., Lu et al., 2006; Korabik et al., 2008).

Financial worries can be attributed to a sense of financial insecurity. In other words, filial piety has caused participants to be concerned about their financial capacity to handle unexpected expenses, such as medical bills for their elderly parents. Under this feeling of financial insecurity, individuals often feel compelled to prioritise their work domain in order to increase their income, thereby increasing the risk of experiencing work-to-family conflict (Ode-Dusseau et al., 2018).

The relationship with elderly parents appeared to influence the work/family factors related to work-family conflict, resulting in differences between the findings of this study and previous

Western research. This influence gave rise to unique situations that affected work-family conflict in this context.

Firstly, the support provided by elderly parents seemed to influence the relationship between the age of children and work-family conflict among the interviewees. Previous Western research suggested that younger children would require more care, leading to increased childrearing time and subsequently higher work-family conflict (Huffman et al., 2013). However, in this study, it appeared that as children grew older, parent participants reported experiencing more work-family conflict. This was attributed to the financial burden of education costs, the time required to assist with children's homework, and the distress felt when their children's school grades did not meet parental expectations.

Secondly, many Western studies on the relationship between income and work-family conflict have focused on how income affects available coping strategies for managing family-to-work conflict. For instance, individuals with higher incomes can hire nannies to care for their children, reducing the time required for family responsibilities and, consequently, mitigating time-related family-to-work conflict (Ciabattari, 2007). In contrast, rather than associating income solely with coping strategies, most interviewees in this study linked income levels to their family's future. They expressed concerns about their family's future and feared that if they could not increase their income, it would exacerbate their experience of work-family conflict.

In other words, income appeared to be associated with strain-based work-family conflict among the participants. This association may stem from the fact that elderly parents provided both daily and financial support to the interviewees. However, the concept of filial piety simultaneously created a sense of financial insecurity. This insecurity intensified family strain, leading to strain-based work-family conflict (e.g., Lawrence et al., 2013; McGinnity & Russell, 2013).

Thirdly, it appeared that the belief in filial piety exacerbated the experience of work-family conflict among interviewees who were the only child in their family. Many participants asserted that being the sole child in the family placed more pressure on them regarding their ability to care for

elderly parents in the future. Western concepts of 'family' typically emphasise the relationship between parents and underage children, which has led to a lack of Western studies investigating how being an only child affects the experience of work-family conflict. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, only one Chinese study (Su & Xing, 2014) has delved into the experience of being an only child, suggesting that it increases the risk of experiencing family overload. For instance, an only child may need to invest more time and energy into caregiving responsibilities, such as eldercare, due to the absence of sibling support, consequently amplifying work-family conflict.

Moving on, traditional Chinese thoughts have influenced the relationship between husband and wife; gender inequality in household chores and childcare responsibility is still distinct in current Chinese society. This traditional gender role has differentiated the level of work-family conflict between male and female participants. Male participants generally reported less work-family conflict, and female participants claimed that they experienced a greater work-family conflict due to their overwhelming family responsibilities. The finding of this gender difference in the experience of work-family conflict coincides with previous studies that argued females have a greater work-family conflict (e.g., Rehman & Roomi, 2012; El-Kassem, 2019).

Additionally, this gender inequality in family responsibilities seemed to mix with the strong sense of family, creating a one-sided supportive relationship between husband and wife (i.e., the wife has more family responsibilities and is more willing to take them on). This has the potential to enhance conflict with workplace culture (e.g., employees have to fully devote to work), resulting in the gender discrimination in the workplace, such as females have fewer hiring and promotion opportunities (Zhang et al., 2021). This might explain why P8, a single mother, would report that she felt that she had lost development opportunities due to family matters.

Last, other traditional Chinese values, such as the importance of honouring the family and achieving personal success to bring pride to the family (Xu et al., 2005), seem to contribute to the high parental expectations in China. These expectations often revolve around children's educational

performance, such as excelling in school, and result in increased demands on parenting and resources. Parent participants mentioned that they had to invest additional hours (e.g., assisting with homework) and financial resources (e.g., enrolling children in after-school classes) to enhance their children's academic achievements. This finding seemed to explain why interviewees experience greater work-family conflict as their children grow older.

#### 4.3. Conclusion

In conclusion, this study explored and provided insight into the work-family conflict phenomenon in contemporary Chinese society. The attitude towards work-family conflict (i.e., just a lived experience) and the strong sense of family responsibility (i.e., family come first) seem to affect the experience of work-family conflict and its coping strategy. In addition, the experience of work-family conflict also seems to be associated with family statuses (e.g., childrearing and eldercare responsibility), a friendly work environment (i.e., the degree of schedule flexibility and receiving supervisor and co-worker support), family support (i.e., spouse, sibling, and elder parents support), income level, gender (e.g., the gender difference in household chore), and work/family-related emotion (e.g., guilt), performance, and wellbeing.

## 5. Development and Validation of a Model of Work-Family Conflict in China

### 5.0. Introduction

The Western work-family findings and/or theoretical framework might be broadly applicable in different cultural settings; as found, for example in Shaffer et al. (2011) after reviewing 219 work-family studies conducted outside the U.S. Nevertheless, when examining work-family conflict relations under different cultural backgrounds, the difference in the culture and/or society between nations should be considered (e.g., Lu et al., 2006; Liu & Cheung, 2015; Shaffer et al., 2011). For example, Aryee (2005) found differences in the work-family conflict structure, process, and crossover effect due to influence of the cultural background.

Therefore, Shaffer et al. (2011) recommended that more non-Western samples are needed and advised that non-Western work-family research should be cautious in choosing variables to represent the source of work/family-related support and demand during work-family conflict investigation. Identifying and using the “culturally specific variables” (p. 250) might provide a better explanation for the work-family conflict experienced in different countries and improve our understanding of the process of work-family conflict. For example, the term ‘family’ in some Eastern countries might be more distensible than in Western countries, which in many studies only included the members of the nuclear family (i.e., parents and child) (Shaffer et al., 2011); in contrast to China, an Eastern country where the big family structure exists (e.g., three-generation living together) (Liu et al., 2008). Hence, not only spouse support but also elderly parents and/or sibling support might influence the experience of work-family conflict in China.

Unfortunately, Chinese work-family conflict studies rely deeply on the theories and/or models that are based on and developed by the West (Liu et al., 2008). Most Chinese work-family conflict studies only focused on the specific aspects of work-family conflict that have been identified/examined by researchers focusing on Western samples; for example, the relationships between work-family conflict and work stress (Lu et al., 2017), depression (Hao et al., 2015), and work hours (Lu et al., 2009), etc. Frone et al. (1992) argued that the process of work-family conflict



can only be fully understood by using an integrated work-family conflict model to examine the influence of the conflict on the work-family system.

Thus, after Study 1 identified factors associated with work-family conflict in China, the present study aims to build on the third-generation model (see Chapter Two) as a starting point. The current work extends and adapts this third-generation model, addressing its limitations, to develop a new integrated work-family conflict model that is applicable in the Chinese context. The third-generation model was revised in three directions. First, based on the concept of work-family conflict, the behaviour-based antecedent of work-family conflict was considered. Second, the effect of work-family conflict on individuals' life satisfaction was examined. Last, the qualitative findings from Study 1 were considered as the culturally specific variables and used in the present study, to further investigate Study 1's findings and make this model more appropriate in testing the work-family conflict in China. More details were discussed in the next section.

### **5.1. Variable Consideration of the Proposed Model**

In this section, both the direct and indirect predictors of work-family conflict were first discussed, followed by the consequences of work-family conflict and the path relations that did not involve work-family conflict, such as the direct relationship between work support and life satisfaction (see Figure 5.1).

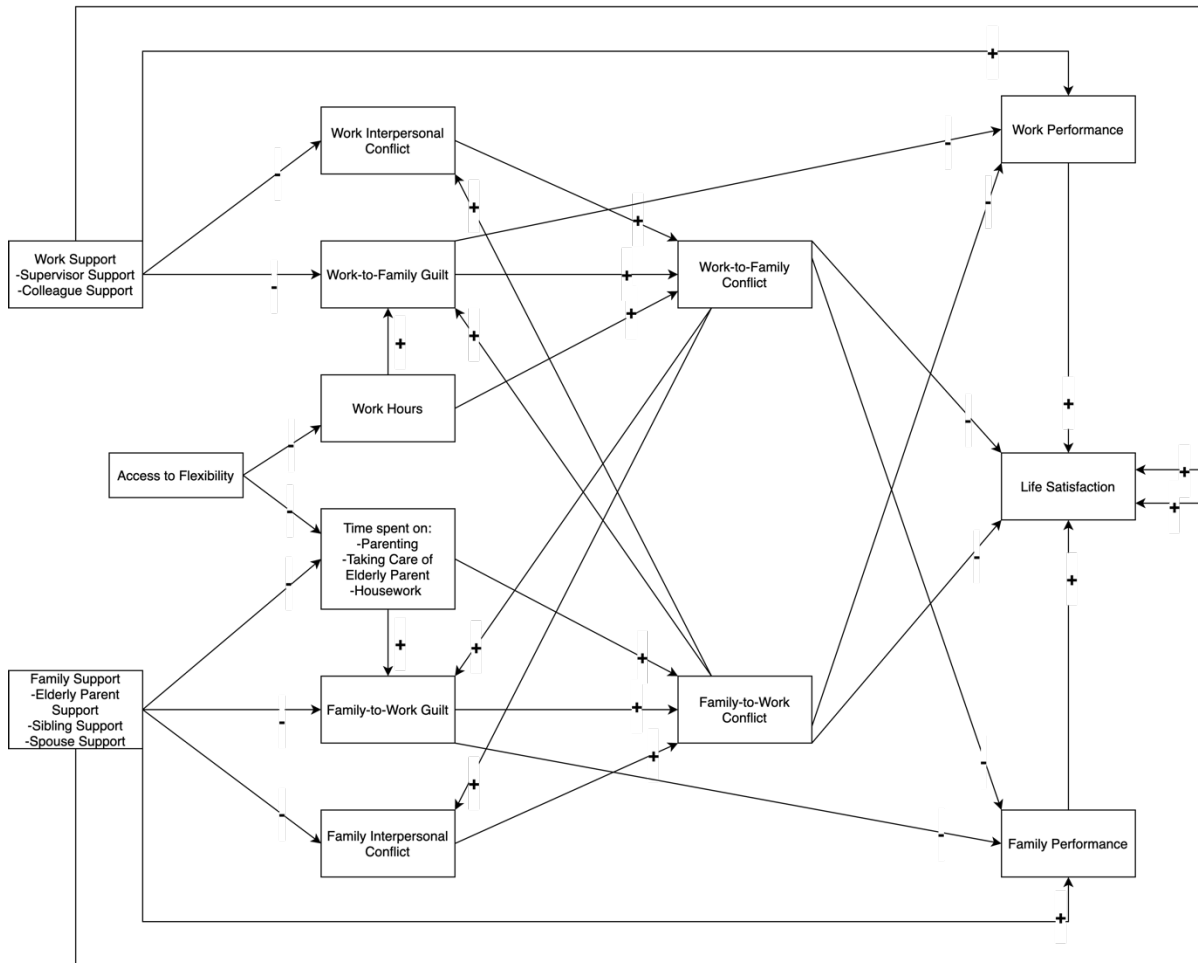


Figure 5.1 *The Proposed Model of Present Study.*

### 5.1.1. Predictors of Work-Family Conflict

In general, the proposed model was based on Greenhaus and Beutell's (1985) definition of work-family conflict to distinguish the direct predictors of work-family conflict into time-, strain-, and behaviour-based antecedents, and with the consideration of the reciprocal and bidirectional nature of the work-family conflict. In addition, similar to the third-generation model, the work and family environments (i.e., social support and access to flexibility) were considered as the indirect predictors of work-family conflict. The direct predictors of work-family conflict were first discussed and followed by their indirect predictors in this section.

#### 5.1.1.1. Direct Predictors of Work-Family Conflict

The time-based antecedent will be represented by the in-role time commitment. This time-conflict relationship has been well-studied: time as a limited personal resource might run out when spending too much in one role, thereby affecting the time available for the other roles; such

imbalance of time allocation between work and family roles thus results in work-family conflict (e.g., Skinner & Pocock, 2008; Frone et al., 1997; Michel et al., 2011).

Hence, in line with the third-generation model, the first direct predictor of work-to-family conflict will be work hours. Unlike the third-generation model, which only used the time spent on parenting as the variable of family-related time commitment, the proposed model uses the total time spent on childcare, eldercare, and housework responsibilities to represent the family-related time commitment. This is based on the findings from Study 1 (Theme 2 and Theme 3) and previous studies (e.g., Barrah et al., 2004; Cerrato & Cifre, 2018; Lu et al., 2011). For example, due to the influence of *filial piety*, Chinese adults are unlikely to use formal elder caregiving services, because it is seen as shirking their own responsibility (Lai, 2010); hence, time spent on eldercare is considered one culturally specific variable. In addition, Cerrato and Cifre (2018) argued that domestic chores could be one of the most time-consuming family responsibilities that could result in family-to-work conflict; thus, time spent on housework responsibilities is also considered. The increased time needed for eldercare and housework chores might deplete the available time for the work domain, thus increasing the risk of experiencing family-to-work conflict (e.g., Lu et al., 2011; Lai, 2010).

Moreover, the proposed model chooses to use work-family guilt as the strain-based antecedent of work-family conflict. This is based on Theme 5 in Study 1, which found that work-family conflict is associated with emotional distress – guilt. Furthermore, individuals from collectivistic Asian culture (i.e., China) were found to have a generally higher level of work-family guilt relative to individuals from English-speaking countries (Korabit et al., 2017).

Work-family guilt can be defined as the sense of guilt that arises from the belief that involvement in one domain is affecting participation in the other domain, such as the guilty feeling generated from missing the child's birthday due to work demands (work-to-family guilt), or feeling guilty about showing up at work late due to providing care for sick family members (family-to-work guilt) (e.g., Livingston & Judge, 2008; Korabik, 2015). Based on this definition, previous studies (e.g., Speights et al., 2020; Judge et al., 2006) generally focused on the conflict-guilt relationship, in which

work-family guilt is the emotional response to work-family conflict (e.g., work-to-family conflict creates work-to-family guilt, and family-to-work conflict is related to family-to-work guilt).

Nevertheless, given guilt is emotional distress (Baumeister et al., 1994) and distress is categorised as the strain-based antecedent of work-family conflict (e.g., Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Lu & Cooper et al., 2015). This study used work-to-family and family-to-work guilt as the strain-based antecedents of work-to-family and family-to-work conflict, respectively.

Last, differing from the third-generation model, the third type of direct predictor of work-family conflict in this proposed model is work/family-related interpersonal conflict (behaviour-based antecedent). This is based on the argument from Dierdorff and Ellington's (2008) study. Dierdorff and Ellington (2008) based on the spillover theory and argued that "the work behaviors associated with interpersonal conflict may clash with behaviors requisite to family roles" (p. 885). This is believed due to the negative spillover mechanisms in the work-family interface, the involvement in one domain might negatively impact the participation in the other domain, and that such spillover can vary in different forms, including emotions, beliefs, strain, skills, attitudes, and behaviour patterns (e.g., Geurts & Demerouti, 2002; Kinnunen et al., 2006). For example, the work-related behaviours that are related to interpersonal conflict (e.g., dispute with a co-worker because of a project) might be brought back into the family role (i.e., spillover) by the employee in which such behaviours are not expected by or are inappropriate to the family members (e.g., dispute with family members about what should eat for dinner); consequently, leading to the experience of work-to-family conflict. Hence, work and family-related interpersonal conflict will be the behaviour-based antecedents of work-to-family and family-to-work conflict, respectively.

#### *5.1.1.2. Indirect Predictors of Work-Family Conflict*

The proposed model has three different types of indirect predictors of work-family conflict. First, because of the bidirectional and reciprocal nature of work-family conflict, work-to-family conflict and family-to-work conflict indirectly predict each other via different mechanisms in the work-family interface. This is based on Frone et al.'s (1997) analysis, which demonstrated that the

reciprocal nature between work-to-family conflict and family-to-work conflict was not straightforward. For example, when work-induced distress (e.g., emotional distress – guilt, work-to-family guilt) and conflict (e.g., work interpersonal conflict) creates work-to-family conflict, individuals might use their limited personal resources to manage such stressful feeling and situations, thereby depleting the resources for managing family-induced distress (e.g., family-to-work guilt) and conflict experience (e.g., family interpersonal conflict) and consequently exacerbating or increasing the risk of experiencing family-induced distress and conflict, which thus creates family-to-work conflict (e.g., Frone et al., 1992; Korabik et al., 2008).

Moreover, the second type of indirect predictor of work-family conflict is its time-based antecedent. According to Greenhaus and Beutell (1985), the time-based antecedent of work-family conflict has both direct and indirect effects on work-family conflict due to its negative impact on the strain-based antecedent of work-family conflict. For example, working overtime not only directly leads to work-to-family conflict due to the imbalance of time allocation between work and family domains, but also creates emotional distress (work-to-family guilt – a form of the strain-based antecedent of work-family conflict), consequently indirectly creating work-to-family conflict. For instance, both Matthews et al. (2012) and Weston et al. (2019) found that the amount of time spent in one domain was associated with the within-domain distress level, thereby causing conflict experience (e.g., work distress mediates the relationship between work hours and work-to-family conflict).

The last type of indirect predictor can be categorised as work/family environment, including the support from work and family domains, respectively, and the access to flexibility according to the findings from Study 1 (Theme 2 and 4). The effect of work/family support and access to flexibility on work-family conflict has been well-studied. Bickford (2005) argued that social support is related to an individual's health and wellbeing; such support can help the individual feel safe during stressful situations. In other words, social support can decrease the negative effect of a stressful situation, such as decreasing the level of work-family conflict resulting from the experience of interpersonal

conflict. Moreover, access to flexibility has been found helpful in reducing time-based work-family conflict and its negative impact on employees. For example, flexitime at work can help employees have more quality time with family members, more time control, and less time pressure, consequently decreasing the work-family conflict (Kim, 2020). In addition, Lai et al. (2020) argued that despite access to flexibility being categorised as a feature of a supportive work environment (in the form of a family-friendly policy), its effect on work-family conflict will be weakened when other supports are available, especially in collectivist countries (i.e., China), where the level of family support tends to be higher than the individualist countries (Lai et al., 2020).

Thus, in the proposed model: first, access to flexibility is related to both work-to-family and family-to-work conflict via the time-based antecedents, respectively; second, work support is related to work-to-family conflict via the work-related behaviour- and strain-based antecedents (i.e., work interpersonal conflict and work-to-family guilt); and third, family support is related to all three forms of antecedents of family-to-work conflict. One thing needed to note is that because the participants in Study 1 generally claimed that sibling and elderly parent support might play important roles in helping them manage the experience of work-family conflict. Hence, family support will be represented by the sibling, elderly parent, and spouse support in the proposed model, which differs from the third-generation model (spouse support only).

## 5.1.2. Consequences of Work-Family Conflict

### 5.1.2.1. *Work-Family Guilt (Emotional Distress)*

The first type of consequence of work-family conflict is work-family guilt. Previous conflict-guilt studies only focused on the within-domain conflict-guilt relationship (Korabik, 2015). Recall the example above, in which managing distress in one domain can deplete the limited personal resources, thereby increasing the risk of having distressing feelings in the other domain. Thus, the conflict-guilt relationship might be domain-specific (e.g., work-to-family conflict related to family-to-work guilt) when considering work-family guilt as variables in an integrated work-family conflict model. For example, work-to-family guilt, as work-induced emotional distress, creates work-to-family conflict and depletes individuals' personal resources to regulate family-induced negative

emotion, thereby increasing the risk of feeling family-to-work guilt. In addition, this is also evident in Study 1's Theme 5; several participants claimed that they could not stop the negative emotion transmitted from work to the family domain. Thus, work-to-family conflict is the predictor of family-related strain (i.e., family-to-work guilt), whereas family-to-work conflict is the predictor of work-related strain (i.e., work-to-family guilt).

#### 5.1.2.2. *Work/Family Performance*

The second type of consequence of work-family conflict is work/family performance. The predictive relationship between work-family conflict and work/family performance has been well studied (e.g., Roth & David, 2009; Yusuf & Hasnidar, 2020; Chen et al., 2014). Energy, as a limited personal resource, might run out when spending too much in one domain; for example, working long hours might burnout the employee, consequently affecting his/her family performance, such as unwillingness to do household chores (Devreux, 2007), less parent-child interaction (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006) and/or parental activities (Gorman & Kmec, 2007). Thus, it is expected that work-to-family conflict is negatively predicting family performance, whereas family-to-work conflict is negatively predicting work performance.

In addition, previous studies found that the feeling of emotional distress would emotionally exhaust the individuals, thereby affecting their performance, such as lowering task performance (Ogunfowora et al., 2022) and job performance (Spagnoli & Molinaro, 2020), and having a higher risk of burning out (Chang, 2009). In the case of our study, it is possible that, for example, the experience of work-to-family conflict may create family-to-work guilt due to the resource-depletion mechanism in the work-family interface; the feeling of family-to-work guilt in turn influences family performance due to emotional exhaustion. Thus, for the reason above, work-to-family conflict is indirectly predicting family performance via family-to-work guilt, whereas family-to-work conflict is indirectly predicting work performance via work-to-family guilt.

#### 5.1.2.3. *Life Satisfaction*

The last type of consequence of work-family conflict is life satisfaction. This is because a study by Yuan et al. (2022) emphasised the necessity of investigating the influence of work-family

conflict on life satisfaction. Most of the Chinese work-family conflict studies have used depressive symptoms and/or burnout as proxies for measuring well-being outcomes. Therefore, how work-family conflict influences life satisfaction in China remains unclear. In contrast, the direct predictive relation between work-family conflict and life satisfaction has been well-studied in the West, indicating that work-family conflict is a stressor that would impact life satisfaction (e.g., Naami & Mahmoodikia, 2019; Aryee et al., 1999).

The present study proposed that work-family conflict is directly related to life satisfaction and indirectly related to life satisfaction via domain-specific performance. Previous studies have continuously proved the direct predictive relation between work-family conflict and life satisfaction (e.g., Naami & Mahmoodikia, 2019; Aryee et al., 1999). Moreover, work-family conflict is negatively related to both life satisfaction (e.g., Adams et al., 1996) and domain-specific performance (e.g., Ahmad, 2008; Chen et al., 2014; Prajogo, 2016), respectively; and Gregory (1983) suggested that

Occupational behavior can prevent the loss of habits and skills once maintained during the worker role, can help nurture a productive role, and can create a positive self-image – all factors leading to greater satisfaction with daily living. (p. 551)

Hence, there may be a mediating relationship between work-family conflict and life satisfaction via domain-specific performance. For example, when family-to-work conflict affects an employee's work performance, the employee might become susceptible to a negative self-image (e.g., 'I am a bad worker'), leading to poorer life satisfaction.

### 5.1.3. Supports, Performance, and Life Satisfaction

Despite the fact that the direct effects from social support to work/family performance and to life satisfaction in the proposed model involves neither work-to-family conflict nor family-to-work conflict; to develop an integrative work-family conflict model, these relations should be included. This is because the effect of social support on role performance and on life satisfaction has been consistently supported by previous studies. Support is one resource that can positively influence role performance by minimising the negative impact of the stressor and promoting the in-role



commitment (e.g., Shanock & Eisenberger, 2006; Chen et al., 2020); in addition, social support can decrease the stress level of the individual and consequently increase the perception of life satisfaction (e.g., Wan et al., 1996; Lu, Wang, et al., 2021). Hence, it is expected that social support is positively related to both performance and life satisfaction.

## 5.2. Hypotheses of the Present Study

Consistent with the role theory – work-family conflict (one type of inter-role conflict) occurs when the work demands and family responsibilities are incompatible, and there are three forms of work-family conflict named time-based, strain-based, and behaviour-based conflict in which each form of work-family conflict has its unique antecedent (e.g., Greenhaus & ten Brummelhuis, 2013; Frone et al., 1997). This study hypothesised that:

*H1: Work-related antecedents predict work-to-family conflict in which work hours (H1a), work-to-family guilt (H1b), and work interpersonal conflict (H1c) all positively predict work-to-family conflict.*

*H2: Family-related antecedents predict family-to-work conflict in which time used on parenting, taking care of elderly parents, and housework (H2a), family-to-work guilt (H2b), and family interpersonal conflict (H2c) all positively predict family-to-work conflict.*

Moreover, based on the work-family role pressure incompatibility framework (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985), time used in one demand might indirectly affect work-family conflict via domain-specific strain (e.g., work overtime might increase work distress which in turn increases the level of work-to-family conflict). Thus, this study hypothesised that:

*H3: Guilt mediates the relationships between time and work-family conflicts in which work hours have a positive indirect effect on work-to-family conflict via increased work-to-family guilt (H3a), whereas total time used on the family has a positive indirect effect on family-to-work conflict via increased family-to-work guilt (H3b).*

In addition, based on the bidirectional and reciprocal nature of the work-family conflict (Frone et al., 1997), this study hypothesised that:

*H4: There are positive indirect bidirectional relationships between work-to-family conflict and family-to-work conflict in which work-to-family conflict has a positive indirect effect on family-to-work conflict via increased family interpersonal conflict (H4a) and family-to-work guilt (H4b), whereas family-to-work conflict has a positive indirect effect on work-to-family conflict via increased work interpersonal conflict (H4c) and work-to-family guilt (H4d).*

Moreover, in line with the third-generation model, which found that work/family environment (e.g., support) has an indirect effect on work-family conflict via the unique antecedents of work-family conflict (Frone et al., 1997), the present study hypothesised that:

*H5: Domain-specific supports have a negative indirect effect on work-family conflict in which work support has a negative indirect effect on work-to-family conflict via decreased work interpersonal conflict (H5a) and work-to-family guilt (H5b), whereas family support has a negative indirect effect on family-to-work conflict via decreased family interpersonal conflict (H5c), family-to-work guilt (H5d), and total time used on family (H5e).*

*H6: Access to flexibility influences the level of work-family conflict by decreasing the negative impact of time-based antecedent on work-family conflict, in which work schedule flexibility has a negative indirect effect on work-family conflict via decreased work hours (H6a) and a negative indirect effect on family-to-work conflict via decreased total time used on family (H6b).*

Furthermore, based on previous findings regarding the negative impact of work-family conflict (e.g., El-Kassem, 2019; Netemeyer et al., 1996; Ohu et al., 2019), this study hypothesised that:

*H7: Work-family conflict has a negative impact on domain-specific distress in which work-to-family is a direct and negative predictor of family-to-work guilt (H7a), whereas family-to-work conflict is a direct and negative predictor of work-to-family guilt (H7b).*

*H8: Work-family conflict has a negative impact on domain-specific performance in which work-to-family conflict is negatively related to family performance (H8a), whereas family-to-work conflict is negatively related to work performance (H8b).*

*H9: Work-to-family conflict has a negative indirect effect on family performance via increased family-to-work guilt (H9a), whereas family-to-work conflict has a negative indirect effect on work performance via increased work-to-family guilt (H9b).*

*H10: Both work-to-family conflict and family-to-work conflict are direct and negative predictors of life satisfaction.*

*H11: Work-to-family conflict has a negative indirect effect on life satisfaction via decreased family performance (H11a), whereas family-to-work conflict has a negative indirect effect on life satisfaction via decreased work performance (H11b).*

Last, for the path relations that did not involve work-family conflicts in the proposed model, the present study hypothesised that:

*H12: Both work and family supports are positive predictors of life satisfaction.*

*H13: Both work and family supports are the positive predictors of domain-specific performance in which work support is positively predicting work performance (H13a), whereas family support is positively predicting family performance (H13b).*

### 5.3. Methodology

#### 5.3.1. Participants

All the participants in this study met the following recruitment requirements: a) over 18 years old; b) Chinese nationality, grew up and living in China; c) have any type of paid work (including self-employ, freelancing, etc.); d) have a family (spouse, partner, children, relatives, or/have parents). In addition, a total of 696 Chinese employees participated in this study voluntarily. After data trimming, a total of 520 samples (male = 268, female = 252) were used; participants who provided any unrealistic answer (e.g., spent 25 hours taking care of children per day) and some missing data (more details see the missing data section below) were deleted.

The age of the 520 participants ranges from 18 to 59 years old ( $M = 33.74$ ,  $SD = 8.89$ ); on average, they worked 45.17 ( $SD = 11.10$ ) hours per week, spent 37.59 ( $SD = 39.34$ ) minutes on housework per day, and spent 1.17 ( $SD = 6.20$ ) hours on providing care for elderly parents per day. A total of 83 participants were not in a relationship, seventy-nine participants were in a relationship,

and 358 were married; a total of 324 participants had at least one child ( $M = 1.79$ ,  $SD = 0.73$ ). Among the parent participants, an average of 2.05 ( $SD = 2.40$ ) hours per day were spent on childcare responsibilities per day. The average number of siblings the participants in this study had was 2.12 ( $SD = 1.11$ ).

In terms of work-related information, the job level for non-management was 42.9 per cent, for management (e.g., manager, team leader) was 42.5 per cent, for the business owner was 7.3 per cent, and for self-employ/freelancer was 7.3 per cent. The percentage of participants who had supervisors or bosses was 93.7 per cent, and 98.7 per cent of participants reported they had at least one co-worker. The modal income per month (RMB) bracket was in the 5,000 to 10,000 range (40.6%), with the second frequent bracket in the 10,000 to 25,000 range (36%), and the third in the 25,000 to 50,000 range (10.4%).

### 5.3.2. Procedure

An online questionnaire (see Appendix H) via Wenjuanxing, a popular and professional online questionnaire survey tool in China, is used to collect the data. A snowball sampling technique was used to recruit the Chinese participants for this study. After receiving the ethics approval from the De Montfort University Health and Life Science Faculty Research Ethics Committee, the researcher posted and shared the recruitment letter (see Appendix G) with the link to the online questionnaire on WeChat, Weibo, and QQ, which are all the mainstream social media platforms in China. People who met the recruitment requirements and were interested in participating were asked to click the link of the online questionnaire shown on the recruitment letter.

Because of the anonymity of the online questionnaire, no consent form was needed; however, one question regarding the willingness to participate was asked at the beginning of the questionnaire, and participants must choose “yes” to continue the questionnaire. Moreover, participants consent to participate in the present study by submitting the completed questionnaire. The participant information sheet (see Appendix F) was provided once the participant clicked on the link to the online questionnaire. Participants started the online questionnaire by clicking on the

'next' button under the participant information sheet. Debrief letter (see Appendix I) was provided once the participants submitted the questionnaire.

### 5.3.3. Measures

All materials used in the present study have been translated into Chinese by the researcher and back-translated by professional translators who speak both languages fluently.

**Work-family conflict.** Work-family conflict was measured using the scale developed by Matthews et al. (2010). The scale includes 6 items, of which 3 items are used to measure work-to-family conflict (e.g., "I have to miss family activities due to the amount of time I must spend on work responsibilities"), and the rest of the 3 items are used to measure family-to-work conflict (e.g., "because I am often stressed from family responsibilities, I have a hard time concentrating on my work"). This 5-point Likert scale ranges from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree); a higher score indicates a greater level of work-family conflict. Internal Consistency Reliability (Cronbach's Alpha)  $\alpha$  was .75 for the work-to-family conflict scale and .67 for the family-to-work conflict scale.

**Work support.** This category was represented by supervisor support and colleague support. Perceived supervisor support was measured using the scale developed by Rhoades and Eisenberger (2001); this 5-point Likert scale has a total of 4 items (e.g., "my supervisor cares about my opinions", "my supervisor strongly considers my goals and values") ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), item 4 was reverse-coded. A higher score indicates greater perceived supervisor support. The Cronbach's  $\alpha$  for this scale was .88. Perceived co-worker support was measured using the scale developed by Haynes et al. (1999); this 5-point Likert scale range from 1 (not at all) to 5 (completely); a higher score indicates greater perceived co-worker support. Sample items are: "to what extent can you count on your colleagues to listen to you when you need to talk about problems at work?" or "to what extent can you count on your colleagues to help you with a difficult task at work?". The Cronbach's  $\alpha$  for this scale was .79.

**Access to flexibility.** Access to flexibility was measured by asking the participants two questions focusing on flexible time ('flexitime') and flexible working place ('flexplace') (adopted from

Lai et al., 2020). The question for access to flextime was: “Do you have access to flexible work schedules, such as changes in starting and quitting times or choices about shifts?” The question for flexplace was: “Do you have access to flexible places, such as being able to work from home or at a different worksite in the organisation?” The answer was dummy coded, with ‘Yes’ coded 1 and ‘NO’ coded 0. A higher score indicates greater work flexibility. The Cronbach’s  $\alpha$  for this scale was .66.

**Family supports.** The variables under this category were spouse/partner support, elderly parents’ support, and sibling support. The measure of spouse/partner support was adopted from Choi and Ha (2011); participants answered 4 items ranging from 1 (hardly ever) to 3 (often), and items 3 and 4 were reverse-coded. Sample items are “how often can you open up to spouse/partner if you need to talk about your worries?” and “how often can you rely on him/her for help if you have a problem?”. The Cronbach’s  $\alpha$  for this scale was .92. Elderly parents and sibling support were measured by a three items scale (adopted from Guan & Fuligni, 2015); participants answered questions regarding the received support (i.e., “how much do you turn to these people for support with personal problems?”, “how much do you depend on these people for help, advice, and sympathy?” and “when you are feeling down or upset, how much do you depend on these people to cheer things up?”) from two sources (i.e., elderly parents and siblings). This 5-point Likert scale ranged from 1 (almost never) to 5 (almost always); a higher score indicates the participant received more support from his/her elderly parents or sibling. The Cronbach’s  $\alpha$  for the scale of sibling support was .97 and .89 for the elderly parent support scale.

**Work behaviour-based antecedent.** This class of variable was work-related interpersonal conflict, which was measured with three items adopted from Dierdorff and Ellington (2008). The 5-point frequency scale ranged from 1 (never) to 5 (everyday); a higher score indicates a greater work-related interpersonal conflict. A sample item is “how often are conflict situations a part of your current job?”. The Cronbach’s  $\alpha$  for this scale was .67.

**Family behaviour-based antecedent.** This class of variable was family-related interpersonal conflict, which was measured using the subscale of the family environment scale—Chinese version

(Phillips et al., 1993). This yes/no subscale has a total of 9 items. Sample items are “family members rarely get angry with each other publicly”, “often quarrel at home”, and “family members often blame and criticise each other”. The answer was dummy coded, with ‘YES’ coded 1, and ‘NO’ coded 2. The score was calculated following the calculation formula (i.e.,  $(I_{13-1})+(I_{33-1})+(I_{63-1})-[(I_{3-2})+(I_{23-2})+(I_{43-2})+(I_{53-1})+(I_{73-2})+(I_{81-2})]$ , where  $I_{\text{number}}$  is the item number), the higher the score indicates the greater the interpersonal conflict at home. Items  $I_{3}$ ,  $I_{23}$ ,  $I_{43}$ ,  $I_{53}$ ,  $I_{73}$ , and  $I_{81}$  were reverse-coded. The Cronbach’s  $\alpha$  for this scale was .75.

**Work time-based antecedent.** This class of variable was represented by work hours. Participants were asked to write down their average work hours per week.

**Family time-based antecedent.** This class of variable was represented by the total time spent on parenting, taking care of elderly parents, and housework. Participants were asked to write down their average time spent on childcare, elderly parents, and doing housework chores, respectively.

**Work strain-based antecedent.** This class of variable was represented by work-to-family guilt. Five items from the Work-Family Guilt Scale (Morgan & King, 2012) were used to measure the level of work-to-family guilt. This 5-point Likert scale ranges from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree); a higher score indicates greater work-to-family guilt. Sample items are “I feel guilty when the things I want to do at home do not get done because of the demands my job puts on me” and “I feel guilty when my job produces strain that makes it difficult to fulfil family duties”. The Cronbach’s  $\alpha$  for this scale was .90.

