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Received: 8 October 2021 | Revised: 15 September 2023 | Accepted: 18 September 2023

DOI: 10.1002/job.2755

RESEARCH ARTICLE

WILEY Journal of Organizational Behavior

We were all in it together: Managing work from home as dual-earner households with school-age children

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Summary

We examine how professional dual-earner couples, with school-age children, who worked from home during the COVID-19 lockdown, adjusted to the changes it brought to their lives. To do so, we conducted a qualitative study of 28 dual-earner households that had at least one school-age child, resided in China, Iran, Malaysia, the United Kingdom, or the United States, and worked from home during their local lockdown period. In each household, we interviewed the parents (56 total), and we asked at least one child to draw their perception of their parents' work-from-home experience and narrate the drawing (31 total). Informed by work–home interface and family stress scholarships, we outline the resources and demands generated by working at home as a family, as well as the strategies families employed to manage their collective work from home. We extend work-from-home scholarship beyond the individual level by accounting for the roles of all collective members in the work-from-home experience. We complement the research that has studied individual- and couple-level work–family strategies by theorizing the supportive, attentive, relational, delegative, and compromising strategies families adopted to generate changes in resource-demand dynamics. In doing so, we introduce *family adaptive capability* for the context of adjusting to work from home and define it as a collective ability to initiate strategies to meet remote work demands with resources generated from the new work arrangement. At a practical level, the strategies presented in our work can inform employers of dual-earner couples and families experiencing similar dynamics.

KEYWORDS
dual-earner couple, family adaptive capability, work-family interface, work from home, remote work

1 | INTRODUCTION

Work from home[1] is an alternative work arrangement that involves individual workers performing tasks from home, away from their primary workplaces, using information and communication technologies to interact with others inside and outside their organization (Spreitzer et al., 2017). Work–family research and practice have viewed working from home as a flexible work option that helps employees integrate work and family by saving resources (e.g., commute time) that meet

Melika Shirmohammadi and Wee Chan Au contributed to this work equally.

[1]Work from home is also known as telecommuting, telework, remote work, and virtual work. The common definitions of these terms imply that the work is remote from the employer and, therefore, not necessarily in the home.

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their family demands (e.g., parental and care responsibilities) (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007). This has motivated subsequent scholarly work examining the work–family dynamics of employees working from home mainly at the invididual level, with only a few studies incorporating data from teleworkers' partners (e.g., Raghuram et al., 2003; Sullivan & Lewis, 2001), and a few recent and pandemic-induced studies that collected data from couples managing childcare whether or not both partners worked remotely (e.g., Otonkorpi-Lehtoranta et al., 2022; Shockley et al., 2021).

The COVID-19 pandemic and its consequent lockdowns gave rise to households with multiple individuals working remotely, a phenomenon likely to extend beyond the pandemic. The increasing tendency toward work from home (e.g., McKinsey Global Institute, 2023), the increase in the number of remote workers and hybrid work arrangements (e.g., Gallup, 2023[2]; ILO, 2021), and the greater possibility for more than one remote worker in a household suggest there is a need to adopt a more inclusive lens when examining work–family dynamics in the work-from-home context. Also, with 20%–25% of the workforce in advanced economines working from home 3–5 days a week (McKinsey Global Institute, 2023), dual-earner households with the opportunity to work remotely will continue to expereince overlapping remote work days. We believe organizational behavior could benefit from research that accounts for managing remote work beyond an invididual level and extends work from home to unpack the processes through which collectives integrate remote work and family demands.

Due to viewing work from home as a predominantly individual experience, researchers have mainly studied individual-level adjustments to its management (e.g., Raghuram et al., 2019) without specifying the resource-demand contingencies and the strategies to integrate work and family used by both remote workers and those living with them. Post-pandemic research has made headway along these lines through both individual-level studies examining strategies adopted to manage work–family boundaries while working from home (e.g., Allen et al., 2012; Vaziri et al., 2020) and couple-level studies highlighting gendered strategies used to manage childcare and work commitments (e.g., Otonkorpi-Lehtoranta et al., 2022; Shockley et al., 2021). However, boundary management strategies focus only on ways to shape temporal and spatial demarcations between work and family, while gendered strategies emphasize the lack of symmetry in the division of labor among couples. The existing studies have neither comprehensively unpacked resource-demand dynamics when remote work is not limited to one individual in a household, nor have they outlined how a collective adapts to work from home. A resource-demand perspective explains work-from-home adjustment through resource-demand fit and management beyond the self regulatory dynamics highlighted in past research (e.g., Raghuram et al., 2003). Also, the resource-demand dynamics at the family level differ from that of the individual level, with the former being a continuous process that requires ongoing communication, collaboration, and adaptability. In a collective social system, individuals' actions directly or indirectly impact others, motivating members of the collective to consider other people's needs when evaluating resources and prioritizing demands and thus creating a condition where resources and demands function relative to the collective. Above all, resource-demand dynamics determine whether working from home is perceived as a positive or stressful experience, given that individuals and families experience stress when demands exceed resources (McCubbin & Patterson, 1983; Voydanoff, 2005).

We conducted a qualitative study among 28 professional, dual-earner households in China, Iran, Malaysia, the United Kingdom, and the United States, which had at least one school-age child and both partners working from home during the COVID-19 lockdowns in their respective countries. We consider the family as a collective unit that manages work from home, following previous studies examining family accounts to understand work–home dynamics (e.g., Beckman & Stanko, 2020). Aligned with our focus on the collective level, in each household, we interviewed the parents and requested that at least one child draw their perception of their parents' work-from-home experience and narrate the drawing to triangulate our interview data. Upon initiating our research, we positioned our work within the theoretical framework of work–family resource demand (Greenhaus & ten Brummelhuis, 2013; Voydanoff, 2005). Also, informed by the first stage of our data analysis, we complemented the resource-demand lens by drawing on McCubbin and Patterson's (1983) model for family stress and adaptation to explain the households' strategies for managing work from home. Patterson (1983) proposes that after the occurrence of a change or stressor event in a family's environment, members draw on family resources and develop coping strategies to address demands generated by the event. We examined how dual-earner households with school-age children integrate work and family while adjusting to collective work from home. The emergent nature of our inquiry led to addressing the specific questions of "What work and family demands and resources are generated for a household by working from home collectively?" and "How do households manage their resources and demands to adjust to working from home as a collective?"

We extend work-from-home scholarship beyond the individual level to account for the collective members' roles in managing the work-from-home experience. Our findings recognize aggregated resources—a collection of work and nonwork resources available to a family—to be managed and allocated to a collection of demands in a household. While individual-level research highlights how resources start in one domain (e.g., work) and end in another domain (e.g., family), and couple-level research emphasizes how resources start in one domain (e.g., work) of a partner and end in one domain (e.g., family) of the other partner, our collective-level study highlights how resources start from a pool of resources, where resources could overlap, be exchanged, or influenced by others, and consequently allocated to another household member's work or nonwork domain.

We approach strategies as efforts to adapt and ensure healthy family functioning and theorize the five salient strategies—supportive, attentive, relational, delegative, and compromising—that families devised to fit resources to meet their demands or to manage their

[2]Gallup found in February 2023 that, among remote-capable employees in the United States, 20% worked on-site, 28% exclusively remote, and 52% hybrid.

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unmet demands as they adapt to work from home. In doing so, we introduce *family adaptive capability* for the context of adjusting to work from home and define it as a collective ability to initiate strategies to meet remote work demands with resources generated from the new work arrangement. Our findings also suggest that family adaptive capability could be developed and enhanced through intentional efforts and practices including the strategies highlighted in our study for the work from home context. Therefore, we identify a household as an adaptive participant in the work–family integration process, an actor responding to changes, reframing resources, and meeting collective demands. This way, we envision families and households as adaptive units that choose their patterns of action, rather than responding reactively to the constraints and opportunities of working from home.

