



# A Review of Work Family Conflict Research

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**Abstract.** The job competition is becoming more and more fierce with the rapid development of society, nowadays, the job requirements for individuals are becoming more and more strict. At the same time, the liberalization of the birth policy and the change of parents' educational concept have gradually increased the individual work family conflict. The dual pressure of work and family will inevitably lead to work family conflict. This paper combs the concept, dimension, measurement and related research of work family conflict, in order to make contribution to the research on work family conflict.

**Keywords:** Work Family Conflict · Roles · Gauge · Job Satisfaction

## 1 Introduction

Work family conflict is the most frequently discussed research direction in the study of work family relations, and there are many descriptions of it, such as Inter-role Conflict, Family/Work Role Incompatibility, Job-Family Role Strain Work Family Tension and so on. From these descriptions, it can be found that work family conflict is often associated with roles. According to the role theory, Kahn et al. (1964) [1] concluded that work family conflict is caused by the conflict between the requirements of the roles involved in work and the requirements of the roles involved in family.

At present, the definition of work family conflict, which is generally accepted by the academic community, is that work family conflict is a special form of role conflict. The role relationship between individuals in different fields of work and family is competitive. When some role pressures from work and family occur incompatible and irreconcilable contradictions, work family conflict will be caused. Specifically, work family conflict can be divided into two aspects, on the one hand, the conflict originates from the fact that individuals focus on meeting the role requirements of work and neglect the responsibility of doing their best family role. Similarly, on the other hand, the conflict originates from the fact that individuals focus on meeting the role requirements of family and neglect the responsibility of doing their best work role. Based on this, Greenhaus (1985) [2] defined the work family conflict caused by work role requirements as work-family conflict; The work family conflict caused by family role requirements is defined as family-work conflict.

There are three main forms of work family conflict: (1) Time-based conflict, that is, the conflict caused by individuals unable to meet the different role requirements of work and family at the same time due to limited time. For example, due to work requirements, it is not possible to fulfill the family responsibility of accompanying children on weekends or holidays; the individual is unable to complete the arrangement of work activities due to taking care of his family. (2) Stress-based conflict, that is, the psychological stress or bad emotions generated by individuals engaging in work/family role activities will inadvertently or uncontrollably affect the state and performance when engaging in family/work role activities. For example, individuals' anxiety caused by high pressure of work promotion leads to their inability to happily participate in family activities; the mental tension caused by family illness makes it difficult for individuals to enter the working state. (3) Behavior-based conflict, that is, the conflict caused by the incompatibility between the behavior of individuals participating in work/family roles and the behavior of individuals participating in family/work roles. For example, if the way of dealing with work matters according to rules and regulations is used to deal with family affairs, it will lead to dissatisfaction among family members and conflict; treating work with an inclusive attitude towards family will lead to lax work requirements and conflict.

## 2 Dimensions and Measurement of Work Family Conflict

Based on Greenhaus' definition of 'work family conflict', the current academic measurement of work family conflict adopts two-dimensional form. The names of dimensions are similar: work-family conflict, family-work conflict; work family conflict, family work conflict; work interferes with family and family interferes with work. The work family conflict scale compiled by Netemeyer, Bowles and McMuman is an earlier scale to study the dimensions of work interferes with family. With the deepening of research on work family relations, the work family conflict scale is also being enriched and optimized. The two-dimensional work family conflict scale of Carlson et al. (2000) [3] has been adapted and widely adopted by different scholars. Based on the work family conflict scale developed by Carlson and other scholars, Y Gan (2007) [4] revised the scale according to Carlson and other scholars, and the work family conflict was measured from the two dimensions of work-family conflict and family-work conflict. Similarly, Z Chen et al. (2014) also studied the two-way nature of work family conflict from the two aspects of work interferes with family and family interferes with work, and adapts it according to the scale developed by Carlson and other scholars, Stephens and Sommer to measure work interferes with family. The measurement of family interferes with work is also based on the questionnaire adapted from Carlson and other scholars. Later, scholars also refined the measurement of different dimensions of work family conflict according to different research needs, so as to quantify the dimensions more comprehensively and accurately. For example, for the questionnaire on the working environment of teachers, H Zhang (2004) evaluated the work-family conflict dimension from three aspects: work stress, behavior spillover and resource conflict, and evaluate the family-work conflict dimension from two aspects: psychological and behavioral factors.