**Family strain-based antecedent.** This class of variable was represented by family-to-work guilt. Five items from the Work-Family Guilt Scale (Morgan & King, 2012) were used to measure the level of family-to-work guilt. This 5-point Likert scale ranges from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree); a higher score indicates greater family-to-work guilt. Sample items are “I feel guilty when the demands of my family or spouse/partner interfere with work-related activities” and “I feel guilty

when I have to put off doing things at work because of demands on my time at home". The Cronbach's  $\alpha$  for this scale was .90.

**Work performance.** Work performance was measured with the Self-Assessment Scale of Job Performance (Andrade et al., 2020). A total of 10 items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (always); a higher score indicates a greater self-assessed job performance. Sample items are "I perform hard tasks properly", "I take initiatives to improve my results at work", and "I work hard to do the tasks designated to me". The Cronbach's  $\alpha$  for this scale was .86.

**Family performance.** Family performance was measured with the Family Role Performance Scale (Chen et al., 2014). A total of 8 items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (do not fulfil expectation at all) to 5 (fulfil expectation completely); a higher score indicates a greater family role performance. Sample items are, to what extent do you think you fulfil what is expected of you in relation to the following aspects of your current family life – "do household chores", "complete household responsibilities", and "provide emotional support to your family members". The Cronbach's  $\alpha$  for this scale was .85.

**Life satisfaction.** Life satisfaction was used to represent overall wellbeing. The Satisfaction with Life Scale (Diener et al., 1985) measured the level of life satisfaction. This 7-point Likert scale has a total of 5 items ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 7 (strongly disagree); a higher score indicates greater life satisfaction. A Sample item is "so far, I have gotten the important things I want in life". The Cronbach's  $\alpha$  for this scale was .89.

#### 5.3.4. Path Analysis

The model in the present study was tested using Lavaan, an R package that was developed specifically for handling structural equation modelling (SEM) in R (Rosseel, 2012). Because of the difference between the time measurement unit (e.g., time used on childcare is per hour per day whereas time used on housework is per minute per day), and the types of sub-questionnaire (e.g., the measure of life satisfaction is a 7-Likert scale, whereas access to flexibility is measured by a yes-no questionnaire), thus, z-score of each scale was calculated using SPSS and being used for SEM in



Lavaan. The details of potential issues regarding the estimation and evaluation of the proposed model are discussed below.

**Identification:** Before estimating a structural equation model, the model needs to be identified (Byrne, 2016). This study used the z-score during SEM analysis, so each measurement construct is a single-item; for example, the z-score of work-to-family conflict was calculated and used as a single indicator (item) to represent the work-to-family conflict construct instead of the three items from the work-family conflict scale (Frone et al., 1997). In addition, previous studies suggested that the error of the variables with a reciprocal relationship in one model should be correlated because such variables might share the same causes that are not being modelled (e.g., Frone et al., 1992; Aryee et al., 1999). Therefore, due to the reciprocal nature of work-family conflict, the error of work-to-family conflict and family-to-work conflict is correlated. The results from Lavaan revealed that the proposed model is identified.

**Measurement error:** Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was used to evaluate the measurement construct. The results from Lavaan revealed that the measurement model was a good fit for the data. In addition, because each multi-item measure was calculated and used as a single indicator of the corresponding latent construct, no measurement error was adjusted (Frone et al., 1997).

**Model evaluation:** It is recommended that at least two different fit indices should be used for the purpose of model evaluation (Byrne, 2016). This study used the comparative fit index (CFI), chi-square divided by the degrees of freedom ratio ( $\chi^2/df$ ), root mean square error of approximation (RESEA), and the standardised root mean square residual (SRMR) to evaluate the model fit. For CFI, a value greater than .90 is considered a well-fitting model; for the  $\chi^2/df$ , a ratio that is between 1 and 5 indicates a good-fitting model; for the RESEA, a value less than .05 indicates a good-fitting model, between .05 and .08 indicates reasonable fit, between .08 and .10 indicates mediocre fit, and greater than .10 indicates poor fit; for SRMR, a value less than .08 indicates a good fit (Byrne, 2016). In addition, the path coefficients and the significance levels will be reported.

**Missing data:** The skip logic feature was used while completing the questionnaire. One question regarding “do you have a supervisor/co-worker/sibling/spouse/partner?” was asked before answering the corresponding support-related sub-questionnaire respectively. Participants who chose “NO” automatically skipped the following support-related sub-questionnaire. Therefore, there were two types of missing data in the raw data file, coded “-2” and “-3” by Wenjuanxing. All the “-2” missing data have been deleted because it means the participant chose not to answer certain questions. The “-3” missing data was the result of the skip logic feature. Hence, all “-3” missing data were coded into “0” (e.g., participants who have no sibling score 0 regarding sibling support).

#### 5.3.5. Results

The mean and standard deviations of the variables are presented in Table 5.1. A confirmatory measurement model of 15 constructs and 71 items (excluding the construct of work/family time-related antecedent of work-family conflict) was tested using Lavaan. The results of the CFA model fitting index (CFA = .90;  $\chi^2/df = 2.0$ ; RMSEA = .04; SRMR = .05) indicated that the measurement model was a good fit (see Table 5.2). Moreover, all factor loadings were significant at  $p < .001$  and ranging from .26 to .96. Given that the measurement model was a good fit and that all factor loadings were significant, no factors needed to be removed (Brown & Moore, 2012).

Table 5.1 Mean and Standard Deviations of the Variables

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
1. WIF	9.41	2.69	-																
2. FIW	7.81	2.40	.464*	-															
3. FIC	2.67	2.21	.110*	.041	-														
4. WIC	6.09	2.31	.283*	.357*	.150*	-													
5. WH	45.17	11.09	.247*	.053	.001	.118*	-												
6. FH	3.84	7.06	-.064	.079	-.050	.047	-.094*	-											
7. WIFG	16.01	4.62	.351*	.208*	.131*	.109*	.125*	-.070	-										
8. FIWG	13.76	4.47	.220*	.272*	.131*	.112*	.136*	-.041	.574*	-									
9. SUS	13.00	4.09	-.049	-.119*	-.100*	-.039	-.068	-.027	-.004	-.010	-								
10. CS	12.78	3.39	.013	-.007	-.163*	.112*	-.066	.006	-.058	-.014	.218*	-							
11. SPS	7.60	3.61	-.108*	-.111*	-.286*	-.063	.006	.134*	-.050	-.069	.069	.130*	-						
12. SIS	4.91	4.76	-.042	.044	-.006	.108*	-.003	.161*	-.036	.024	.050	.104*	.087*	-					
13. PS	7.44	3.3	.027	.122*	-.099*	.230*	-.096*	.074	.002	.036	.100*	.208*	.086*	.268*	-				
14. WSF	2.74	.83	-.154*	.021	-.032	.013	-.094*	-.006	-.102	-.010	-.160*	.059	.014	.055	.027	-			
15. WP	39.44	5.04	-.074	-.203*	-.123*	-.149*	.003	-.036	-.014	-.089	.128*	.069	.153*	-.045	.027	.053	-		

16.	29.3	5.76	-.183*	-.044	-.291*	-.034	-.129*	.144*	-.093	-.107	.111*	.128*	.298*	.143*	-.231*	.095*	.245*	-
FP	8		*		*		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	
17.	19.6	6.34	.240*	.116*	.328*	.131*	.131*	-.033	.118*	.092	-.079	-.105	-.241*	-.136*	-.171*	-.203*	.162*	-.265*
LS	4		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*

Note. WIF = work-to-family conflict, FIW = family-to-work conflict, FIC = family interpersonal conflict, WIC = work interpersonal conflict, WH = work hours, FH = time spent on family responsibilities, WIFG = work-to-family guilt, FIWG = family-to-work guilt, SUS = supervisor support, CS = co-worker support, SPS = spouse support, SIS = sibling support, PS = parent support, WSF = work schedule flexibility, WP = work performance, FP = family performance, LS = life satisfaction. \*  $p < .05$  \*\*  $p < .01$

#### 5.3.5.1. Overall Model Fit

The model fit indices are shown in Table 5.3. The value of CFI was lower than the acceptable value of .90, which indicates a poor model fit. However, such a result might be because of the effect of the model and sample size (Shi et al., 2019). Shi et al. (2019) found that when the sample size is insufficient, as the model size increases (e.g., the number of the observed variables and/or the correlations in one model), the CFI index becomes unreliable. In addition, Alavi et al. (2020) suggested that different model fit indices such as the RESEA,  $\chi^2/df$ , and the SRMS should be considered, especially for a complex model. Thus, given the large model size and the complexity of the proposed model, the  $\chi^2/df$  ratio of 4.07 (less than 5) with a RESEA of .077 (between .05 and .08) and an SRMR of .067 (less than .08) indicate that the proposed model is reasonable (Byrne, 2016).

Table 5.2 Goodness-Of-Fit of the Measurement of the Proposed Model.

	AIC	BIC	N	Baseline Model			User Model			CFI	$\chi^2/df$	RMSEA	SRMR
				$\chi^2$	$df$	$p$	$\Delta\chi^2$	$\Delta df$	$p$				
Proposed model	82120.625	83171.320	520	21410.491	2485	.000	4508.723	2309	.000	0.884	1.952	0.043	0.050

Table 5.3 Goodness-of-Fit of the Proposed Model.

	AIC	BIC	N	Baseline Model			User Model			CFI	$\chi^2/df$	RMSEA	SRMR
				$\chi^2$	$df$	$p$	$\Delta\chi^2$	$\Delta df$	$p$				
Proposed model	25225.843	25476.819	520	1402.338	171	.000	529.851	130	.000	0.675	4.08	0.077	0.067

5.3.5.2. Parameter Estimates

Figure 5.2 presents the parameter estimates with the significance level for paths that constitute the final model. To help reading, Table 5.4 summarises the parameter estimates, the covariance between latent variables, and the covariance between the error of work-to-family conflict and family-to-work conflict. In addition, the parameter estimates and the significance level of the specific indirect effect related to the hypotheses are only provided for the routes that have significant relationships (see Table 5.5).

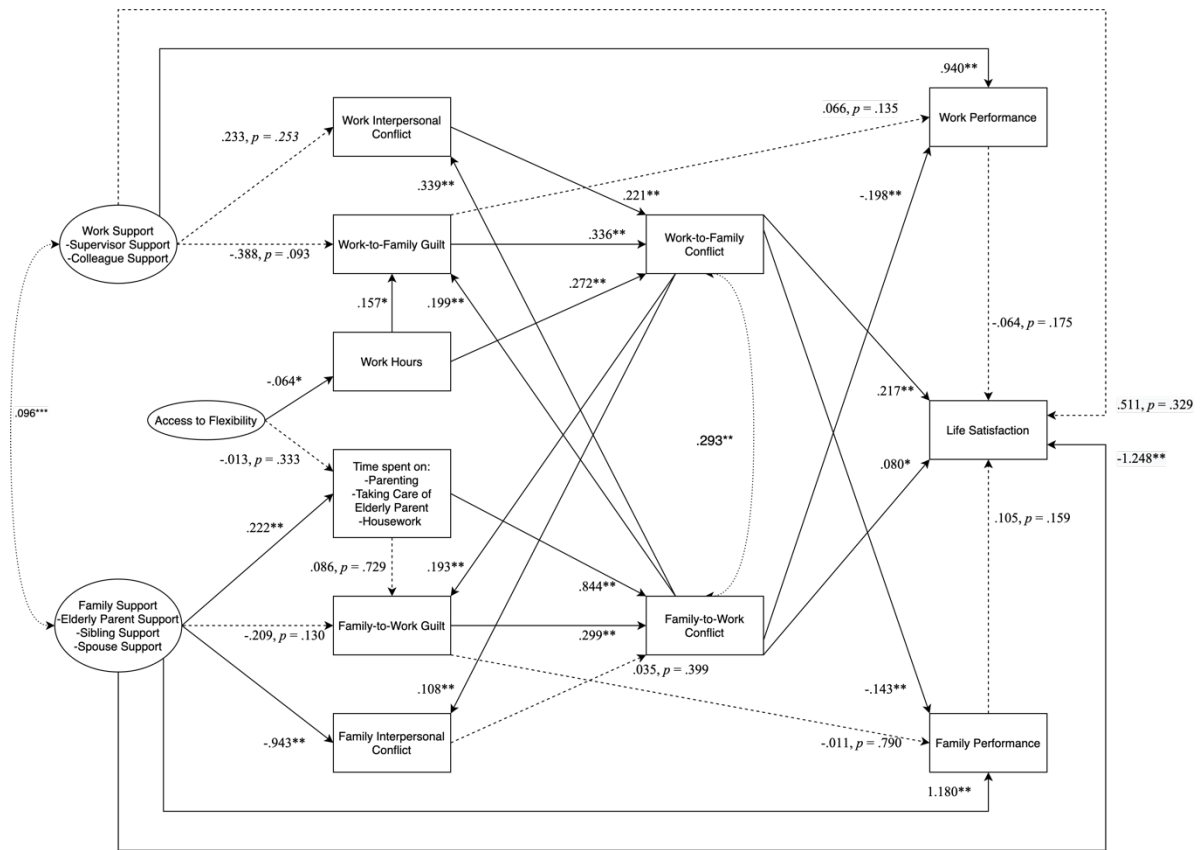


Figure 5.2 Final Model with the Regression Coefficients Labelled for Each Path. Note. Broken Lines Represent Non-Significant Paths, Curved Lines Represent the Covariance, \*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ . \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

Table 5.4 Summary of the Parameter Estimates, the Covariance of the Latent Variables, and the Covariance Between the Error of Work-Family Conflicts.

Path relations	Estimates
Work support → Work interpersonal conflict	.233
Work support → Work-to-family guilt	-.388
Work support → Work performance	.940***
Work support → Life satisfaction	.511
Work schedule flexibility → Work hours	-.064*
Work schedule flexibility → Total time use on family	-.013
Family support → Family interpersonal conflict	-.943***
Family support → Family-to-work guilt	-.209
Family support → Total time use on family	.222**

Family support → Family performance	1.180***
Family support → Life satisfaction	-1.248***
Work interpersonal conflict → Work-to-family conflict	.221***
Work-to-family guilt → Work-to-family conflict	.336***
Work-to-family guilt → Work performance	.066
Work hours → Work-to-family conflict	.272***
Work hours → Work-to-family guilt	.157*
Family interpersonal conflict → Family-to-work conflict	.035
Family-to-work guilt → Family-to-work conflict	.299***
Family-to-work guilt → Family performance	-.011
Total time used on family → Family-to-work conflict	.844***
Total time used on family → Family-to-work guilt	.086
Work-to-family conflict → Family-to-work guilt	.193***
Work-to-family conflict → Family interpersonal conflict	.108**
Work-to-family conflict → Family performance	-.143***
Work-to-family conflict → Life satisfaction	.217***
Family-to-work conflict → Work-to-family guilt	.199***
Family-to-work conflict → Work interpersonal conflict	.339***
Family-to-work conflict → Work performance	-.198***
Family-to-work conflict → Life satisfaction	.080*
Work performance → Life satisfaction	-.064
Family performance → Life satisfaction	.105
<b>Covariance of the latent variables</b>	
Work support, Family support	.096***
<b>Covariance of the error between work-family conflicts</b>	
Work-to-family conflict, Family-to-work conflict	.293***

Note. → represents the path direction, \*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ . \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

Table 5.5 Summary of the Parameter Estimates and the Significance Level of the Specific Indirect Effect Related to the Hypotheses.

Specific routes	Estimates
(H3a) Work hours → Work-to-family conflict <b>via</b> Work-to-family guilt	.493***
(H4b) Work-to-family conflict → Family-to-work conflict <b>via</b> Family-to-work guilt	.492***
(H4c) Family-to-work conflict → Work-to-family conflict <b>via</b> Work interpersonal conflict	.560***
(H4d) Family-to-work conflict → Work-to-family conflict <b>via</b> Work-to-family guilt	.535***
(H5e) Family support → Family-to-work conflict <b>via</b> Total time used on family	<u>1.066***</u>
(H6a) Work schedule flexibility → Work-to-family conflict <b>via</b> Work hours	.208***

Note. the highlighted estimate means the indirect effect is significant, but the hypothesis is being rejected. → represents the path direction, \*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ . \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

As hypothesised, work-related time use, interpersonal conflict, and work-to-family guilt are all positively predicted work-to-family conflict; thus, H1 and its sub-hypotheses are supported. In addition, H2 is partially supported. Only family-related time use and family-to-work guilt positively predicted family-to-work conflict (H2a and H2b); the broken line between family interpersonal conflict and family-to-work conflict indicated that there was no significant relationship between these two variables; thus, it failed to support the hypothesis H2c (i.e., Family interpersonal conflict is a positive predictor of family-to-work conflict).



Moreover, H3 is partially supported. The results indicated that work hours had a positive indirect effect on work-to-family conflict via the increased work-to-family guilt (H3a); however, the non-significant relationship between time used on family responsibility and family-to-work guilt indicated that there was no mediating relation between total time used on family responsibility and family-to-work conflict via family-to-work guilt (H3b). Furthermore, H4 is partially supported. The results indicated that there were positive indirect effects from work-to-family conflict to family-to-work conflict via the increased family-to-work guilt (H4b), and from family-to-work conflict to work-to-family conflict via the increased work interpersonal conflict (H4c) and work-to-family guilt (H4d). However, the non-significant relationship between family interpersonal conflict and family-to-work conflict indicated that family interpersonal conflict did not have a mediating effect on work-family conflicts; thus, H4a is not supported.

Regarding the negative indirect effect of work/family environment (i.e., support and access to flexibility) on work-family conflicts via its unique antecedents. The broken lines from work support to work interpersonal conflict, from work support to work-to-family guilt, from family support to family-to-work guilt, and from family interpersonal conflict to family-to-work conflict indicated that there were no mediating relationships between work support and work-to-family conflict via work interpersonal conflict (H5a) and work-to-family guilt (H5b); and no mediating relationship between family support and family-to-work conflict via family interpersonal conflict (H5c) and family-to-work guilt (H5d); in addition, the results indicated that family support has a positive indirect effect on family-to-work conflict via total time used on family responsibility, hence, failed to support H5e. Thus, H5 is not supported.

Furthermore, H6 is partially supported. Only H6a (i.e., access to flexibility has a negative indirect effect on work-to-family conflict via decreased work hours) is supported. The broken line between access to flexibility and total time used on family responsibility indicated that there was no mediating relation between access to flexibility and family-to-work conflict via time used on family responsibility (H6b).

In addition, regarding the hypotheses related to the consequence of work-family conflict. The results indicated that both work-to-family conflict and family-to-work conflict were positive predictors of domain-specific distress and negatively predicted domain-specific performance. Thus, H7 (e.g., work-to-family conflict is a direct and positive predictor of family-to-work guilt) and H8 (e.g., work-to-family conflict is a direct and negative predictor of family performance) were supported.

However, the non-signification relationships between work-family guilt and domain-specific performance indicated that work-family conflicts had no indirect effect on domain-specific performance via work-family guilts (e.g., the work-to-family conflict has a negative indirect effect on family performance via increased family-to-work guilt); thus, H9 is not supported. In addition, the results failed to support H10 (i.e., both work-to-family conflict and family-to-work conflict are direct and negative predictors of life satisfaction) and H11 (e.g., the work-to-family conflict has a negative indirect effect on life satisfaction via decreased family performance), because of the estimates highlighted the positive predictive relations between work-family conflicts and life satisfaction, and the non-significant relations between domain-specific performance and life satisfaction.

Last, H12 is not supported (i.e., both work and family support are the positive predictor of life satisfaction) due to the non-significant relation between work support and life satisfaction and the negative relation between family support and life satisfaction. In addition, the results indicated that both work and family support are positively related to domain-specific performance in which work support is positively related to work performance whereas family support is positively related to family performance; thus, H13 is supported.

#### 5.4. Discussion

The priority of the present study is to develop an integrated work-family conflict model that is applicable in Chinese society and to understand the process of work-family conflict in China's work-family system. Some of Study 1's qualitative findings are considered as Chinese culturally specific variables and are being used in the proposed model to further investigate its accuracy. In

general, in line with the third-generation model, the findings of the present study supported the bidirectional and indirect reciprocal nature of work-family conflict; both work-to-family conflict and family-to-work conflict are mediators that connect the surface between work and family domains (e.g., Frone et al., 1997; Ohu et al., 2019; Dierdorff & Ellington, 2008). In addition, the results indicated that the final model is a reasonable fit model and some of the findings were surprisingly different from the previous work-family conflict studies, which might be due to the cultural background in China.

#### 5.4.1. Work-Family Conflict and its Direct Antecedents.

Consistent with previous studies (e.g., Frone et al., 1997; Lu & Cooper, 2015), the final model indicated that more time spent in one domain would increase its corresponding conflict experience (e.g., work hours predict work-to-family conflict). In addition, previous studies generally focused on work-family guilt being the emotional response to work-family conflict (e.g., Morgan & King, 2012; Korabik, 2015). Nevertheless, the final model indicated that when considering work-family guilt as emotional distress, work-family guilt can be the direct strain-based antecedent of work-family conflict. The work-/family-induced guilt (i.e., work-to-family guilt and family-to-work guilt) would create or exacerbate the within-domain conflict (e.g., work-to-family guilt creates work-family conflict).

Moreover, differing from the third-generation model, the proposed model used work/family-related interpersonal conflict as the behaviour-based antecedents of work-family conflict. The final model indicated that only work-to-family conflict has three forms of antecedents but not for family-to-work conflict in China; family interpersonal conflict (one form of behaviour-based antecedent) was not the antecedent of family-to-work conflict. Such a finding is inconsistent with previous work-family conflict studies (e.g., Frone et al., 1997; Byron, 2005; Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; El-Kassem, 2019; Michel et al., 2011), which generally proposed that there were three forms of work-family conflict and that each form of work-family conflict has its corresponding

unique antecedents, such as working overtime would lead to the experience of time-based work-to-family conflict.

The reason for the non-significant relationship between family interpersonal conflict and family-to-work conflict might be explained through the findings of Study 1 regarding the neglecting attitude toward work-family conflict (Theme 1). Some participants claimed that although quarrel with family members (family interpersonal conflict) did affect their mood; however, they tend to neglect the conflict and believe that time can fix everything. In addition, under the influence of Confucianism, the traditional value in China, such as avoiding conflicts and maintaining harmonious relationships with families (e.g., Wei & Li, 2013; Chen, 2013), and the belief that maintaining strong social ties in the workplace can benefit the business, or future career development (Park & Chesla, 2007) might affect the impact of interpersonal conflict on different types of work-family conflict, the impact of family interpersonal conflict on family-to-work conflict might not as salience as work interpersonal conflict on work-to-family conflict.

#### 5.4.2. Work-Family Conflict and its Indirect Antecedents

The first type of indirect antecedent of work-family conflict is work-family conflict itself (i.e., work-to-family conflict indirectly predicts family-to-work conflict, whereas family-to-work conflict indirectly predicts work-to-family conflict). The final model supported the bidirectional and indirect reciprocal nature of work-family conflict, suggesting work-family conflict has two directional dimensions (i.e., work-to-family conflict and family-to-work conflict, bidirectional nature) and employees would not only experience one type of work-family conflict, but the level of work-to-family conflict and family-to-work conflict might be different via different mechanisms (i.e., indirect reciprocal nature), such as work-to-family conflict creates family distress and the increased family distress thereby leading to family-to-work conflict (e.g., Ohu et al., 2019; Dierdorff & Ellington, 2008; Frone et al., 1997).

One thing should note is that, unlike the third-generation model, which failed to support the mediating relation between work-to-family conflict and family-to-work conflict via family strain-

based antecedent (family distress) (Frone et al., 1997); the results of the final model highlighted that family strain-based antecedent (i.e., family-to-work guilt) mediated the relationship between the work-to-family conflict and family-to-work conflict in China. Besides the possible reason for the choice of the variables between the present study (family-to-work guilt) and the third-generation model (family distress), this result might suggest that the process of work-family conflict is different between the West and the East (Galovan et al., 2010), and emphasised the need of investigating the work-family conflict in different cultural background.

Furthermore, based on the previous findings (e.g., Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Kikuchi et al., 2020) regarding the positive relationship between time spent in one domain and distress (e.g., working long hours increase work distress), and their effect on work-family conflict. The second type of indirect antecedent of work-family conflict is time spent on the work/family domain. The final model found that work time has a positive indirect effect on work-to-family conflict via work-to-family guilt; however, total time spent on family responsibilities is not associated with family-to-work guilt. This finding might be due to the influence of Chinese culture. Collectivism emphasises that groups should be a priority over self, and the philosophies of Confucianism highlight the importance that family members should respect and take care of each other (e.g., Lu & Cooper, 2015, Billing et al., 2014). In addition, the qualitative findings from Theme 3 also explained that stopping working to provide care for the family is not a conflict but fulfilling obligations. All of these might cause the participants not to feel family-to-work guilt when spending time on family responsibilities.

Same with the third-generation model, the present study tested the indirect effect of work/family environments (i.e., work/family support and access to flexibility) on work-family conflicts via its unique antecedents. The final model revealed that work support has no indirect effect on work-to-family conflict via its unique work-related antecedents, and family support only had a positive indirect effect on family-to-work conflict via total time spent on family responsibilities.

These findings might be due to the influence of Chinese traditional culture. Kim and his colleague (2008) found that due to the belief that group is a priority over self, Asian people generally believe that individuals should not share their personal issues with the surrounding people as it might burden the social network; consequently, compared to Americans, Asians are unlikely to seek support from people close to them and less likely to use and benefit from the support that involves personal stressful events and/or the feeling of distress. Hence, the influence of social support on the strain-based antecedent (work-family guilt – emotional distress) and behaviour-based antecedent of work-family conflict (work/family-related interpersonal conflict – a stressful personal event), and the indirect effect of social support on work-family conflict (a stressful personal event) in China might not be as strong as the previous findings that based on the Western samples (e.g., Blanch & Aluja, 2012; Drummond et al., 2016).

Ironically the final model indicated that participants who received a greater level of family support would spend more time on family responsibilities and consequently increase family-to-work conflict. This is inconsistent with previous studies (e.g., Frone et al., 1997; Yang et al., 2000; billing et al., 2014), which argued that receiving social support can minimise the negative impact of time-related factors on work-family conflict. The researcher believes that this opposite finding might be due to the cultural background in China. When a person considers the goals and the needs of the group should be over self, the relationships with the group members become less voluntary, more “given”, and have more obligations (Adams, 2005). Following this perspective, the greater the family support received might mean that the individual has more obligations towards his/her family members because of the shared social obligation/norm (Kim et al., 2008). As such, family support is positively related to the total time spent on family responsibilities.

This perspective was also spotted in the qualitative findings (Them 2). The interviewees described that elderly parents would help with the childcare responsibility of their adult children; however, being a married adult in China not only needs to take care own elderly parents and grandparents but also, the spouse’s parents and grandparents. These “exchanges” in caregiving

responsibilities might, in turn, increase the time spent on family responsibilities and exacerbated work-family conflict.

Last, the final model indicated that access to flexibility has a negative indirect effect on work-to-family conflict via work hours. This finding is consistent with the previous studies, access to flexibility gives more time control to the employees, thereby decreasing the negative impact of work-related time demand and reducing the level of work-to-family conflict (e.g., Kim, 2020; Haar et al., 2009). Moreover, no indirect effect of access to flexibility on family-to-work conflict via total time spent on family responsibilities is found. This might be due to the linkage between access to flexibility and work-family conflict. For example, Carlson et al. (2010) and Anderson et al. (2002) argued that because access to flexibility is one work-related benefit, the effect of schedule flexibility on family-to-work conflict is not directly on the family-related factors (e.g., time used on family responsibility) but indirectly via work-to-family conflict (i.e., work-to-family conflict mediated the relationship between schedule flexibility and family-to-work conflict).

#### 5.4.3. The Relationships Between Work-Family Conflict and its Consequences

Consistent with previous studies, the results indicated that work-to-family conflict is positively related to family strain, whereas family-to-work conflict is positively related to work strain (e.g., Lu & Cooper, 2015; Korabik, Lero, et al., 2008). Under this finding, the present study found that work-to-family guilt is the consequence of family-to-work conflict, whereas family-to-work guilt is the consequence of work-to-family conflict. With the findings regarding the predictive effect of work-family guilt on work-family conflict in this study, the present study sheds light on the possibility that like work-family conflict, there is a bidirectional and indirect reciprocal relationship between work-to-family guilt and family-to-work guilt when constructing work-family guilt into an integrated work-family conflict model. For instance, work-to-family guilt creates work-to-family conflict and reduces the employees' resources to manage such emotional distress, thereby increasing the risk of feeling family-to-work guilt. However, further study is needed to testify to this relation.

Moreover, as expected, this study found that work-to-family conflict is negatively related to family performance, whereas family-to-work conflict is negatively related to work performance. This finding is consistent with previous studies (e.g., Frone et al., 1997; Bellavia & Frone, 2005; Roth & David, 2009); for example, time and energy as limited personal resources; thus, when too much time/energy is used in one domain, the individual might be too exhausted to perform in another domain.

The last but the most surprising finding in the present study is the positive relationship between work-family conflict and life satisfaction. This finding is surprising since the work-family conflict has always been defined by the West as a stressful event and/or a stressor associated with negative outcomes, such as depression (e.g., Galovan et al., 2010), work/family-related distress (e.g., Netemeyer et al., 2004), substance use or abuse (e.g., Grzywacz & Bass, 2003), and of course, decrease job, marital, family, and life satisfaction (Anafarta, 2010; Beutell & O'Hare, 2018; Calvo-Salguero et al., 2010; Cortese et al., 2010; Ford et al., 2007; Naami & Mahmoodikia, 2019). Nevertheless, this finding may be closer to the reality in China when considering the completely different cultural backgrounds between the West and the East.

For example, the qualitative findings (Themes 2 and 3) and Zhang et al.'s (2012) study highlighted that Chinese employees tend to prioritise work for the benefit of the family due to the influence of collectivist culture. Work is seen as a tool for improving the family income and providing a better future for the family. Following this perspective, it is possible that the greater the work-to-family conflict experienced, the greater the life satisfaction because the energy and time spent on the work domain might be perceived as worth it for the improved lives of the family. In addition, collectivist cultures view work as one way to bring honour to the family (Redding, 1993), and this might also be the reason for the positive relationship between work-to-family conflict and life satisfaction. Work-to-family conflict might be seen as self-sacrifice for the benefit and honour of the family.



Moreover, collectivist culture emphasises the importance of groups over self, and Confucianism highlights the importance of support, care, and respect toward families (Lu & Cooper, 2015; Billing et al., 2014). Therefore, it is possible that the experience of family-to-work conflict might be seen as the result of fulfilling the collectivist obligation. Similar explanations were spot during Study 1's interviews; for example, the statement from P6 (Theme 3):

I think, if you have to stop your work because you have to provide care for your family members, I actually don't think it is a conflict, it is just a thing that you must do for your family, it is a responsibility.

Perhaps under such cultural background, the cognitive assessment of Chinese employees toward family-to-work conflict becomes less negative because the family-to-work conflict experience may indirectly be demonstrated that Chinese employees are fulfilling their family responsibility/obligation, with life satisfaction defined as a "subjective evaluation of how far their most important needs, goals, and wishes have been fulfilled" (Cheung & Chan, 2009. p. 125), so it is understandable that family-to-work conflict is positively related to life satisfaction in China.

#### 5.4.4. Relationships Between Work/Family Support, Domain-Specific Performance, and Life Satisfaction

Consistent with the previous studies, the results indicated that work support is positively related to work performance, whereas family support is positively related to family performance (e.g., Chen et al., 2020; Shanock & Eisenberger, 2006; Byrne & Hochwarter, 2008). However, no relationship between work support and life satisfaction was found in the present study. In addition, the results revealed that when considering family support and life satisfaction in an integrated work-family conflict model, family support is negatively related to life satisfaction in China. The underlying reason might be similar to the positive relationship between family support and total time spent on family responsibilities. Because of shared family obligations/norms in China, the more family support received by Chinese employees might mean they have more family obligations/responsibilities towards family members (e.g., Adams, 2005; Kim et al., 2008), and so decrease their life satisfaction.

In addition, Study 1's interviewees also described that the thought of having to support/take care of elderly parents often stressed them out, because the interviewees would evaluate and compare their current financial ability/occupational status and the potential eldercare difficulties in the future (Theme 2), for example, P11 stated

[Having to take care of parents] is a pressure, because right now, it's not like I am doing very well at work, still not achieving my [occupational] goal, I mean, I am not rich enough, but my parents are getting older and older, so I just feel so much pressure.

Therefore, it is possible that compared to the Chinese employees who receive less or no family support, Chinese employees who receive more support might feel more pressure and more often worry about the ability to fulfil their family obligation, thereby decreasing life satisfaction.

### 5.5. Conclusion

In conclusion, the focus of this study was to develop an integrated work-family conflict model that is applicable in China, to understand the process of work-family conflict and how it interacts in China's work-family interface. The results indicated that work-family conflict is the mediator connecting work and family domains. By adopting Study 1's qualitative findings, the notable differences in the process of work-family conflict and its relevant outcomes between the previous Western findings and China are spotted. Such results emphasised the importance of the consideration of cultural influence in the understanding of work-family conflict and as a reminder for future work-family conflict studies that based on the Eastern countries should be cautious when adopting or choosing the Western developed work-family models and/or theories as it may not be suitable due to the cultural difference.

## 6. Using the Gendered Life-Course Approach to Understand Work-Family Conflict: Do Age and Gender Make a Difference in the Experience of Work-Family Conflict?

### 6.0. Introduction

“She finished all the housework. She didn’t leave anything for me to do.”; “because my husband does nothing [at home], [...] I have more things to do.”; “My husband, he hopes that I could spend more time at home [...] so I have to take some time off [from work].”; “I don’t seem to feel anything anymore. I feel like it is just my responsibility.” All these statements from Study 1’s interviews pointed to the possibility that traditional gender roles (e.g., men being the provider and women being the caregiver) influence the experience of work-family conflict in China. Moreover, the oldest participant (53 years old) in Study 1 described the possibility of the influence of age on the experience of work-family conflict due to the changes in work goals (i.e., care less about work achievements) and the strengthening boundary between work and family (i.e., think less about work when he is at home) during the ageing process.

Hence, after exploring the work-family conflict phenomenon (Study 1) and mapping out the structure and process of work-family conflict in China (Study 2a), this chapter will utilise a gendered life-course perspective to investigate the influence of the demographic characteristic (i.e., age and gender) on the final model of Study 2a. The aim of this chapter is to further verify the qualitative findings of Study 1, have a deep understanding of how work-family conflict might be experienced in China, and shed light on which demographic group of Chinese employees (e.g., younger or older? Male or female?) might have a higher risk of experiencing work-family conflict.

This chapter will start by introducing the life-course approach and its related concepts (i.e., time cage and time conveys). After that, the perspective of the gendered life-course and how it is different from the life-course approach was discussed. In addition, the limitations of previous gendered life-course work-family conflict studies (e.g., only focused on the mean gender/age difference) and the way to improve such limitations (i.e., treating gender and age as moderators) will

be discussed. Last, the moderating and interaction effects of age and gender on Study 2a's final model will be discussed.