Considerable research has shown that family systems influence employee outcomes, such as productivity, engagement, and performance (e.g., Olson, 2000; Raush et al., 1979). Recognizing how families function while adapting to working from home can advance important outcomes for organizations and foster support mechanisms to help employees manage their resources and demands. By seeking patterns across families in five countries and analyzing the commonalities of a shared lived experience, we present a set of strategies with great resonance for contexts beyond the current study (Meier & Wegener, 2017). Documenting patterns common in multiple countries helps to establish the prevalence of different strategies, which future scholars can expand to consider institutional and cultural circumstances to modify the repertoire of strategies for specific families.

2 | THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 | Work-from-home dynamics from a resource-demand perspective

Work–family models have emphasized the beneficial effects of work and family resources (e.g., Eby et al., 2005; Masterson et al., 2021; McNall et al., 2010) and the negative effects of work and family demands on individuals and their employing organizations (e.g., Allen, 2012; Amstad et al., 2011). Resources are structural or psychological assets that may be used to facilitate performance, reduce demands, or generate additional resources, while demands are anything that competes for individual resources (e.g., role requirements, expectations, and activities) (Voydanoff, 2005). Resources and demands can explain the benefits and challenges of working from home that have been extensively described in pre-pandemic studies. For example, work from home enables workers to save resources from reduced commute time (Hartig et al., 2007) and provides psychological control to telecommuters regarding their work time and location (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007; Hilbrecht et al., 2013). Resources such as time, flexibility, and control were assumed to be applied toward meeting family responsibilities and promoting work–family integration. On the other hand, researchers also found that temporal and locational flexibility associated with work from home can increase work demands, such as working long hours (Cech & Blair-Loy, 2014), simply because it is easier to do so, or because of a felt need to overcompensate for absence from the office (Kelliher & Anderson, 2009). Also, working from home was found to engender psychological demands from the risk of career stagnation or of missed office-based learning and development opportunities (Cooper & Kurland, 2002).

Although the available literature has characterized work from home and its benefits and challenges, the existing understanding has been grounded in individual experience. Our study is informed by resource-demand work–family models (Greenhaus & ten Brummelhuis, 2013) and the concept of fit between resources and demands (Voydanoff, 2005). The notions of demand and resource generation presented in the findings section appeared compatible with the processes of gaining or losing resources while engaging with roles in work or home described in work–family resource-demand models (Greenhaus & ten Brummelhuis, 2013). Accordingly, we set out to answer the question: "What work and family demands and resources are generated for a household by working from home collectively?"

2.2 | Work–family strategies while working from home

Strategies to manage work–family experience while working from home have received little empirical attention in the work-from-home literature. Noticeable exception is Sullivan and Lewis's (2001) study, which suggested that combining work and family by teleworkers was a "deliberate strategy" (p. 137). Also, Raghuram et al. (2003) showed that structuring behaviors moderated the positive association between telecommute employee self-efficacy (i.e., capability to initiate behavioral strategies to manage new demands) and adjustment to telecommuting (i.e., employee perceived ability to cope with the new work context). The COVID-19 pandemic and its subsequent lockdowns introduced a unique opportunity to examine work–family integration while working from home. As a result, many researchers found it critical to study changes in work–family experience in an unprecedented context (see Baskin & Bartlett, 2021; Del Boca et al., 2020). The surge of post-pandemic research consisted of studies addressing work–family strategies while working from home (Shirmohammadi et al., 2022).

Allen et al. (2012), in a survey-based study with sampling from couples in the United States, suggested that individual strategies while working from home only partially mapped onto the established boundary management categories (Kreiner, 2009). Participants' answers to the open-ended questions on the survey revealed three new strategies adopted to manage pandemic-related circumstances: emulating office routines, purposefully disconnecting, and reducing work and home overlap. Vaziri et al. (2020) compared experiences of work–family conflict and enrichment in two studies conducted before and during the pandemic reporting that individuals who experienced negative change preferred strong boundaries between work and family. Otonkorpi-Lehtoranta et al.'s (2022) study in Finland revealed that working parents (93% mothers) negotiated spatial boundaries by

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making no changes in work–family arrangements, or by one or both partners switching to remote work at home and implementing daily work shifts for both parents or working in short episodes to adjust temporal boundaries. Shockley et al. (2021) identified gendered patterns across the work–family strategies adopted by dual-earner couples who were required to work, whether remote or not, and manage childcare during the US pandemic lockdown. In their first survey, consisting of three open-ended questions, couples described their plans for managing childcare and work commitments. The second survey, which examined the plans' outcomes, found that most frequently, wives working remotely assumed most of the childcare with little adjustment to husbands' work roles, followed by husbands participating intermittently in childcare.

We build on the efforts of these researchers to study families' collective work-from-home strategies by focusing on the strategies they adopted to generate changes in resource-demand dynamics. Although the role of strategies related to managing work from home as a family has not been explicitly developed in past research, this notion is consistent with McCubbin and Patterson's (1983) model for family stress and adaptation. It argues that after the occurrence of a change or stressor event in a family's environment, families draw upon psychological, social, and intrafamilial resources to address demands generated by the event and other stressors. Family resources, including their strategies, shape the course of the family's adaptation (Walker, 1985). We suggest that families develop strategies as they try to face, cope with, and overcome the challenges of collective work from home (Moen & Wethington, 1992). Initial ideas supporting work–family strategies at the collective level include Perry-Jenkins and Wadsworth's (2017) statement that the life of spouses and children intersect and co-occur and, thus, necessarily affect the strategies and coping mechanisms adopted to manage work and family responsibilities. Beckman and Stanko (2020) argued that multiple outcomes, such as family cohesion and adjustability, are shaped by relationships that underlie the family system. The challenges of managing two jobs from home and the learning from home of school-age children conjure different strategies for managing work and family. Therefore, our second research question was "How do households manage their resources and demands to adjust to working from home as a collective?"

3 | METHODOLOGY

We adopted a qualitative interpretive methodology, informed by a constructivist philosophical approach (Crotty, 1998). The interpretive approach enables understanding of "how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences" (Merriam, 2009, p. 23). Research through the social constructivist lens facilitates analysis of social phenomena in relation to the contexts in which they are embedded (Cohen et al., 2004). Accordingly, participants shared meanings they attributed to their experience of working from home while their children learned from home during the early COVID-19 pandemic. Our approach reflected essential characteristics of interpretive theorizing from social constructivist assumptions, examining the phenomenon in its most immediate or natural setting (i.e., home), capturing multiple realities constructed by families, and inductively analyzing the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 2009). Also, we embraced the assumption that researchers take part in the meaning-making process during in-depth interviews, functioning as the "human instrument" that grasps multiple meanings and interprets participants' narratives by taking a comparative stance (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 39).

3.1 | Participants

Twenty-eight dual-earner households with school-age children, residing in China, Iran, Malaysia, the United Kingdom, or the United States, participated in our study. Since scholars have called for more inclusive work-from-home research, we selected a combination of Western and non-Western countries. The countries we studied represent dominant collectivist and individualistic cultural orientations and were impacted early in the pandemic, which enabled us to examine family responses in multiple and diverse contexts. Families were recruited through personal and professional contacts according to the following purposeful sampling criteria (Patton, 2002): (1) professional dual-earner couple household, (2) both partners working from home during the COVID-19 lockdown period, and (3) at least one school-age child (14 years old and under) learning from home during the lockdown. All the households who participated in our study were nuclear families (except for one family in China and one family in Malaysia that also had grandparent[s] living with them). In each household, we interviewed parents separately and asked for a drawing from at least one of their school-age children illustrating their work-from-home experience. The interviewees had a wide range of jobs, including teacher, university professor, manager, psychologist, engineer, accountant, auditor, lawyer, and IT specialist. The average age of interviewees was 42, ranging from 34 to 54. Fifty percent of the interviewees had a bachelor's degree, 42% had postgraduate degrees, and the rest had a high school diploma and a professional certificate. Five households had one, 19 had two, and four had more than two school-age children between 6 and 14 years old (Tables 1 and 2 illustrate the interviewees' and children's demographic characteristics). We started data collection 8 weeks after the first lockdown was in place in the United Kingdom and approximately 9 weeks after the Malaysian government announced the Movement Control Order[3] (MCO). In the United States, our data collection was limited to households in states having a statewide stay-at-home order for at least 8 weeks. At the time of our study, China and Iran had lifted some of their national COVID-19-related restrictions. Although the majority of our Chinese and Iranian interviewees were working from home while supporting their children's home learning at the time of the interviews, we had a few households in which one partner had returned

[3]The term that the government used for "lockdown" in Malaysia.