Therefore, the specific scale to measure work family conflict needs to be treated according to different studies. A scale selection method worth learning is that it can be adapted according to the existing mature scale and combined with the research topic.

### 3 Research on Work Family Conflict

#### 3.1 Factors Affecting Work Family Conflict

Existing research shows that work family relationship is mainly affected by work factors, social factors and personal factors.

In terms of work factors, J Zhao et al. (2013) pointed out that a large number of studies have proved that work requirements and work resources are two important factors affecting work family conflict. Work requirements positively predict work family conflict and work resources negatively predict work family conflict. In addition, low work control will also increase work family conflicts. Relevant studies on work control suggest that higher work autonomy will increase employees' work enthusiasm and inhibit work family conflict. H Li (2022) [5] pointed out that work remodeling can also affect work family conflict, what corroborates each other is that Bruning et al. (2018) [6] found that the work family conflict was negatively affected by the promoting work remodeling, while the work family conflict was positively affected by the defensive work remodeling.

In terms of social factors, J Yang (2018) [7] pointed out that the domestic fertility policy is becoming more and more loose, and the family responsibility of raising children is becoming heavier and heavier, which will lead to the imbalance of work family relations, and then lead to work family conflict. Although this conflict cannot be eliminated, there are also some ways to alleviate it. H Gong et al. (2006) proposed that people can effectively reduce work family conflict through emotional support, assessment support, information support and other social support.

In terms of personal factors, emotion is generally accepted and confirmed by the academic community, and one of the factors that have an important impact on work family relations. Gross J J (2003) [8] divided Emotion regulation strategies into cognitive reappraisal and expression inhibition. Existing studies have proved that cognitive reappraisal emotion regulation strategies can alleviate work family conflicts, and expression inhibition emotion regulation strategies can aggravate work family conflicts. At the same time, based on the role expectation theory, gender can also regulate work family conflict. Men generally feel less work family conflict than women. It is worth noting that some studies have confirmed that work family conflicts caused by gender differences are not significant. Izraeli D. N (1993) [9] gave a more convincing explanation, the gender difference in work family conflict is not caused by gender itself, but the result of the gender attitude that everyone has always adhered to (such as the traditional concept that "men are in charge of the outside, women are in charge of the inside").

#### 3.2 Effect of Work Family Conflict

Burke (1988) [10] found that the more serious the work family conflict, the lower the job satisfaction and the higher the degree of psychological burnout. Y Wang, W Dong

(2020) divided the work family conflict into work negative spillovers and family negative spillovers. The research shows that work and family spillovers can significantly increase job burnout. Later, Bacharach and other scholars also confirmed this view through research. More novel, Thomas and Ganster (1995) [11] pointed out that work family conflict is not only negatively related to job satisfaction, but also related to individual physical condition. Higher work family conflict will lead to individual depression and other adverse situations. Similarly, X Song (2022) [12] found that work family conflict will increase the probability of individual mental health problems. In addition, Higgins and his colleagues (1987) found that work family conflict can also lead to the decline of family quality of life; Wiley (1987) [13] showed that work family conflict is also negatively related to organizational commitment; the research results of C Xu and J Wang (2014) showed that the greater the work family conflict that migrant workers bear, the stronger their turnover intention; C Zhang, J Zhou (2021) found that family work relationship has an important impact on the changes of individual negative emotions, and family work conflict will lead to more negative emotions.

## 4 Conclusions

This study mainly summarizes the concept definition, type classification, scale selection and influencing factors of work family conflict, and draws the following conclusions in order to be helpful to the future related research.

First of all, work family conflict, as a common research direction of work family relations, has various definitions. Among them, the most widely accepted concept is to define work family conflict as work-family conflict and family-work conflict based on role theory. And, the measurement of work family conflict also starts from these two dimensions. Furthermore, work family conflict can be further divided into time-based conflict, stress-based conflict and behavior-based conflict. Then, the scale of work family conflict is also based on the mature scale constructed by Carlson and other scholars, and then adapted according to different research topics. Finally, the influencing factors of work family conflict are mainly divided into three aspects: work, society and individual. Each aspect has different points. At the same time, work family conflict will also have an impact on individual job satisfaction, psychological burnout, physical and mental health, quality of life, turnover intention and so on.

To sum up, the follow-up related research can enrich the research topics of work family conflict by combining the two main points: what factors will affect work family conflict and what aspects work family conflict may affect.

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