### 6.1. What is a Life Course?

The term *life-course* can be defined as a culture-influenced, age-graded, and lock-step social system (Kruger, 2003). Moen and Chesley (2008) further explained that the cultural practices and social policies provided support and security for individuals during different ages and life stages, such as the British government providing certain hours of free early education and childcare per year for the 3 and 4-year-olds. Nevertheless, these social supports also structured individuals' lifespans virtually, creating a lock-stepped life course involving three uninterrupted full-time phases: education, employment, and retirement (Moen & Chesley, 2008). More specifically, Individuals who share the same cultural background tend to have a common understanding of accepting the designated rules for various roles or relationships, assuming the availability of resources, and allocating risks taken during different stages of life (Moen & Chesley, 2008). Using Confucian-influenced societies, such as China, as an example, the life course of an individual can be seen as – a child should obey their parents; an adult should fulfil the filial obligation and take care of elderly parents; a parent should support their children unconditionally, regardless of the age of the children, etc. (e.g., Zhang, et al., 2020; Chao & Kaeochinda, 2010).

Because of such a definition, using the life-course approach can help to identify the patterns of multiple roles of the individual through the passage of time and create a blueprint that denotes how roles overlap and spillover/crossover to other role over time (Moen & Chesley, 2008). They can raise important research questions, such as “What is the average starting age for people in Confucian-influenced society to become a worker, a husband/wife, or a parent?” and “How do these roles influence each other?”. In addition, the life-course approach explores the connections between the individuals' personal roles and the macroscopical surrounding environment through the passage of time (Moen & Chesley, 2008), for example, a working parent who has a child with a chronic disease might become more focused on the caregiving role over time.

In general, the life-course is an analytical approach that is used in understanding the effect of social change, historical movements, and an event/stressor on the individual over time (Moen & Kelly, 2009). Investigating work-family conflict (a stressor) from a life-course perspective thus provides insight into the different work-family conflicts experienced during an individual's lifespan, and how the changing social institution, as well as the surrounding environment of the individual, may influence work-family conflict (e.g., Moen & Chesley, 2008; Moen & Kelly, 2009). For example, from a life-course perspective, implementing the one-child policy in China might have helped lessen the experience of work-family conflict because it influences the number of children in the household (i.e., less childcare responsibility) (Ohu et al., 2019). However, this policy has shaped the Chinese population over time and partly contributed to the ageing problem in China (Wang, 2019); thus, to cope with the ageing population, China has recently introduced a three-children policy; i.e., allowing families to have three children and providing government support for them (McDonell, 2020). Nevertheless, the three-child policy may potentially increase childcare-related work-family conflict in the future, since previous studies (e.g., Cerrato & Cifre, 2018; Le & Xiao, 2016) suggested that the number of children might influence the experience of work-family conflict.

Studies investigating work-family conflict from a life course perspective are rare (e.g., Baltes & Young, 2007; Allen & Finkelstein, 2014). In addition, most of the life-course work-family conflict studies used secondary data (e.g., Allen & Finkelstein, 2014; Huffman et al., 2013; Cullati, 2014), which might limit the generalisability and accuracy of the findings since the secondary data was originally collected for other purpose and the researcher has no control and limit information about the data collection process (Johnston, 2014). Furthermore, such studies often only focused on the relationship between age and work-family conflict, without considering the influence of the environmental elements on the individual, such as the influence of culture on the experience of work-family conflict, which might limit our understanding of the conditions that cause the difference in work-family conflict experienced in different ages (e.g., Bennett et al., 2017; Huffman et al., 2013;

Cooke, 1994). For this reason, the concepts of time cages and convoys were developed to better understand and put the life-course approach into practice (Moen & Kelly, 2009).

#### 6.1.1. The Time Cages and Convoys

The concept of time cages and convoys are defined as “the structures and cultures of time embodied in organisational and government policies and practices” (Moen & Kelly, 2009, p. 33). Specifically, the time cages and convoys represent the presumed organisational rules, the regulations, and/or the cultural and societal routines regarding the time *durations, rhythms, timing,* and *biographical pacing* (e.g., Moen & Kelly, 2009; Moen & Chesley, 2008). For instance, an employee should work no more than 40 hours per week according to the law (time durations), an employee should work 5 days a week, 8 hours per day (time rhythms), the legal age to become a full-time worker (timing), and an employee retires before the statutory retirement age (biographical pacing – the unique timing of the turning points of the individual or family).

The time cages refer to all these routines, regulations, and/or rules that happen but only at any one point in time; over a period of time, these lasting time cages will create a time conveys that might benefit or damage the roles and/or relationships (Moen & Chesley, 2008), for example, working parents’ work-family relationship might benefit from having grandparents to help with childcare responsibilities whenever they needed, or having to work overtime every day might burn out the employee easily, problematise the relationship between work and family role, and leading to work-family conflict.

Furthermore, time convoys are categorised into institutional time convoys (institutional convoys) and social time convoys (social convoys) (Moen & Chesley, 2008). The institutional convoys elucidate how individuals make decisions at various stages of life, taking into account their cultural background, regulations, and the expectations of others (e.g., Meyer, 1986; Moen & Chesley, 2008), for example, the compulsory education system may cause students to focus on school grade at the expense of considering career paths, the filial piety culture may make adult children take on more eldercare responsibilities, and the traditional gender roles may cause the wives having more family

responsibilities. The social convoys emphasise the relationship between the individual, time (e.g., age), and the surrounding people (Kahn & Antonucci, 1980). In addition, social convoys highlight that people born in the same period of time might experience similar life events during their lifespan (Moen & Kelly, 2009), for example, under the influence of shared societal norms (i.e., institutional convoys), people born in the same period of time might enrol in school, enter the workplace, parenthood, and retire at a similar age and life stage (Kahn & Antonucci, 1980).

Furthermore, Moen and Chesley (2008) posited that the surrounding people that are not in the same age group as the individual also belong to the social convoy and act as a source of support or a potential stressor. This standpoint is similar to Elder (1995), which argued that people's lives are linked together, and individuals' minds and behaviours are consistently shaped by the expectations, beliefs, and behaviours of close ones, such as colleagues, parents, children, and siblings (e.g., Elder et al., 2015; Moen & Kelly, 2009), for example, if the parents believe that their adult children should take care of them when they are old (filial piety, an institutional convoy), such expectation from parents might change the adult children's choice between work and family role (e.g., I should visit my parents more often instead of work), and become a stressor that may create conflict between work and family role over time (e.g., being a good worker versus being a good child).

In general, the concepts of time cages and the two types of time conveys enriched the life-course approach and provided a more detailed and clear explanation of how the culture, social norms, and the surrounding people might influence the individual's beliefs, choices, and behaviours toward different events (Moen & Kelly, 2009). However, it could still be argued that the ideas of institutional and social conveys have effectively captured and explained the varying experiences of work-family conflict throughout an individual's lifespan, as people are born with different circumstances. One of the most compelling examples might be the biological sex of the individual. Individuals might perceive different expectations or supports during different ages or life stages, based on how the culture or society annotated the gender role (e.g., Moen & Chesley, 2008; Mortimer et al., 2005; Shanahan, 2000; Gerstel & Sarkisian, 2006; Cerrato & Cifre, 2018).

## 6.2. The Gendered Life-Course

Moen (2011) argued that the concept of “lock-step” in the life course (i.e., the age-graded lock-steps in life: education, employment, and retirement) is somewhat biased. The study further explained that the concept of “lock-step” simplified individuals’ lives and that such a concept only describes a subgroup of the labour force, which are traditional white-collar and middle-class male workers, who have full-time housewives at home to support and facilitate their careers. Research indicates that women's life paths are not equal to men's. The idea of age-based and lock-step progression through life may not apply to women in the same way (e.g., Moen & Chesley, 2008; Moen, 2011).

This is evident in previous studies (e.g., Cancian & Oliker, 2000; Moen, 2005), which found that women are more likely to become the main caregivers in the household and that married women not only need to provide care and assistance to their own kin but also more often assist the lives of their husband’s relatives; all these overwhelming caregiving responsibilities always led to the women to withdraw from different roles, such as community, employment, and/or education (Korabik, McElwain, et al., 2008). In other words, society and/or culture have assigned different roles to individuals based on their gender, and such pre-existing gender roles may influence the individuals’ life experiences during different life stages (e.g., Moen & Chesley, 2008; Moen & Spencer, 2006). For this reason, gender should be considered when practising the life-course approach (e.g., Korabik, McElwain, et al., 2008; Moen, 2011; Moen & Chesley, 2008).

## 6.3. Work-Family Conflict from a Gendered Life-Course Perspective

Gender and age are two popular research topics that have long been found relating to work-family conflict (e.g., Korabik, McElwain, et al., 2008; Gerstel & Sarkisian, 2006; Allen & Finkelstein, 2014; Artazcoz et al., 2018; Hu & Scott, 2016; Pocock et al., 2013; Matthews, Bulger et al., 2010). However, there are very few studies combined them and examined work-family conflict from a gendered life-course perspective; moreover, previous gender-related work-family conflict studies are often fraught with problems (e.g., Korabik, Lero, et al., 2008; Byron, 2005). In addition to



problems endemic to life-course (age-related) work-family conflict studies, such as use of secondary data (Cullati, 2014), gender-related work-family conflict studies have issues of their own. Most significant in this context is that they often overlook the cultural influence and only tell one side of the story; for example, with samples that only focus on one gender (e.g., Ling & Powell, 2001; Moen & Chesley, 2008). Moreover, most gender-related work-family conflict studies only examined the mean gender difference in the level of work-family conflict (e.g., McElwain et al., 2005). This could only shed light on the correlation between two gender groups without understanding the difference between men and women in the experience of work-family conflict, as mean difference analysis only examines the average differences between groups. It doesn't consider the complexity of interactions or potential influences of other variables. This can lead to a simplistic understanding of the relationship between variables (Korabik, McElwain, et al., 2008). These limitations have created multiple inconsistencies in the findings of gender-related work-family conflict studies. Some studies claimed that men generally experience more work-family conflict than women (e.g., Yang et al., 2000; Martinengo et al., 2010); in contrast, some studies found that women experience more work-family conflict than men (e.g., Carlson et al., 2000; El-Kassem, 2019).

#### 6.3.1. The Moderating Effects of Gender and Age in the Work-Family Conflict Structure

The inconsistent findings regarding the age and gender differences in the experience of work-family conflict highlight the necessity to investigate the relationships between gender, age, and work-family conflict in a more detailed way, and to improve the conceptualisation of the structure of relationship between gender and age and work-family conflict and its related variables (Moen & Chesley, 2008). One way to do that is by considering gender and age as moderators of the work-family conflict (e.g., Drummond et al., 2016; Xie et al., 2021). However, relatively few studies do so. The interaction effect of age and gender on the process of work-family conflict is still an unexplored area.

Several theories and studies have highlighted the potential of exploring the moderating effects of gender and age on work-family conflict and its related variables, respectively. For example, the gender role theory argues that differences in societal identification (e.g., men as providers, women as caregivers) and role salience (e.g., women might prioritise family over work) between men and women could result in the different experiences of work-family conflict in which gender might moderate the relationship between social support and work-family conflict (Drummond et al., 2016), and between work-family conflict and job satisfaction (Calvo-Salguero et al., 2010).

In addition, the Selection, Optimisation, and Compensation (SOC) theory argues that people of different ages might have different strategies to manage the experience of work-family conflict, thereby influencing the strength of the relationships between work-family conflict and its antecedents and/or consequences (Huffman et al., 2013). For instance, Matthews, Bulger et al. (2010) found that age moderated the relationship between social supports, work stressors, and work-family conflict, due to the differences in task-related expertise and the size of social networks; and Xie et al. (2021) found that age moderated the relationship between servant leadership and work-family conflict, since employees in older age tend to have more tangible (e.g., financial) and intangible (e.g., stress management) resources.

In conclusion, considering age and gender as moderators in work-family conflict studies might provide more accurate information regarding the process and the change of work-family conflict experience during lifespan since such an approach has the potential to fill in the lacuna of the inadequate conceptualisation of age and gender in the process of work-family conflict (e.g., Moen & Chesley, 2008; Korabik, McElwain, et al., 2008). Thus, to gain an in-depth understanding of how people of different genders and ages experience work-family conflict in China, this study used both gender and age as moderators and tested their moderating and interaction effects on the final model of Study 2a.

More specifically, that a life course perspective should consider the influence of other elements such as culture and support; i.e., the institutional and social convoys (e.g., Moen &

Chesley, 2008; Moen & Kelly, 2009; Korabik, McElwain, et al., 2008). Thus, the moderating and interaction effects of age and gender were tested on the relationships between work/family environment (i.e., access to flexibility and family support) and the antecedents of work-family conflict, between work-family conflict and its direct antecedents, and between work-family conflict and its consequences, based on Study 2a's final model. In other words, the current study re-analysed the data collected in Study 2a, using a different analytic strategy to allow the integration of gender and age variables into the model.

It is worth noting that since the present study focused on investigating the gender and age differences in the relationships between work-family conflict and its related variables; thus, the moderating and interaction effects of age and gender were only tested on the relationships that involved work-family conflict in Study 2a's final model. Three relationships in Study 2a's final model were not included in this study, which are the positive direct relationship between work support and work performance, the positive direct relationship between family support and family performance, and the negative direct relationship between family support and life satisfaction. To facilitate reading, the broken lines (non-significant relations) in Study 2a's final model and the paths that would not be tested for the moderating and interaction effects of age and gender have been removed (see Figure 6.1).

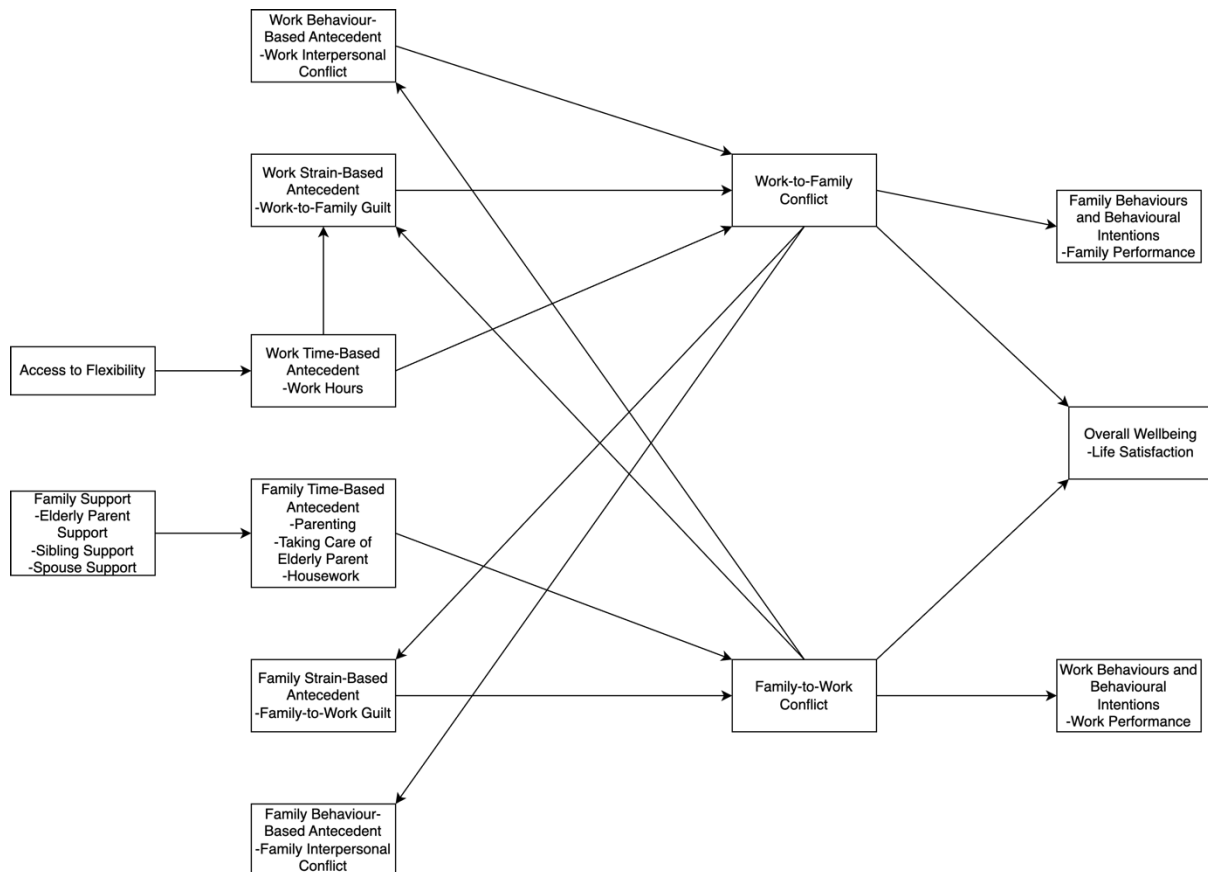


Figure 6.1 A Work-Family Conflict Model for Testing the Moderating and Interaction Effects of Age and Gender.

Moreover, because of the different purposes between Study 2a (i.e., develop a model) and the present study (i.e., testing the moderating effect and interaction effects of age and gender), the specific effect approach (e.g., moderation) was adopted to complement the SEM approach that was used in Study 2a. To do so, the above revised final model from Study 2a was further simplified into different moderation or moderated-mediation models. For example, how age and gender might moderate and interact on the strength of the relationship between access to flexibility and work hours was simplified into a moderation model. To further facilitate reading, the above revised final model was split into three parts: Part A included the paths between work/family environment and the antecedents of work-family conflict; Part B included the paths between work-family conflict and its antecedents; and Part C included work-family conflict and its consequences. All the simplified models were presented and discussed in detail under their respective sections.

### 6.3.2. The Structures of Age and Gender on the Path Relations of Study

#### 2a's Final Model

Two moderation model frameworks from Hayes' PROCESS (2018) were used in the present study to construct the moderation and moderated-mediation work-family conflict models. First, Hayes' PROCESS model 2 (see Figure 6.2) was used to test the moderating and interaction effects of age (Z) and gender (W) on all but three path relations in Figure 6.1 (i.e., the route of work hours, work-to-family guilt, and work-to-family conflict), respectively. The following questions can be answered from this model: when will this relationship be affected (the effects of  $X*W$  and  $X*Z$  on Y) and how the interaction between two moderators will affect the relation between X and Y (the effect of  $W*Z$  on the regression of X and Y) (Haye, 2018). Furthermore, the route of work hours, work-to-family guilt, and work-to-family conflict have created a unique mediation model, model 67 (see Figure 6.3) from Hayes' PROCESS was used to analyse the moderating and interaction effects of gender and age on this mediation model. The reason why moderator Z (age) was not moderated on the relation between X (work hours) and M (work-to-family guilt) is discussed thoroughly later in this study.

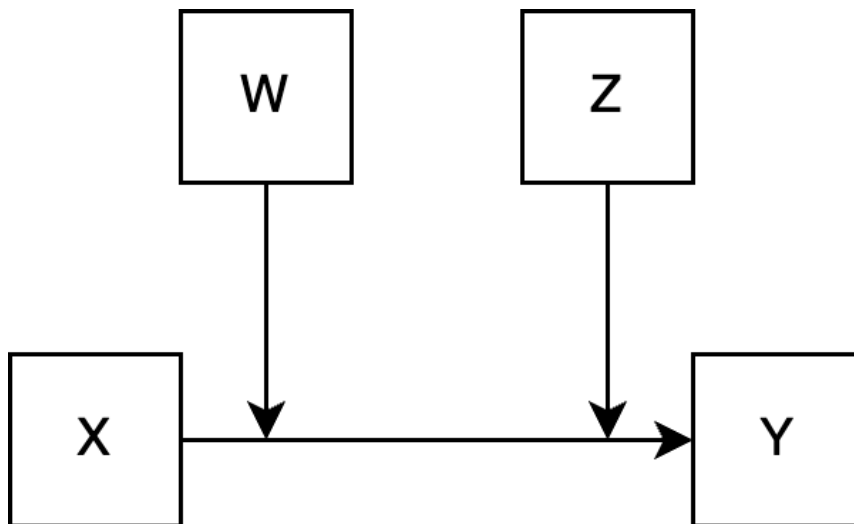


Figure 6.2 Hayes' PROCESS Model 2.

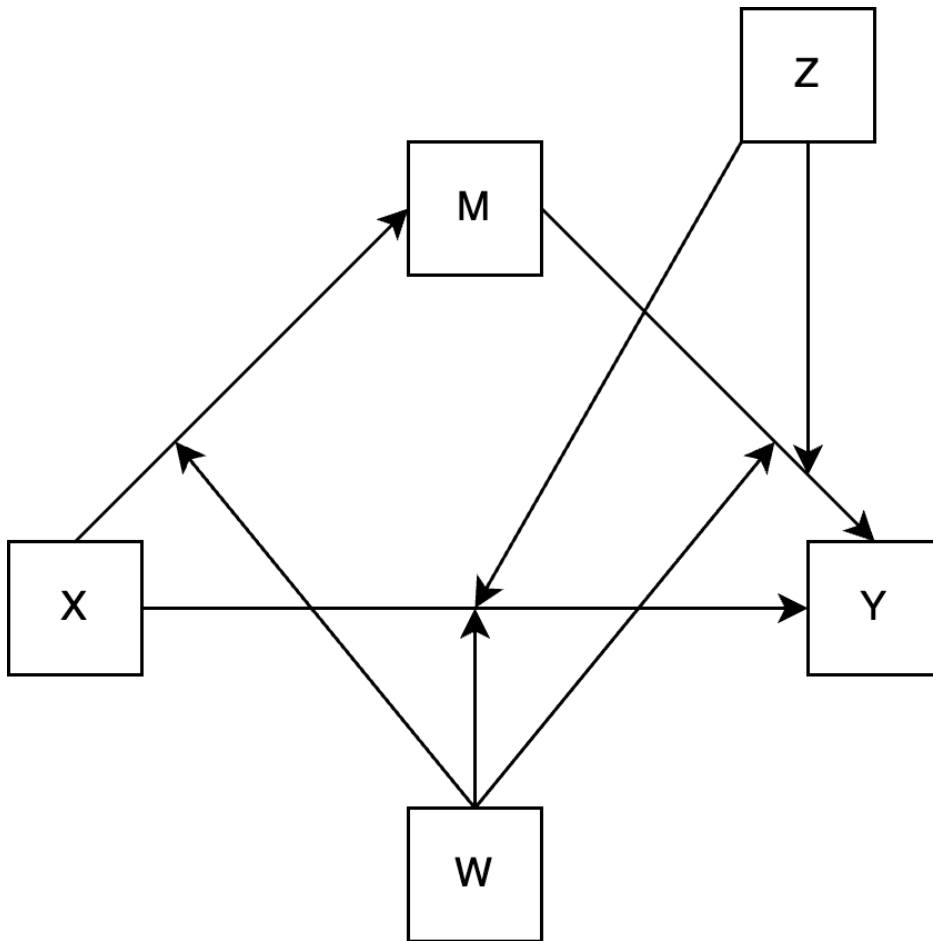


Figure 6.3 Hayes' PROCESS Model 67.

#### 6.4. Age Group Consideration

Despite there being no clear division of the age groups, adulthood has been traditionally separated into three different categories: young adulthood, middle adulthood, and late adulthood. Previous studies (e.g., Huffman et al., 2013; Super, 1980; Darcy et al., 2012; Matthews, Bugler et al., 2010) often suggested similar age groups range, in which young adulthood starts at the age of 18-21 and end roughly in the early 30s, middle adulthood begins in the early 30s and ended roughly in mid-40s, and the late adulthood begins in the 40s. Learning from previous studies, this study split the age into 18-29 for young adulthood, 30-44 for middle adulthood, and 45-59 for late adulthood. This division of age groups also considered China's legal age of adults (i.e., 18 years old) and the statutory retirement age (i.e., for blue-collar women is 50, for white-collar women is 55, whereas for men is 60) (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OCED], 2019).

## 6.5. Part A – The Moderating Effect of Age and Gender on the Relationships Between Work/Family Environment and the Antecedents of Work-Family Conflict

Because all the path relations have been discussed thoroughly in the previous chapter; to avoid repetition, the path relations were not addressed again and only focused on explaining the moderating effects of age and gender on these path relationships.

### 6.5.1. The Moderating Effect of Age and Gender on the Relationship Between Access to Flexibility and Work Hours

#### 6.5.1.1. The Moderating Effect of Age

Previous studies suggested that access to flexibility is important to all workers of different ages and career stages and that employees of different ages might benefit from different types of work flexibility (e.g., Pitt-Catsoupes & Matz-Costa, 2008; Bal & Jansen, 2016). Piszczek and Pimputkar (2020) claimed that work and family role structures might be varied in different age stages, which might affect the strength of access to flexibility in the experience of stressful work events. This study further argued that employees in middle age might obtain more benefits from access to flexibility when compared to employees in younger or older age. The rationale is that employees generally have more family/work-related role demands during their middle-age stage, access to flexibility thus becomes more salient to middle-aged employees because it helps to adjust the increased incompatible role demands (e.g., Piszczek & Pimputkar, 2020; Huffman et al., 2013).

If as suggested by previous studies, the salience of access to flexibility is related to age due to the increase in role demands (e.g., increased work hours), it is possible that the impact of access to flexibility on work hours is stronger for the employees in the middle age group (30-44).

#### 6.5.1.2. The Moderating Effect of Gender

A recent study by Lyttelton et al. (2022) argued that due to the gendered expectation of family responsibility, access to flexibility, such as work hours and workplace flexibility might exacerbate the inequality in housework and affect the work hours. This study further explained that access to flexibility had blurred the boundaries between paid work and family lives. In addition, due

to the influence of gender social norms (i.e., women being the caregiver), when access to flexibility is available, female employees might have a higher risk of multi-tasking between childcare and paid work, and using access to flexibility for family responsibilities, such as providing childcare and doing housework, thereby resulting in the decreased in the time spent in paid work, the increase of time for family responsibilities, and reduced the quality of the work time (Lyttelton et al., 2022). Following this perspective, it may be argued that the relationship between access to flexibility and work hours will be stronger for female employees.

In summary, the present study hypothesises that:

*H1: Age and gender moderate the relationship between access to flexibility and work hours in that the effect of access to flexibility on work hours will be strongest for the employees in the 30-44 age group (H1a) and stronger for female employees (H1b).*

In addition, as suggested by previous studies: 1) the increased role demand during middle age has led to middle-aged employees valuing the importance of access to flexibility more; and 2) the gender role expectation has caused women to use access to flexibility more often to deal with family issues, thereby decreasing time spent in paid work. Hence, it is plausible that although both men and women in middle age will value access to flexibility more; however, due to the impact of the gendered expectation, the effect of access to flexibility on work hours may become stronger for female employees in the middle-age group (see Figure 6.4). Thus, the present study further asserts the following hypothesis:

*H2: There is an interaction effect of age and gender on the relationship between access to flexibility and work hours in that the strength of the relationship between access to flexibility and work hours will be strongest for the female employees in the 30-44 age group.*



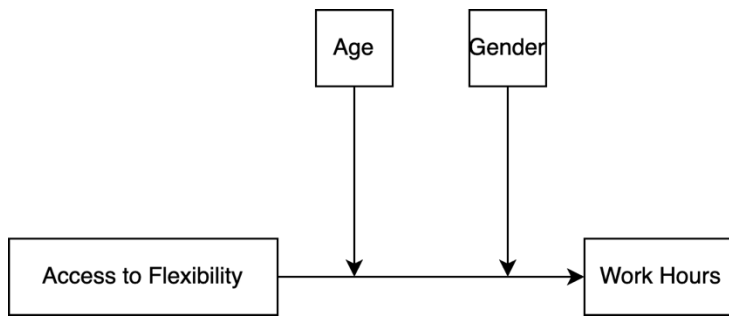


Figure 6.4 The Moderating Effect of Age and Gender on the Relationship Between Access to Flexibility and Work Hours.

## 6.5.2. The Moderating Effect of Age and Gender on the Relationship Between Family Support and Time Used on Family Responsibilities

### 6.5.2.1. The Moderating Effect of Age

Previous Western work-family conflict studies argued that the negative relationship between perceived support and a stressful situation, such as work-family conflict, might be stronger for older adults when compared to adults at a younger age (e.g., Matthews, Bugler et al., 2010; Carstensen, 1992; Penningroth & Scott, 2012). The logic is that the ageing process might contribute to the thought of not having much time left in life, and could motivate older adults to attain more emotional meaning from life instead of material and/or occupational goals (Penningroth & Scott, 2012). This change in life goals might lead to a shift from focusing on occupational achievements to family matters, and affects the social selection process of older adults, which narrows their social networks and allocates more emotional resources to the people that are close to them; as a result, the benefit from social exchanges (e.g., social support) might be more salient to older adults when compared to younger adult (e.g., Carstensen, 1992; Penningroth & Scott, 2012; Huffman et al., 2013).

However, this argument is based on the findings that social support is one resource that can decrease the negative impact of the stressor on the level of work-family conflict, for example, receiving family support for childcare responsibility might decrease the employee's time needed for childcare, thereby decreasing the time spent on childcare and the level of work-family conflict (e.g., Frone et al., 1997; Matthew et al., 2010). Nevertheless, Study 2a found a positive relationship between family support and total time spent on family responsibilities in China: the more family

support the Chinese employee received, the more time this Chinese employee spent on family responsibilities. As discussed in the previous chapter, this might be due to the influence of Chinese cultural background, and sharing the same obligation norm towards family members might create a mutually supportive relationship with the families in which the received support is seen as a debt that has to be “paid back” (Adams, 2005).

Suppose the obligation norm (social exchange) towards family members is the underlining reason for the positive relationship between family support and total time spent on family responsibilities. It may then be expected that the positive relationship between spouse/sibling/parent support and total time spent on family responsibility will be stronger in the 30-44 age group. This is based on the previous findings (e.g., Huffman et al., 2013; Piszczek & Pimputkar, 2020), which found that the role demands would be increased during middle age due to the increased expectations from others, for example, having to take care of the ageing parents, getting married, and/or having a child. All of these might increase the types of family obligations and boost the frequency of social exchange to happen. Thus, the present study hypothesises that:

*H3: Age moderates the relationship between family support and total time used on family responsibility in that the effect of spouse (H3a), elderly parents (H3b), and sibling (H3c) support on total time used on family responsibility will be the strongest for the employees in the 30-44 age group.*

#### 6.5.2.2. The Moderating Effect of Gender

Previous studies (e.g., Elliot, 2003; Van Daalen et al., 2006) argued that as a result of the traditional gender roles, males being the “providers” might more often experience work-to-family conflict, work supports thus are more beneficial for males in managing work-to-family conflict. In contrast, females being the “caregivers” might more often experience family-to-work conflict, family support thus might have a more powerful influence on women to decrease the experience of family-to-work conflict. However, as discussed above, the premise is that social support can help decrease the negative impact of the stressor on the level of work-family conflict.

Following the discussion of the moderating effect of age on the positive relations between support and time spent on family responsibilities, if the obligation towards family members was the underlying reason, the impact of support on time spent on family responsibilities might be stronger for the female employees. This is based on the traditional gender roles, which define women as the caregivers and kin-keepers in the family (Dykstra & Fokkema, 2012), and the belief that fulfilling family obligations should be reciprocal in China (Kim et al., 2008). Thus, the sense of family obligation and the expectation from family members regarding providing familial assistance might be stronger for women (Fuligni & Pedersen, 2002). For example, when the husband assumes that he is the “provider” and brings wealth back to the family, the husband might expect that his spouse should spend more time on family responsibilities (e.g., cooking, taking care of children, etc.) as a return. Therefore, this study hypothesises that:

*H4: Gender moderates the relationship between family support and total time used on family responsibility in that the effect of spouse (H4a), elderly parents (H4b), and sibling (H4c) support on total time used on family responsibility will be stronger for the female employees.*

In addition, based on 1) the increased role demand during middle age might increase the frequency of the social exchange (e.g., receive/provide care); and 2) the gendered expectation; the present study explores the interaction effect of age and gender on this positive relationship (see Figure 6.5) and further hypothesises that:

*H5: There is an interaction effect of age and gender on the relationship between family support and total time used on family responsibility in that the strength of the relationships between spouse support and time used on family (H5a), between elderly parents support and time used on family (H5b), and between sibling support and time used on family (H5c) will be strongest for the female employees in 30-44 age group.*

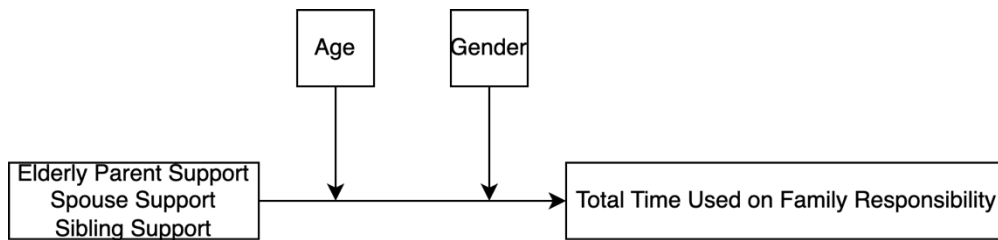


Figure 6.5 The Moderating Effect of Age and Gender on the Relationship Between Parent/Spouse/Sibling Support and Total Time Used on Family Responsibility.

## 6.6. Part B – The Moderating Effect of Age and Gender on the Relationships Between Work-Family Conflict and its Direct Antecedents

As mentioned in the previous chapter, work-family guilt is still an understudied topic in the field of work-family conflict (Goncalves et al., 2018). Among these limited work-family guilt studies, most of them are focused on general guilt being the outcome of work-family conflict without categorised it into work-to-family and family-to-work guilt (Korabik, 2015), in that it appears only gender (e.g., Goncalves et al., 2018; Gomez-Ortiz & Roldan-Barrios, 2021) but not age has been studied in the generation process of work-family guilt during recent years. Hence, for this reason, work-family guilt and its specific term (work-to-family and family-to-work guilt) will be viewed as a broader term (i.e., emotional distress, the stain-based antecedent of work-family conflict) for the purpose of discussion and exploration of the moderating and interaction effects of age and gender on the predictive relationship between work-family guilt and conflict.

### 6.6.1. The Moderating Effect of Age

Previous work-family conflict studies found that there is a curvilinear relationship (inverted-u) between age and work-family conflict, due to the different role demands and the ability to manage the conflict during different life stages (e.g., Huffman et al., 2013; Matthew et al., 2010).

The rationale for this curvilinear relationship is explained by Huffman et al. (2013) and Hill et al. (2014): An employee in young adulthood is still exporting his/her life and has just transferred from school to the workplace; therefore, having fewer job and family demands/responsibilities, and a lower level of work-family conflict. As employees enter middle adulthood, they start to face more responsibilities and perceive higher expectations from both work and family domains which, in turn,

increase the work-family conflict; additionally, despite the rising role responsibilities and expectations, employees in middle adulthood often have fewer available resources to help them cope with and manage role conflicts when compared to employees in their later adulthood, which might further exacerbate work-family conflict. Last, employees of older age generally have a lower level of work-family conflict, a stronger boundary between work and family domain, and a greater ability to manage such conflict. Zapf et al. (2016) also explained that the management skills of work-family conflict are an ongoing developmental process that continually improves with age. Thus, from a resource perspective, it might be argued that the strength of the relationships between work-family conflict and its antecedents may be strongest for younger age employees and decrease over time, for example, older employees may be more mature in handling workplace difficulties than their younger colleagues since they have more work resources and experiences, thereby reducing its effect on work-to-family conflict.

Furthermore, two different perspectives might also be used to support the argument above. First, Allen and Finkelstein (2014) and Carstensen et al. (2011) explained that because temperament and emotional reactions would change within the ageing process, older employees may not react negatively to work stress as employees at younger ages, which minimising the negative spillover and thus reducing the experience of work-family conflict. Second, Dykstra and Fokkema (2012) suggested that younger adults might have higher family obligations, such as filial obligations towards family members. The rationale is that as children enter adulthood, it is the first time in their lives to have the ability to pay back their parents for their investment, care, and/or sacrifice for them (Rossi & Rossi, 2018). Hence, it is possible that the stronger family obligation during younger adulthood may create the thought that I should do more for the family, such as spending more time providing care for the family members because it is considered one way of return or feeling more guilt when cannot provide care for the family members, consequently, increasing the level of family-to-work conflict.