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TABLE 1 Interviewees' demographic characteristics.

Interviewee	Family	Country of residence	Gender	Age	No. of children and age	No. of school-age children below14	Job	Education
1.	$Family_1$	China	W	37	2 (10 and 3 years)	1	Finance officer	BA
2.		China	M	38			Manager	BA
3.	$Family_2$	China	W	39	2 (7 and 3 years)	1	Government officer	BA
4.		China	M	41			Senior engineer	BA
5.	$Family_3$	China	W	39	1 (8 years)	1	Academic	MA
6.		China	M	38			Academic	MA
7.	$Family_4$	China	W	43	1 (12 years)	1	Academic	MA
8.		China	M	42			Academic	MA
9.	$Family_5$	China	W	37	1 (10 years)	1	Technical support	BA
10.		China	M	36			Department supervisor	BA
11.	$Family_6$	Iran	W	48	2 (21 and 11 years)	1	School teacher	BA
12.		Iran	M	52			Dentist and academic	PhD
13.	$Family_7$	Iran	W	45	2 (20 and 7 years)	1	School teacher	MA
14.		Iran	M	49			Civil engineer	BA
15.	$Family_8$	Iran	W	47	2 (16 and 11 years)	1	School teacher	BA
16.		Iran	M	50			Lawyer	MA
17.	$Family_9$	Iran	W	40	1 (8 years)	1	IT specialist	BA
18.		Iran	M	43			Academic	PhD
19.	$Family_{10}$	Iran	W	50	2 (13 and 18 years)	1	School teacher	BA
20.		Iran	M	48			School teacher	BA
21.	$Family_{11}$	Malaysia	W	43	2 (10 and 5 years)	1	Auditor	BA
22.		Malaysia	M	49			Entrepreneur and chartered accountant	PhD
23.	$Family_{12}$	Malaysia	W	42	2 (12 and 9 years)	2	Academic	PhD
24.		Malaysia	M	37			Warehouse and ISO executive	BA
25.	$Family_{13}$	Malaysia	W	42	3 (15, 14, and 2 years)	2	Admin supervisor	BA
26.		Malaysia	M	44			Sales supervisor	High school diploma
27.	$Family_{14}$	Malaysia	W	41	1 (12 years)	1	Senior lecturer	PhD
28.		Malaysia	M	40			Assistant manager	MA
29.	$Family_{15}$	Malaysia	W	44	2 (8 and 11 years)	2	Sales manager	BA
30.		Malaysia	M	43			Sales manager	BA
31.	$Family_{16}$	Malaysia	W	36	2 (7 and 9 years)	2	Field manager	BA
320		Malaysia	M	37			HR executive	BA

(Continues)

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TABLE 1 (Continued)

Interviewee	Family	Country of residence	Gender	Age	No. of children and age	No. of school-age children below14	Job	Education
33.	$Family_{17}$	Malaysia	W	42	3 (11, 9, and 6 years)	3	University administrative staffer	BA
34.		Malaysia	M	42			Sales personnel	BA
35.	$Family_{18}$	UK	W	43	2 (10 and 8 years)	2	Financial analyst	BA
36.		UK	M	44			Principle policy manager	BA
37.	$Family_{19}$	UK	W	35	2 (7 and 6 years)	2	School teacher	BA
38.		UK	M	35			School assistant head teacher	BA
39.	$Family_{20}$	UK	W	43	2 (12 and 9 years)	2	Academic	MA
40.		UK	M	45			Academic	PhD
41.	$Family_{21}$	UK	W	35	2 (14 and 7 years)	2	Cake decorator and tutor	High school diploma
42.		UK	M	41			Senior bank officer	College degree
43.	$Family_{22}$	UK	W	45	2 (11 and 8 years)	2	Psychologist	MA
44.		UK	M	41			Teacher	MA
45.	$Family_{23}$	UK	W	40–50	2 (11 and 8 years)	2	Psychologist	MA
46.		UK	M	40–50			Academic	PhD
47.	$Family_{24}$	USA	W	41	2 (14 and 16 years)	1	Accountant	BA
48.		USA	M	41			Insurance agent	BA
49.	$Family_{25}$	USA	W	37	2 (15 and 12 years)	1	Bank call center	BA
50.		USA	M	38			Utility technician	High school diploma
51.	$Family_{26}$	USA	W	35	2 (9 and 3 years)	1	Academic	PhD
52.		USA	M	39			Academic	PhD
53.	$Family_{27}$	USA	W	37	4 (12, 10, 7, and 5)	3	Academic	MA
54.		USA	M	36			Director of online learning center	PhD
55.	$Family_{28}$	USA	W	37	3 (10 and 2 years and 6 months)	1	Utility company customer processor	MA
56.		USA	M	54			Academic	PhD

Note: W represents woman and M represents man.

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TABLE 2 Demographic characteristics of children that submitted drawings.

Participant	Family	Country of residence	Gender	Age
1.	$Family_1$	China	G	10
2.	$Family_2$	China	B	7
3.	$Family_3$	China	B	8
4.	$Family_4$	China	B	12
5.	$Family_5$	China	G	10
6.	$Family_6$	Iran	G	11
7.	$Family_7$	Iran	G	7
8.	$Family_8$	Iran	B	11
9.	$Family_9$	Iran	G	8
10.	$Family_{10}$	Iran	B	13
11.	$Family_{11}$	Malaysia	B	10
12.	$Family_{12}$	Malaysia	G	9
13.	$Family_{13}$	Malaysia	B	14
14.	$Family_{14}$	Malaysia	B	12
15.	$Family_{15}$	Malaysia	G	11
16.	$Family_{16}$	Malaysia	B	9
17.	$Family_{17}$	Malaysia	B	11
18.	$Family_{18}$	UK	G	8
19.		UK	B	10
20.	$Family_{19}$	UK	B	6
21.		UK	G	7
22.	$Family_{20}$	UK	B	9
23.	$Family_{21}$	UK	G	7
24.	$Family_{22}$	UK	B	11
25.		UK	G	8
26.	$Family_{23}$	UK	B	11
27.	$Family_{24}$	USA	B	14
28.	$Family_{25}$	USA	B	12
29.	$Family_{26}$	USA	B	9
30.	$Family_{27}$	USA	B	12
31.	$Family_{28}$	USA	G	10

Note: G represents girl and B represents boy.

to work in the office; therefore, we asked our interviewees to focus on their lockdown experience when responding to our questions.[4]

3.2 | Data collection

Our dataset includes 56 in-depth interviews with parents, as well as drawings (with their written or voice-recorded description) from at least one school-age child in each of the 28 households. Interviews served as the primary source of data, and children's descriptions of their drawings served as a triangulation source. Children were asked to draw a picture that illustrates their family's work-from-home experience and then describe what their drawing meant. We received input from a total of 31 children. Our team did not directly contact the children; instead, we asked their parents to ask the children to make the drawings and to narrate a brief description. Once receiving consent, parents conveyed our instructions to their children, who then prepared the drawing; then parents helped children record their narration of the drawing and shared the drawing and narration with us. In our consent form, we highlighted that in cases where the children or their parents were not willing to share their voice, the parents could debrief us on what their child had described. Other than one household that shared only their child's drawing with the parents' description attached to it, the remaining 27 households shared with us both the drawing and their children's narrations.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with each partner separately for 60–90 min via a safe online videoconferencing application (in observance of social distancing). We asked the participants to describe their experience relevant to working from home during the lockdowns (interview questions are available as Appendix S2). We gave each household a gift card once the interviews were completed. Each author conducted interviews with households in their country of residence (except for one author who spoke three languages and conducted interviews in Malaysia and China); the lead author listened to all the interviews as they were conducted to monitor their consistency and suggested additional questions in case new topics were raised in the first set of interviews.

3.3 | Data analysis

All interviews and children's descriptions of their drawings[5] were transcribed verbatim, yielding 1214 pages of text (font size 12; single spaced). Informed by the constant comparative method (Charmaz, 2014; Lincoln & Guba, 1985), our data analysis unfolded in three stages. At the first stage, each author open-coded data from two or three households independently (10 families in total) (Charmaz, 2014). In a reflective group discussion concerning the open codes and interview memos, we realized that in addition to discussing resources and demands that work from home had generated for them, all 10 families highlighted the strategies they had adopted to fit demands and resources and to adjust to the changes in their lives. We referred to the work-from-home literature to identify relevant theoretical anchors, but we realized that the existing research primarily focused on individual-level experience and strategies, which could not explain findings at the collective level. We then turned to family studies and identified McCubbin and Patterson's (1983) model of family

[4]We acknowledge that the countries in which our participants resided had mandated different restrictions. For example, after 2 weeks of MCO in Malaysia, residents were allowed to move within 10 km from their residential address to get groceries or deliver food to family members, and in Iran, the government imposed nationwide COVID-19 restrictions, but no rigid lockdown was in place. However, when reaching out to potential participants, we were mindful about selecting those whose work-from-home experiences were as homogeneous as possible.

[5]The drawings were meant to trigger children to reflect on and narrate their perspectives and perceptions of lived experiences. We analyzed children's descriptions rather than the drawings themselves.

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stress and adaptation, which helped make sense of our findings regarding the strategies families used to adjust to work from home. At this point, we entered the second stage of our analysis, and two of the authors took the lead on data analysis and immersed themselves in the data by listening to all the interviews. Interviews conducted in local languages were translated into English by credible services. At least one of the authors who coded the data was proficient in the original interview language to check the meaning conveyed in translations if needed. Then, we open-coded the whole dataset, using "in vivo" codes (Charmaz, 2006, p. 55)—text labels that came verbatim from interviewees—as often as possible, while mindful of resource-demand fit strategies. In addition to collective demands and resources, our analysis yielded five strategies (e.g., supportive) and 13 sub-strategies (e.g., facilitating demands of family members). We intentionally excluded the individual-level strategies. For example, if a family member used their extra time to play a new instrument or another hobby, we did not include it because it was an individual-level strategy.

At the final stage, we developed a coding guide (later extended to Table 4 in Appendix S1), which included descriptions of the five main strategies and their corresponding sub-categories, demands and resources involved in each strategy, examples, sample quotations, and drawings. Using this guide, one author coded the whole dataset, and two other authors reviewed all the codes. In cases of disagreement, these three authors discussed the codes until they reached a complete agreement. To perform an interrater reliability test, the fourth author coded 70 quotations from interview transcripts separately and reached 90% agreement. To triangulate, we checked whether the strategies mentioned by the parents were explicitly identifiable in the children's drawings and descriptions. We coded the drawings and descriptions from the child(ren) right after coding parents' transcripts and included a sample drawing that corresponded with each sub-category. This enabled us to examine the relevance of the drawings to the strategies. To ensure the intersubjectivity of our interpretations, one coder independently examined the alignment of the parents' accounts with the child(ren)'s drawings and descriptions. The alignment findings were consistent.

We collected and analyzed data simultaneously; therefore, we realized that categories reached saturation after analyzing the 25th household. We collected and analyzed data from the remaining three families to ensure no new categories emerged (Morse et al., 2002). We also calculated a saturation ratio following the steps recommended by Guest et al. (2006, 2020) and used by other qualitative researchers (e.g., Coenen et al., 2012). This approach compares new information in a base set with a run set to determine the relative amount of incoming new information. A new information threshold of ≤5% indicates that the data have reached adequate saturation. Accordingly, we calculated the number of new categories in the last three interviews (23, 24, and 25; the base set) and three additional interviews (26, 27, and 28; the run set). Dividing the numbers revealed ≤5% new information, providing evidence that adequate saturation has been reached (Appendix S3 outlines the three steps we took to calculate the saturation ratio).

4 | FINDINGS

It took the 28 households who participated in our study from a few days to a couple of weeks to adjust and develop a routine for combining family life with work and home learning. We present the demands and resources generated as a result of the households' collective work-from-home experience, followed by the five strategies they used to adjust to this unprecedented situation (Figure 1). Although some of the demands and resources we discuss have been mentioned in previous studies, our findings are unique in that our participants aggregated resources available to a family to allocate them to a collection of demands in a household. Also, our participants managed the resources and demands as a collective, rather than individually. In other words, resources generated for a family member could be used to address the demands of another member, or demands generated for one member could be handled by resources available to other family members.

Before proceeding to our findings, we note that our sample included households in which the couples had secure jobs that could be done remotely during the pandemic. Therefore, the experience of our participants may not be comparable to dual earner working parents in lower-paid jobs, which are feasible from home but do not typically pay enough to accommodate basic family needs.

4.1 | Collective work–home integration: a resource-demand lens

4.1.1 | Demand generation

Working from home as a collective generated demands for all the households in our study. These demands were mainly associated with (1) loss of resources (i.e., space, tools, technology, and social relations) due to being away from work or school; (2) work or school synchronicity requirements (i.e., privacy and focus); (3) dependent member contingencies (i.e., care, monitoring, and learning); and (4) additional household chores (i.e., cooking, cleaning, and shopping) that would not exist had the households not transitioned collectively to work-from-home mode. Households living in large houses that had enough space for all the members, and enough devices and bandwidth to support both the parents' work and children's home learning, found it easier to transition and adjust to work from home. Also, households with couples whose work required frequent synchronized engagement, and children whose school provided synchronized lessons, needed the most privacy and focus. In contrast, families in which one or two of the partners had flexible work that did not have to be done at a fixed time, and children whose school's lessons were asynchronous, found it easier to work in the same space, even if their house was not spacious.

Having children in all the households meant that, in addition to attending to their work and supervising their children's home learning, parents had to engage their children and remain committed to their care responsibilities all day long. In households with one parent having