Therefore, for these reasons, it may be expected that:

*H6: Age moderates the relationship between work-family conflict and its antecedents in that the effect of work interpersonal conflict on work-to-family conflict will be strongest for the employees in the 18-29 age group (H6a), whereas the effect of total time used on family responsibility (H6b) and family-to-work guilt (H6c) on family-to-work conflict will be strongest for employees in the 18-29 age group.*

#### 6.6.2. The Moderating Effect of Gender

Men and women in the stress response might be different when associated with the traditional gender care role; the overwhelming caregiving responsibility and women generally more salient to the family role has resulted in the family-related stressors having a greater impact on women (e.g., Cinamon & Rich, 2002; Blanch & Aluja, 2012). In other words, traditionally, family-related stressors might have a stronger effect on the level of family-to-work conflict for female employees, whereas work-related stressors might have a stronger effect on the level of work-to-family conflict for the male employees (e.g., Cinamon & Rich, 2002).

However, Kinnunen and Mauno (1998) argued that change in society and workforce, such as the increased number of dual-career couples and single parents, has increased 'providers' (i.e., men) in family activities, such as fatherhood. Consequently, the increased care role for men and the thought of being the provider of the family might result in male employees becoming more easily affected by both work and family-related stressors and having a higher risk of experiencing both work-to-family and family-to-work conflict (e.g., Byron, 2005; Yang et al., 2000).

In addition, the qualitative findings from Study 1 regarding the gender role and the one-sided supportive relationship between husband and wife (theme 2) might come from a different angle to explain why men have a higher risk of experiencing work-family conflicts. For example, due to the influence of the traditional gender care role, the wife gets used to taking on more family responsibilities, thereby might perceive the family-related stressor as less stressful (e.g., taking care of children), consequently decreasing the perception of family-to-work conflict; on the other hand, as the husband gets used to being supported by the wife regarding the family care responsibilities,

when the husband has to take time off from work due to family issues, he might perceive this situation more stressful and in turn, increase the level of family-to-work conflict. Therefore, the present study hypothesises that:

*H7: Gender moderates the relationship between work-family conflict and its antecedents in that the effect of work interpersonal conflict on work-to-family conflict (H7a), total time used on family responsibility on family-to-work conflict (H7b), and family-to-work guilt on family-to-work conflict will be stronger for the male employees.*

In addition, based on the above reviews regarding the moderating effect of age and gender on the relationships between work-family conflict and its antecedents (see Figure 6.6), the present study further asserts that:

*H8: There is an interaction effect of age and gender on the relationships between work-family conflict and its antecedents in that the strength of the relationship between work interpersonal conflict and work-to-family conflict will be strongest for the male employees in the 18-29 age group (H8a), whereas the strength of the relationships between total time used on family responsibility and family-to-work conflict (H8b), and between family-to-work guilt and family-to-work conflict (H8c) will be strongest for the male employees in the 18-29 age group.*

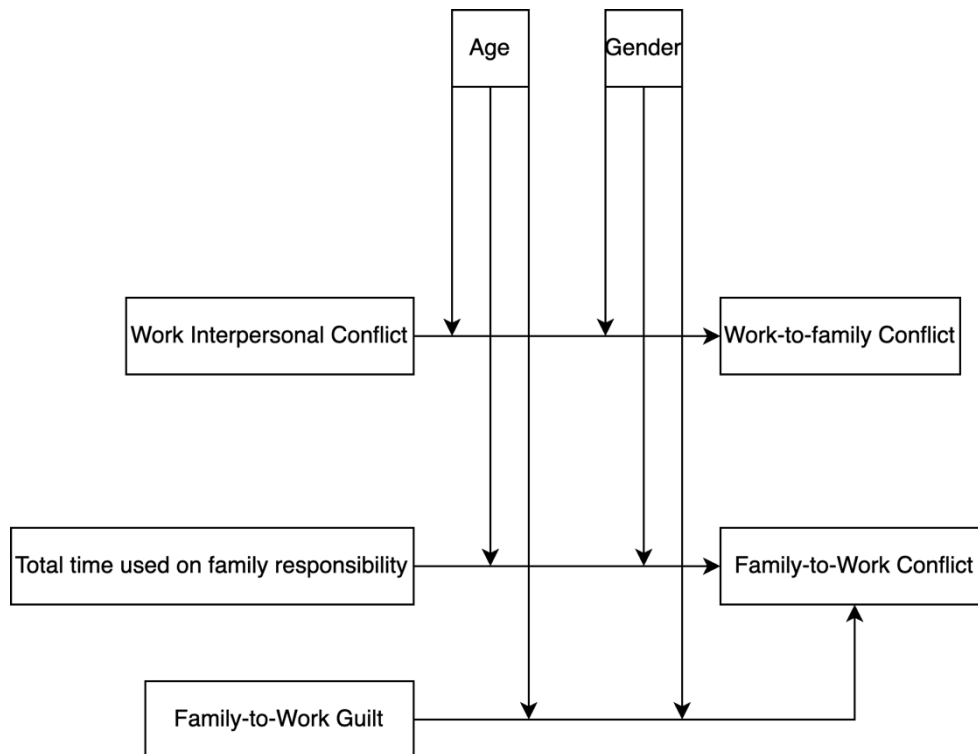


Figure 6.6 The Moderating Effect of Age and Gender on the Relationships Between Work-Family Conflict and its Direct Antecedents.

### 6.6.3. The Moderated-Mediation Model: The Moderating Effect of Age and Gender on the Mediation Model of Work Hours, Work-to-Family Guilt, and Work-to-Family Conflict

In this simplified moderated-mediation model, how age and gender might moderate the relationships between work hours and work-to-family conflict, and between work-to-family guilt and work-to-family conflict have been discussed in the previous section (the moderating effect of age and gender on the relationships between work-family conflict and its antecedents). Thus, the present study hypothesises that:

*H9: Age moderates the relationships between work hours and work-to-family conflict (H9a) and between work-to-family guilt and work-to-family conflict (H9b) in that the moderation effect will be strongest for the employees in the 18-29 age group.*

*H10: Gender moderates the relationships between work-family conflict and its work-related antecedents in that the moderation effect of gender on the relationship between work hours and*



*work-to-family conflict (H10a) and between work-to-family guilt and work-to-family conflict (H10b) are stronger for male employees.*

The following of this section focused on discussing the moderating effect of age and gender on the relationship between work hours and work-to-family guilt.

#### 6.6.3.1. The Moderating Effect of Age

The researcher believes that age does not moderate the relationship between work hours and work-to-family guilt. The rationale is that the effect of work hours on an individual's wellbeing, such as emotional distresses (guilt), might depend on how the employee values his/her work and family roles, for example, employees who place more value on their work might simply feel lesser negative impacts on their wellbeing when working long hours (Matthews et al., 2012). Moreover, Roberts and Mroczek (2008) suggested that value is one characteristic and personality variable that forms during the process of adolescent and cultural socialisation; once it is formed, it becomes stable during adulthood. In addition, when associating the value of individuals with their age, age itself might not change the value system, but age-related life circumstances or major life events do; for example, an employee who recently becomes a parent may change the role salience from work to the family domain and value his/her family more than the job; consequently, the impact of work hours on wellbeing (i.e., work-to-family guilt) might become stronger (e.g., Gouveia et al., 2015; Maio, 2010). Thus, the moderating effect of age was not tested on the relationship between work hours and work-to-family guilt, and Hayes' Process model 67 was adopted for this moderated-mediation model.

#### 6.6.3.2. The Moderating Effect of Gender

Rivera-Torres et al. (2013) found that there are gender differences in the perception and reaction to work demands, such as the workload and work time. This is evident in a more recent study by Weston et al. (2019), which found that when comparing the negative impact of work hours between men and women, female employees who work longer hours would have a negative impact on their wellbeing but not on male employees. In addition, the traditional gender role argues that

the salience of work and family roles is different between men and women, and women are generally more salient to the family role (Calvo-Salguero et al., 2010), with the definition of work-to-family guilt being the sense of guilt that generated from being a good worker violated being a good family member (Korabik, 2015), and the scarcity theory (Marks, 1977) suggests that time is one limited resource, spent more time in one role (e.g., work role) would consequently affect the available time for another role (e.g., family role). Hence, it is possible that working longer hours might have a greater impact on female employees regarding the feeling of work-to-family guilt due to the influence of role salience.

Thus, the present study hypothesises that:

*H11: Gender moderates the relationships between work hours and work-to-family guilt in that the effect of work hours is stronger for female employees.*

In addition, from the above literature reviews, the present study further hypothesises that:

*H12: There is an interaction effect of age and gender on the relationships between work-family conflict and its work-related antecedents in that the strength of the relationships between work hours and work-to-family conflict (H12a) and between work-to-family guilt and work-to-family conflict (H12b) will be strongest for the male employee in the 30-44 age group.*

Figure 6.7 presents the moderated-mediation model.

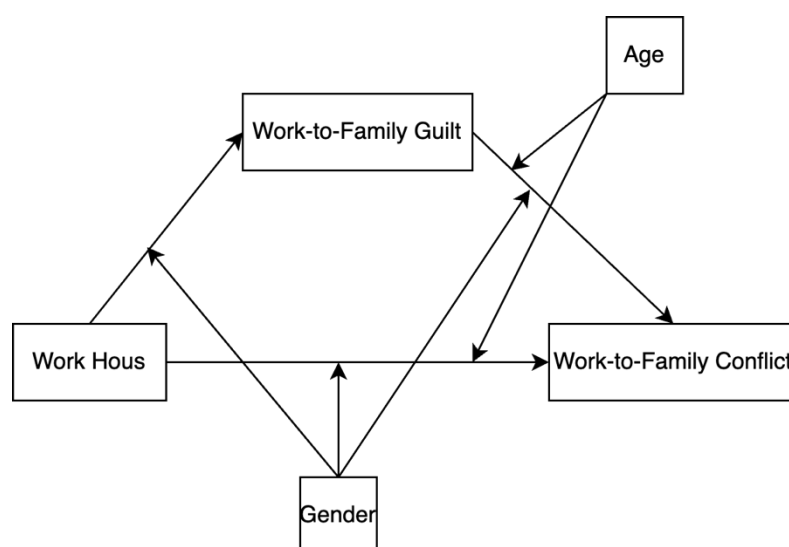


Figure 6.7 The Moderated-Mediation Model.

## 6.7. Part C – The Moderating Effect of Age and Gender on the Relationships Between Work-Family Conflict and its Consequences

Due to the insufficient studies that investigated the age and gender difference in the path relations between work-family conflict and its consequences, and several of Study 2a's findings, such as work-family conflict was positively related to life satisfaction, were inconsistent with the previous study. This section is thus based on COR theory, selection, optimisation, and compensation (SOC) theory, the changing care role, and the qualitative findings from Study 1 to explore the moderating and interaction effects of age and gender on work-family conflict and its consequences. All categorised work-family conflict consequences (e.g., work-to-family guilt represents a strain-based consequence of family-to-work conflict) were treated as the outcome of work-family conflict.

### 6.7.1. The Moderating Effect of Age

Treadway et al. (2005) based on the COR theory argued that there is a stressor-strain relationship and that such a relationship might be moderated by age. The rationale is that individuals may exposure to more life experiences in the form of stressful events during the ageing process, thereby increasing the demands on resources to manage the stressors, ultimately depleting the resources pool and increasing the strength of the stressor-strain relationship. This argument is supported by Matthews, Bulger et al.'s (2010) study, which drew on Treadway et al.'s (2005) study and found that age moderated the relationship between work-to-family conflict (a stressor) and family-to-work conflict (a strain outcome) in which the strength of such relationship became strongest for the older employee (aged 46 and above).

In addition, with the influence of the continuing decrease in health conditions during the ageing process (Lye, 1996), and COR theory highlighted that strength and/or energy might be damaged when the individual is experiencing a stressful event; thus, older employees experiencing work-family conflict (a stressful event) might be easier to feel physical exhaustion, thereby having a greater impact on their performance when compared to the employees in the younger ages (Yuan et al., 2022). Hence, it is plausible that the negative impacts (i.e., increase in interpersonal conflict and

emotional distress, decrease in performance) of work-family conflict will be strongest for older employees.

Furthermore, the results of Study 2a highlighted that work-family conflict was positively related to life satisfaction. It was discussed that this might be due to the influence of Chinese cultures, such as work is for the benefit of the family and time spent on family responsibilities means that the individual is fulfilling his/her family obligation, resulting in the experience of work-family conflicts is seen as self-sacrifice for the loved one, thereby increasing the life satisfaction.

If this was the case, the positive effect of work-family conflict on life satisfaction may increase within the ageing process. This is drawing on the SOC theory, which argues that individuals will change their life goals from occupational matters to more personal matters during ageing, such as focusing on and placing more importance on family members (Huffman et al., 2013).

Furthermore, studies by Xu and Chi (2011) and Xu (2019) both found that older age Chinese who sacrifice more for their family members, such as providing instrumental support (e.g., financial assistance and caregiving), would enhance their feelings of self-worth, self-esteem, and self-efficacy, thereby boosting psychological wellbeing and increasing life satisfaction. Thus, it is plausible that when work-family conflict is seen as self-sacrifice for the loved one, the strength of the positive relationship between work-family conflict and life satisfaction will increase within the ageing process. Hence, the present study hypothesises that:

*H13: Age moderates the relationship between work-family conflict and its consequences in that the strength of the relationships between work-to-family conflict and family interpersonal conflict (H13a), family-to-work guilt (H13b), family performance (H13c), and life satisfaction (H13d); and between family-to-work conflict and work interpersonal conflict (H13e), work-to-family guilt (H13f), work performance (H13g), and life satisfaction (H13h), respectively, will be strongest in the 45-59 age group.*

### 6.7.2. The Moderating Effect of Gender

Previous studies (e.g., Frone et al., 1996; Gerstel & Sarkisian, 2006; McElwain et al., 2005) based on the influence of traditional gender roles and the sex-role socialisation suggested that, because males are the breadwinner, men might experience greater work-to-family conflict and its negative impact might be stronger; in contrast, because females are socialised to being the caregivers of the family, women might have more family-to-work conflict, and such conflict has a greater impact on their wellbeing. However, as mentioned above (section 6.6.2), the traditional gender care roles are changing; the changing society, workplace, and family structure have resulted in more men being involved in family responsibilities (e.g., Kinnunen & Mauno, 1998; Olah et al., 2018). Furthermore, some female interviewees of Study 1 responded they have become used to family stressors, such as providing care for their children, which might have caused them to feel less stress when experiencing family-to-work conflict. In other words, it is plausible that due to the learned helplessness mechanism (e.g., Maier & Seligman, 1976; Howell, 2014), repeated exposure to the stimuli (work-family conflict) might have numbed females' response to such a phenomenon and lessened its negative impacts, such as weakening the strength between work-family conflict and its consequences. Therefore, the present study hypothesises that:

*H14: Gender moderates the relationship between work-family conflict and its consequences in that the strength of the relationships between work-to-family conflict and family interpersonal conflict (H14a), family-to-work guilt (H14b), family performance (H14c), and life satisfaction (H14d); and between family-to-work conflict and work interpersonal conflict (H14e), work-to-family guilt (H14f), work performance (H14g), and life satisfaction (H14h), respectively, will be stronger in male employees.*

Last, the present study further hypothesises that:

*H15: There is an interaction effect of age and gender on the relationships between work-family conflict and its antecedent in that the strength of the relationships between work-to-family conflict and family interpersonal conflict (H15a), family-to-work guilt (H15b), family performance*

(H15c), and life satisfaction (H15d); and between family-to-work conflict and work interpersonal conflict (H15e), work-to-family guilt (H15f), work performance (H15g), and life satisfaction (H15h), respectively, will be strongest in the male employees aged 45-59.

Figure 6.8 represents the moderating effects of age and gender on the relationships between work-family conflict and its consequences.

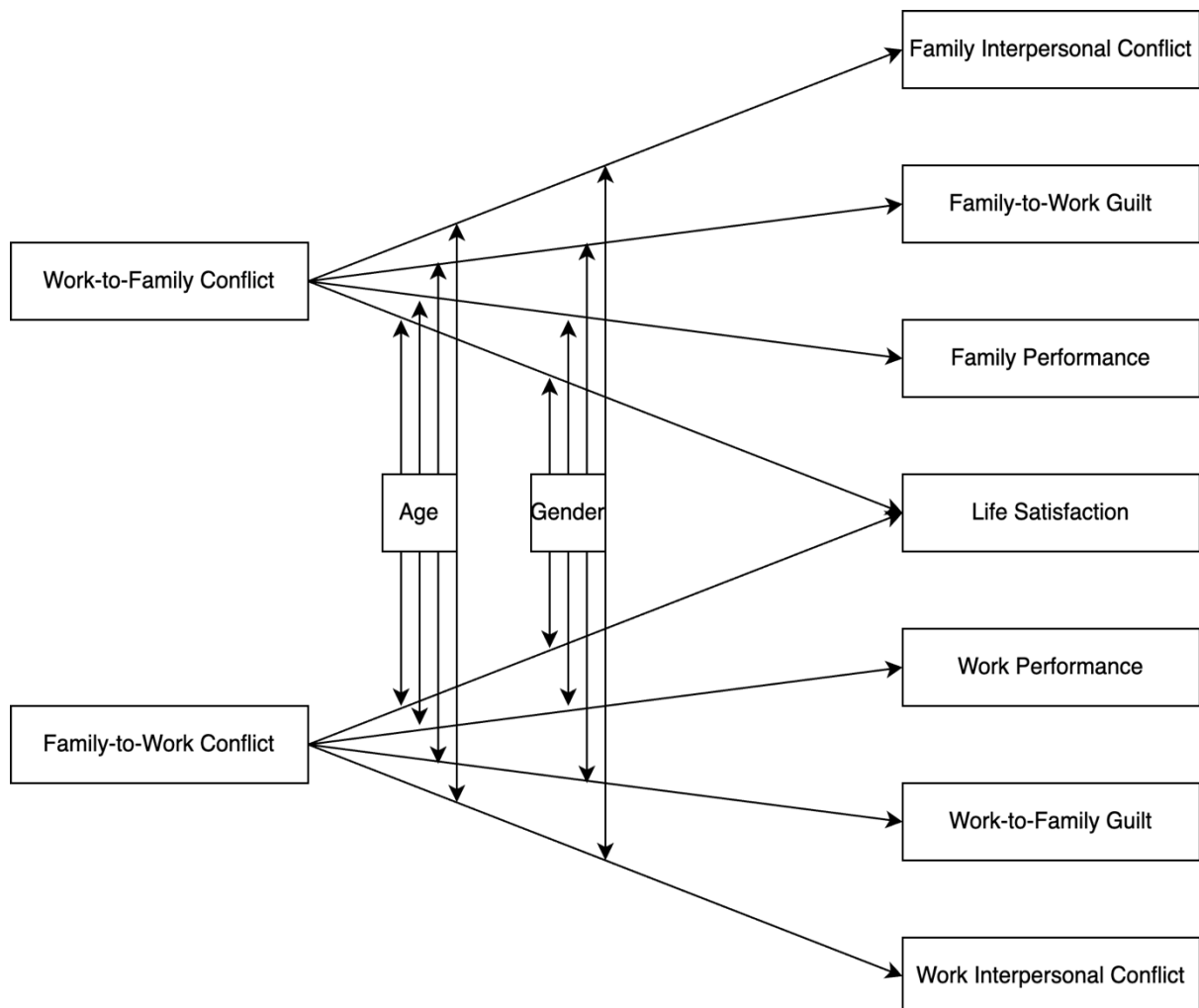


Figure 6.8 The Moderation Effect of Age and Gender on the Relationships Between Work-Family Conflict and its Consequences.

## 6.8. Methodology

Because the present study used the same dataset as Study 2a, to avoid duplication, the sections of 'participants', 'measures', and 'procedure', and the Means, Standard Deviations, and variables correlations will not be provided here; all of these can be found in the previous chapter (pages 104-118). The present study focuses on the moderation and interaction effects of age and gender on the different relations between work-family conflict and its related variables. Thus,

gender was dummy-coded in the present study, male coded 1, female coded 2. In addition, because the present study split the age into three different age groups, participants were asked to write down their ages in the questionnaire instead of choosing the age range. Thus, age was recorded into a different variable; participants in the age range between 18-29 were recorded into 1, in the age range between 30-44 age group were recorded into 2, and in the age range between 45-59 were recorded into 3, after that, the specified coding system in Hayes' PROCESS will be used for the coding of this new age variable (more details will be provided in next section). In addition, after splitting the 520 participants into three different age groups, a total of 221 participants were in the 18-29 age group, the number of participants in the 30-44 age group was 216, and 83 participants were in the 45-59 age group.

#### 6.8.1. Data Analysis

Hayes' PROCESS v4.0 analysis (model 3 and model 67) was conducted in the present study in order to investigate the moderating and interaction effects of age and gender on the relationships between work-family conflict and its related variables. The alpha level for this study was set at 0.05. All confidence in output was set at 95%. The number of bootstrap samples for bootstrap confidence intervals was set at 5000. In addition, because variables that more than 2 groups must be specified and coded in Hayes' PROCESS, the indicator coding system in Hayes' PROCESS was used for specifying and coding the age groups (multi-categorical variable). By utilising the indicator coding system, the youngest age group (18-29 years old) was used as a reference group for the middle age (30-44 years old) and older age (45-59 years old) groups (Hayes, 2018).

Hayes' PROCESS model 3 was used to find out the moderating and interaction effects of age and gender on all the path relations in Part A (i.e., work/family environment and the antecedents of work-family conflict), all but three path relations in Part B (i.e., work-family conflict and its direct antecedents), and all path relations in Part C (i.e., work-family conflict and its consequences). Moreover, Model 67 was used to analyse the moderating and interaction effects of age and gender

on the mediation model in Part B (i.e., the route of work hours, work-to-family guilt, and work-to-family conflict).

## 6.8.2. Results

### 6.8.2.1. Part A – Work/Family Environment and the Antecedents of Work-Family Conflict

Regarding the moderation model of age and gender on the relationship between access to flexibility and work hours, the results of the model summary revealed that the overall model fit of this model was significant ( $F(7, 512) = 2.97, p = .005, R^2 = .04$ ). However, the results indicated that both age ( $F(2, 512) = .02, p = .98, \text{change } R^2 = .0001$ ) and gender ( $F(1, 512) = .04, p = .84, \text{change } R^2 = .0001$ ) had no moderating effect on the relationship between access to flexibility and work hours. In addition, the interaction effect of age and gender ( $F(3, 512) = .04, p = .99, \text{change } R^2 = .0002$ ) was not significant, which indicated that the interaction of age and gender had no moderating effect on the relationship between access to flexibility and work hours. Thus, H1 and H2 are not supported.

Moreover, the results of the moderation analysis revealed that the overall model fits regarding the models of the moderating effect of age and gender on the relationships between spouse support ( $F(7, 512) = 4.39, p < .001, R^2 = .06$ ), elderly parents support ( $F(7, 512) = 4.57, p < .001, R^2 = .06$ ), and sibling support ( $F(7, 512) = 6.39, p = .99, R^2 = .0002$ ) and total time used on family responsibility were all significant respectively.

However, the results indicated that age ( $F(2, 512) = .53, p = .59, \text{change } R^2 = .002$ ) and gender ( $F(1, 512) = .007, p = .94, \text{change } R^2 = .000$ ) were not the moderators on the relationship between spouse support and family time used and that no interaction effect of age and gender on this relationship ( $F(3, 512) = .37, p = .77, \text{change } R^2 = .002$ ). Thus, H3a, H4a, and H5a are not supported. Moreover, the results indicated that both age ( $F(2, 512) = .47, p = .62, \text{change } R^2 = .002$ ) and gender ( $F(1, 512) = .16, p = .69, \text{change } R^2 = .0003$ ) were not the moderator of the relationship between elderly parents support and family time used and that no interaction effect of age and gender on this relationship ( $F(3, 512) = .37, p = .77, \text{change } R^2 = .002$ ). Thus, H3b, H4b, and H5b are not supported.



However, it is worth mentioning that the interaction effect of elderly parents' support and the middle age group on family time used was significant ( $b = 3.72$ ,  $t(1.68) = 2.21$ ,  $p = .03$ ), which indicated that age moderated the relationship between elderly parents support and family time used but only for younger and middle age group comparison and that the effect of elderly parents support on family time used was stronger for the middle age group (see Figure 6.9).

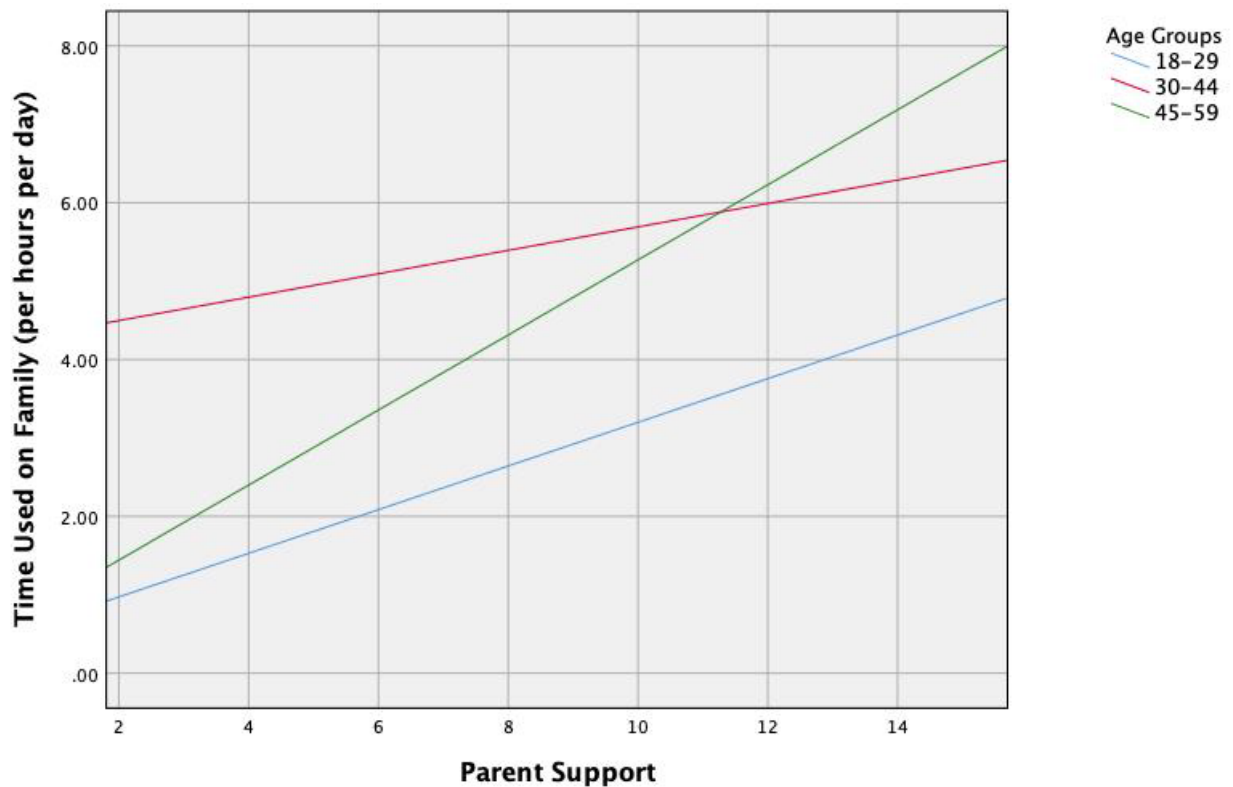


Figure 6.9 The Comparison of the Moderation Effect of Age on the Relationship Between Elderly Parents' Support and Total Time Used on Family Responsibilities.

Furthermore, the results of the moderation analysis revealed that gender ( $b = .29$ ,  $t(.13) = 2.26$ ,  $p = .02$ ) but not age ( $F(2, 512) = 1.17$ ,  $p = .31$ , change  $R^2 = .004$ ) had a moderating effect on the relationship between sibling support and family time used; the positive coefficient ( $b = .29$ ) revealed that when the value of gender is bigger (i.e., gender = 2), the effect of sibling support on family time used became stronger, in other words, the effect of sibling support on family time used was stronger for female employees (Figure 6.10). Hence, H3c is not supported, but H4c is supported.

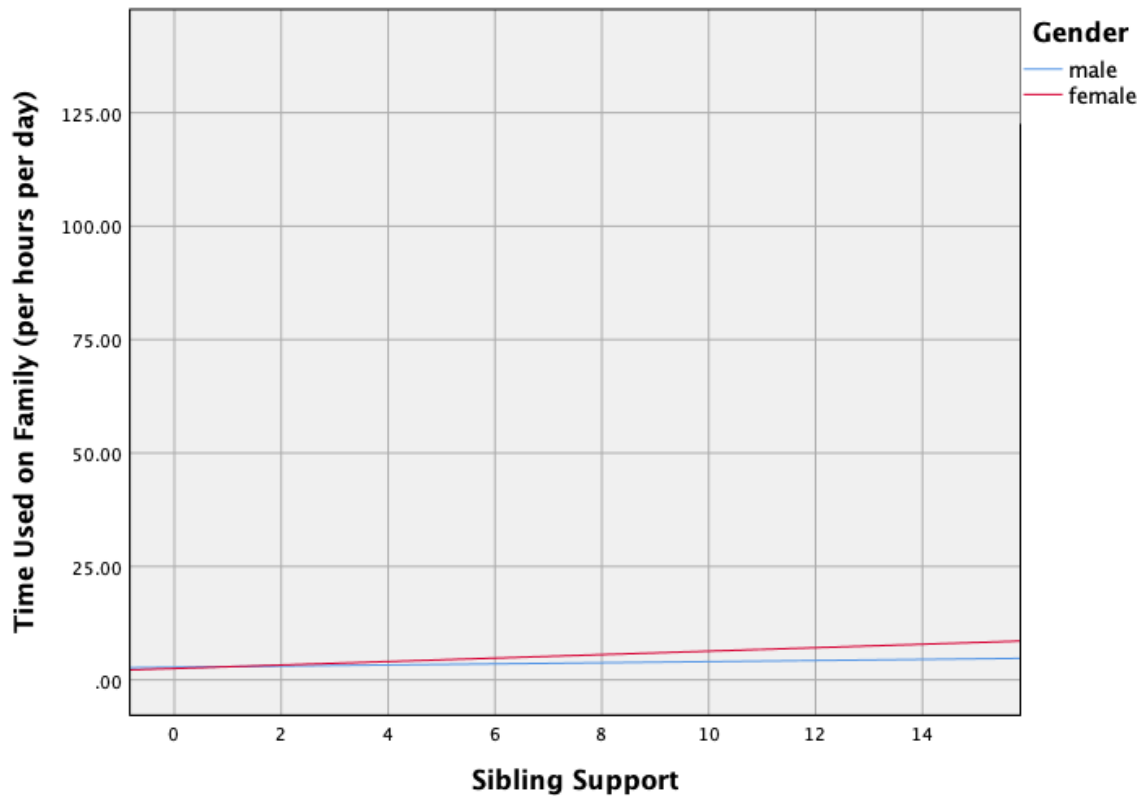


Figure 6.10 The Comparison of the Moderation Effect of Gender on the Relationship Between Sibling Support and Total Time Used on Family Responsibilities.

In addition, the results did not support the hypothesis (H5c) regarding the interaction effect of age and gender on sibling support and family time used ( $F(3, 512) = 2.34, p = .07$ , change  $R^2 = .01$ ). However, age and gender had an interaction effect in two specific terms, which were female in the younger age and middle age groups, in that the effect of sibling support on family time used was stronger for the female employees in the middle age group (see Table 6.1).

Table 6.1 Conditional Effects of Age and Gender on the Relationship Between Sibling Support and Total Time Used on Family Responsibility. ( $N = 520$ ).

Gender	Age	Effect	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
1	1	.0449	.1239	.3621	.7174	-.1985	.2882
1	2	.1851	.1109	1.6697	.0956	-.0327	.4030
1	3	-.1303	.2128	-.6124	.5405	-.5483	.2877
2	1	.3334	.1107	3.0121	.0027	.1159	.5508
2	2	.4737	.1205	3.9325	.0001	.2470	.7103
2	3	.1582	.2149	.7363	.4619	-.2640	.5804

Note. for gender, 1 = male, 2 = female; for age, 1 = 18-29 age group, 2 = 30-44 age group, and 3 = 45-59 age group

#### 6.8.2.2. Part B – Work-Family Conflict and its Antecedents

The results of the model summaries of the moderation analysis (model 2) revealed that all age, gender, and work interpersonal conflict predicted work-to-family conflict ( $F(7, 512) = 8.30, p$

<.001,  $R^2 = .10$ ); all age, gender, and total time used on family responsibility predicted family-to-work conflict, respectively  $F(7, 512) = 4.04, p = .0003, R^2 = .05$ ); and all age, gender, and family-to-work guilt predicted family-to-work conflict ( $F(7, 512) = 8.15, p < .001, R^2 = .10$ ).

Regarding the moderating effect of age and gender on the relationship between work interpersonal conflict and work-to-family conflict. The results indicated that gender ( $b = -.20, t(.10) = -2.01, p = .05$ ) but not age ( $F(2, 512) = 0.11, p = .90, \text{change } R^2 = .0004$ ) had moderating effect on this relationship; the negative coefficient ( $b = -.20$ ) indicated that the effect of work interpersonal conflict on work-to-family conflict will be stronger for male employees (see Figure 6.11). Hence, H6a is not supported, but H7a is supported.



Figure 6.11 The Comparison of the Moderation Effect of Gender on the Relationship Between Work Interpersonal Conflict and Work-To-Family Conflict.

In addition, the results did not support the hypothesis (H8a) regarding the interaction effect of age and gender on work interpersonal conflict and work-to-family conflict ( $F(3, 512) = 1.38, p = .25, \text{change } R^2 = .007$ ). However, age and gender had an interaction effect in five specific terms, which were male in all age groups and female in the younger age and middle age groups, in that the

effect of work interpersonal conflict on work-to-family conflict was strongest for the male employees in the younger age group (see Table 6.2).

Table 6.2 Conditional Effects of Age and Gender on the Relationship Between Work Interpersonal Conflict and Work-To-Family Conflict. (N = 520).

Gender	Age	Effect	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
1	1	.4311	.0877	4.9172	.000	.2588	.6033
1	2	.4005	.0875	4.5765	.000	.2286	.5724
1	3	.3660	.1231	2.9736	.0031	.1242	.6079
2	1	.2280	.0947	2.4069	.0164	.0419	.4142
2	2	.1975	.0935	2.1126	.0351	.0138	.3811
2	3	.1630	.1445	1.1282	.2598	-.1209	.4469

Note. for gender, 1 = male, 2 = female; for age, 1 = 18-29 age group, 2 = 30-44 age group, and 3 = 45-59 age group

Moreover, for the relationship between family time used and family-to-work conflict, the results revealed gender ( $b = -.18$ ,  $t(.06) = -3.13$ ,  $p = .002$ ) but not age ( $F(2, 512) = 3.00$ ,  $p = .053$ , change  $R^2 = .01$ ) had moderating effect on this relationship; the negative coefficient ( $b = -.18$ ) indicated that the effect of total time used on family responsibility on family-to-work conflict was stronger for male employees; hence, H6b is not supported, but H7b is supported. Although age is not the moderator, however, the interaction of total time used on family responsibility and older age group is significant ( $b = -.20$ ,  $t(.08) = -2.35$ ,  $p = .02$ ), which indicates that age has a moderating effect but only for younger and older age group comparison, and that the effect of family time used on family-to-work conflict was stronger for the employees in the younger age group (see Figure 6.12).