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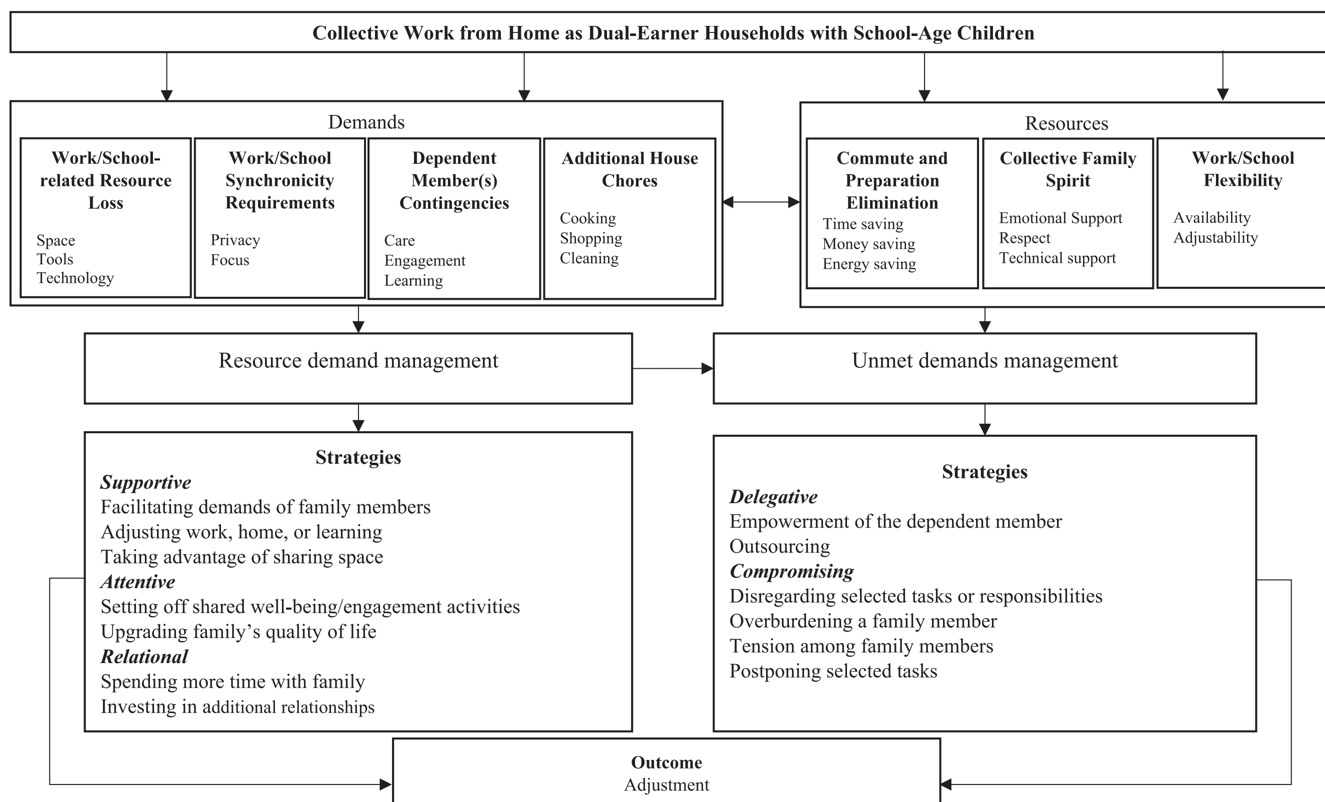

FIGURE 1 Collective work from home: a resource-demand perspective.

synchronous work obligations, the other parent, or another adult, had to be available to attend the child(ren), or they were left unattended, causing stress for the parents.

Work from home as a collective required the household members to have all meals at home—requiring more cooking and grocery shopping than usual. Spending more time at home also produced additional chores, such as washing, cleaning, or tidying, compared to pre-lockdown life. For households that were used to having external help for household chores—such as weekly cleaners or maids—the lockdown was less tolerable because they lost their regular help at the same time as their chores increased.

4.1.2 | Resource generation

Collective work from home also generated various resources for the households, primarily from the elimination of work commutes and preparation, and from being close to family members. These resources included retrieved time, money, energy, and emotional support. The time typically spent on the morning rush and dressing up for work, commuting to work and school, and being stuck in traffic was available to the households. Also, partners shared with us that working from home had turned their work breaks into time available for family. Work from home also saved financial resources for the interviewees, such as gas or transportation money and the money spent on make up or hair products. Our participants—especially those with long commutes—highlighted that not having to commute to work made them less tired during the workdays and saved them energy. Participants with demanding or stressful jobs regarded the availability of their family to provide emotional support as a resource they could not readily access while at work. Quotations below showcase our participants' accounts of the resources generated due to their work-from-home experience.

> My workplace is around 52 km from home, back and forth is like 104 km daily. The first thing is during MCO I'm saving the journey… I can get a lot of saving daily commute, my wife's commute is about 200 km… back and forth. (Family$_{12}$, Malaysian resident, Man)

> It's so much easier. Like right now I don't have any hair product. You know, it's so much easier to just shower, get in sweatpants and a T-shirt. You know, for me, it's working 20 ft away basically downstairs. So that's been enjoyable, absolutely. Walking. The kitchen is not far, so I'm getting lunch. (Family$_{24}$, US resident, Man)

4.2 | Collective work from home management strategies

Our findings suggested five strategies, namely, *supportive*, *attentive*, *relational*, *delegative*, and *compromising*, that were adopted by the households to address their demands through resources available to

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them and to manage their work-from-home experience. These strategies demonstrated efforts to adapt and ensure healthy family functioning and a collective capability to meet remote work demands with resources generated from the new work arrangement. The frequency of adopting the strategies depended on the sum of resources available to each family and on their aggregated demands, as well as on the distribution of tasks among household members, especially partners. Although the households who participated in our study were homogeneous in terms of being dual-earner families with school-age children, each household had unique resources and demands, with varying approaches toward sharing house chores, childcare, and learning support between the partners.

Following, we describe each strategy, together with its varying manifestations, the demands it addressed, and the resources it deployed. Each strategy was used by at least 19 households and mentioned by at least one member (please refer to Table 3 for more information on the frequencies and percentages). Due to space limitations, we provide only one or two representative quotations for each strategy; however, a table providing several quotations for each strategy accompanies our manuscript (Appendix S1).

4.2.1 | Resource-demand management

Supportive

The supportive strategy was adopted by 27 of the households participating in our study. This strategy was implemented when one or more family member(s) made adjustments or went an extra mile to support other members. *Facilitating demands of family members*, *adjusting work, home, or learning*, and *taking advantage of sharing space* were the three ways in which this strategy was demonstrated. The main demands motivating this strategy were childcare and home learning, as well as synchronicity requirements of one or more member(s)' work or school. For these demands to be met, resources such as the flexible nature of other members' work or school and the family's collective spirit were needed the most.

When *facilitating demands of family members*, partners shared supporting their children's home learning and household chores. Partners could divide supporting their children so that each parent was responsible for one or more child(ren), with each assuming responsibility for helping their children with the subjects they knew well, or one could take care of the bulk of household chores and grocery shopping, leaving the other partner responsible for the children's learning. In a few cases, older siblings supported younger siblings' learning, or children helped with house chores. Implementing this strategy enabled many family members to attend their synchronous meetings or school classes, because the other members supported their privacy, accommodated their spatial or technological needs, and took care of essential tasks (e.g., childcare, cooking, and tidying). However, the couples in our study implemented this strategy in different ways.

Adjusting work, home, or learning occurred when partners adjusted their working time or working space to divide childcare between themselves or to accommodate their children's home learning. For example, one partner could work, while the other spent time with children, and then they swapped so that each could get their work done. Another example was when one member's job was mainly synchronous, so the quiet corner or office space was devoted solely to that member, and the others shared the remaining space for work and learning. Such adjustments were possible when one or both parents work or the children's classes were flexible (not time sensitive) and when the family had enough space to maintain privacy for online meetings. Households in which more than one member had to simultaneously attend synchronous sessions were more mindful about sharing space and were required to make more adjustments. Also, having frequent synchronous meetings in a household required its members to eat separately or to adjust mealtimes if they preferred to eat as a family. To manage these synchronicity requirements, each partner required the other's adjustment and support.

Taking advantage of sharing space was adopted when at least one parent's work was flexible enough to allow for sharing their workspace with their child(ren). Sharing space enabled parents to monitor their children, to make sure the children concentrated on their learning, and to be available to support their learning when the children had questions or synchronous classes.

In Family$_{22}$, who were UK residents, the mother was a child psychologist, and the father was a science teacher, both in their early 40s; they had two children who were 8 and 11. The mother saved 150 min of daily commute time, and worked in a room upstairs, due to having synchronous meetings. The house chores and responsibility for the children's home learning were equally shared between the mother and father.

> There hasn't really been a time where both me and [my partner] have been shut away… they've always had an adult available with them at any time… I'll often sit at the table with them… doing things like… writing reports [for] school or replying to e-mails, where you can kind of dip in and out and do bits and bobs. (Family$_{22}$, Man)

Attentive

The attentive strategy was adopted by all the households who used their existing resources to invest in activities that elevated their spirits and was demonstrated in the form of *setting off shared well-being or engagement activities* or *upgrading quality of family life*. Our participants typically used an attentive strategy to make sure they were taking care of the collective's well-being and to partially make up for their lost social connections at work (for the parents) or at school (for the children).

When *setting off shared well-being or engagement activities*, families set aside time for and came up with activities that engaged two or more members of the collective and lifted their spirits. Hearing unpleasant news about the spread of the COVID-19 virus, worrying about testing positive, dealing with the virus and recovering from it, and losing friends and family to the disease or hearing about their

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TABLE 3 Overview of collective's work-from-home management strategies.

Family	Country	Supportive			Attentive		Relational	
		Facilitating demands of family members	Adjusting work, home, or learning	Taking advantage of sharing space	Setting off shared well-being/engagement activities	Upgrading family's quality of life	Spending more time with family	Investing in additional relationships
$Family_1$	China	x		x	x		x	
$Family_2$	China				x	x	x	
$Family_3$	China	x	x		x		x	
$Family_4$	China	x	x	x	x		x	
$Family_5$	China	x				x		
$Family_6$	Iran	x	x		x		x	x
$Family_7$	Iran	x	x		x	x	x	
$Family_8$	Iran	x	x		x	x	x	x
$Family_9$	Iran	x	x		x	x	x	
$Family_{10}$	Iran	x	x	x	x	x		x
$Family_{11}$	Malaysia	x	x	x	x	x	x	
$Family_{12}$	Malaysia	x		x	x	x	x	
$Family_{13}$	Malaysia	x		x	x	x	x	
$Family_{14}$	Malaysia	x	x	x	x		x	
$Family_{15}$	Malaysia		x	x	x	x	x	
$Family_{16}$	Malaysia	x	x		x		x	x
$Family_{17}$	Malaysia	x	x		x	x	x	
$Family_{18}$	UK		x		x		x	
$Family_{19}$	UK	x	x	x	x		x	
$Family_{20}$	UK	x	x	x	x	x	x	
$Family_{21}$	UK	x		x	x	x	x	
$Family_{22}$	UK	x		x	x		x	
$Family_{23}$	UK	x	x		x		x	x
$Family_{24}$	USA	x	x				x	
$Family_{25}$	USA	x			x	x	x	
$Family_{26}$	USA	x	x		x		x	
$Family_{27}$	USA	x	x	x	x		x	
$Family_{28}$	USA	x					x	
Frequencies and percentages	–	25 (89%)	19 (68%)	13 (46%)	25 (89%)	14 (50%)	26 (93%)	5 (18%)
		Supportive: 27 (96%)			Attentive: 28 (100%)		Relational: 28 (100%)	

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TABLE 3 (Continued)

Family	Delegative		Compromising			
	Empowerment of the dependent member	Outsourcing	Disregarding selected tasks or responsibilities	Over burdening a family member	Tension among family members	Postponing selected tasks
$Family_1$	x	x				
$Family_2$	x	x				
$Family_3$	x	x	x		x	
$Family_4$	x	x			x	
$Family_5$	x				x	
$Family_6$	x					
$Family_7$			x	x	x	
$Family_8$	x				x	
$Family_9$				x	x	
$Family_{10}$						
$Family_{11}$	x		x	x	x	
$Family_{12}$		x	x			
$Family_{13}$		x	x		x	x
$Family_{14}$	x	x	x	x		
$Family_{15}$		x				
$Family_{16}$	x		x	x		
$Family_{17}$	x	x	x		x	
$Family_{18}$	x	x				
$Family_{19}$		x	x		x	x
$Family_{20}$			x			
$Family_{21}$			x			x
$Family_{22}$						x
$Family_{23}$	x					x
$Family_{24}$					x	
$Family_{25}$			x			x
$Family_{26}$						
$Family_{27}$	x					
$Family_{28}$		x	x			
Frequencies and percentages	14 (50%)	12 (43%)	13 (46%)	5 (18%)	11 (39%)	6 (21%)
	Delegative: 19 (68%)		Compromising: 20 (71%)			

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sufferings were among the stressful situations that motivated households to be more mindful of their mental health. Examples of well-being activities taken on by families include playing games, exercising or going for family walks, cooking new dishes or baking, having movie nights or home picnics, and conducting collective religious practices. Although our households resided in five different countries, they came up with very similar activities when trying to engage the children or to initiate entertaining activities as a family.

Upgrading quality of family life, such as improving family meals, gardening, or doing projects to improve their living space, was also common among households adopting the attentive strategy. Working at home made it possible to cook meals that took longer to prepare, and being around the house all day made family members more aware of the things that needed to be done around the home. Most of these activities were initiated by one family member, and then other members joined in to help.

In $Family_{17}$, who resided in Malaysia, the mother was a university administrative staff, and the father was a salesperson in the information and communications technology industry; they were both in their early 40s and had three children aged 6, 9, and 11. The parents' jobs required synchronous meetings and instant responses to emails, and the children attended online classes; however, the household members still embarked on fun activities together, such as cooking, playing, and exercising when they had free time.

> Sometimes I paint together with my children. During the MCO, there was once I was playing Jenga with the children… I told… should I paint this and turn it to be a puzzle as well?… so I painted a rooster. It was very therapeutic for myself, at the same time, they found it interesting, after that they got to play with it as a puzzle. ($Family_{17}$, Woman)

> When I have time, in between work… I will squeeze in some time to get them to do the Malay exercises. ($Family_{17}$, Man)

> Dad and mom will take turns to cook lunch and dinner and breakfast. These are pictures of activities when… we are free-er. This is a time when mom don't have any work then we make piñata and beat it. And this one is mom making the custard. This one is mom making bread pudding. This is dad teaching me how to cook, how to marinate chicken and all those. This is we, every night… watch some movies… I feel very happy with my parents working from home because we don't have to… wake up so early and don't have to rush so much, and I get to spend more time with them. ($Family_{17}$, 11-year-old Boy's narration of his drawing; Figure 2)

The attentive strategy was different from the supportive strategy because it centered around sustaining family members' well-being, not their immediate work, learning, or additional house chore demands.

Relational

The relational strategy referred to taking advantage of sharing space and being free from daily commutes to cherish proximity to and availability of family members. This strategy, which was brought up in our interviews with all the households, helped our participants cope with and make the best of their unprecedented situation.

Spending more time with family was regarded as an opportunity valued by our participants. The context of our study, the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown, meant that family members were inevitably more accessible to each other and saw more of each other's daily activities. Using work breaks to chat with family members and having more meals as a family were examples that appeared in many interviews.

Investing in additional relationships was manifested by some families who addressed household members' lack of connectivity or social life by initiating virtual interactions with extended family and friends. Creating or joining WhatsApp groups, having virtual meetings with extended family and friends, and playing online multiplayer games were examples of how our participants invested in relationships outside their immediate family.

$Family_9$ showcases the relational strategy. This family resided in Iran; the wife was an IT specialist, the husband an academic, and they had an 8-year-old daughter. Dealing with COVID-19-related stress notwithstanding, they cherished the time they could spend with each other as a family during the lockdown and felt they were closer to one another.

> All three of us are so happy to be together… [Previously]… I had to get out at 6 am … and I would not see my child until five in the afternoon… I really didn't have time to spend with my child… [plus, my husband and I] did not have time to talk to each other at all; there was no time for us to have fun. But during this period… it is as if, say, we have returned to the peak of our relationship. ($Family_9$, Woman)

> When I refer to my personal experience, it is interesting that during lockdown, without saying a word and making a will, the [communication] problems we had did not occur at all. This interests me… I'd like to know why. ($Family_9$, Man)

The relational strategy was different from the supportive strategy in that, instead of addressing an immediate work, learning, or additional house chore demand, it took advantage of being together as a family to spend time with each other and strengthen their relationship by having a family meal, break-time catch-ups, or conversations. Also, the relational strategy was different from the attentive strategy because adopting it did not denote engaging in activities (e.g., family games and house improvement projects) beyond those that regularly took place in the

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FIGURE 2 Drawing by 11-year-old boy; $Family_{17}$.

household; rather, it enabled them to connect more due to having the opportunity to work, live, and learn in their shared space.