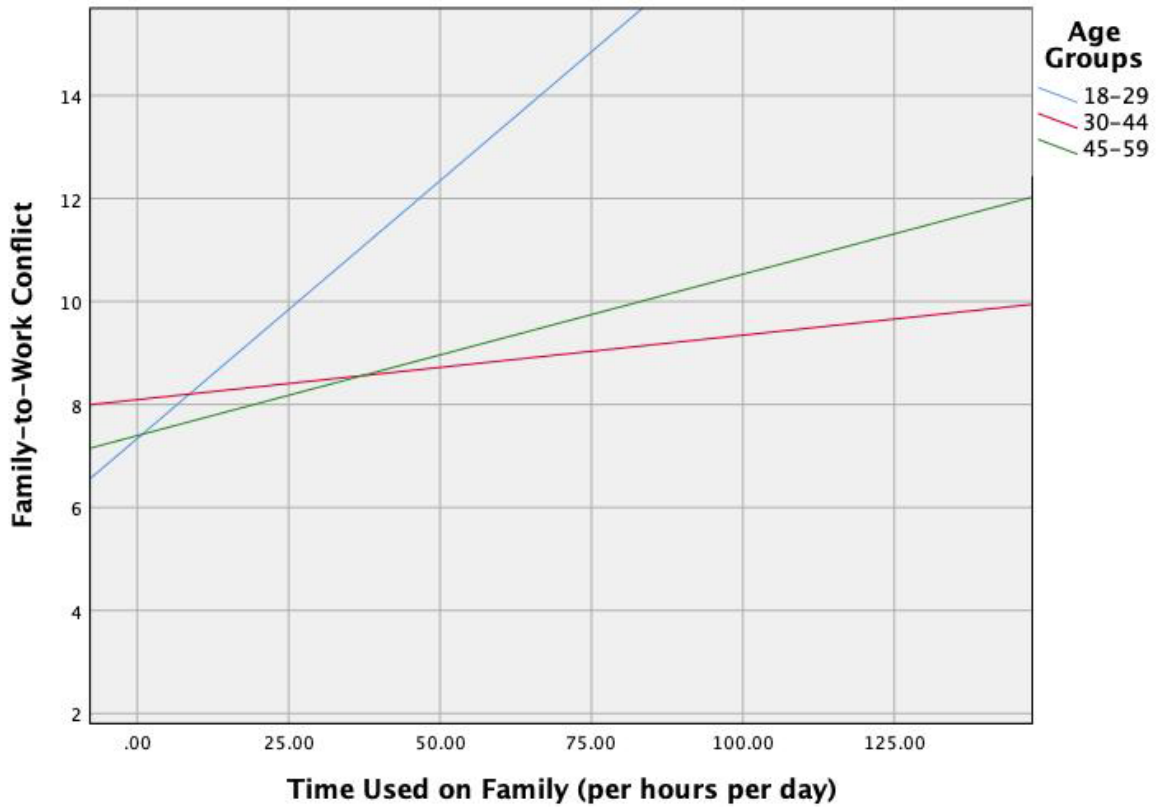


Figure 6.12 The Comparison of the Moderation Effect of Age on the Relationship Between Total Time Used on Family Responsibility and Family-To-Work Conflict.

In addition, the interaction effect of age and gender on this relation was spotted ( $F(3, 512) = 6.66, p = .003$ , change  $R^2 = .03$ ) in that the effect of family time used on family-to-work conflict was strongest for the male employees in younger age group (see Table 6.3); thus, H8b is supported.

Table 6.3 Conditional Effects of Age and Gender on the Relationship Between Total Time Used on Family Responsibility and Family-to-Work Conflict. (N = 520).

Gender	Age	Effect	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
1	1	.2445	.0601	4.0711	.0001	.1265	.3625
1	2	.1885	.0580	3.2481	.0012	.0745	.3026
1	3	.0464	.0624	.7445	.4569	-.0761	.1689
2	1	.0639	.0411	1.5549	.1206	-.0168	.1446
2	2	.0079	.0169	.4690	.6392	-.0252	.0411
2	3	-.1342	.0817	-1.6425	.1011	-.2947	.0263

Note. for gender, 1 = male, 2 = female; for age, 1 = 18-29 age group, 2 = 30-44 age group, and 3 = 45-59 age group

Furthermore, the results indicated that gender ( $b = -.10, t(.05) = -2.17, p = .03$ ) but not age ( $F(2, 512) = .64, p = .53$ , change  $R^2 = .00$ ) had moderating effect on the relationship between family-to-work guilt and family-to-work conflict, the negative coefficient ( $b = -.10$ ) indicated that the effect

of family-to-work guilt on family-to-work conflict was stronger for male employees (see Figure 6.13); hence, H6c is not supported, but H7c is supported.

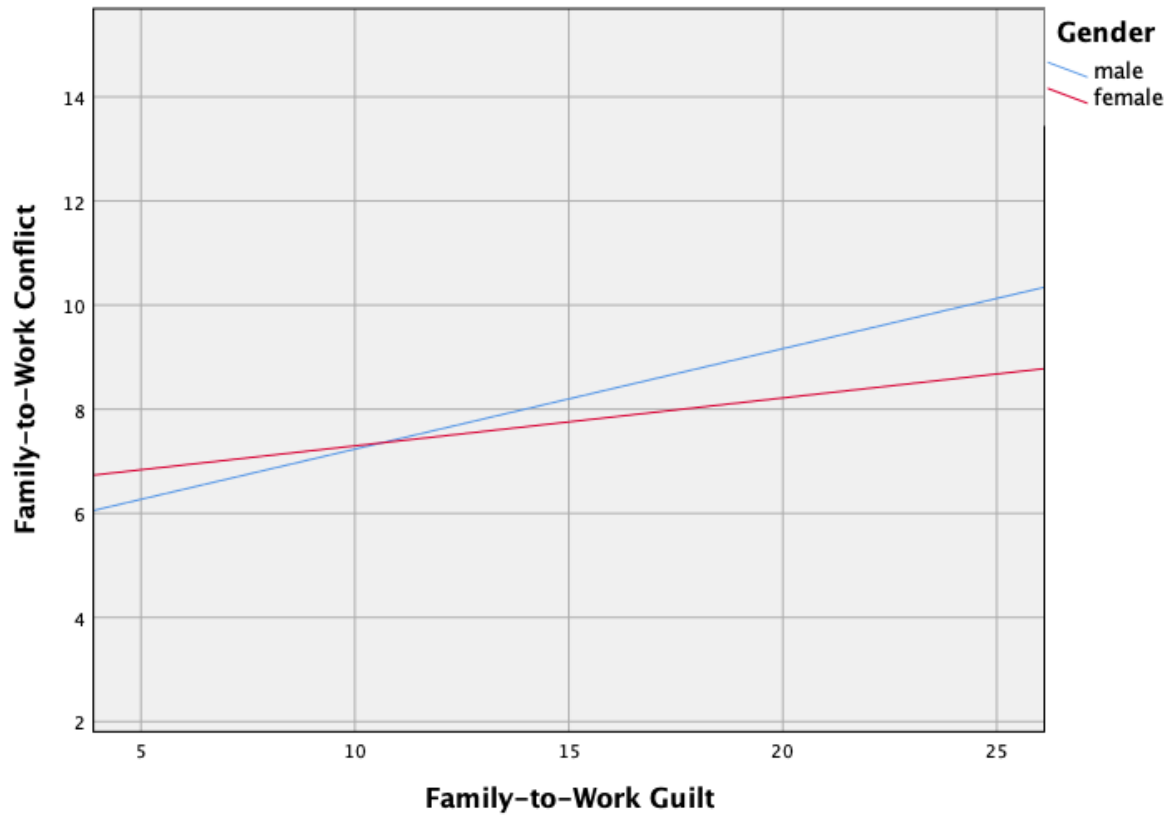


Figure 6.13 The Comparison of the Moderation Effect of Gender on the Relationship Between Family-to-Work Guilt and Family-to-Work Conflict.

In addition, no interaction effect of age and gender on this relation was non-significant ( $F(3, 512) = 1.9, p = .13, \text{change } R^2 = .01$ ); hence, H8c is not supported. However, the interaction effect of age and gender was spotted in 4 specific terms, which are male and female in the younger and middle age groups, in that the effect of family-to-work guilt on family-to-work conflict was strongest in the male employees in the middle age group (see Table 6.4).

Table 6.4 Conditional Effects of Age and Gender on the Relationship Between Family-to-Work Guilt and Family-to-Work Conflict. (N = 520).

Gender	Age	Effect	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
1	1	.1891	.0431	4.3847	.0000	.1044	.2738
1	2	.2117	.0401	5.2851	.0000	.1330	.2904
1	3	.1259	.0676	1.8609	.0633	-.0070	.2587
2	1	.0881	.0386	2.2818	.0229	.0122	.1639
2	2	.1106	.0436	2.5349	.0115	.0249	.1964
2	3	.0248	.0764	.3248	.7455	-.1253	.1749

Note. for gender, 1 = male, 2 = female; for age, 1 = 18-29 age group, 2 = 30-44 age group, and 3 = 45-59 age group

Furthermore, the results of the moderated-mediation model (model 67) revealed that, first, the model that considered work-to-family guilt as an outcome variable was significant ( $F(3, 516) = 2.78, p = .04, R^2 = .02$ ). However, the results indicated that gender was not the moderator of the relationship between work hours and work-to-family guilt ( $F(1, 516) = .006, p = .94, \text{change } R^2 = .00$ ); thus, H11 is not supported. Second, the model that considered work-to-family conflict as an outcome variable was significant ( $F(11, 508) = 9.90, p < .001, R^2 = .17$ ). However, both age ( $F(2, 508) = .28, p = .76, \text{change } R^2 = .001$ ) and gender ( $F(1, 508) = .98, p = .32, \text{change } R^2 = .002$ ) were not the moderators on the relationship between work hours and work-to-family conflict; hence, H9a and H10a are not supported. In addition, the interaction effect of age and gender on work hours and work-to-family conflict was non-significant ( $F(3, 508) = .59, p = .62, \text{change } R^2 = .003$ ); hence, H12a is not supported. However, the interaction effect of age and gender on this relation was spotted in 3 specific terms, which were male in the younger and middle age groups and female in the younger age group, in that the effect of work hours on work-to-family conflict was strongest for the younger male employees (see Table 6.5).

Table 6.5 Conditional Effects of Age and Gender on the Relationship Between Work Hours and Work-to-Family Conflict. ( $N = 520$ ).

Gender	Age	Effect	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
1	1	.0651	.0172	3.7865	.0002	.0313	.0989
1	2	.0491	.0189	2.6005	.0096	.0120	.0863
1	3	.0530	.0283	1.8749	.0614	-.0025	.1085
2	1	.0450	.0194	2.3215	.0207	.0069	.0831
2	2	.0291	.0178	1.6330	.1031	-.0059	.0640
2	3	.0329	.0299	1.1017	.2711	-.0258	.0917

Note. for gender, 1 = male, 2 = female; for age, 1 = 18-29 age group, 2 = 30-44 age group, and 3 = 45-59 age group

Third, the results indicated that age ( $F(2, 508) = .74, p = .48, \text{change } R^2 = .002$ ) and gender ( $F(1, 508) = .46, p = .50, \text{change } R^2 = .001$ ) were not the moderators on the relationship between work-to-family guilt and work-to-family conflict; thus, H9b and H10b are not supported. In addition, H12b is not supported as the results revealed that age and gender had no interaction effect ( $F(3, 508) = .63, p = .59, \text{change } R^2 = .003$ ) on the relationship between work-to-family guilt and work-to-family conflict.

### 6.8.2.3. Part C – Work-Family Conflict and its Consequences

The results of the model summaries indicated that age, gender, and work-to-family conflict were all predicting family interpersonal conflict ( $F(7, 512) = 5.52, p < .001, R^2 = .08$ ), family-to-work guilt ( $F(7, 512) = 4.33, p = .0001, R^2 = .06$ ), family performance ( $F(7, 512) = 7.59, p < .001, R^2 = .09$ ), and life satisfaction ( $F(7, 512) = 7.29, p < .001, R^2 = .09$ ); whereas age, gender, and family-to-work conflict were all predicting work interpersonal conflict ( $F(7, 512) = 13.70, p < .001, R^2 = .16$ ), work-to-family guilt ( $F(7, 512) = 4.53, p = .0001, R^2 = .06$ ), work performance ( $F(7, 512) = 5.17, p < .001, R^2 = .07$ ), and life satisfaction ( $F(7, 512) = 4.59, p = .0001, R^2 = .06$ ).

In addition, H13 and its sub-hypotheses are not supported since the results indicated that age was not the moderator on the relationships from work-to-family conflict to family interpersonal conflict ( $F(2, 512) = 1.79, p = .17, \text{change } R^2 = .007$ ) (H13a), to family-to-work guilt ( $F(2, 512) = .10, p = .91, \text{change } R^2 = .0003$ ) (H13b), to family performance ( $F(2, 512) = 1.53, p = .22, \text{change } R^2 = .005$ ) (H13c), and to life satisfaction ( $F(2, 512) = 1.89, p = .15, \text{change } R^2 = .007$ ) (H13d); and that age was not the moderator on the relationships from family-to-work conflict to work interpersonal conflict ( $F(2, 512) = .32, p = .73, \text{change } R^2 = .001$ ) (H13e), to work-to-family guilt ( $F(2, 512) = .50, p = .61, \text{change } R^2 = .002$ ) (H13f), to work performance ( $F(2, 512) = 1.00, p = .37, \text{change } R^2 = .004$ ) (H13g), and to life satisfaction ( $F(2, 512) = 2.52, p = .08, \text{change } R^2 = .009$ ) (H13h). However, it is worth noting that the interaction effect of family-to-work conflict and older age group on life satisfaction is significant ( $b = .76, t(.36) = 2.11, p = .04$ ), which indicated that age moderated the relationship between family-to-work conflict and life satisfaction but only for younger and older age group comparison, and that the effect of family-to-work conflict on life satisfaction was stronger for older age group (see Figure 6.14).



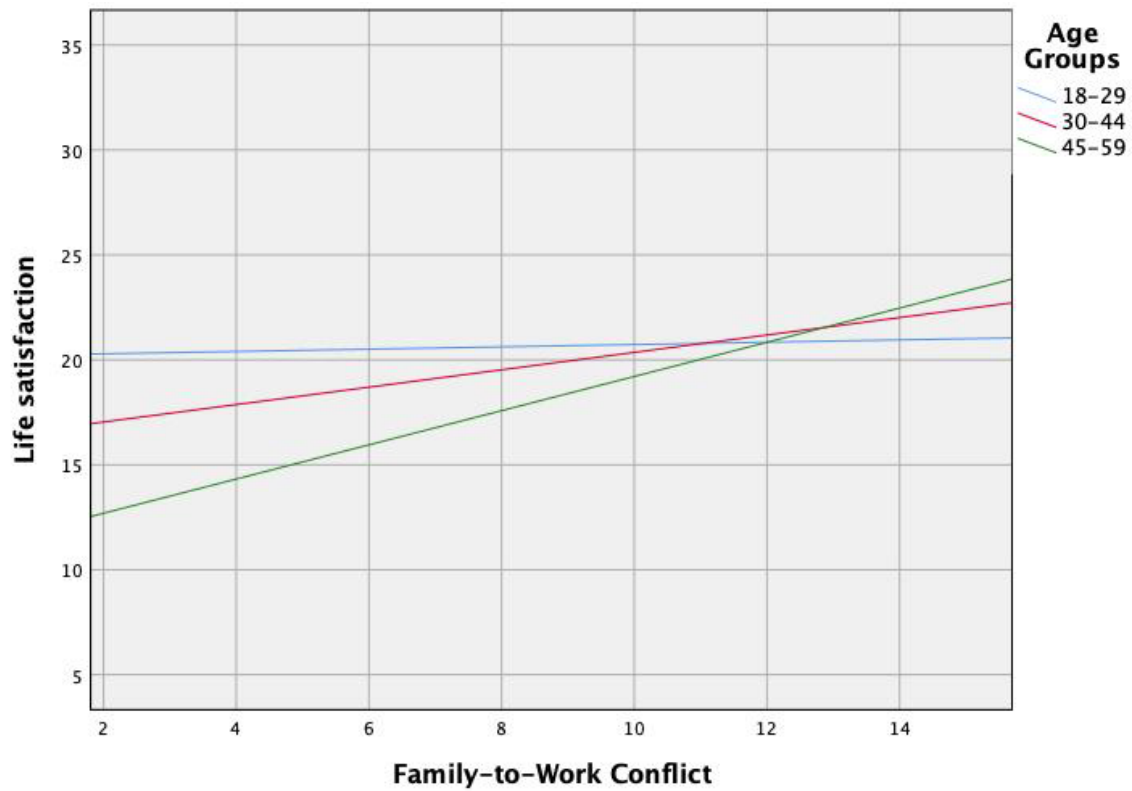


Figure 6.14 The Comparison of the Moderation Effect of Age on the Relationship Between Family-to-Work Conflict and Life Satisfaction.

Moreover, H14 is partially supported; gender only had a moderating effect on the relationship between family-to-work conflict and work interpersonal conflict ( $b = -.32$ ,  $t(.08) = -4.04$ ,  $p = .0001$ ) (H14e), the negative coefficient ( $b = -.32$ ) indicated that the effect of family-to-work conflict on work interpersonal conflict was stronger for male employees (see Figure 6.15).

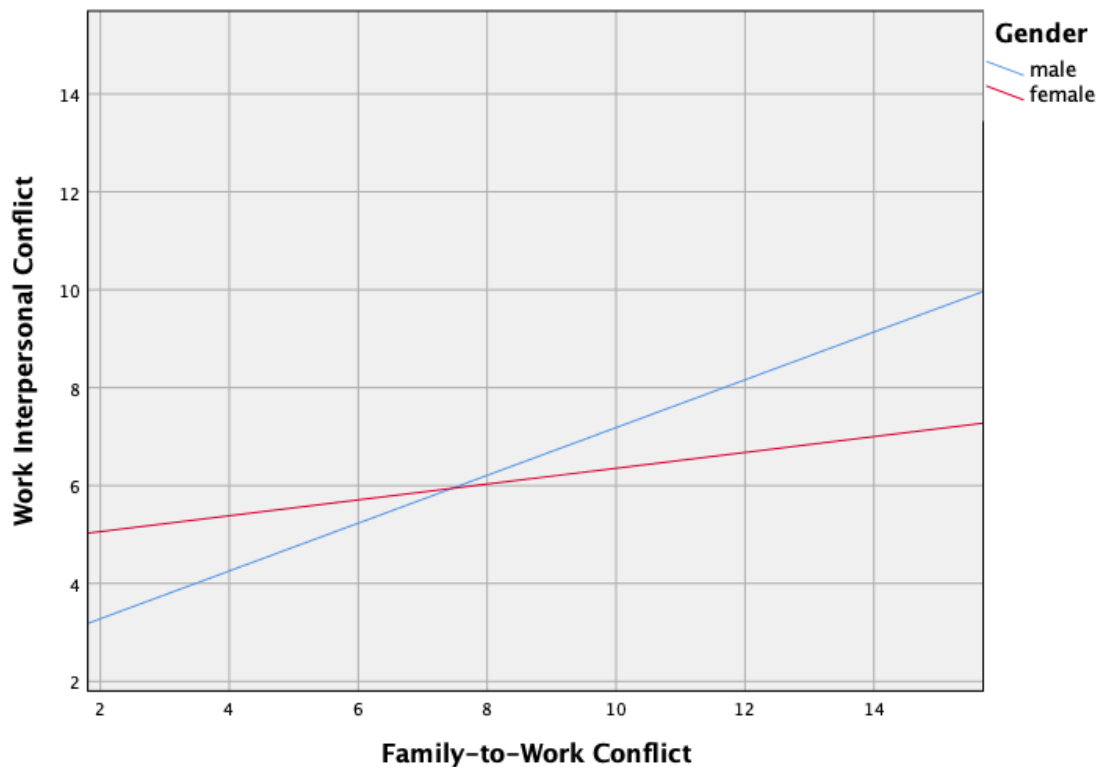


Figure 6.15 The Comparison of The Moderation Effect of Gender on the Relationship Between Family-to-Work Conflict and Work Interpersonal Conflict.

All other sub-hypotheses regarding the moderating effect of gender on the relationships between work-family conflict and its consequences, which were, from work-to-family conflict to family interpersonal conflict ( $F(1, 512) = .04, p = .85, \text{change } R^2 = .0001$ ) (H14a), to family-to-work guilt ( $F(1, 512) = .50, p = .48, \text{change } R^2 = .0009$ ) (H14b), to family performance ( $F(1, 512) = .003, p = .96, \text{change } R^2 = .0000$ ) (H14c), to life satisfaction ( $F(1, 512) = .11, p = .74, \text{change } R^2 = .0002$ ) (H14d); and from family-to-work conflict to work-to-family guilt ( $F(1, 512) = 1.05, p = .31, \text{change } R^2 = .002$ ) (H14f), to work performance ( $F(1, 512) = .13, p = .72, \text{change } R^2 = .0002$ ) (H14g), and to life satisfaction ( $F(1, 512) = .53, p = .82, \text{change } R^2 = .0001$ ) (H14h) were not supported.

The last hypothesis in the present study, hypothesis 15 regarding the interaction effect of age and gender on the relationship between work-family conflict and its consequences, was partially supported. Only H15e, regarding the interaction of age and gender on the relationship between family-to-work conflict and work interpersonal conflict, is supported ( $F(3, 512) = 5.87, p = .0006, \text{change } R^2 = .03$ ); the results indicated that the effect of family-to-work conflict on work interpersonal conflict was strongest in the male employees in older age group (see Table 6.6)

Table 6.6 Conditional Effects of Age and Gender on the Relationship Between Family-to-Work Conflict and Work Interpersonal Conflict. (N = 520).

Gender	Age	Effect	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
1	1	.4544	.0710	6.4011	.0000	.3149	.5939
1	2	.5033	.0685	7.3469	.0000	.3687	.6379
1	3	.5438	.1138	4.7794	.0000	.3203	.7674
2	1	.1340	.0718	1.8662	.0626	-.0071	.2750
2	2	.1828	.0766	2.3858	.0174	.0323	.3334
2	3	.2234	.1190	1.8766	.0611	-.0105	.4572

Note. for gender, 1 = male, 2 = female; for age, 1 = 18-29 age group, 2 = 30-44 age group, and 3 = 45-59 age group

Moreover, age and gender had no interaction effect on the relationship between work-to-family conflict and family interpersonal conflict ( $F(3, 512) = 1.19, p = .31$ , change  $R^2 = .007$ ) (H15a), between work-to-family conflict and family-to-work guilt ( $F(3, 512) = .25, p = .86$ , change  $R^2 = .001$ ) (H15b), between work-to-family conflict and family performance ( $F(3, 512) = 1.02, p = .38$ , change  $R^2 = .005$ ) (H15c), between work-to-family conflict and life satisfaction ( $F(3, 512) = 1.33, p = .26$ , change  $R^2 = .007$ ) (H15d), between family-to-work conflict and work-to-family guilt ( $F(3, 512) = .67, p = .57$ , change  $R^2 = .004$ ) (H15f), between family-to-work conflict and work performance ( $F(3, 512) = .72, p = .53$ , change  $R^2 = .004$ ) (H15g). In addition, although the results revealed that the interaction effect of age and gender on the relationship between family-to-work conflict and life satisfaction is non-significant ( $F(3, 512) = 1.73, p = .16$ , change  $R^2 = .01$ ) (H15h); however, there was an interaction effect of age and gender on this relation in 3 specific terms, which were male in the middle and older age group and female in the older age group, in that the effect of family-to-work conflict on life satisfaction was strongest in the female employee in the older age group (see Table 6.7).

Table 6.7 Conditional Effects of Age and Gender on the Relationship Between Family-to-Work Conflict and Life Satisfaction. (N = 520).

Gender	Age	Effect	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
1	1	.0901	.2052	.4388	.6610	-.3132	.4933
1	2	.4431	.1981	2.2369	.0257	.0539	.8322
1	3	.8483	.3290	2.5786	.0102	.2020	1.4946
2	1	.0373	.2075	.1798	.8574	-.3704	.4450
2	2	.3903	.2216	1.7614	.0788	-.0450	.8257
2	3	.7955	.3441	2.3117	.0212	.1195	1.4716

Note. for gender, 1 = male, 2 = female; for age, 1 = 18-29 age group, 2 = 30-44 age group, and 3 = 45-59 age group

## 6.9. Discussion

The findings from Study 1 shed light on the potential gender differences in the experience of work-family conflict. Based on the gendered life-course theory, these differences might relate to how society defined the gender role – individuals of different gender will perceive different types/levels of expectation from others, the availability of the source of support is different, and response to expectation/support differently during different stages of the lifespan, which resulted in the different work-family conflict experienced between gender and in different age stages (e.g., Moen, 2011; Korabik, Lero, et al., 2008). Thus, the goal of the present study was to investigate the moderating and interaction effects of age and gender on the path relations of Study 2a's final model. Specifically, between work/family environment (i.e., access to flexibility and family support) and the antecedents of work-family conflict, and between work-family conflict and its direct antecedents and consequences.

In general, all the moderation hypotheses supported in the present study were gender-related, suggesting that gender plays an important role in the experience of work-family conflict in China. In addition, age itself has no moderating effect on the relationships between work-family conflict and its related variables could be explained by the following reasons:

Previous work-family conflict studies have shown that the experience of work-family conflict is strongly related to the life role value of the individual, such as the role salience; for example, an employee who places more importance on his/her family role might more easily be affected by family-related stressors and prone to experience family-to-work conflict (e.g., Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Calvo-Salguero et al., 2010; Carlson & Kacmar, 2010). Furthermore, as mentioned above, once the value of an individual becomes stable during adulthood, therefore, age itself may not change the individual's value system, but age-related life circumstances or major life events do (e.g., Roberts & Mroczek, 2008; Gouveia et al., 2015; Maio, 2010), for example, an employee who recently becomes a parent may change the role salience from work to family domain and pay more attention to his/her family than the job, consequently changing the levels and/or the types of work-family

conflict. Hence, following this perspective, it is reasonable to believe that age will not moderate the process of work-family conflict by itself.

Further stronger evidence regarding the age itself might not influence the process of work-family conflict is spotted in the present study, that being, some relationships between work-family conflict and its related variables were moderated by the interaction of age and gender despite the fact that these relationships were not moderated by age. Such findings supported the arguments from scholars who investigated work-family conflict using the gendered life-course approach, and claimed that gender should be considered when investigating the effect of age on the experience of work-family conflict, due to the difference between the role/duty/expectation/behaviour of men and women that defined and assigned by the society (e.g., Martinengo et al., 2010; Korabik, Lero, et al., 2008; Quick & Moen, 1998; Moen & Chesley, 2008; Moen & Roehling, 2005).

#### 6.9.1. Part A – Work/Family Environment and the Antecedents of Work-Family Conflict

No age difference was found in all the relations at this structural level. The finding regarding age did not moderate the relationship between access to flexibility and work hours is inconsistent with previous studies, which argued that middle-aged employees would more value the importance of access to flexibility due to the worsened incompatible role demands between family and work (e.g., Huffman et al., 2013; Piszczek & Pimputkar, 2020).

However, such a finding might be explained through Lu et al.'s (2008) and Lai et al.'s (2020) studies, which argued that culture might influence the perception of access to flexibility and that access to flexibility might become less beneficial when other sources of support are available. For example, previous studies argued that the overwhelming role demand (e.g., in the form of work hours) during middle age might cause middle-aged employees to attach more importance to access to flexibility; however, due to the influence of collectivist culture, Chinese elderly parents would provide care and support for their adult children, regardless of the age and gender of their adult children, which might have changed how middle-aged Chinese employees perceive access to

flexibility and weaken the moderating effect of age on the relationship between access to flexibility and work hours. Accordingly, such cultural influence on the perception of access to flexibility might also explain why gender had no moderation effect on this relationship. In addition, Study 1's qualitative findings might also indirectly support these findings. Whether male or female, younger or older interviewees of Study 1 all claimed that they often received financial support and/or daily care from their elderly parents, and P4, a 48-year-old husband described receiving elderly parent support as "Parents are always the provider; I think it is just a common phenomenon."

Regarding the moderating effects of age and gender on the relationships between different types of family support and time spent on family responsibilities, the present study found that, first, age and gender did not moderate the relationships between spouse support and time spent on family responsibilities. This might be because of the belief that fulfilling family obligations should be reciprocal (Kim et al., 2008) and the changing caregiver role due to the changes in workplace and family structure (Erdogan et al., 2021). Under these influences, the patriarchal system is fading and blurred gender values in China, weakening traditional gendered expectations (Hu & Scott, 2016). As a result, no gender differences between spouse support and time spent on family responsibilities can be found.

Second, it was found that age and gender did not moderate the relationships between elderly parents' support and time spent on family responsibilities. This might be due to the influence of China's intergenerational relationship culture, which emphasises the obedience relationship between parent and child and the importance of fulfilling filial obligation towards parents whether the children are female or male (e.g., Zhang et al., 2020; Hu & Scott, 2016); hence no gender differences can be found between elderly parent support and time spent on family responsibilities.

Last, the positive relationship between sibling support and time spent on family responsibilities became stronger when the employees were female. In other words, the present study found that the more sibling support the female employees received, the more time they had to spend on family responsibilities. This remained a mystery. Perhaps traditional gender roles still

leave a mark on the family values of female employees in which they identify themselves are the kin-keepers in the family (Dykstra & Fokkema, 2012). Consequently, female employees might be aware of what duties and/or behaviours their families (e.g., siblings) expected from them (e.g., Hu & Scott, 2016; Janoff-Bulman & Leggatt, 2002); therefore, when female employees received a higher level of support from a sibling, they tend to spend more time on family responsibilities as a return, for example, spend more time to take care elderly parents in order to reduce the care duty burden of her sibling.

#### 6.9.2. Part B – Work-Family Conflict and its Direct Antecedents

The findings revealed that age had no moderating effect on all the relations at this structural level. Again, this might be due to the influence of the salience of the role value (e.g., family orientated vs career orientated) and personal circumstances (e.g., recently becoming a parent) on the work-family conflict mentioned above.

As expected, the changing traditional family care role and workplace/family structure have influenced the process of work-family conflict in different genders (e.g., Erdogan et al., 2021; Kinnunen & Mauno, 1998; Dykstra & Fokkema, 2012). The results of the moderation analysis revealed that gender moderated one relationship between work-to-family conflict and its antecedent (i.e., work interpersonal conflict), and moderated all the relationships between family-to-work conflict and its antecedents (i.e., time spent on family responsibilities and family-to-work guilt). In addition, the strength of the relationships between work-family conflict and its antecedents became stronger for male employees. Hence, it might be argued that male employees have a higher risk than female employees of experiencing work-family conflict. These findings coincide with the previous studies that found male employees generally experience a higher level of both types of work-family conflicts (e.g., Yang et al., 2000; Martinengo et al., 2010, Humberd et al., 2015; Erdogan et al., 2021).

The present study found that gender is not the moderator in the relationships between work-to-family guilt (strain-based antecedents) and work-to-family conflict, and between work hours

(time-based antecedents) and work-to-family conflict. Perhaps under the trend of the shifting family care role, the term 'provider' that was used to describe the role of the husband in the family now might not simply mean bringing wealth to the family but should fulfil certain family responsibilities such as fatherhood (Humberd et al., 2015), and that because work-to-family guilt is defined as the sense of guilt that generated from being a good worker violated being a good family member (Korabik, 2015); therefore, no gender difference on the relationship between work-to-family guilt and work-to-family conflict was found. In other words, the shifting family care role might have blurred the traditional gender care role, thereby diluting the moderating effect of gender on the relationship between work-to-family guilt and work-to-family conflict. Furthermore, the shifting family care role and the influence of the changing workplace and family structure, such as the increasing number of women entering the workplace (Hill et al., 2014), might result in the fade away of the gender differences in the relationship between work hours and work-to-family conflict, since going to work is not the exclusive responsibility of the husband and fulfilling family responsibility is not confined to the wife; hence, no gender differences can be found in the relation between work hours and work-to-family conflict.

The present study based on the standpoint of the shifting family care role and that family obligation will be stronger for younger adults, explored the interaction effect of age and gender on the relationship between total time spent on family responsibilities and family-to-work conflict, and hypothesised that the strength between this time-conflict relationship will be strongest for Chinese male employees in the 18-29 age group (younger adulthood). As expected, the results supported this hypothesis despite this relationship was not moderated by age. This finding is inconsistent with the previous age-related work-family conflict studies, which found that work-family conflict would be stronger for employees in middle adulthood (30-44 age group) (e.g., Huffman et al., 2013; Matthews, Bulger et al., 2010). Nevertheless, this finding highlighted the importance of the consideration of the effect of gender when investigating the experience of work-family conflict



during individuals' lifespans (e.g., Moen & Chesley, 2008; Korabik, Lero, et al., 2008; Korabik, McElwain, et al., 2008).

### 6.9.3. Part C – Work-Family Conflict and its Consequences

Only two gender-related hypotheses are supported at this structural level: the moderating effect of gender and the interaction effect of age and gender on the relationship between family-to-work conflict and work interpersonal conflict. Thus, it might be argued that gender and age only have a marginal impact on the process between family-to-work conflict and its outcomes, but not work-to-family conflict and its outcomes. These findings to some degree coincided with the previous studies (e.g., Frone et al., 1996; Bellavia & Frone, 2005; Sousa et al., 2018; Minnotte & Yucel, 2018; Gilboa et al., 2005), which concluded that age and/or gender only affect the relationships between work-family conflict and its antecedents, but not the relationships between work-family conflict and its physical and/or mental health outcomes.

Specifically, the present study found that the effect of family-to-work conflict on work interpersonal conflict was stronger for male employees and strongest for older age male employees. Perhaps the collectivistic and family-oriented culture in China might make Chinese employees more prone to and be affected by family-to-work conflict (Allen et al., 2015), and female employees expect family-to-work conflict more than men and less affected by it (Yavas et al., 2007). In addition, with the emphasis on the importance of "guanxi" (interpersonal relationship), the belief that interpersonal relationships are beneficial to occupational achievement (Siu et al., 2005), and the influence of traditional masculinity, such as men should be the provider of the family (Lu & Cooper, 2015). Thus, the strength of the relationship between family-to-work conflict and work interpersonal conflict became stronger when the participants were male. Furthermore, as explained, the strength of the stressor-strain relation increases during ageing because of the depleted recourse to manage the stressor (Treadway et al., 2005); hence, the strength of the relationship between family-to-work conflict and work interpersonal conflict was strongest for the male employees in the older age group.

#### 6.9.4. The Significant Specific Terms

The interaction effect of age and gender were spotted on some relations under different specific terms (e.g., the general interaction effect of age and gender on the conflict-guilt relation was non-significant, but younger age female [specific term] has an interaction effect on this relation), which shared one similar pattern that worth discussing. All but one of the significant specific terms regarding the interaction effect of age and gender were found only in younger and/or middle age groups. This pattern might potentially be used to verify the change of work-family conflict during lifespan: older employees generally experience a lower level of work-family conflict due to the greater boundary between work/family domains and/or the master of conflict management skills (e.g., Huffman et al., 2013; Zapf et al., 2016; Efeoglu & Ozcan, 2013). Simultaneously, this might be the reason why the present study could not find any moderating effect of age on all tested relationships, as the older age group weakened the moderating effect of age.

#### 6.10. Conclusion

As the final study of this thesis, this study focused on the influence of demographic characteristics (i.e., age and gender) on the experience of work-family conflict in China. By adopting the gendered life-course approach, the moderating and interaction effects of age and gender were tested on the relationships between work/family environment and the antecedents of work-family conflict and between work-family conflict and its antecedents and consequences.