4.2.2 | Unmet demands management

Delegative

The delegative strategy, adopted by 19 households, was employed when existing demands could not be fulfilled by the resources available to the collective's members. Demands, such as children's contingencies, work or school synchronicity requirements, social time or childcare resources lost due to working from home, and additional chores, could not be addressed by the households all the time. Therefore, they either empowered their children to become more independent or sought external support.

Empowerment of the dependent member (mainly children in this study) was practiced by households with parents who had to engage with synchronous work tasks during the day and therefore could not accompany their children in their online classes or provide their children with extensive support for their home learning. In these cases, parents encouraged their children to become independent learners and to assume responsibility for organizing their days, attending their online classes, or doing their share of house chores. Some parents saw this situation as an opportunity for their children's growth and independence.

Outsourcing was a solution for some households who lacked sufficient resources within the household to deal with demands, such as childcare, child learning, or cooking. External helpers, usually grandparents, provided childcare support by staying with the families, having young children dropped at their house in the morning and picked up in the afternoon, or engaging in online conversations with their grandchildren.

$Family_2$ characterizes this delegative strategy in many ways. This family resided in China; the mother was a public sector employee, and the father was a senior engineer in a multinational company. The mother was in her late 30s, and the father was in his early 40s, and their two children were ages 7 and 3. During the quarantine period, they sent their 3-year-old to her grandparent's house as a way for them to fulfill their job and home learning responsibilities, while their 7-year-old son attended online supplementary classes in addition to his school lessons.

> I don't have much time on the day time to take care of my son… so I set… some of the goals [and told him]… “you need to arrange your time by yourself and you need to know what class you need to take during the day”… after 3–4 times, he started to engage very much with the schedule making before the start of the week… last month he made the schedule by himself totally. ($Family_2$, Man)

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> I attend my online classes, arrange my own timetable… I feel I've made the best of my time during this stay-at-home period (Family$_2$, 7-year-old Boy's narration of his drawing)

> Having [parents] who work during the pandemic… trains the children to be more independent… He was able to adapt fast. He sometimes cooks noodles for his lunch… I guess he observes and he learns, he has seen us cook before. (Family$_2$, Woman)

Compromising

Compromising the demands of work or nonwork domains or not meeting one or more household member(s)' needs occurred when household members did not have sufficient resources to address some of their demands and were unable to outsource them. Such demands included, childcare, home learning support, work synchronicity requirements, and additional house chores. Compromising was manifested in four different ways, as we describe below.

Disregarding selected tasks or responsibilities happened when families could not provide childcare or learning support to their children due to their daytime work requirements. These families did not manage to pay attention to or spend time with their children as they liked, allowed their children extensive screen time, or did not attend to their children's learning requirements on time. In those situations, they felt guilty about not being able to accommodate their children's needs, but there were certain hours of the day or the week when there was nothing they could do about it.

Overburdening a family member was evidenced by overburdening the mother of the family in our interviews with five households, whereas none of the fathers in our sample had this experience. Childcare, home learning requirements, and additional chores, when combined with one partner whose work had extensive synchronicity requirements or who was not sufficiently engaged with household activities, resulted in a very heavy load on the other partner. Mothers sacrificed their sleeping or resting hours to accomplish all their family and work demands, which could be both exhausting and frustrating for them.

Tension among family members was an indicator of households being frustrated by their inability to deal with their demands. For example, parents found it hard to play the teacher role and did not get along with their children when trying to teach them, or partners had conflict over assuming responsibility for childcare or housework. Although 11 households mentioned experiencing tension in their households during the lockdown, none of that tension was perceived as long-lasting or severe.

Postponing selected tasks was shown in the form of delaying non-urgent work requirements or household chores by parents who preferred to focus on urgent tasks and making themselves more available to their children. We observed that our participants who worked as academics or had flexible jobs with minimum synchronous requirements were more likely to postpone selected tasks.

In family$_{28}$, who resided in the United States, the mother worked for a utility company and the father was a finance instructor. They had three children, aged 10 years, 2 years, and 6 months old. Although a grandparent came to their house every weekday to help with childcare, sometimes they still needed to allow their children more screen time than is ideal.

> My two-year-old [is] the most challenging… because you're at home, [for him] it's time to play. My six-month old is no different. She doesn't know other than Mummy and Daddy's here… So, I would think that's the most challenging. (Family$_{28}$, Man)

> We'll give the two-year-old the phone to kind of get distracted for a little bit. Especially when I'm in a meeting and I really can't get bothered… [she] watches YouTube videos which is unfortunate… but it's the only way to distract her… when we have meetings or my husband has a class going on. (Family$_{28}$, Woman)

Perceptions of adjustment among families were highly dependent on the extent of the demands they needed to address, the extent of resources available to them, and the perceived fairness of the distribution of nonwork demands among the couples, as well as their ability to implement the strategies effectively. Therefore, the level of adjustment among families varied, ranging from mal-adjustment to full adjustment.

5 | DISCUSSION

We illustrate how multiple household members working from home integrated work and family by managing resources and demands generated from their collective work-from-home experience. In doing so, we extend and deepen our understanding of adjustment to work from home through a resource-demand lens and at a collective level. While previous pre- and post-pandemic research highlighted the challenges and benefits of working from home, such research has yet to evaluate working from home from a resource-demand perspective. A resource-demand perspective enabled us to explore the fit between resources and demands that determines the quality of adjustment to work from home (mal-adjustment to full adjustment). It also helped us to capture previously underexplored dynamics, including a collective's pool of resources that was managed to meet aggregated household demands. A collective setting increases the potential for resources and demands to be impacted by others' needs, actions, and decisions and for household members to mobilize resources across multiple household members' domains.

We found that adjustment to work from home as a collective called for collective adaptive capability and distinct strategies to manage resources and demands. Our findings demonstrated that families

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undertook an adaptive process using strategies in response to new arrangements and changes. A collective adaptive capability advocates for families' ability to adjust existing resources and demands to fit changing work and family situations and optimize outcomes. It could predict and promote positive adjustment to working from home, problem-solving throughout the adjustment process, and the overall well-being of those working from home. We encourage researchers and employers to view dual-earner couples with school-age children as active and adaptive actors who, with sufficient resources, can navigate the complexities of working from home and thrive in changing work and family arrangements.

We theorized strategies that dual-earner households applied to accommodate more than one family member working from home, extending the range of strategies identified by previous researchers (e.g., boundary setting and gendered patterns). We provided insights into addressing demands with resources by using supportive, attentive, and relational strategies and managing unmet demands with delegative and compromising strategies. The inherent actions in these strategies demonstrate that at a collective level, achieving resource-demand fit requires ongoing communication, collaboration, and adaptability with others. In comparison to our approach, previous research on individual-level work–family dynamics has highlighted cross-domain resource-demand fit (i.e., individual work resources meet family demands or individual family resources meet individual work demands), and couple-level research has acknowledged the crossover of resources and demands (i.e., individual work demands impose stress on their partner).

The COVID-19 pandemic was a forced work-from-home experience, but research has consistently shown that our future ways of working entail hybrid work and an increasing number of remote workers. We do not argue that the resource-demand trajectory that emerged from our findings will apply to all remote workers, as this is beyond the reach of a qualitative exploratory study of this kind; however, we do challenge the predominant individual-level focus toward working from home. We argue that the interrelatedness of a collective's resources and demands should be considered when studying or managing employees who share space with others. We contribute to work-from-home literature by wedding the resource-demand perspective (Greenhaus & ten Brummelhuis, 2013; Voydanoff, 2005) with family stress and adaptation theory (McCubbin & Patterson, 1983). Considering the ongoing increase in remote work and different family arrangements calls for a theoretical lens that accommodates moving beyond an individual-level focus. The strategies that emerged in our study all involve resources or demands of more than one member of the collective and do not apply to only one individual. We demonstrate and suggest that a focus on strategies has the potential to capture collective behaviors, helping work–family scholars move from a predominantly individual-centric to a collective-centric emphasis.