In general, the results showed that the experience of work-family conflict in China is more prone to be affected by gender and that Chinese male employees have a higher risk of experiencing work-family conflict. The results failed to suggest which age groups would have a higher risk of experiencing work-family conflict since the results revealed that age itself had relatively weak moderating effects on work-family conflict and its related variables. Nevertheless, the interaction effects of gender and age were found in several relationships, indicating the importance of considering gender when investigating work-family conflict during the lifespan. The next chapter provides a general discussion, limitations, implications, and a final conclusion.

## 7. General Discussion

### 7.0. Overview

This final chapter discusses the findings of the studies in this thesis. One of the benefits of using a mixed-method approach is that the qualitative and quantitative findings can be compared, to help greater understanding and provide an explanation of work-family conflict experienced in China, and to reach conclusions. This leads to the contributions to knowledge, as well as the implications for practice. The chapter closes with a summary of limitations and recommendations for future studies.

### 7.1. Discussion

The overall aim of this thesis was to investigate the work-family conflict experience in China, this aim was further split into three objectives to help understand the unique work-family conflict in China:

- To explore the work-family conflict phenomenon in China and suggest the potential contextual factors that are associated with work-family conflict.
- To develop and test an integrated work-family conflict model that considered the suggested contextual factors and help understand the process of work-family conflict in China.
- To investigate the effect of age and gender on the experience of work-family conflict, identifying which group of Chinese workers have a higher risk of experiencing work-family conflict.

The research conducted two studies, of which the second study had two parts (Study 2a and b) that shared the same dataset, to help achieve these objectives. In general, data was collected twice, online interviews were used to collect the data for Study 1, and online questionnaires were used to collect the data for both Study 2a and b. An exploratory sequential mixed-method approach was adopted for this research, Creswell's (2013) phenomenological method was used in the qualitative Study 1, SEM was used for model development in Study 2a, and Hayes Process macro was used in Study 2b, to analyse the moderating and interaction effects of age and gender on the relationships between work-family conflict and its related variables.

This thesis has seven chapters, Chapter One gave the aims and objectives of this study. Chapter Two provided a background review of work-family conflict as well as the potential work-family conflict experience in China. Chapter Three described the methodologies that were used in this research. Chapter Four was the first study which explored work-family conflict in China from 16 Chinese interviewees. Chapter Five as Study 2a provided further literature reviews on work-family conflict and its theoretical basis, and based on 520 samples collected via online questionnaires to complete the model development process. Chapter Six as Study 2b provided literature reviews on the gendered-life course approach, and based on the same dataset of Study 2a, to analyse the moderating and interaction effects of age and gender on the path relationships in Study 2a's final model. Last, Chapter Seven provided the general conclusion.

The following three sections concluded how each of the objectives was met and the findings of each study. The qualitative and quantitative findings will be integrated and compared in section 7.1.4, to provide a deep understanding of the work-family conflict experienced in China.

#### 7.1.1. Explore the Work-Family Conflict Phenomenon in China and Suggest the Potential Contextual Factors that are Associated with Work-Family Conflict

This objective was achieved by conducting a phenomenological qualitative study to explore work-family conflict phenomenon in China. Based on 16 participants' statements, a total of 6 themes and 19 subthemes were found, and contextual factors related to the work-family conflict were spotted.

Specifically, based on 16 participants' descriptions, work-family conflict was viewed as "not a problem" or "no more than a minor issue in life", yet would place negative impacts on their lives, such as affecting their work/family performance and wellbeing, and associated with emotional distress. Other contextual factors were identified, such as gender, work flexibility, supervisor and co-worker support, and family support including sibling, spouse, and elderly parents support. These findings have been used in Study 2 to increase its contextual relevance to the experience of work-family conflict in China.

### 7.1.2. Develop and Test an Integrated Work-Family Conflict Model that Considered the Suggested Contextual Factors, to Help Understand the Process of Work-Family Conflict in China

This objective was met by Study 2a's model development. The model was developed using Frone et al.'s (1997) third-generational model as a starting point, and with the consideration of the qualitative findings from Study 1. By using SEM analysis, a final work-family conflict model applicable in China was developed. The process of work-family conflict in China was mapped out in detail including the relationships between work/family support and the antecedents of work-family conflict, between work-family conflict and its antecedents and consequences, and the indirect reciprocal relationship between work-to-family conflict and family-to-work conflict via different mechanisms.

Specifically, work support (supervisor and co-worker support) was only positively related to work performance but not the antecedents of work-to-family conflict; access to flexibility was negatively related to work hours; family support (elderly parents, sibling, and spouse support) was positively related to time spent on family responsibilities and family performance respectively, and negatively related to family interpersonal conflict and life satisfaction respectively; work interpersonal conflict, work-to-family guilt, and work hours were all positively related to work-to-family conflict, and work hours were positively related to work-to-family guilt, respectively; time spent on family responsibilities and family-to-work guilt were positively related to family-to-work conflict respectively; work-to-family conflict was positively related to family-to-work guilt, family interpersonal conflict, life satisfaction, and was negatively related to family performance respectively; and family-to-work conflict was positively related to work interpersonal conflict, work-to-family guilt, life satisfaction, and was negatively related to work performance respectively.

### 7.1.3. Investigate the Effect of Age and Gender on the Experience of Work-Family Conflict, Identifying Which Group of Chinese Workers have a Higher Risk of Experiencing Work-Family Conflict

This objective was met by investigating the moderating and interaction effects of age and gender on the path relationships in Study 2a's final model. Gender groups were assigned based on

the biological gender of the participants, and age was separated into three groups: younger age group (18-29 years old), middle age group (30-44 years old), and older age group (45-59 years old).

By using Hayes Process model 2 and model 67, age was found to have no moderating effect on all tested relationships, and gender was found to moderate several relationships including females increased the strength of the relationship between sibling support and total time spent on family responsibilities; males increased the strength of the relationship between work interpersonal conflict and work-to-family conflict; males increased the strength of all the relationships between family-to-work and its antecedents (i.e., time spent on family responsibilities and family-to-work guilt); and male increased the strength of the relationship between family-to-work conflict and work interpersonal conflict. The moderating effects of gender suggested that male Chinese employees were more prone to be affected by the antecedents of work-family conflict, thereby having a higher risk of experiencing work-family conflict.

Despite no moderating effect of age being found, the interaction effects of age and gender were found in the relationship between family-to-work conflict and work interpersonal conflict, in that the strength of such a relationship was strongest for male workers in the older age group. In addition, the interaction effects of age and gender were found in several specific terms under different tested relationships, such as in the relationship between sibling support and total time spent on family responsibilities, between work interpersonal conflict and work-to-family conflict, between work hours and work-to-family conflict, between family-to-work guilt and family-to-work conflict, and between family-to-work conflict and life satisfaction.

#### 7.1.4. The Similarities and Differences Between Qualitative and Quantitative Findings

In general, the similarities between the qualitative and quantitative findings included the influence of gender, supportive work/family environment (in the form of family support and access to flexibility), work hours, and the influence of work/family-related emotion on the experience of work-family conflict, as well as the impact of work-family conflict on the work/family-related emotion and performance. All these similarities are consistent with the prior studies (e.g., Allen &

Finkelstein, 2014; Beutell & O'Hare, 2018; Calvo-Salguero et al., 2010; Adams et al., 1996; Huffman et al., 2013; Korabik, 2015; Carlson et al., 2010; Matthews et al., 2012; Ahmad, 2008; Efeoglu & Ozcan, 2013; Livingston & Judge, 2008). By further comparing the qualitative and quantitative findings, one difference was found: the influence of gender on the experience of work-family conflict.

Based on the statements from the 16 participants in Study 1, it appeared that the relationship between gender and work-family conflict in China coincides with the previous gender-related work-family conflict studies, which suggested that the traditional gender role has resulted in women more often and more prone to experiencing family-to-work conflict, in contrast, men are more often and prone to experiencing work-to-family conflict (e.g., Rehman & Roomi, 2012; El-Kassem, 2019). However, the results of Study 2b tell another story, the strength of the relationships between family-to-work conflict and its antecedents were all stronger for the male employees, indicating that males were more prone to be affected by the family stressors, thereby the family-to-work conflict within China has become skewed towards adult males.

This might be due to the influence of the traditional gender role. As Study 1's participants, for example, P14, a married male, stated, "in a family, the housework should be done by the wife; that's just part of our culture." And P7, a married female, said,

I feel like it is just part of my life, I already get used to it [...] it is always me who takes care of his (the son's) daily life [...] I, I don't seem to feel anything anymore, I just feel like it is just my responsibility.

To put it differently, the traditional gender role (i.e., women are the caregiver) might be like an inescapable cell that chained the Chinese female employees to repeated exposure to family-related stressors, consequently might have changed the cognitive assessment of the Chinese females toward family-to-work conflict (learned helplessness, see Maier & Seligman, 1976), and the process of identification with the aggressor; therefore, becomes less defensive to the aggressor (in

the form of the family-related antecedents of work-family conflict) (Howell, 2014), accepting such gender inequality in family responsibilities, and lessen its negative impact.

Apart from the above potential reason, the difference in the gender findings might point to the possibility of reporting bias in Study 1. Specifically, due to the influence of the belief and/or pursuit of traditional masculinity, such as the gender image of men, who should be “invulnerable” and that “real” men as the “provider” should “man up” when experiencing difficulties (e.g., work-family conflict) and/or feeling unwell (e.g., Farrimond, 2012; Rochelle, 2015; Shockley et al., 2017); hence, the male participants in Study 1 might be less likely to express their feeling of work-family conflict during the interview. For example, P1, a married male, stated,

Just don't think about and ignore it; it is common in every household, maybe everyone will deal with it differently, but for me, I would just act as nothing happened, give it a couple of days, and everything will be okay again.

In contrast, when the questionnaire was conducted anonymously, the male participants might be more willing to express their feelings toward work-family conflict, thereby resulting in the difference in the gender-related findings between Study 1 and Study 2b.

Accordingly, the different findings between Study 1 and Study 2b might point to the possibility that the different cognitive assessments of work-family conflict between the male participants (e.g., P13, a married man, said, “maybe it is a problem, but I don't think it has a strong negative affect.”) and female participants (e.g., P10, a married woman, said, “it is not like I don't think about it; it is what is the point to think about it?”) in Study 1, could be the potential reason why the work-family conflict was considered only a lived-experience or a minor problem in life and Study 1's participants tend to self-cope with such a phenomenon.

## 7.2. Contribution to Knowledge

The literature review revealed that our understanding of work-family conflict is based on the Western perspective due to the limited work-family conflict studies conducted in different cultural backgrounds outside the West (e.g., Luo & Cooper, 2015; Allen et al., 2015). This research,



investigating the work-family conflict in China, an Eastern country with different cultural background from the West, has broadened our understanding of such a phenomenon experienced in a collectivist and Confucianism cultural setting.

To the researcher's knowledge, Study 1 as the first study that used a phenomenological approach to researching work-family conflict in China has provided a deep insight into how the 16 interviewees with a Chinese cultural background experience the work-family conflict, grounds for the quantitative data collection, and contributed to the increased contextual relevance of the following model development, made the final model more appropriate to be used and tested in a Chinese context.

The statements from Study 1's interviewees, such as work-family conflict might intensify as children grow older, is different from the previous Western findings (e.g., Byron, 2005; Ohu et al., 2019; Michel et al., 2011), which generally believe that there is a negative relationship between the age of the child and the experience of work-family conflict. This difference has suggested that the experience of work-family conflict is partially different between the West and China, and necessitating further investigation of work-family conflict in different cultural settings (Lu & Cooper, 2015). The qualitative findings also provided valuable information and direction for future work-family conflict studies in China and in other Confucian heritage countries in Asia by suggesting the potential contextual factors related to work-family conflict, such as the impact of emotional distress on work-family conflict, the relationship between only child and eldercare responsibilities on work-family conflict, and the influence of parental expectation on work-family conflict.

Study 2a as one of the first studies that investigated work-family conflict in China by developing and testing an integrated work-family conflict model applicable in China has enriched our understanding of how work-family conflict is generated, processed, and acted in China's work-family system in detail. As China is the birthplace of Confucianism, the final model might shed light on how the work-family conflict is experienced in the Confucian heritage countries in Asia (e.g., Japan, Korea, and Singapore) to some degree (Phuong-Mai et al., 2005).

Differences in the experience of work-family conflict between China and the West were spotted based on comparing Study 2a's findings and Western literature. Study 2a confirmed a positive indirect relationship between family support and work-family conflict via total time spent on family responsibilities. This has reformed our knowledge of the beneficial effect of social support on the experience of work-family conflict (e.g., Adams et al., 1996; Blanch & Aluja, 2012; Drummond et al., 2016). Where cultures emphasise that family obligations should be mutual (Kim, 2008), support might not always be helpful for easing the experience of work-family conflict. In other words, the received support may be considered a debt that must pay back by the receiver.

Study 2a discovered a positive relationship between work-family conflict and life satisfaction, which contrasted with prior Western studies that indicated work-family conflict as a stressor is negatively related to life satisfaction (e.g., Adams et al., 1996; Perrewe et al., 1999; Prajogo, 2016; Byron, 2005; Ford et al., 2007; Naami & Mahmoodikia, 2019; Matthews et al., 2010; Nasuridin & O'Driscoll, 2012; Shaffer et al., 2001; Van Daalen et al., 2006; Michel et al., 2011). This has redefined the concept of work-family conflict since previous studies generally believed that work-family conflict is a stressor that only led to negative outcomes (e.g., Frone et al., 1997; Frone et al., 1992; Lu & Cooper, 2015). Such a positive relationship suggested that work-family conflict can be a buffer or a resilience factor of overall wellbeing under certain societal values or cultural beliefs, such as in China, where the cultural values view hard work as a source of honour and work is for family wealth, and family values underscore the significance of fulfilling familial responsibilities (Chen et al., 2023).

Moreover, Study 2a's final model indicated that interpersonal conflict as the behavioural-based antecedent only predicted work-to-family conflict, but not family-to-work conflict, which shed light on the possibility that the construct and the antecedents of work-family conflict are different between China and the Western society, since previous Western studies generally believed that each work-family conflict comes in three forms (i.e., time-based, strain-based, and behavioural-

based) and each form of work-family conflict has its unique antecedents (e.g., Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Michel et al., 2011; Korabik, Lero, et al., 2008).

Additionally, Study 2a's proposed model could be called the fourth-generation model of work-family conflict since this model was developed using Frone et al.'s (1997) third-generation model as a starting point, and has improved the limitations of the third-generation model, such as including the behaviour-based antecedent of work-family conflict, improved the construct of work-family conflict in the work-family system (e.g., examining the indirect effect of time-based factors on work-family conflict via strain-based factors), and by incorporating the overall wellbeing as one of the outcomes of work-family conflict (i.e., life satisfaction).

Furthermore, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, Study 2a as the first study that used work-family guilt as the antecedent of work-family conflict, and add work-family guilt to an integrated work-family conflict model, has enriched our understanding of work-family guilt. Work-family guilt started to catch scholars' attention in recent years; however, most of the work/family-related guilt studies were focused on general guilt (Korabik, 2015) or guilt being the outcome of work-family conflict (Korabik et al., 2017). The findings of Study 2a shed light on how work-family guilt acted in the process of work-family conflict, the predictive effect of work-family guilt on work-family conflict, and the possibility of the potential bidirectional and reciprocal relationship between work-to-family and family-to-work guilt (e.g., the indirect effect of work-to-family guilt on family-to-work guilt via work-to-family conflict).

These findings have improved the theoretical structure of work-family guilt (i.e., the bidirectional and reciprocal nature of work-family guilt) and potentially help to increase future work-family guilt studies' accuracy. In general, all these findings from Study 2a have provided strong evidence to confirm the structure and experience of work-family conflict are different between cultural settings (Shaffer et al., 2011), proven that work-family models/theories developed based on the individualistic Western sample may not be completely suitable for the collectivist East (Galovan

et al., 2010), and further highlighted the importance of investigating work-family conflict under different cultural backgrounds.

Study 2b from a gendered-life course perspective investigated the moderating and interaction effects of age and gender on the path relationships in the final model of Study 2a. The results provided confirmation for the perspective of the gendered-life course, which posits that gender ought to be taken into account when examining the work-family conflict over the course of one's life (e.g., Korabik, McElwain, et al., 2008; Moen & Roehling, 2005). This is because Study 2b found that age and gender had interaction effects on certain relationships, despite the fact that these relationships were neither moderated by age nor gender. Such findings also give a reason for future scholars to consider the interaction effect of age and gender on work-family conflict, instead of only focusing on age or gender differences in work-family conflict.

Moreover, no moderating effects of age were found on all tested relationships between work-family conflict and its antecedents/consequences, suggesting that age itself might not influence the experience of work-family conflict in China, but the life circumstances do (e.g., Thornthwaite, 2004; Gouveia et al., 2015). This has renewed our knowledge regarding the inverted-u relationship between age and work-family conflict, which suggests that middle-aged employees experience greater work-family conflict due to the increased work demands (e.g., Huffman et al., 2013; Matthews, Bugler et al., 2010). This is perhaps because individuals can enter, exit, and re-enter different life stages (Korabik, McElwain, et al., 2008), such as getting married and divorced. Life circumstances/life stages might have a more profound influence on the experience of work-family conflict than one's age does, as life circumstances manifest the changing roles, which result in the increase or decrease of role demands that influence the level of work-family conflict. In addition, the results identified that work-family conflict in China has become skewed towards adult males, as all antecedents of work-family conflict either had a greater impact on work-family conflict for males or no gender differences at all. This provided strong evidence to support previous studies (e.g.,

Byron, 2005; Yang et al., 2000; Olah et al., 2018) that argued the changing care role has resulted in males having a higher risk of experiencing work-family conflict.

Furthermore, Study 2b is one of the first studies that investigated the interaction effect of age and gender on several relationships in the work-family interface, including the relationship between work-family conflict and work-family guilt; between sibling and parent support on time spent on family responsibilities; between interpersonal conflict and work-family conflict; and between work-family conflict and performance. It has provided a deeper understanding of the gender and age difference in the experience of work-family conflict and enriched the field of work-family conflict, work-family guilt, support, interpersonal conflict, and performance studies.

In general, all studies have made empirical as well as theoretical contributions to knowledge, and suggest that culture seems to play an essential role in the experience of work-family conflict, providing evidence to question the generalisation of the previous Western findings, the need to be cautious when adopting Western-developed theories/models for the purpose of investigating work-family conflict experience in the East, and the importance of further examining work-family conflict under different cultural backgrounds.

#### 7.2.1. Methodological Contributions

Kossek et al. (2011) and Agars and Frech (2011) advocated that it is beneficial to have a qualitative study prior to quantitative studies when investigating work-family conflict, this allows the design of the quantitative studies to be more contextually relevant to the phenomenon of interest. Nevertheless, previous work-family conflict studies were largely conducted only using online questionnaires (Chang & Burton, 2010). This research started with a qualitative interview study, and as the first study using Creswell's (2013) phenomenological method to identify the Chinese culturally specific variables has increased the contextual relevance of the findings, as well as the findings' validity and reliability.

Moreover, Frone et al. (1992) suggested that work-family conflict can only be understood when investigated using an integrated work-family conflict model. Nevertheless, most previous

work-family conflict studies conducted in China only focused on specific aspects of work-family conflict, this can only shed light on the relationships between work-family conflict and its specific antecedents/consequences (Chen et al., 2023). Study 1a, by using SEM analysis to develop an integrated work-family conflict model in China has provided a deeper understanding of how work-family conflict as a mediator is interacted with and processed in China's work-family system.

Furthermore, previous studies often only examined the mean difference of gender and age on the experience of work-family conflict and its related variables, which can only identify whether there are statistically significant differences between the gender groups on average, but cannot examine whether the relationship between work-family conflict and its related variables differs for males and females (e.g., Korabik, McElwain, et al., 2008; McElwain et al., 2005). Study 2b, by using moderation analysis, and as one of the first studies to examine the interaction effect of age and gender on the relationships between work-family conflict and its related variables, has overcome this problem and allowed for a more nuanced understanding of gender and age differences in the relationships between work-family conflict and its related variables, which is important for developing effective policies to help employees better cope with work-family conflict.

In general, this research contributes to the growing trend of using an exploratory sequential mixed-method approach, as well as conducting SEM and moderation analyses in the field of work-family conflict research. By adopting these methods, this research offers valuable insights into the ways in which work-family conflict is perceived and experienced, as well as rich insights into how age and gender influenced the experience of work-family conflict in China.

### 7.3. Practical Implications of this Thesis

The findings of this thesis are beneficial to managing work-family conflict in China, as well as the Confucian heritage countries in Asia to some degree, and potentially helpful for managers, organisations, and policy/lawmakers to support Chinese workers to achieve work-family balance.

#### 7.3.1. Practical Recommendations for Individuals

Work-family conflict has been identified as a feminine issue in some countries due to cultural influence and societal stereotypes, such as the influence of gender image and traditional

masculinity. As a result, men might be unwilling to discuss such a problem (Shockley et al., 2017). However, this does not mean that male employees are immune to work-family conflict. In fact, this thesis found that male employees have a higher risk of experiencing work-family conflict in China. Thus, it is important for the employees to understand that work-family conflict is not a feminine issue or just a life experience that is not worthy of mention. Recognising that both sexes will experience work-family conflict and be affected by it may help employees increase their stress awareness abilities, thereby better coping with work-family conflict and weakening the strength of the stressor-strain relationship (Hoel & Giga, 2006).

Moreover, of the 16 participants in Study 1, it was generally mentioned that they received a certain degree of support from their elderly parents (e.g., childcare and financial support) to help them ease the experience of work-family conflict. However, such supports appeared to be only at a material and physical level. As a previous study by Wallace (2005) pointed out, emotional support can improve individuals' wellbeing and might decrease the negative psychological impact of work-family conflict. Thus, in addition to seeking material or physical support from family members, individuals should also seek emotional help from family members through communication; on the other hand, family members could show emotional support by listening to and empathising with the individual when they are experiencing distress events, such as work-family conflict (Greene & Burleson, 2008).

### 7.3.2. Practical Recommendations for Managers

It is worth emphasising the findings regarding the positive relationship between family support and total time spent on family responsibilities (Study 2a) and the moderating effect of gender on this relationship, which the strength of such positive relation was stronger for female participants (Study 2b). As discussed, this could be due to the influence of the traditional gender role resulting in women identifying themselves as the "kin-keeper" in the family (Dykstra & Fokkema, 2012). Hence, it might be argued that some traditional Chinese thinking relating to feminine virtues/ethics should be abandoned, such as the "san cong" (The Three Obediences) – "women obey

the father before the marriage, obey the husband after marriage, and obey the first son after the death of husband.” (Gao, 2003, pp. 116), since it could further deepen social injustice, gender inequality, and/or lead to the experience of work-family conflict (e.g., Gao, 2003; Long, 2015).

It is not easy to eliminate these types of “feminine virtues”; nevertheless, it may be helpful for managers and supervisors to introduce Hall’s (1972) role conflict coping strategy, especially the structural role redefinition coping strategy, to female employees and help them put this strategy into practice. According to Hall (1972), structural role redefinition is defined as “to confront one’s role senders and come to a mutual agreement on a revised set of expectations” (pp. 474), such as negotiating with the employer about having to leave work early to pick up children or communicate with families about the allocation of housework responsibilities, and reach up to a mutual agreement about these tasks. In addition, to increase the practical usefulness of such a coping strategy, not only should gender equality be promoted, but also the policies and laws relevant to gender equality should be strengthened or popularised in order to endow more bargaining power to female employees during negotiation (Kailasapathy & Metz, 2012).

Furthermore, given that Chinese tradition might discourage employees from sharing their problems with others to avoid burdening their social network (Kim et al., 2008), it is essential for managers or supervisors to foster an open communication environment where employees feel listened to, understood, and respected (Allen et al., 2000). According to Barki and Hartwick (2001), Open communication can play a significant role in managing work-family conflict, it allows for a clear understanding of each employee’s unique challenges related to balancing work demands and family responsibilities. When managers foster an environment of open communication, employees are more comfortable discussing their work-family conflicts and seeking solutions (Barki & Hartwick, 2001).

### 7.3.3. Practical Recommendations for Organisations

To help employees better cope with the impact of negative emotion on work-family conflict, such as when emotion at work affects the mood during family time, organisations may find it



beneficial to provide emotion management programmes for their employees (Scott & Myers, 2005). For instance, an emotional awareness and self-reflection programme can help employees recognise the triggers of certain emotions and the impact of these emotions on thoughts and behaviours, thereby reducing their negative impact (Goleman, 1995). A stress management programme can also be helpful in reducing work-family conflict by helping individuals cope with work-related stress, preventing it from spilling over into family life (Smith & Jones, 2018), enhancing coping mechanisms, resilience, and promoting a healthier work-life balance (Johnson, 2019). In addition, a problem-solving intervention, such as problem-solving therapy, can help employees reconstruct their problem-solving cognition and skills, instead of adopting an avoidance coping strategy when experiencing conflict situations. This can be effective in improving conflict management skills towards interpersonal conflict and reducing such conflict in the future (Barki & Hartwick, 2001).

Moreover, this study found that a family-friendly work environment, in the form of access to flexibility, is effective in managing and reducing the level of work-family conflict through its work-related antecedent. Hence, organisations can promote access to flexibility to help employees cope with work-family conflict. However, it is important for the government to reinforce supervision and improve policies and regulations regarding the family-supportive work environment in China, to provide a regulatory framework for organisations to follow and protect workers' rights. This is particularly important as some organisations have used work time flexibility as an excuse to request employees work unlimited hours due to insufficient relevant legal protection (e.g., Liu et al., 2008; Bimian Lanyong Tanxinggongzuozhi Qin Hai Laodongzhe Quanyi [Avoid abusing the flexible working system to infringe workers' right], 2020).

Furthermore, to reduce the impact of time-related factors, such as work hours and time spent on family responsibilities, on work-family conflict, it may be worth carrying out a 4-day working week trial or following the French and German practice by enacting a statutory framework for the right to disconnect from work after working hours. This is especially relevant given that technologies have enabled and created a "24/7" work culture. Doing so may help employees better

manage their time between work and family domains, increase the productivity of work time, and decrease work-family conflict (e.g., Secunda, 2019; Anna et al., 2021).

Most importantly, it is crucial to ensure that employees understand what work-family benefits they have, have access to these benefits, and have policies and regulations to support and ensure such benefits can be part of “best practice” in organisations.

#### 7.3.4. Practical Recommendations for Law/Polymakers

In addition to strengthen and provide regulations to support and ensure family-friendly policies to be best practise in organisations. It may be helpful to make amendments to some of the family-friendly policies in China to expand such policies’ applicability and beneficial outcomes.

Given that the gender care role is changing (Olah et al., 2018), families, such as married couples, might handle work-family conflict together instead of dealing with them separately (Masterson & Hoobler, 2015). In addition, due to its crossover effect, the experience of work-family conflict impacts both partners in a couple (Ho et al., 2013). Hence, it may be beneficial to promote parental-related benefits to men in China, such as giving “breastfeeding leave” to the father, so that the husband and wife can better share childcare responsibilities. In addition, balancing the length of maternity leave (at least 98 days, varies by region) and paternity leave (at least 7 days, varies by region) may also be beneficial, and make parental-related policies more practical (Huang, 2021). Promoting such childcare-related benefits equally to both genders might potentially maximise the beneficial outcome of such family-friendly policies by decreasing the gender discrepancy in the use/access of work-family policy, helping employees of both genders, especially the married and/or single-parent employees, to better cope with work-family conflict, and may potentially help to improve gender discrimination at work, such as the discrimination in hiring against women due to women’s fertility (e.g., have to provide paid maternity leave) (Amin et al., 2016).

Moreover, it may be appropriate to amend the regulation which emphasises that only the employees who work in state agencies, trade unions, and state-owned organisations can apply for a holiday for visiting family members (Resolution of the Standing Committee of the Fifth National

People's Congress Approving the Provisions of the State Council for Home Leave for Workers and Staff, 1981), to be suitable for all workers in different businesses. Especially since a report by Zhou and Wang (2021) found that, as of 2020, there were roughly 2.86 hundred million Chinese internal migrant workers (i.e., individuals who move from one region to another within the borders of their own country in search of work), and the majority of internal migrant workers were in the service industry that would not benefit from this regulation. In addition, the Decision of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress to Amend the Population and Family Planning Law of the People's Republic of China (2021) only emphasises that China encourages each county to promote parental leave. Nevertheless, as it is "encourage" to promote parental leave, without the actual binding force, the duration for parental leave varies from 0 days per year (e.g., Jilin province) (Regulations of Jilin Province on Population and Family Planning, 2021) to 30 days per year (e.g., Shaanxi province) (Regulations of Shaanxi Province on Population and Family Planning [Revised Draft], 2021). Hence, it may be worth strengthening this regulation by setting up a minimum day of parental leave for the local government to follow and help employees to better manage childcare-related work-family conflict.

#### 7.4. Limitations of Present Study

As with all research, this thesis has limitations. In this section, all limitations were discussed.

##### 7.4.1. Limitations of Study 1

Study 1's limitations can be concluded as followed: first, the participants' requirements. Learned from previous work-family conflict studies, in which participants' recruitments often required the participants must have a part-time or full-time job (e.g., Wong & Goodwin, 2009), or the participants' recruitments required the participants at least reached up to a certain number of working hours per week (e.g., Matthews, Bulger et al., 2010). Study 1 required that the participants must have a full-time job. Nevertheless, during Study 1's interviews, one female participant (P14) described her husband's career as followed

Stay at home and invest in stocks, although it is not counted as a real job, but it is like work from home, he has his own working hours (i.e., Chinese stock market trading hours, 9:30 AM to 11:30 AM, 13:00 PM to 15:00 PM from Monday to Friday), and he is very concentrating during the stock market trading hours and treats it like a full-time job.

That is to say, within the changing society and the work category (e.g., freelancer, self-employed individual, etc.), the participants' recruitment requirements of work-family conflict should not be focused on the participants must have a full-time or part-time job. Instead, it should focus on whether the individual is paid for the piece or task of work. For example, P14's husband, as a self-employed stock investor, invests in stocks are his only source of income; therefore, if family emergencies (e.g., family members suddenly illness) happened during stock market trading hours, he might experience family-to-work conflict because of his work and income might be affected by the family emergencies; and the performance of the stock might affect his emotion which may spill over into his family domain and cause work-to-family conflict.

Second, due to the nature of the qualitative study, the data from Study 1 cannot be used to generalise and represent a larger group of population, and the strength between the work-family conflict and its potential antecedents and consequences cannot be tested (Casares & White, 2018). That is to say, the qualitative data from Study 1 might only provide an overview and insight into how the 16 Chinese interviewees experienced work-family conflict and the contextual factors associated with the work-family conflict phenomenon. Third, although from the 16 participants' statements, Chinese cultures seem to influence the experience of work-family conflict. Nevertheless, due to the use of the qualitative method, no specific cultural influence on the experience of work-family conflict can be tested and confirmed.

Last is the limitation of the cultural framework. The cultural framework used in Study 1 focused on how the culture would indirectly and directly influence the experience of work-family conflict. This framework has limited the antecedents of work-family conflict into "demands and supports in work/family domain" and the consequences of work-family conflict into "wellbeing at

work/family domain". However, Study 1's participants described that wellbeing in work/family domains (e.g., work/family distress) might also be the antecedent of work-family conflict. For example, the traditional Chinese culture emphasises the importance of filial piety, causing worrying regarding the ability to take care of elderly parents in the future (e.g., P4 stated, "...will I have the ability to take care of my parents by myself when they are old? [Every time I thought about that] I start to panic, and I start to worry."); such a worry increases the family strain and potentially leads to the experience of work-family conflict.

#### 7.4.2. Limitations of Study 2a

Despite Study 2a overcoming some of the limitations of Study 1, such as changing the participants' requirements from full-time workers only to those with a paid job, and further verifying the qualitative findings by including them as variables during model development. However, Study 2a has several limitations. First is the use of online questionnaires. Though the present study did not restrict the industries of the participants, using an online survey to collect data may limit the sample to a sub-group of employees who have access to the internet and/or are more interested in participating in the online questionnaire, which might affect the generalisability of the findings and increase the self-selection bias (Andrade, 2020). The second limitation is the model fit. Although the model fit indices indicated the final model is a reasonable fit. However, the main goal of Study 2a was to develop an integrative work-family conflict model; thus, a reasonable fit is like a fly in the ointment. Previous studies argued that the insufficient sample size might be one of the reasons that lower the CFI index, especially for a large-size model. The sample size of Study 2a ( $N = 520$ ) is not small (Shi et al. 2019); however, considering the complexity of Study 2a's proposed model, the insufficient sample size might be one of the reasons that caused the CFI index lower than the acceptable range ( $> .90$ ) (e.g., Shi et al., 2019; Alavi et al., 2020). Thus, further studies that aim at developing or testing a model should pay attention to the effect of both sample and model size on the model fit indices.

The third limitation is the difference between the types of measurement scales and the time measurement unit. Some measurements used in Study 2a were the Likert scale (e.g., life satisfaction), but others were a yes-no questionnaire (e.g., access to flexibility). In addition, participants were asked to write down the time used on childcare per hour per day, and on taking care of elderly parents per hour per day, but time spent on housework was per minute per day. This difference might have confused some participants during the completion of the questionnaire and caused them to provide unrealised answers (e.g., spent 25 hours on childcare per day) and increased the amount of work the researcher spent on data trimming. Although the score of all measures was transformed into a z-score and using the z-score to analyse the model fit and path relationships; thus, the accuracy of the present findings was not affected. However, a hundred and seventy-six samples were deleted during the data-trimming process.

Last, work support is represented by supervisor and co-worker support, whereas family support is represented by the spouse, sibling, and elderly parent supports. Thus, Study 2a did not investigate how these sub-supports might influence the work-family conflict experience differently. Future studies can subdivide these supports to provide more insight into the effect of different types of support on work-family conflict.

#### 7.4.3. Limitations of Study 2b

Study 2b overcame some of the limitations of the previous studies in this thesis, such as the generalisability issue of Study 1's qualitative findings regarding the gender differences in the experience of work-family conflict, and subdivided family supports into spouse, sibling, and elderly supports, and investigated their effects on the antecedents of work-family conflict, respectively (the limitation of Study 2a). However, since Study 2a and b shared the same dataset, Study 2b also has limitations in the design of the questionnaire.

The second limitation of Study 2b is the imbalance in the number of participants in different age groups. Among the 520 participants, two hundred and twenty-one participants were in the 18-29 age group, two hundred and sixteen participants were in the 30-44 age group, and only 83

participants were in the 45-59 age group. Although such imbalance accords with the age structure in the Chinese workforce since China's statutory retirement age was set to start at 40, thereby would not influence the credibility of the findings. However, the unequal sample sizes have decreased the statistical power and consequently lower the chance to find the systematic differences between age groups (Kahan et al., 2015). Hence, a larger sample size or an equal number of participants between the compare groups is recommended for further studies to increase the probability of observations.

The third limitation of study 2b is only using the biological sex to investigate gender differences in the experience of work-family conflict. Despite the biological sex does affect the work-family conflict due to the different social expectations and in accord with the gendered-life course perspective (Korabik, Lero, et al., 2008), only testing/using biological sex might mean that it is accepting the assumptions from the gender-stereotyped roles (e.g., men being the provider, women should be a caregiver) and the biopsychological equivalence (men should be masculine, women should be feminine) (Lu et al., 2021).

#### 7.4.4. General Limitations of this Thesis

This thesis has three general limitations. First, because the objective of this thesis was to enrich the field of work-family conflict by investigating the work-family conflict experience in China, hoped to eliminate the overwhelming Western focus in the field of work-family conflict, and help Chinese workers cope with work-family conflict better. Thus, this thesis is only focused on the experience of work-family conflict in China.

Second, this thesis is still classified as cross-sectional mixed-method research, which combined qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis methods in cross-sectional study designs, and might not establish causality definitively. Although previous studies (e.g., Greene et al., 1989; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Morgan, 2007; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2003) argued that mixed-method research helps improve the causation of cross-sectional studies, such as by providing triangulate findings from cross-sectional studies. Triangulation involves using multiple methods to investigate the same phenomenon, which can increase the validity and reliability of the findings

providing. Additionally, the use of moderation analyses also helps to improve the causality of the findings, because if the relationship between X and Y only holds for certain levels of Z (a moderator), the causal relationship between X and Y may be more specific and restricted than previously assumed (e.g., Hayes, 2018; MacKinnon et al. 2007; VanderWeele, 2016). Nevertheless, the capacity to examine causal relationships may be comparatively limited in cross-sectional studies (Przyhyla et al., 2018).

Third, the data were collected during the Covid-19 pandemic. This has changed Study 1's research design from face-to-face interviews to online interviews, which might limit the richness of the qualitative findings, as face-to-face interviews provide more information from interviewees' social cues, such as their body language (Opdenakker, 2006). Nevertheless, face-to-face interviews were not allowed during the Covid-19 pandemic, and online interviews were safer for both the interviewer and interviewees. In addition, the pandemic has created a unique and constantly changing context that may affect participant responses to study measures (e.g., Liu et al., 2020; Schwartz, 2020; Sonnentag & Lischetzke, 2020), for example, due to the increased stress and anxiety associated with the pandemic, participants may be more likely to report a greater level of distress when filling out the online questionnaire.

### 7.5. Future Research Directions

Drawing from the findings of the present study and conscientiously considering its limitations, several viable directions emerge as appropriate next steps for further research. First, because the objective of this study was focusing on understanding the work-family conflict experience in China. Thus, despite being a cultural study, this research focused solely on one country – China, instead of conducting studies in different countries. Hence, it is recommended that a future comparative study between China and other Western countries be undertaken. Comparing the findings across nations may offer more insights into how culture influences the process of work-family conflict.



Secondly, the qualitative findings not only heightened the contextual relevance of the proposed model but also suggested a unique direction for future studies. For instance, some interviewees described that being an only child might increase work-family conflict due to increased eldercare responsibilities and the absence of sibling support. Future studies could focus on how being the only child might influence the experience of work-family conflict. This direction holds potential significance, especially considering the shrinking family size worldwide and the increasing prevalence of adult children providing eldercare in the Western world (e.g., Centre for Policy on Ageing, 2014; AARP & The National Alliance for Caregiving, 2015).

Thirdly, it may be worth delving deeper into the two abnormal positive relationships identified in Study 2a—the indirect positive relationship between social support and work-family conflict, as well as the positive relationship between work-family conflict and life satisfaction, considering they are completely opposite to Western findings. It would be informative to investigate the influence of sub-cultures or social norms on these relationships, exploring potential moderating effects such as mutually supportive relations, family-oriented values, and/or work values. Such an investigation aims to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the underlying reasons for these positive correlations.

Lastly, future studies can also focus on addressing the limitations of this study. For instance, conducting a longitudinal mixed-method study could enhance the causality of future findings. Additionally, investigating the influence of gender role orientation on work-family conflict, rather than focusing on biological sex, could extend our understanding of how gender identity shapes the experience of work-family conflict. Furthermore, using the life stage of employees as a moderator could help confirm whether age itself or age-related circumstances (e.g., entering the workplace, starting a family, and/or becoming a parent) influence the experience of work-family conflict.

## 7.6. Conclusion

In conclusion, this thesis has gradually examined the work-family conflict experienced in China from two studies. This thesis explored the work-family conflict in China (Study 1), developed

and tested an integrated work-family conflict model applicable in China by using Frone et al.'s (1997) model as a starting point (Study 2a), and examined the moderating and interaction effects of age and gender on the path relations in Study 2a's final model (Study 2b).

In general, this thesis has provided evidence to demonstrate that work-family conflict is a relatively subjective life experience; it is found that work-family conflict was described as no more than a lived experience and/or a minor problem in life due to the influence of Chinese culture on the different cognitive assessments between men (e.g., should not show weakness when experiencing difficulties) and women (e.g., could not escape from the family responsibilities) towards such a phenomenon. Moreover, the inconsistent findings between the present thesis and previous Western research, such as the positive relationships between family support and total time spent on family responsibilities and between work-family conflict and life satisfaction, suggest that the experience and process of work-family conflict are partially different in China and that work-family conflict may not always act as a stressor. Furthermore, age itself has no moderating effect on the relationships between work-family conflict and its antecedents and consequences; but the moderating effect of gender and the interaction effect of age and gender were found, confirming that gender differences have a greater impact on the experience of work-family conflict in China and the importance of the consideration of gender when investigating the work-family conflict experienced during lifespan.

This thesis has provided sufficient evidence to make suggestions and amendments to the current family-friendly policies in China. The family-friendly policies in China need to be strengthened with the consideration of a. promoting gender equality; b. the universal coverage of such policies ensure such policies are practical; c. ensuring such policies are practical, to maximise their advantageous outcomes. On top of that, it is important that the Chinese employees, legislators, and the management realise that some of the traditional Chinese thoughts might have impeded employees from achieving work-life balance, recognising that work-family conflict is not a feminist issue nor a minor problem in life could help to improve the constitute of family-friendly policies and

prevent the employees to neglect the work-family conflict experience and repeating such an experience.

Most importantly, I have accomplished all the objectives of this thesis. I have obtained a comprehensive understanding of the unique experience of work-family conflict in China by cross-validating the interview findings and online questionnaire findings. I have developed an integrative work-family conflict model that considers the Chinese culturally specific variables and I have tested the moderating and interaction effects of age and gender on this framework. This thesis is encouraging in that it highlights how work-family conflict is generated and acted in the work-family system and provides a thorough understanding of the dynamics of work-family conflict in China.

Future studies should resolve the limitations of this thesis. Specifically, there is a need to investigate work-family conflict in different cultural backgrounds using an integrative work-family conflict model that takes account of the culturally specific variables, considers gender differences when investigating the relationship between age and work-family conflict, and carries out work-family conflict comparison studies in the future.

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## List of Appendices

### *Appendix A Study 1's Recruitment Letter*

#### **Recruitment letter (Chinese)**

我是一位就读于英国莱斯特德蒙福特大学的博士生，我正在为我的第一个研究做一个关于工作与家庭冲突的调查。这个研究的主旨在于调查中国的工作与家庭冲突。此次的调查会采用网上采访的形似，网上采访主要通过 QQ、微信或 Skype 进行。如果您符合以下要求且愿意参与到此次调查中，或者您想了解更多关于本次调查的信息请直接通过私信或电子邮件联系调查员。

#### **参与者要求：**

- 年满 18 周岁
- 中国国籍且生活于中国
- 有全职工作
- 与家庭（配偶/情侣/或儿女）一起生活或与父母一起生活
- 曾经经历过工作与家庭间的冲突

在采访进行期间，如果部分问题让您感觉不适，您有权不回答此问题或退出此次调查或要求中断并从新安排采访。

如果您对此次调查感兴趣，请直接联系调查员或通过电子邮箱联系调查员。

感谢您的时间，如果您对此次采访存在问题，请通过邮件联系调查人员：

[shujie.chen@dmu.ac.uk](mailto:shujie.chen@dmu.ac.uk) 或与调查人员的主管联系：[mcheng@dmu.ac.uk](mailto:mcheng@dmu.ac.uk)。

### **Recruitment letter (English)**

I am a PhD student at De Montfort University, Leicester, UK. I am doing a study for my PhD. The aim of this study is to explore and understand the work-family conflict in China. The purpose is to understand and find out the potential antecedents and consequences of work-family conflict in today's Chinese society. An online interview will be conducted via WeChat, QQ or Skype according to your choice. If you meet the following requirements and are interested in participating in this study or need more information about this study, please send a direct message or an email to the researcher.

#### **Participants requirements:**

- Over 18 years old.
- Chinese nationality and living in Mainland China.
- Full-time employed.
- Have a family (spouse/partner and/or children living at home) or living with parents.
- Have experienced the conflict between work and family.

During the interview, if any questions make you uncomfortable, you have the right not to answer the question or withdraw from the interview or stop and reschedule the interview.

If you are interested in participating in this study, please send a direct message to or email the researcher.

Thanks for your time, if you have any questions please feel free to contact the researcher by email: [shujie.chen@dmu.ac.uk](mailto:shujie.chen@dmu.ac.uk) or contact the researcher's supervisor: [mcheng@dmu.ac.uk](mailto:mcheng@dmu.ac.uk).

*Appendix B Study 1's Participant Information Sheet*

## PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET (Chinese)

项目名称：工作与家庭冲突：发掘中国的工作与家庭冲突以及其潜在的前因后果的定性研究。

研究员姓名：陈树杰，英国莱斯特德蒙福特大学博士生

## 邀请段

你被邀请参与一个研究性学习，在你决定是否参与本次研究之前，最重要的是让你明白本次研究是如何进行的已经本次研究涉及了什么内容。请花时间仔细阅读以下信息，如果需要，也可以与亲友共同讨论。如果依然有什么不明确的地方，请随时联系我们。请仔细思考你是否愿意参加本次调查。最后，谢谢你阅读这篇参与者信息表。

本次研究的内容是什么？

本次研究主旨是调查中国的工作与家庭冲突。

本次研究涉及什么？

网上在线采访，此次采访的邀请信会被发放在微博、微信、QQ和知乎上，符合参与者要求的人可以通过留言或直接发信息给研究员。

为什么我会被选中？

因为你满足此次研究的要求。本次研究的所有参与者均来自中国大陆且拥有中国国籍。此外，所有的参与者都应该具备以下条件，拥有全职工作和家庭（配偶/伴侣和/或孩子住在家里）或依然与父母一起生活，以及曾经经历过工作与家庭间的冲突。参与者的年龄必须在18岁以上。

我需要做些什么？

一个持续时间在1小时左右的线上采访，我将会问你有关工作于家庭冲突的问题，此次采访将会被录音，我将会使用QuickTime来对本次采访进行录音。采访的录音文字副本将会被用于我的博士论文。在笔文字副本中任何有可能识别你的个人信息将会被删除或使用假名代替。

此次采访会在哪里进行？

本次采访将会通过QQ、微信或Skype，取决于你认为那种更方便。

如果我中途不想继续本次调查怎么办？

如果在采访过程中你决定退出本次调查你可以直接和我说明而不需要提供任何理由。同时，在采访结束后三天内你有权可以选择退出本次调查。

如果我同意参加但之后又改变主意呢？

如果任何问题导致你情绪上的不安而不想回答或突发事件发生，你有权力不回答，中止并另外安排时间继续采访或在采访结束后三天内你依然有权选择退出本次调查。

如果采访中有部分内容我不希望被记录在文字副本中怎么办？

若果在采访中的部分内容你不希望被记录，你可以直接在采访的过程中和研究员提出。

如果采访过程中发生了令到我难受的事怎么办？

如果采访过程中发生了任何影响你心理或身理的事，你可以选择暂停采访，休息一段时间。如果依然没有改变，你有权选择中断采访或从新安排受访时间。在结束的时候我会通过邮件发一份感谢信给你，里面也会包括中国大陆的专业心理机构以及本人的联系邮箱。

参与本次研究有可能存在的风险是什么？

由于本次研究主旨是在于工作与家庭的冲突，因此部分问题可能会让你感到不安。然而，你可以自由选择想回答的问题，并且在本次调查研究之后，如果部分问题让你带来困扰，我们将会提供相关的帮助支持。

参与本次研究有可能存在的好处是什么？

本次采访的其中一种可能存在的好处是，由于本次调查涉及的是工作与家庭冲突，因此你可以借此机会反思工作与家庭中做的不好的地方。

如果出了问题怎么办？/我可以向谁投诉？

如果你有任何关于本次问卷调查的投诉，你可以直接联系研究人员。如果依然没有达到令人满意的结果，你也可以联系教师研究伦理委员会的管理员或德蒙福特大学研究与商业办公室，地址是Health & Life Sciences, 1.25 Edith Murphy House, De Montfort University, The Gateway, Leicester, LE1 9BH或通过电子邮件邮件：hlsfro@dmu.ac.uk。此外，如果你对本次调查问卷仍然存在任何的抱怨与不满，也可以联系研究者的导师，Mei-I Cheng，她的邮件是：  
mcheng@dmu.ac.uk。

我参与这项研究具有保密性吗？

在本次研究调查中所收集的所有关于你的结果与信息均会被保存在受密码保护的数据库中严格保密。研究员会用一个身份代码来代替参与者的名字，没有任何可能识别你身份的信息将会被收集。数据收集后，按照德蒙福特大学的政策，原始数据通常在研究完成后保持五年。只有研究员的导师与研究员本人可以访问数据。此外研究伦理委员会的教师可能会调查数据，以便检查这项研究是否按照他们的批准进行。

本次研究调查的结果会怎么样处理？

本研究的结果仅用于完成研究员的博士学位毕业论文。调查问卷中的数据将以汇总的格式呈现于毕业论文中。毕业论文可能会在研讨会或会议上发表，但所有的结果将会以汇总的格式呈现，从而影响识别个人信息的可能性。

谁是这项研究调查的资助或组织？

本次研究调查是由陈树杰本人发起，并用于陈树杰的博士学位论文，因此不存在资助人。

谁检查了本次研究调查？

本项研究调查已被德蒙福特大学和健康与生命科学研究伦理委员会审批并批准。

是否有任何其他人我可以联系来了解本次调查？

在你决定参与到本次采访之前，如果你希望和其他了解本次调查的人联系，更加了解本次调查，你可以联系本人的导师。



如果我的朋友有兴趣参与到本次调查中，他/她可以参与吗？

可以。他们可以直接联系研究员从而对本次调查有更近一步的了解。

欲了解更多信息，请与我联系，以下是我的联系方式：

研究员联系方式：

电子邮箱：shujie.chen@dmu.ac.uk

研究员导师联系方式：

电子邮箱：mecheng@dmu.ac.uk

De Montfort University

Division of Psychology

Hawthorn Building Room No. HBO.20a

The Gateway

Leicester LE1 9BH

**PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET (English)**

**Title of Project:** Work-family conflict: A qualitative study exploring the potential antecedents of work-family conflict and its consequences in Chinese society.

**Investigator:** Shujie Chen, a PhD student at De Montfort University, Leicester, UK.

**Invitation paragraph**

You have been invited to take part in this research study. Before you decide whether to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being proposed and what it will involve.

Please take some time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with friends and relatives if you wish to. Feel free to contact the researcher if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take the time to decide whether you wish to take part or not.

Thank you for reading this.

**What is the research about?**

I am conducting interviews exploring work-family conflict in China, its potential antecedents and consequences.

**What does the study involve?**

An online semi-structured interview will be conducted with the people that meet the participants' requirements via WeChat, QQ or Skype.

**Why am I being invited to participate?**

Because you meet the requirements in this study, all the participants in this study will live in Mainland China and have Chinese nationality. Also, the participants should be full-time employee and have a family (spouse/partner and/or children living at home) or living with parents and have experience of the conflict between work and family. The age of the participants must be over eighteen years old.

**What are you asking of me?**

I am asking you to take part in an online interview lasting around 1 hour. I will ask you some questions related to your experience of the conflict between work and family. I will use QuickTime to audio record the interview. The transcript of the interview will be used for my PhD thesis. You will be given a pseudonym. Any information that can identify you will be removed from the transcript.

**Where will the interview take place?**

The interview will be conducted online via QQ, WeChat or Skype.

**What if I want to withdraw?**

If you wish to drop out at any stage during the course of interview, then please just let me know during the interview. Any data collected will be destroyed. If you wish to withdraw your interview data after the interview you can do this, without any questions and consequences, and you will not be asked to explain your reasons. You can withdraw up to 3 days after you have completed your interview. Should you wish to withdraw your interview data after the day of the interview please contact the researcher (contact details are provided below).

**What if I agree to take part and then change my mind?**

You can withdraw during the interview or re-schedule the interview, and you are free to not answer all of the questions. Also, you can withdraw up to 3 days after you have completed your interview without giving a reason.

**What if I don't want you to include certain things I've said from my interview?**

If during the interview you said something that you do not want me to include in my transcript, you can tell me directly during or after the interview within 3 days that you want to omit them from the transcript and my final report.

**What if I am upset by anything during the course of the interview?**

In this case, you can take a break or if you want, you can choose to withdraw or stop and re-schedule the interview. At the end of the interview, I will send you a debriefing form with the information about appropriate sources of support in China and the contact detail of the researcher.

**What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?**

Some of the questions are relevant to work/life related conflicts which some participants may find upsetting. However, you are free to not answer all of the questions, and at the end of the study, the information will be provided concerning sources of support if these questions raise any difficult emotions for you.

**What are the possible benefits of taking part?**

This study is about work-family conflict. Therefore, you have the opportunity to reflect your experience on this.

**What if something goes wrong? Who can I complain to?**

If you have a complaint regarding anything to do with this study, you can initially approach the lead investigator. If this achieves no satisfactory outcomes, you should then contact the Administrator for the Faculty Research Ethics Committee, Research & Commercial Office, Faculty of Health & Life Sciences, 1.25 Edith Murphy House, De Montfort University, The Gateway, Leicester, LE1 9BH or [hlsfro@dmu.ac.uk](mailto:hlsfro@dmu.ac.uk). Also, if you have a complaint regarding anything do with this study, you can contact the researcher's supervisor: Dr Mei-I Cheng by email [mcheng@dmu.ac.uk](mailto:mcheng@dmu.ac.uk).

**Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?**

All information which can identify you during the recruitment process will be saved on a password-encrypted computer, and it is strictly confidential. All the personal identifying information will be deleted once the interview and follow up (if needed) has been done. You will be given a pseudonym which will be used instead of your name in the transcript file. After the data is collected, in keeping with the DMU policy, the transcript file will be kept for five years after the study has been completed. The transcript file will be kept in a password-encrypted USB and will not be shared. My supervisor and possibly the examiners will also have access to the data and members of the faculty human research ethics committee may require access in order to check that the study has been conducted in accordance with their approval.

**What will happen to the results of the research study?**

The results of this study will be used to be part of my PhD thesis. Data will be presented in aggregate format within the thesis. The results may be published or presented at workshops/conferences. If this is the case, then the results will be presented in aggregate format and your response will not be identifiable to you personally.

**Who is organising and funding the research?**

The research is organised by Shujie Chen for his PhD thesis and is unfunded.

**Who has reviewed the study?**

This study has been reviewed and approved by De Montfort University, the Faculty of Health and Life Sciences Research Ethics Committee.

**Is there anyone I can talk to about the study before I take part?**

Before you decide to take part in this study, if you wish to talk to someone else about my study, please feel free to contact my supervisor.

**I know a friend who may be interested; can s/he participate in your study?**

Yes, as long as your friend meets the participant requirement. Your friend can contact me directly for further information about this study.

If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact me. My contact details are as follows:

**Researcher contact details:**

Email: [shujie.chen@dmu.ac.uk](mailto:shujie.chen@dmu.ac.uk)

**Supervisor contact details:**

Dr Mei-I Cheng

Email: [mcheng@dmu.ac.uk](mailto:mcheng@dmu.ac.uk)

De Montfort University

Division of Psychology

Hawthorn Building Room No. HB0.20a

The Gateway

Leicester LE1 9BH

## Appendix C Study 1's Participant Consent Form

## Participant Consent Form (Chinese)

标题: 工作与家庭冲突: 发掘中国的工作与家庭冲突以及其潜在的前因后果的定性研究。

批准机构: 德蒙福特大学, 健康与生命科学学院, 学院研究伦理委员会

研究人员: 1

如果您同意, 请在方框内打勾

1. 我确认我满足此次调查的所有要求并是自愿参加到由陈树杰 (英国莱斯特德蒙福特大学博士在读生) 所执导的调查中。
2. 我已被提供关于本次调查的信息表 (中文二版, 日期 13/08/20) 并已充分阅读且考虑后才参与到本次的调查中。
3. 我明白我被要求参与到一次在线采访中 (约 60 分钟) 且我要在采访中回答一系列的问题。我明白整个采访都将被录音, 但在录音过程中如果我希望停止录音我可以直接和采访者说。
4. 我知道我可以从本次采访中退出也可以要求直接销毁我的采访内容。我已告知我有三天的期限去确定是否需要退出本次采访 (采访结束后或拿到我的录音信息后)。超过三天后, 将无法再从采访中退出。
5. 研究员有给机会我询问所有和本次采访有关的问题并也已经提供了其导师 (Mei-I Cheng) 的联系资料。
6. 我明白我将受到 2018 年通用数据保护法例, 同时遵照英国心理学协会伦理道德准则的指引, 即, 我的所有信息都会被保密且匿名直到进行销毁。
7. 我了解所有个人数据 (例如我的姓名和通过招聘的社交媒体名称) 都将被安全保留, 并且所有可以识别我的数据都将在面试完成后被删除。我允许研究员 (陈树杰) 使用和分析我们面试录音的数据。

8. 我明白在所有关于本次采访的报告中，我的姓名和任何个人资料都将会被匿名处理。在这个为前提下，我也同意我所提供的所有信息可被用于出版在学术期刊或会议演讲中。
9. 我明白如果如果我需要，我可以要求得到所有关于本次采访的录音或录音笔录复印。
10. 我同意参加本次调查。

受访者姓名	日期	签名
调查员姓名	日期	签名

**研究员联系方式:**

陈树杰

[shujie.chen@dmu.ac.uk](mailto:shujie.chen@dmu.ac.uk)

De Montfort University

Division of Psychology

Hawthorn Building

The Gateway

Leicester LE1 9BH

**研究员导师联系方式**

Dr. Mei-I Cheng

[mecheng@dmu.ac.uk](mailto:mecheng@dmu.ac.uk)

De Montfort University

Division of Psychology

Hawthorn Building Room No. HB0.20a

The Gateway

Leicester LE1 9BH

**Participant Consent Form (English)**

**Title of Study: Work-family conflict: A qualitative study exploring the potential antecedents of work-family conflict and its consequences in Chinese society.**

**Approved by: De Montfort University, Faculty of Health and Life Sciences, Faculty Research Ethics Committee**

**Number of Researcher: 1**

**Please read the follow items carefully and initial the box to show that you have read, understood, and agreed each item.**

**Please initial all boxes if you agree**

- 1. I confirm that I meet the requirements for this study and I voluntarily agree to participate in a research project conducted and outlined to me by Shujie Chen, an PhD student at De Montfort University.**
- 2. I have been provided with a copy of the participant information sheet (Chinese Version dated 13/08/20) and have had adequate time to read it and consider participation.**
- 3. I understand that I am being asked to participate in an online interview (approximately 60 minutes in duration) and respond to a series of questions. I understand that the whole interview will be audio recorded, but should I wish to stop the recording at any time I may do so by informing the researcher accordingly.**
- 4. I acknowledge that I may withdraw from participation without prejudice or penalty if I so wish and my data will be appropriately destroyed. I have been informed that withdrawal after 3 days from the interview will not be possible.**
- 5. The researcher has offered to answer any questions concerning the research procedure and I have been provided with contact details for the researcher's supervisor (Mei-I Cheng).**



- 6. I understand I will be fully protected in accordance with the 2018 General Data Protection Regulation, and in compliance with *British Psychological Society* ethical guidelines and that my data will be kept confidential and anonymous until they are securely destroyed.
  
- 7. I understand that all personal data such as my name and social media name through recruitment will remain securely, and any data that can identify me will be deleted once the interview has been done. I give permission to the researcher (Shujie Chen) to use and analyse the data collected from our interview’s audio recording.
  
- 8. I understand my name and any personal details will be anonymised in any report concerning this study, though I agree that any of the data I provide may be published in academic journals or conference presentations.
  
- 9. I understand that if I so wish I may have a copy of both the interview’s audio recording and or/ transcript on request.
  
- 10. I agree to take part in the study.

Name of Participant	Date	Signature
Name of the interviewer	Date	Signature

**Interviewer’s contact details:**

Shujie Chen  
[shujie.chen@dmu.ac.uk](mailto:shujie.chen@dmu.ac.uk)  
 De Montfort University  
 Division of Psychology  
 Hawthorn Building

**Researcher’s supervisor contact details:**

Dr. Mei-I Cheng  
[mecheng@dmu.ac.uk](mailto:mecheng@dmu.ac.uk)  
 De Montfort University  
 Division of Psychology  
 Hawthorn Building Room No. HB0.20a

The Gateway

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The Gateway

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*Appendix D Study 1's Debriefing Form***Debriefing Form (Chinese)**

**工作与家庭冲突：发掘中国的工作与家庭冲突以及其潜在的前因后果的定性研究。**

**采访日期:**

**采访者: 陈树杰**

谢谢你同意参与本次研究调查！本研究的目的在于调查中国的工作与家庭冲突。

研究员邀请了 10 人参与到了本次的研究调查中，所有的参与者均来自中国大陆并拥有全职工作以及家庭（配偶/伴侣和/或孩子住在家中）或与父母一起生活且曾经经历过工作与家庭的冲突。同时，研究员在采访开始前并不知道受试者的工作与行业。在本次研究中，你被要求进行一次采访，而本次采访的目的是在于调查与探索在中国到底是什么因素导致工作对家庭的冲突以及家庭对工作的冲突，并且发掘这些冲突对中国人民心理以及身理的影响。

如果你需要，一份本次采访的笔录可以通过电子邮箱或邮政的方式发送给你。此笔录应该会在接下来的 28 天内完成。如果你需要本次采访的录音请直接通过电子邮件联系采访者（陈树杰），电子邮件为：[shujie.chen@dmu.ac.uk](mailto:shujie.chen@dmu.ac.uk)。请引用此感谢信上方的采访日期和采访者作为你的证明。

如果你对本次研究调查的结果感到特别有兴趣，或有任何问题想要咨询。请随时通过电子邮件联系研究员，电子邮件地址为：[shujie.chen@dmu.ac.uk](mailto:shujie.chen@dmu.ac.uk)。或者可以通过电子邮件与研究员的导师联系，电子邮件为：[mcheng@dmu.ac.uk](mailto:mcheng@dmu.ac.uk)。你依然可以在本感谢信发出的三天内选择退出本次调查，若希望退出，请与陈树杰联系。

在这里再次感谢你的参与，如果对本次研究调查存在问题，请通过电子邮件联系研究员，电子邮件地址为：[shujie.chen@dmu.ac.uk](mailto:shujie.chen@dmu.ac.uk)。若对本次研究调查存在任何方面的顾虑，可以通过电子邮件与研究员的导师联系，电子邮件为：[mcheng@dmu.ac.uk](mailto:mcheng@dmu.ac.uk)。

如果你由于参与本研究而对家庭工作的平衡问题产生疑虑，并希望向专业人士进行咨询，下面提供一些心理咨询机构的联系方式：

中国心理咨询机构:

中国心理学协会, 联系电话: 010-84289911. 网页: [www.psychcn.com](http://www.psychcn.com)

广州听说吧心理咨询有限公司, 联系电话: 020-38295867. 网页: <http://www.gzxlys.com/>

广州红树林心理咨询, 联系电话: 020-38295867. 网页: <http://www.gzxlys.com/>

广州向日葵心理咨询有限公司, 联系电话: 020-38299651. 网页: <http://www.xiangrikui.cn/>

**Debriefing Form (English)**

**Work-family conflict: A qualitative study exploring the potential antecedents of work-family conflict and its consequences in Chinese society.**

**Interview Date:**

**Interviewer: Shujie Chen**

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study! The general purpose of this research is to investigate and discover work-family conflict in China.

The researcher aims to invite 10 people in China and all the participants in this study are based in Mainland China and should have a full-time job and have a family (spouse/partner and/or children living at home) or live with parents, and have the experience of the conflict between work and family. The researcher does not know which industries or business sectors the participant is in before the interview. In this study, you were asked to take part in an interview. The purposes of this study are to investigate work-family conflict in China such as the factors that cause work-to-family and family-to-work conflict in China and how it affects individual physically and mentally.

A copy of the transcribed interview can be forwarded to you if you wish. This will be sent by email or post, depending on your preference. If you request this option, this should be with you within the next 28 days. If you would like a copy of the audio recorded of your interview, you can contact the researcher (Shujie Chen) via email: [shujie.chen@dmu.ac.uk](mailto:shujie.chen@dmu.ac.uk). Please reference the date and my name as noted at the top of this sheet. You are also still able to withdraw your data within three days if you so wish. Please contact Shujie if you wish to do this.

If you feel especially concerned about your information and the results being published, please feel free to email the researcher: [shujie.chen@dmu.ac.uk](mailto:shujie.chen@dmu.ac.uk) or contact the researchers' supervisor by email: [mcheng@dmu.ac.uk](mailto:mcheng@dmu.ac.uk) about options for counselling.

Thank you for your participation in this study. If you have further questions about the study, please email the researcher: [shujie.chen@dmu.ac.uk](mailto:shujie.chen@dmu.ac.uk). In addition, if you have any concerns about any aspect of the study, you may contact Mei-I Cheng, PhD Email: [mcheng@dmu.ac.uk](mailto:mcheng@dmu.ac.uk).

If you have been affected by some of the questions during the interview, and would like to talk to someone in confidence about it, you may wish to contact to following organisation(s):

Counselling Support in China:

Chinese psychology. Phone number: 010-84289911. Website: [www.psychcn.com](http://www.psychcn.com) .

Guangzhou Soul Nourishing Centre Co., Ltd. Phone number: 020-34385911. Website: <http://www.020xlx.com/>.

Guangzhou Mangrove Counselling Centre. Phone number: 020-38295867. Website: <http://www.gzxlys.com/> .

Guangzhou Sunflower Counsel ING Co., Ltd. Phone number: 020-38299651. Website: <http://www.xiangrikui.cn/> .

Appendix E Study 1's Interview Schedule

**Interview Schedule (Chinese)**

**基本信息**

1. 性别
2. 年龄
3. 婚姻状况（单身，已婚，已婚年份，离婚）
4. 子女（子女数目，子女年龄）
5. 居住状况（自己住，和父母，伴侣，或子女）
6. 其他家庭成员工作吗？如果工作，是全职还是兼职？
7. 简要介绍一下自己从事的工作

**工作对家庭的冲突**

1. 你在工作上有什么难处？如果有，请问是什么呢？
2. 可以和我描述一下你目前正在经历的工作对家庭间的冲突吗？
3. 你刚刚所描述的工作对家庭冲突是你认为影响最严重的吗？或者你有经历过其他更糟糕的工作对家庭冲突吗？可以举一个例子吗？
4. 你经常遇到工作对家庭的冲突吗？
5. 你可以形容一下工作对家庭冲突怎么在心理上和生理上影响你吗？
6. 你如何面对这一类型的工作对家庭冲突的？有任何人或者事物是可以帮助你的吗？

在上述问题中，如果受访者有不明确的地方，我会提供更加多关于问题的细节，比如：

“请回忆一下你在目前为止人生中所经历的一次工作对家庭冲突，当你脑海中形成这个画面后，请形容给我听。”

“你工作中遇到的困难是否影响到了你在家庭中所担当的角色？比如不够时间陪伴家人或者没有办法帮忙打扫卫生。”

### 家庭对工作的冲突

1. 你和你家庭成员的关系怎么样？（父母，伴侣，子女）
2. （如受访者有子女）你需要照顾你的子女吗？如果需要，你为他们提供哪一类的帮助（金融上的，日常照顾）以及这一类行为有影响到你的工作吗？请提供一个例子。
3. 你需要照顾你的长辈吗？如果需要，你为他们提供哪一类的帮助（金融上的，日常照顾）以及这一类行为有影响到你的工作吗？请提供一个例子。
4. 你的家庭成员一般都指望你去照顾其他的家庭成员吗？你对这种行为有什么想法？
5. 可以提供由于家庭责任而必须停止手头工作的例子吗？你当时是怎么想的？
6. 你经常因为家庭责任而影响你的工作吗？可以告诉我当时对你心理和生理上都有什么影响吗？
7. 有人会为你提供照顾子女，父母或家政上的帮助吗？如果没有，你是怎么解决这些问题的？

在上述问题中，如果受访者有不明确的地方，我会提供更加多关于问题的细节，比如：



“请回忆一下你在目前为止人生中所经历的一次家庭对工作冲突，当你脑海中形成这个画面后，请形容给我听。”

“你家庭中遇到的困难是否影响到了你的工作？比如无法专心工作或不得不停下手头的工作或需要辞去工作。”

## Interview Schedule

### Background information

1. Gender
2. Age
3. Marital status (single, married, years of married, divorce)
4. Child (number of children, age of children)
5. Living situation (live by her/himself or live with parents, spouse, or children)
6. Does your other family member(s) work? If so, full-time or part-time?
7. Brief job description

### Work-to-family conflict

7. Do you encounter any difficulties at work? If yes, what difficulties do you have in your work?
8. Can you describe the work-to-family conflict you are experiencing?
9. Does the work-to-family conflict you mentioned earlier affect you the most? Or do you think another work-to-family conflict are much worse? Can you give me an example?
10. How often you experience the work-to-family conflict?
11. Can you describe how it affects you both mentally and physically?
12. How do you cope with this type of work-to-family conflict? Does or did anyone or anything help you improve these problems?

In the above questions, If the participants are unclear, I will offer more details, such as:

“Please think of a time in your life when you are experiencing work-to-family conflict, when you have a situation in mind, please describe it to me.”

“Did the difficulty at work influenced your family role, such as don’t have enough time for family members or fulfil home responsibility?”

### Family-to-work conflict

1. How is your relationship with your family members? (parents, spouse, children)

2. (If the participant mentioned he or she has a child/children) Do you have childcare responsibility? If so, which types of responsibility (financially or daily care or both) and how does that affect your work? Can you give me an example?
3. Do you have eldercare responsibilities? If so, which types of responsibilities (financially or daily care or both) and how does that affect your work? Can you give me an example?
4. Do you need to take care of other family members? What is your thought about it?
5. Can you give me an example of the time you have to stop your work because of family responsibility? How do you feel about it?
6. How does your family responsibility affect your work both physically and mentally? Can you tell me how you feel about it?
7. Do you have additional help with childcare duties/eldercare responsibilities or housekeeping? If yes, how does it help? If not, how you cope with it?

In the above questions, If the participants are unclear, I will offer more details, such as:

“Please think of a time in your life when you were experiencing family-to-work conflict, when you have a situation in mind, please describe it to me.”

“How did the difficulty at home influenced your work, such as cannot focus on work or have to stop or quit your job?”

**PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET (Chinese)****参与者信息表**

**课题名称：**中国工作与家庭冲突模型的研发与验证。

**研究员姓名：**陈树杰

**邀请段**

你被邀请参与一个研究性学习，在你决定是否参与本次研究之前，最重要的是让你明白本次研究是如何进行的已经本次研究涉及了什么内容。请花时间仔细阅读以下信息，如果需要，也可以与亲友共同讨论。如果依然有什么不明确的地方，请随时联系我们。请仔细思考你是否愿意参加本次调查。最后，谢谢你阅读这篇参与者信息表。

**本次研究的内容是什么？**

研究员与其导师相信，由于中西方不同的文化背景，因此，基于西方样本所研发的工作与家庭冲突模型或许并不能完美的应用在中国上。为了更准确的明白工作与家庭冲突中机制的变化以及其在心理健康上的交叉效应。本次调查的主旨是为研发一个中国的全面的工作与家庭冲突综合模型而收集数据。同时，作为研究员博士学位的第二个研究，本次研究所研发的模型将用于进一步检测研究一所得结果的准确性。

**本次研究涉及什么？**

在线调查问卷。邀请函会分享在微信、QQ 和微博，符合参与者要求并有兴趣参与到本次调查的人可通过点击邀请函上的网页链接，此链接会让参与者进入问卷星平台。本次在线问卷调查采取匿名制的形式进行，完成本次问卷约需 30 分钟，你可以选择任何你觉得舒适的地方完成本次调查。

**我为什么被选中？**

因为你满足本次研究的参与者要求。本次研究的所有参与者必须满足以下条件：**1.**年满 18 周岁；**2.**中国国籍，出生并居住在中国；**3.**有一份提供收入的工作；**4.**有家庭。

**我必须参与吗？**

本次研究性调查采取自愿性原则。如果你愿意参与，我们首先会提供你这份信息表。由于本次调查采取的是网上匿名问卷调查的形式，所以你将不需要签署同意表。此外，即使你决定参与，你仍然可以选择随时退出。

### **如果我想参与到本次调查中，我接下来该怎么做？**

如果你有兴趣参加这次研究，你可以点击以下链接：**【未完成】**

在点击链接之后，你将看到参与者信息表，详细的概括本次研究的目的是以便你可以对本次研究调查有更深入的了解。最后，你可以通过点击‘开始’选项来开始在线调查问卷。

在填写调查问卷的过程中，请在每一题上选择你觉得最合适的答案并通过点击‘下一题’来进入到下一个问题。如果在填写调查问卷的过程中，有任何题目导致你不适，你可以随时点击‘退出’来退出本次问卷调查，‘退出’选项会让你从调查问卷的页面直接到最后的感谢信。同样的，在你完成所有题目后，点击‘完成’选项，这也会让你从调查问卷到感谢信。此外，你也可以通过直接关闭调查问卷的网页来退出本次问卷调查。

### **如果我同于参与后又改变主意呢？**

你可以随时暂停你手中的问卷调查，但一旦提交，由于本次调查问卷的匿名性，你将无法从本次问卷中退出。即，在提交本次调查问卷前，你有权随时退出本次调查，但一旦提交，将无法再改变主意。

### **参与本次调查有可能存在的风险是什么？**

由于大部分题目和工作与家庭间的冲突有关，因此，部分问题可能会让你感到不适。然而，你可以自由选择想回答的问题。并且，在完成调查问卷后，如果部分题目让你带来困扰，我们将会提供相关的帮助与支持。

### **参与本次调查有可能存在的好处是什么？**

所有关于本次研究调查的题目均来自先前的研究，因此，本次工作与家庭冲突的调查问卷具有一定的专业水准。在填写问卷的过程中，你可以发现生活中本已存在于工作与家庭间但之前却不明确的问题。

### **如果出了问题怎么办？/我可以向谁投诉？**

如果你有任何关于本次问卷调查的投诉，你可以直接联系研究人员。如果依然没有达到令人满意的结果，你也可以联系教师研究伦理委员会的管理人员或德蒙福特大学研究与商业办公室，地址是 Health & Life Sciences, 1.25 Edith Murphy House, De Montfort University, The Gateway,

Leicester, LE1 9BH 或通过电子邮件：[hlsfro@dmu.ac.uk](mailto:hlsfro@dmu.ac.uk)。此外，如果你对本次调查问卷仍然存在任何的抱怨与不满，也可以联系研究者的导师，Mei-I Cheng，电子邮箱地址为：[mcheng@dmu.ac.uk](mailto:mcheng@dmu.ac.uk)。

### **我参与的这次调查具有保密性吗？**

没有任何关于你的个人信息将会在参与本次问卷调查的过程中被收集，问卷的数据会被保存在受密码保护的数据库中严格保密。问卷星会随机为每一个参与本次调查的人生成一个代码，没有人可以通过此代码得知你是谁，从而保证保密性，同时，你也不可以在提交问卷后通过此代码来退出参与。此外，尽管本次问卷中的大部分问题涉及有关你的工作和家庭这两个领域，然而，潜在的有可能识别你个人信息的问题（如你的公司名字，职业，地区）都不会在本次问卷调查中被问到，因此不存在通过问卷调查的结果找到你本人的可能性。

数据收集后，按照德蒙福特大学的政策，原始数据通常在研究完成后保持五年。只有研究员的导师及研究员本人可以访问数据。此外研究伦理委员会的教师可能会调查数据，以便检验本次调查是否按照他们的批准进行。但是，你需要明白，如果在所收集的数据中，研究员发现任何迹象表明你有伤害小孩或其他弱势群体的行为，研究员有权向相关部门检举此不法行为。

### **本次研究调查的结果会如何处理？**

本次研究调查的结果仅用于完成研究员的博士学位毕业论文。调查问卷中的数据将以汇总的格式呈现于毕业论文中。毕业论文可能会在研讨会或学术会议上发表，但所有的结果都将会以汇总的格式呈现，从而影响识别个人信息的可能性。此外，由于本次调查的匿名性，你将无法获得最终结果的复印文件。

### **谁或哪个组织资助了这项研究调查？**

本次研究调查由陈树杰本人发起，并只用于陈树杰的博士学位毕业论文，因此不存在任何个人或组织的资助。

### **谁批准了本次的研究调查？**

本项研究调查已被德蒙福特大学和健康与生命科学研究伦理委员会审批并批准。

欲了解更多信息，请通过电子邮件联系研究员，电子邮箱是 [P13008469@my365.dmu.ac.uk](mailto:P13008469@my365.dmu.ac.uk)。谢谢你的参与。

## **PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET (English)**

**Title of Project:** Development and validation of a model of work-family conflict in China.

**Name of Investigators:** Shujie Chen

### **Invitation paragraph**

You have been invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide whether to take part it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with friends and relatives if you wish to. Feel free to ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take the time to decide whether you wish to take part or not. Thank you for reading this.

### **What is the study about?**

We believe that due to the different cultural backgrounds between Eastern and Western countries, the work-family conflict model that developed by the West might not be generalised into the Chinese sample. In order to more fully understand the mechanisms through which work and family experiences in China and their cross-over effects influence wellbeing, the aims of the proposed study are to develop an integrative work-family conflict model by using Chinese sample, and also, as the second study of researcher's PhD thesis, the developed model in proposed study will be used to further test the accuracy of the qualitative interview findings from study one.

### **What does the study involve?**

An online questionnaire will be used in the proposed study. The recruitment letter with the online questionnaire link will be posted and share via WeChat, QQ, and Weibo. People that fit the participants' requirement and interest in participating can click on the link which will then be directed to the Wenjuanxing platform. This anonymous online questionnaire will take around half hour to complete; you can choose any places that make you feel comfortable to complete the online questionnaire.

### **Why have I been chosen?**

Because you meet the requirements in this study, all the participants in this study must be 1. Over 18 years old; 2. Chinese nationality, grow up and live-in China; 3. Have any types of paid work (included self-employ, freelancer, etc.); 4. Have a family (e.g., spouse, partner, children, relatives, or/and parents).

### **Do I have to take part?**

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet, and during the questionnaire, you are still free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason.

### **I am interested in taking part, what do I do next?**

If you are interested in taking part in this study, you can click the link: [not been completed]

After clicking the link, you will see the information sheet which outlines the aim of this study so that you can have a basic understanding of this study. Then you will need to click the 'start' option to begin the online questionnaire.

You are asked to choose the answer that is most appropriate by selecting the relevant option and clicking 'next' to proceed to the next question. If you feel uncomfortable during the questionnaire, you can withdraw at any time you want before the submission of the online questionnaire by clicking the 'quit' option under every question, which will lead you to the debriefing letter, or you can simply close the questionnaire window to withdraw from the questionnaire. After you finish all questions, you need to click "finish", which will lead to the debriefing page as well.

**What if I agree to take part and then change my mind?**

You may choose to stop the questionnaire at any time, but once submitted, it is not possible to withdraw anonymous information, that being say, you can also withdraw from the study at any time you want before the submission of the online questionnaire, without giving a reason. Also, you are free to not answer all of the questions.

**What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?**

The questionnaire may raise questions regarding work-family conflicts, which some participants may find upsetting. However, you are free to not answer all of the questions, and at the end of the study, information will be provided concerning sources of support if these questions raise any difficult emotions for you.

**What are the possible benefits of taking part?**

As this study is about work-family conflict and almost all the questions were selected from previous studies, so they are all very professional questions. Therefore, during the process of filling out the questionnaire, you can discover problems that exist in your life, but you do not have appropriate ways of expressing them.

**What if something goes wrong?**

If you are harmed by taking part in this research project, there are no special compensation arrangements. If you are harmed due to someone's negligence, then you may have grounds for a legal action but you may have to pay for it. Regardless of this, if you wish to complain, or have any concerns about any aspect of the way you have been approached or treated during the course of this study, the normal University complaints mechanisms should be available to you.

**Who can I complain to?**

If you have a complaint regarding anything to do with this study, you can initially approach the lead investigator. If this achieves no satisfactory outcomes, you should then contact the Administrator for the Faculty Research Ethics Committee, Research & Commercial Office, Faculty of Health & Life Sciences, 1.25 Edith Murphy House, De Montfort University, The Gateway, Leicester, LE1 9BH or



[hlsfro@dmu.ac.uk](mailto:hlsfro@dmu.ac.uk). Also, if you have a complaint regarding anything do with this study, you can contact the researcher's supervisor. Mei-I Cheng by email [mcheng@dmu.ac.uk](mailto:mcheng@dmu.ac.uk).

**Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?**

No personal information of yours will be collected during the course of research, the data of the online questionnaire will be kept on a password-protected database and is strictly confidential. The questionnaire site will randomly generate an ID code to represent each participant, people cannot use this ID code to trace back to you, therefore, it is confidential, and you cannot use this ID code to withdraw your data after submission. Moreover, although most of the questions in this online questionnaire are regarding to your work and family domains, however, potential identifying information such as your company name, profession, and region will not be asked in this questionnaire, therefore, it is impossible to identify you based on the questionnaires' data.

After the data is collected, in keeping with the DMU policy, raw data is normally kept for five years after the study has been completed. My supervisor will also have access to the data and members of the faculty human research ethics committee may require access in order to check that the study has been conducted in accordance with their approval. In addition, you should also be aware that I may be duty bound to pass on information that you provide that reveals harm has occurred to a child or other vulnerable individual.

**What will happen to the results of the research study?**

The results of this study will be used to complete my PhD thesis. Data will be presented in aggregate format within the thesis. The results may be published or presented at workshops/conferences. If this is the case, then the results will be presented in aggregate format and your response will not be identifiable to you personally. In addition, due to the anonymity of present study, you will not receive a copy of the findings.

**Who is organising and funding the research?**

The research is organised by Shujie Chen for his PhD thesis and is unfunded.

**Who has reviewed the study?**

This study has been reviewed and approved by De Montfort University, and the Faculty of Health and Life Sciences Research Ethics Committee.

**Contact for Further Information**

For further information please contact the researcher, email: [P13008469@my365.dmu.ac.uk](mailto:P13008469@my365.dmu.ac.uk).

Thank you for taking part in the study.

*Appendix G Study 2's Participants Recruitment Letter***Participants Recruitment Letter (Chinese)****邀请函**

你好,

我是一位在英国莱斯特德蒙福特大学的工商心理学博士在读生。我希望邀请你参与一个关于工作与家庭冲突模型研发与验证的调查。本次调查作为本人博士学位的第二个研究, 主旨在于开发一个中国的全面的工作与家庭冲突综合模型并进一步验证研究一中所得出的结果。本次调查采用的是匿名问卷, 所得结果仅用于本人的博士学位论文。如你满足以下要求, 请你用半小时完成本次线上调查问卷。

参与者要求:

- 年满十八周岁
- 中国国籍, 出生并居住在中国
- 有一份为你带来收入的工作 (包括自雇、自由职业, 等)
- 有家庭 (包括对象、终身伴侣、孩子、亲戚和/或父母)

在完成调查问卷的过程中, 如果有任何题目让你感到不适, 你有权直接退出本次问卷调查, 所有未完成的调查问卷均会视为无效。由于本次调查为在线匿名问卷, 所以参与者并不能在完成调查问卷后得到关于问卷的结果。

如果你有兴趣参与到本次的问卷调查中, 你可以按以下的链接:

<https://www.wjx.cn/vj/PpFy7oN.aspx>

感谢你的时间, 如果你有任何疑问, 请随时通过电子邮件联系研究员: [P13008469@my365.dmu.ac.uk](mailto:P13008469@my365.dmu.ac.uk) 或联系研究员的导师: [mcheng@dmu.ac.uk](mailto:mcheng@dmu.ac.uk)

### Participants Recruitment Letter (English)

Dear Sir/Madam

I am a PhD student majoring in occupational psychology at De Montfort University, Leicester, UK. I would love to invite you to the study regarding the development and validation of a model of work-family conflict. As the second study of the researcher's PhD, the aims of this study are to develop and validate an integrated work-family conflict model that suitable for the Chinese people and further test the accuracy of the previous study's findings. This survey will be anonymous, and all the results will be used for my PhD's thesis only. If you meet the following criteria, please take around 30 minutes to finish the online questionnaire.

**Participant's criteria:**

- Over 18 years old
- Chinese nationality, grow up and live-in China
- Have any types of paid work (included self-employ, freelancer, etc.)
- Have a family (spouse, partner, children, relatives, or/have parents)

if any questions make you uncomfortable during the completion of the questionnaire, you have the right to withdraw, and all the questionnaire that not completed will be considered invalid. This survey is an anonymous online questionnaire, so the participants will not have the result after completing the questionnaire.

If you are interested in participating in this survey, you can click the link below:

<https://www.wjx.cn/vj/PpFy7oN.aspx>

Thanks for your time; if you have any questions, please feel free to contact the researcher by email: [P13008469@my365.ac.uk](mailto:P13008469@my365.ac.uk) or contact the researcher's supervisor: [mcheng@dmu.ac.uk](mailto:mcheng@dmu.ac.uk).

## Appendix H Study 2's Online Questionnaire

Online Questionnaire (Chinese)  
调查问卷

我同意参与本次在线调查问卷。

- a. 是的
- b. 不是

## 第一部分

1. 你的性别是?
  - a. 男
  - b. 女
2. 你的婚姻状况?
  - a. 单身
  - b. 已婚
  - c. 有伴侣
3. 你有多少小孩?
  - a. 0
  - b. 1
  - c. 2
  - d. 3 个或 3 个以上
4. 你现在和谁一起住? (多选)
  - a. 自己
  - b. 老公/老婆
  - c. 小孩
  - d. 男/女朋友
  - e. 自己父母
  - f. 配偶父母
  - g. 其他亲属 (如兄弟姊妹)
5. 你有多少兄弟姊妹?
  - a. 1 个
  - b. 2 个
  - c. 3 个或 3 个以上
  - d. 我是独生子
6. 你的月收入 (人民币)?
  - a. 低于 5 千
  - b. 5 千至 1 万
  - c. 1 万至 2 万 5

- d. 2万5至5万
  - e. 5万至10万
  - f. 高于10万
7. 你的职位等级是？
- a. 非行政管理人员
  - b. 中级行政管理人员（比如，经理/组长级人员）
  - c. 高级行政管理人员（比如，总经理/股东）
  - d. 无职位等级之分因为我是自由职业者
8. 我是\_\_？
- a. 全职员工
  - b. 兼职员工
  - c. 我有一份为我带来薪水的工作，我当它是我的全职工作
  - d. 我有一份为我带来薪水的工作，我当它是我的兼职工作
9. 你有任何上司/老板吗？
- a. 有
  - b. 无
10. 你有任何同事吗？
- a. 有
  - b. 无
11. 你的年龄？
- 填写你的答案
12. 每周工作多少个小时？
- 填写你的答案
13. 通勤需要多少分钟（上班和回家路程所需分钟总和）？
- 填写你的答案
14. 每天花费多少分钟做家务？
- 填写你的答案
15. 每天需要花费多少小时照顾小孩？
- 填写你的答案
16. 每天需要多少小时照顾父母？
- 填写你的答案

## 第二部分

以下是你可能同意或不同意的 6 点陈述。请在每一个陈述内选择下方 1 到 5 的评分标准来衡量你对该陈述的同意程度。

1-非常不同意; 2-不同意; 3-中立; 4-同意; 5-非常同意

由于我必须花费大量时间在工作上，所以我不得不错过家庭活动/生活。 \_\_\_\_\_

我的工作经常让我精神疲惫，从而影响我回家后的表现（例如，提供帮助）。 \_\_\_\_\_

职业中让我工作效率上升的行为并不能帮助我成为更好的父母/伴侣（例如，工作中的苛刻和严谨等并没有帮助我成为更好的父母/伴侣）。 \_\_\_\_\_

由于我必须花费大量时间在家庭责任上，所以我不得不放弃部分工作。 \_\_\_\_\_

我的家庭责任压的我透不过气，导致我无法在工作时集中。 \_\_\_\_\_

家庭中有效和必要的行为放在工作上的话会适得其反。（例如，对待伴侣/小孩时的包容，情感开放等并不适用于我的工作岗位）。 \_\_\_\_\_

## 第三部分

请回答以下问题用： 1-一点也不可以； 2-很小程度上； 3-中立； 4-很大程度上； 5-完全可以

在多大程度上你能：  
 和你的同事诉说你工作上的问题？ \_\_\_\_\_

指望你的同事支持你的工作？ \_\_\_\_\_

指望你的同事帮助你完成困难的工作任务？ \_\_\_\_\_

指望你的同事违背他们的利益来帮你当你面对有危机的工作情况？ \_\_\_\_\_

请在以下陈述中选择相应的数字以代表你对该陈述的同意程度。

1-非常不同意; 2-不同意; 3-中立; 4-同意; 5-非常同意

我的主管/上级在乎我的意见 \_\_\_\_\_

我的主管/上级关心我的健康 \_\_\_\_\_

我的主管/上级会考虑到我的目标和价值 \_\_\_\_\_

我的主管/上级对我表现很小的关心 \_\_\_\_\_

请回答以下的问题：

	有	无
你有使用灵活的工作时间安排的权限吗？例如改变自己的上下班时间和选择自己想要的排班？		
你有选择工作场所的权限吗？例如在家工作或在同一企业下选择不同的工作地点？		

## 第四部份

请回答以下问题用 1-几乎没有; 2-有时候; 3-经常

如果你需要找人诉苦, 你可以向你的伴侣敞开心扉吗? \_\_\_\_\_

如果你遇到问题, 你可以依靠你的伴侣去为你解决问题吗? \_\_\_\_\_

你的伴侣对你有过多的需求吗? \_\_\_\_\_

你的伴侣经常批评你吗? \_\_\_\_\_

请用 1=几乎没有, 至, 5=几乎总是, 这 5 个评分标准来评价以下陈述:

当你遇到个人问题时, 你会经常向你的兄弟姐妹寻求支持吗? \_\_\_\_\_

你会很依赖你兄弟姐妹对你的帮助, 建议或同情吗? \_\_\_\_\_

当你觉得难过时, 你会很依赖你的兄弟姐妹去开导你吗? \_\_\_\_\_

当你遇到个人问题时, 你会经常向你的父母寻求支持吗? \_\_\_\_\_

你会很依赖你父母对你的帮助, 建议或同情吗? \_\_\_\_\_

当你觉得难过时, 你会很依赖你的父母去开导你吗? \_\_\_\_\_

### 第五部分

请用 1=完全没有, 至, 3=每个月都会发生但不是每周都有, 至, 5=每一天, 这 5 个评分标准来评价以下陈述。

你当前的工作经常发生冲突的情况吗? \_\_\_\_\_

你当前的工作经常需要和使人不愉快的, 脾气大的或不礼貌的人打交道吗? \_\_\_\_\_

你当前的工作需要经常和暴力的或具攻击性的人打交道吗? \_\_\_\_\_

请通过选择是和否回答以下陈述:

	是	否
家庭成员彼此之间很少公开发怒		
家庭成员之间极少脾气		
家庭成员的意见产生分歧时, 我们一直都回避它以保持和气		
家中经常吵架		
有时家庭成员发怒时摔东西		
家庭成员之间常互相责备和批评		
家庭成员有时互相打架		

家庭成员彼此想胜过对方

家人有矛盾时，有时会大声争吵


## 第六部份

请评价以下陈述的认同程度。

7- 非常同意, 6-同意, 5-有点同意, 4-中立, 3-有点不同意, 2-不同意, 1-非常不同意

我的生活和我理想中的生活非常接近。

我的生活状况非常的好。

我很满意自己的生活。

目前为止，生命中我觉得重要的东西我都得到了。

如果我可以再活一遍，我不会想去改变生活中任何东西。

总的来说，我目前所从事的职业正是我想要的。

我的工作条件非常好。

我对我目前的工作很满意

目前为止，我的工作已经让我得到了我生命中想得到的东西。

如果我可以改变我工作中的任何东西，我什么都不会去改变。

我的家庭生活和我理想中的家庭生活非常接近。

我的家庭生活状况非常好。

我很满意我的家庭生活。

目前为止，生命中重要的东西我都从我家庭生活中得到了。

如果我的家庭可以从头来过，我不会改变任何东西。

## 第七部份

请评价你对以下陈述的同意度。



1-非常不同意; 2-不同意; 3-中立; 4-同意; 5-非常同意

我感到很内疚当:

我的工作需求干扰了我的家庭生活时。

我花在工作上的时间导致我无法履行家庭义务时。

我的工作需求导致我无法在家做我想做的事时。

我的工作压力导致我很难履行家庭责任时。

工作相关的职责导致我不得不更改和家人的计划时。

我的家庭生活干扰了我工作相关的活动时。

我花在家庭上的时间导致我无法工作时。

我家人的要求导致我无法完成工作上想完成的事时。

我的家庭干扰了我的工作, 如, 按时上班, 加班等。

家庭相关的压力干扰了我履行工作相关职责的能力。

## 第八部分

请评价以下陈述的发生频率。

1-从不; 2-很少; 3-有时候; 4-经常; 5-总是

我能很好的完成艰难的工作任务。

我会为了我的工作而学习技术相关知识。

我可以根据企业的要求完成工作。

我通过规划我的行为, 工作任务的优先顺序和截止日期来安排我的工作。

我根据自己的任务和组织的要求来规划我的工作流程。

我会主动去改善我的工作成果。

我为工作中可能遇到的问题寻求新的解决方法。

我努力完成指定给我的工作任务。

工作任务的结果总是在我的意料之中。

我抓住可以改善工作成果的机会。

## 第九部分

以下对于你家庭生活的陈述中, 你认为你在多大程度上实现了家人对你的期望?

评分范围从: 1=完全没有达到期待, 至, 5=完全实现期待

帮忙家里的日常家庭琐事（如洗碗，做饭等）

维护/维修家里的物品

履行家庭责任（如照顾小孩，父母等）

做非日常的（较为繁重的）家务活（如大扫除，家具换位整理等）

为家人提供情感上的支持

为家人提供支持

给家人提意见

维系家人之间的关系

**Online Questionnaire (English)**

I confirm consent to participant in this online questionnaire.

- a. Yes
- b. No

**PART A**

1. What is your gender?
  - a. Male
  - b. Female
2. What is your marital status?
  - a. Single
  - b. Marriage
  - c. In a relationship
3. How many children you have?
  - a. 0
  - b. 1
  - c. 2
  - d. 3 or more than 3
4. Who do you live with? (multiple choice)
  - a. Myself
  - b. With my life partner
  - c. With my children
  - d. With my girlfriend/boyfriend
  - e. With my parent
  - f. With parent-in-law
  - g. With other relatives (e.g., sibling)
5. How many sibling(s) you have?
  - a. 1
  - b. 2
  - c. 3 or more than 3
  - d. I am the only child
6. What is your income level (month)?
  - a. Less than 5,000 RMB
  - b. 5,000 to 10,000 RMB
  - c. 10,000 to 25,000 RMB

- d. 25,000 to 50,000 RMB
  - e. 50,000 to 100,000 RMB
  - f. Over 100,000
7. What is your job level?
- a. Nonmanagement
  - b. Management (e.g., manager/team leader)
  - c. Owner
  - d. I am self-employ/freelancer
8. Are you a \_\_\_?
- a. Full-time worker
  - b. Part-time worker
  - c. I have a paid work and I treat it like a full-time job
  - d. I have a paid work and I treat it like a part-time job
9. Do you have any supervisors/boss?
- a. Yes
  - b. No
10. Do you have any co-workers?
- a. Yes
  - b. No
11. What is your age?  
Write down your age here
12. How many hours you work per week?  
Write down your answer here
13. How many mins you spend on commute per day (both go to work and go back home)?  
Write down your answer here
14. Time use on housework per day (minutes)?  
Write down your answer here
15. Time use on childcare per day (hours)?  
Write down your answer here
16. Time use on provide care for elderly parents (hours)?  
Write down your answer here

**PART B**

Below are six statements that you may agree or disagree with. Using the 1-5 scale below, indicate your agreement with each item by placing the approximate number on the line preceding that item. Please be open and honest in your responding.

1-strongly disagree; 2-disagree; 3-neither agree nor disagree; 4-agree; 5-strongly agree

- I have to miss family activities due to the amount of time I must spend on work responsibilities. \_\_\_\_\_
- I am often so emotionally drained when I get home from work that it prevents me from contributing to my family. \_\_\_\_\_
- The behaviours I perform that make me effective at work do not help me to be a better parent and spouse. \_\_\_\_\_
- I have to miss work activities due to the amount of time I must spend on family responsibilities. \_\_\_\_\_
- Because I am often stressed from family responsibilities, I have a hard time concentrating on my work. \_\_\_\_\_
- Behaviour that is effective and necessary for me at home would be counterproductive at work. \_\_\_\_\_

**PART C**

Please respond to the following statements indicating your agreement or disagreement with each statement listed below by placing the approximate number on the line preceding that item.

1-strongly disagree; 2-disagree; 3-neither agree nor disagree; 4-agree; 5-strongly agree

- My supervisor cares about my opinions \_\_\_\_\_
- My work supervisor really cares about my wellbeing \_\_\_\_\_
- My supervisor strongly considers my goals and values \_\_\_\_\_
- My supervisor shows very little concern for me. \_\_\_\_\_

Please respond to the following questions by 1- not at all; 2-to a small extent; 3-neither great nor small extent; 4-to a great extent; 5-completely.

- To what extent can you: \_\_\_\_\_
- Count on your colleagues to listen to you when you need to talk about problems at work? \_\_\_\_\_
- Count on your colleagues to back you up at work? \_\_\_\_\_
- Count on your colleagues to help you with a difficult task at work? \_\_\_\_\_
- Really count on your colleagues to help you in a crisis situation at work, even though they would have to go out of their way to do so? \_\_\_\_\_

Please answer the following two questions

	Yes	No
Do you have access to flexible work schedules, such as changes in starting and quitting times or choices about shifts?		
Do you have access to flexible place, such as being able to work from home or at a different worksite in the organization?		

**PART D**

Please rank the following statement by use 1-hardly ever; 2-some of the time; 3-often

- How often can you open up to spouse/partner if you need to talk about your worries? \_\_\_\_\_
- How often can you rely on him/her for help if you have a problem? \_\_\_\_\_
- How often does he/she make too many demands on you? \_\_\_\_\_
- How often does he/she criticize you? \_\_\_\_\_

Please answer the following questions by using the scale from 1=almost never to 5=almost always

- How much do you turn to your siblings for support with personal problems? \_\_\_\_\_
- How much do you depend on your siblings for help, advice, sympathy? \_\_\_\_\_
- When you are feeling down or upset, how much do you depend on your sibling to cheer things up? \_\_\_\_\_

- How much do you turn to your parents for support with personal problems? \_\_\_\_\_
- How much do you depend on your parents for help, advice, sympathy? \_\_\_\_\_
- When you are feeling down or upset, how much do you depend on your parents to cheer things up? \_\_\_\_\_

**PART E**

Please respond to the following statements using 1=never to 3=once a month, but not every week to 5=every day.

- How often are conflict situations a part of your current job? \_\_\_\_\_
- How often is dealing with unpleasant, angry, or discourteous people a part of your current job? \_\_\_\_\_
- How often is dealing with violent or physically aggressive people a part of your current job? \_\_\_\_\_

Please respond to the following statements by choosing yes or no:

	Yes	No
Family members rarely get angry with each other publicly		
Rarely have temper among family members		
When family members have different opinions, we always avoid it to maintain harmony		
Often quarrel at home		
Sometimes family members throw things when we are angry		
Family members often blame and criticize each other		



**PART G**

Please respond to the following statements indicating your agreement or disagreement with each statement listed below by placing the approximate number on the line preceding that item.

1-strongly disagree; 2-disagree; 3-neither agree nor disagree; 4-agree; 5-strongly agree

- I feel guilty when the demands of my work interfere with my home and family life. \_\_\_\_\_
- I feel guilty when the amount of time my job takes up makes it difficult to fulfil family responsibilities. \_\_\_\_\_
- I feel guilt when things I want to do at home do not get done because of the demands my job puts on me. \_\_\_\_\_
- I feel guilt when my job produces strain that makes it difficult to fulfil family duties. \_\_\_\_\_
- I feel guilt when the work-related duties cause me to have to make changes to my plans for family activities. \_\_\_\_\_
- I feel guilty when the demands of my family or spouse/partner interfere with work-related activities. \_\_\_\_\_
- I feel guilty when I have to put off doing things at work because of demands on my time at home. \_\_\_\_\_
- I feel guilt when things I want to do at work don't get done because of the demands of my family or spouse/partner. \_\_\_\_\_
- I feel guilt when my home life interferes with my responsibilities at work such as getting to work on time, accomplishing daily tasks, and working overtime. \_\_\_\_\_
- I feel guilt when family-related strain interferes with my ability to perform job-related duties. \_\_\_\_\_

**PART H**

Please respond to the following statements indicating the frequency of each statement listed below by placing the approximate number on the line preceding that item.

1-never; 2-seldom; 3-sometimes; 4-frequently; 5-always

- I perform hard tasks properly. \_\_\_\_\_
- I try to update my technical knowledge to do my job. \_\_\_\_\_
- I do my job according to what the organization expects from me. \_\_\_\_\_
- I plan the execution of my job by defining actions, deadlines and priorities. \_\_\_\_\_
- I plan actions according to my tasks and organizational routines. \_\_\_\_\_
- I take initiatives to improve my results at work. \_\_\_\_\_
- I seek new solutions for problems that may come up in my job. \_\_\_\_\_
- I work hard to do the tasks designated to me. \_\_\_\_\_
- I execute my tasks foreseeing their results. \_\_\_\_\_
- I seize opportunities that can improve my results at work. \_\_\_\_\_



**PART I**

To what extent do you think you fulfil what is expected of you in relation to the following aspects of your current family life?

Scale: 1=do not fulfil expectation at all, to, 5=fulfil expectation completely

Do household chores

maintain things around the home

Complete household responsibilities

Do tasks around the house

Provide emotional support to your family members

Provide general support to your family members

Give advice to family members

Keep family members connected with each other

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Debriefing letter (English)**

Development and validation of a model of work-family conflict in China.

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study! In order to more fully understand the mechanisms through work-family conflict in China and its cross-over effects influence wellbeing, the aims of the present study are to develop an integrative model of the work-family conflict by using Chinese sample, and also, as the second study of researcher's PhD degree, the developed model in the present study will be used to further test the accuracy of the qualitative interview findings from study one.

We aim to invite at least 500 people in China; the researcher does not know which industries or business sectors the participant is in. All the participants in the present study are adult (over age 18) and based in mainland China (Chinese nationality, grow up and live in mainland China) and should have a paid work and family (spouse, partner, children, relatives, or/and parents). In this study, you were asked to complete an online questionnaire. We believe that due to the different cultural backgrounds between Eastern and Western countries, the work-family conflict model that developed by the West might not be generalised into the Chinese sample. Thus, the results of this study will use for the develop and validate an integrated work-family conflict model that suitable for the Chinese sample and further test the accuracy of the findings from the previous study.

*If you feel especially concerned about your information and the results being published, please feel free to email the researcher: [P13008469@my365.dmu.ac.uk](mailto:P13008469@my365.dmu.ac.uk) or contact the researcher's supervisor via email: [mcheng@dmu.ac.uk](mailto:mcheng@dmu.ac.uk) about the options for counselling.*

Again! Thank you for your participants in the present study. If you have further questions about the study, please email the researcher: [P13008469@my365.dmu.ac.uk](mailto:P13008469@my365.dmu.ac.uk). In addition, if you have any concerns about any aspect of the study, you may contact Mei-I Cheng, PhD Email: [mcheng@dmu.ac.uk](mailto:mcheng@dmu.ac.uk).

If you have been affected by some of the issues raised in this study, and would like to talk to someone in confidence about it, you may wish to contact to following organisation(s):

Counselling Support in China:

Chinese psychology. Phone number: 010-84289911. Website: [www.psychcn.com](http://www.psychcn.com)

Guangzhou Soul Nourishing Center Co., Ltd. Phone number: 020-34385911. Website: <http://www.020xlx.com/>

Guangzhou Mangrove Counselling Center. Phone number: 020-38295867. Website: <http://www.gzxlys.com/>

*Guangzhou Sunflower Counsel ING Co., Ltd. Phone number: 020-38299651. Website: <http://www.xiangrikui.cn/>*

## Debriefing letter (Chinese)

### 感谢信

中国工作与家庭冲突模型的研发和验证

由衷的感谢你的参与到本次的调查！为了充分地了解工作与家庭冲突在中国的形成机制及其交叉效应对幸福感的影响，本次研究的主旨是通过使用中国样本建立一个全面的工作与家庭冲突的综合模型。同时，作为研究员博士学位的第二个研究，本研究中所开发的模型将用于进一步的验证研究—（定性访谈）所得结果的准确性。

我们的目标是邀请 500 人参与到本次调查中，招募参与者时研究员并没有固定于某一行业或商业部门。所有的参与者都必须为法定成年人（年满十八周岁）；来自中国大陆地区（中国国籍、出生，成长，并居住在中国）；有一份提供收入的工作以及有家庭（有对象，终身伴侣，小孩，亲属，和/或父母）。在本次调查中，你被要求完成一份在线的调查问卷。因为研究员及其导师相信，由于中西方文化文化背景的差异，根据西方样本所研发的工作与家庭冲突模型或许并不能完美的应用在中国样本上。因此，本次调查的结果将用于研发一个中国的全面的工作与家庭冲突综合模型，同时，进一步验证研究—结果的准确性。

如果你对本次研究调查的结果感到特别有兴趣，或有任何问题想要咨询。请随时通过电子邮件联系研究员，电子邮箱地址为：[p13008469@my365.ac.uk](mailto:p13008469@my365.ac.uk)。或者可以通过电子邮件与研究员的导师联系，电子邮箱地址为：[mcheng@dmu.ac.uk](mailto:mcheng@dmu.ac.uk)。

在这里再次感谢你的参与，如果对本次研究调查存在问题，请通过电子邮件联系研究员，电子邮箱地址为：[p13008469@my365.ac.uk](mailto:p13008469@my365.ac.uk)。若对本次研究调查存在任何方面的顾虑，可以通过电子邮件与研究员的导师联系，电子邮箱地址为：[mcheng@dmu.ac.uk](mailto:mcheng@dmu.ac.uk)。

如果你由于参与本研究而对家庭工作的平衡问题产生疑虑，并希望向专业人士进行咨询，下面提供一些心理咨询机构的联系方式：

中国心理咨询机构：

中国心理学协会，联系电话：010-84289911. 网页：[www.psychcn.com](http://www.psychcn.com)

广州听说吧心理咨询有限公司，联系电话：020-38295867. 网页：<http://www.gzxlys.com/>

广州红树林心理咨询，联系电话：020-38295867. 网页：<http://www.gzxlys.com/>

广州向日葵心理咨询有限公司，联系电话：020-38299651. 网页：<http://www.xianqrikui.cn/>