While we examined strategies for managing resources and demands generated by the collective work-from-home experience, we could link them to the couple-level work–family management strategies that Shockley et al. (2021) identified, which outlined plans for dividing childcare labor during normal work hours between couples, whether both parents were working from home or not. Our findings extend Shockley et al.'s (2021) study by examining parents who both worked from home and outlining strategies for managing multiple demands, including childcare, home learning, and house chores, as well as resources. Our supportive strategies extend Shockley et al.'s (2021) category of "both remote couples alternating watching child with spouse based on meetings" (p. 20) by adding behaviors such as sharing child learning support and taking turns in chores and learning support. Also, supportive strategies in our study draw attention to the active role of children, an often-neglected topic in work–family studies, by describing behaviors such as children sharing chores and older siblings supporting the younger siblings' learning. Similarly, we complement the "alternating working days" and "staggering shift work" (p. 20) categories in Shockley et al. (2021) by highlighting different behaviors such as adjusting work or learning time, workspace, mealtime, and prioritizing.

Our findings highlight that families as collectives may take an active role in reframing resources and reworking the application of resources through enacting attentive and relational strategies that help them adjust to working from home. Attentive and relational strategies, for which we did not find parallels in Shockley et al.'s (2021) work, bring to attention the enriching possibilities that these behaviors provide, such as setting off shared well-being or engagement activities, upgrading family quality of life, spending more time with family, or investing in relationships. The outsourcing strategy appeared in both our study and Shockley et al.'s (2021), highlighting the necessity of external resources when demands exceed existing resources, especially for remote workers with young children. Our findings add nuances to how outsourcing may be enacted through utilizing intrafamilial sources, such as grandparents to help with childcare, and non-familial sources, such as online classes for children and food delivery. Delegative strategies also explain that resources could be generated internally within the family system—interfamilial sources—by empowering dependent members to function independently or help with chores. It seems reasonable to assume that the gendered patterns identified by Shockley et al. (2021), such as "doing all childcare when it is not outsourced" (p. 20) could be explained through unmet demand management and compromising strategies. Considering family as an adaptive system that strives to ensure its continued functioning, excessive demands may give way to gendered patterns overburdening one family member positioned in the traditional caring role.

Despite focusing on homogeneous middle-class households, which resided in different countries but shared more commonalities (i.e., being white-collar and professional dual-earner households with children) than differences, we found that the demands introduced by the forced work from home experience outweighed the resources generated by it. Twenty out of 28 households neglected portions of their personal or professional responsibilities, and 19 households delegated some of their tasks. We acknowledge that our study took place during the early stages of the pandemic, which might have imposed maximum demands on households (e.g., supporting children's

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learning), and that some demands have since been removed for some families (e.g., schools in the United Kingdom reopened in September 2020); however, every change can introduce new demands that require new adjustments (e.g., weekday school drop-off and pickup).

With the increase in remote and hybrid work arrangements (e.g., Gallup, 2023), we argue that the strategies we identified are likely to be transferable to situations where more than one person works from home while having caring responsibilities. Given that Office Index reports have consistently shown that since 2022, many workers come to work offices from two to four times a week (Margalit, 2023), dual-earner households with the opportunity to work remotely will continue to expereince overlapping remote work days. Although the context of our research is unique, in that work and learning from home as a collective were not a choice for our participants, these strategies still apply to families adjusting to simultaneous work and childcare during certain times of day, on days their children stay home, and when schools are closed, such as for winter or summer holidays.

5.1 | Practical implications

Given the significant global increase in remote and hybrid workers during the COVID-19 pandemic, we predict that the number of households with dual-earner couples working from home will continue to grow. Our findings highlight how critical it is for employees to know that multiple family members working from home can lead to additional work and family demands and resources. Our findings regarding delegative and compromising strategies suggest that relevant support and facilitation from employers should be provided and tailored to household contingencies. Organizational leaders should consider that the adjustment process to work from home involves the whole family, and not just the individual worker, especially during the initial stages. It is important that employers understand the resource-demand dynamics among household members, provide the needed resources, and facilitate the use of helpful strategies. Table 5 in Appendix S4 provides detailed suggestions and examples of how employees and employers can address demand generation, benefit from resource generation, facilitate resource-demand management, and alleviate unmet demands (see Appendix S4).

5.2 | Limitations and suggestions for research

Certain strategies in our study may have emerged because our participants were dual-earner, middle-class, and financially secure families. We acknowledge that a disproportionate number of remote workers are found in professional, scientific, and management-related sectors and in industries involving information, finance, insurance, and services (Delsiver, 2020) and that managerial and professional workers are more likely than others to engage in the types of tasks that can be performed remotely (Noonan & Glass, 2012). Family studies suggest that a family's definition of the stressor or change event is the most important determinant of its severity and of the family's adaptation (Hill, 1949). This means our participants saw the collective work from home and the COVID-19 lockdown as something they could handle; other families with different arrangements, who found these events beyond their capacity to cope, might have adopted different strategies and struggled to adjust.

Our study took place when the families were adjusting to collective work from home by trial-and-error and learning-by-doing. As families gained more experience as the pandemic prolonged, and as organizations aligned their family-friendly policies with their employees' needs, the dynamics of employees' work-from-home experience may have evolved. Since the households who participated in our study were in the early stages of adjusting to work from home and learning from home, which could be stressful, we decided to collect drawings and associated narrations from children. As a result, the data collected from the children were not as comprehensive and were used mainly for triangulating the strategies that emerged. While it was difficult to control or determine whether parents influenced the drawings or the descriptions their child(ren) produced, we believe it was unlikely that parents regulated or changed children's drawings and descriptions to present socially desirable realities. Our research team established rapport with the interviewees during the interviews and created a safe space where parents shared authentic experiences, including familial struggles and challenges. It was easy to determine that the majority of the child(ren)'s drawings represented authentic experiences when they pictured detailed activities, aligned with the descriptions clearly, or portrayed negative emotions such as sadness and boredom.

Despite such limitations, we expect our study to offer a promising path for future research, as it calls researchers' attention to the importance of the collective level and the family as a social system and unit of analysis in studying work–family dynamics and work from home. Also, we draw future researchers' attention to adjustment as a favorable outcome, the agentic role of families in managing to work from home, and resource generation and demand generation processes when studying the work–family integration of those working from home. Our work invites future focus on identifying strategies—actions that families or couples may devise for coping with or overcoming the challenges of working from home—emphasizing the adaptive and agentic nature of the work–family integration process in households. Building on our findings, researchers may explore the goals involved in the strategies we identified to understand why families maintain, adopt, or discard specific strategies. Scholars can also examine the implications of supportive, attentive, relational, delegative, and compromising strategies for devising solutions to other work–family problems, such as conflict or role incongruencies. We encourage future researchers to expand the pool of resources, demands, and strategies identified in our findings to conceptualize the emerging dynamics of work from home more fully. Examining how work-from-home practices during and after the pandemic influence household resource-demand management and long-term adjustment to work from home is another potential topic that deserves further scholarly attention. In the post-pandemic era, future research can also examine resource-demand management strategies adopted by families adjusting to the return to the workplace and to hybrid work arrangements.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We thank Idaho State University for supporting this study with an internal small research grant. We thank Azadeh Hashemian, a nonfiction writer and translator, who helped us with data collection from our Iranian participants.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors have no conflict of interest to declare.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

Data not available.

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SUPPORTING INFORMATION

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How to cite this article: Beigi, M., Shirmohammadi, M., Au, W. C., & Tochia, C. (2023). We were all in it together: Managing work from home as dual-earner households with school-age children. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 1–19. https://doi.org/10.1002/job.2755

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