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Genping Ye, Michail Veliziotis, Guy Vernon

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Taking Dynamics and Their Origins Seriously: Work-Family Conflict Trajectories and Their Gendered Antecedents in Work and Nonwork Support

Genping Ye [a], Michail Veliziotis [a,1], Guy Vernon [a,1]

[a] Southampton Business School, University of Southampton, Building 175, Boldrewood Innovation Campus, Burgess Road, Southampton, SO16 7QF, United Kingdom

Author Note

Genping Ye: Conceptualization, Methodology, Software, Validation, Formal analysis, Investigation, Data Curation, Writing-Original draft, Visualization, Writing-Review & Editing; **Michail Veliziotis**: Supervision, Writing-Review & Editing, Conceptualization, Methodology; **Guy Vernon:** Supervision, Writing-Review & Editing, Conceptualization, Methodology

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Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Genping Ye, Southampton Business School, University of Southampton, Building 175, Boldrewood Innovation Campus, Burgess Road, Southampton, SO16 7QF, United Kingdom. Email: gy1n21@soton.ac.uk.

[1] The second and third authors share joint second authorship as both equally contributed to this paper in significant ways.

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Abstract

Containing work-family conflict is crucial for sustainable careers. This study examines work-to-family (WtFC) and family-to-work (FtWC) conflict trajectories, deploying the longitudinal Work, Family, and Health Survey on US healthcare and IT employees. It identifies five distinct profiles for 1,843 individuals across four waves (T1–T4) spanning 18 months: Stable High, Stable Fairly-low, Stable Low, Increasing, and Decreasing. Stability in WtFC/FtWC is common, aligning with Dynamic Equilibrium Theory, but notable changes are also apparent, supporting Conservation of Resources Theory. The effect of initial levels (T1) of, and early changes (T1–T2) in, work and nonwork support is then examined. Individuals with higher initial support levels or larger early increases are more likely to belong to Stable Low, Stable Fairly-low, or Decreasing profiles than Stable High or Increasing ones. However, gender moderates these relationships, with support generally having stronger effects on women's membership in WtFC profiles and men's in FtWC profiles. The findings partially align with traditional gender roles typically linking women with caregiving and men with breadwinning, but also suggest shifting gender roles, with women valuing their careers and men actively engaging in family.

Keywords: work-family conflict, trajectory, work support, nonwork support, gender

1 Introduction

Employees typically aspire to a professional life in which they can work productively while remaining healthy and happy in the long run - hallmarks of a sustainable career that fosters both

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present and future career engagement (De Vos et al., 2020). However, advancing in one's career may require sacrifices in family participation, and ambitious employees may worry that family demands could hinder their job opportunities. Work-family conflict (WFC) - where involvement in one role interferes with the other (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985) - is a perennial challenge for those seeking career growth (Allen & French, 2023). Such struggles can undermine well-being and productivity (Li et al., 2021), hindering career sustainability. De Vos et al. (2020) suggest that a sustainable career is achieved when different life domains are well-aligned, allowing resources to be enriched rather than depleted. Numerous studies (e.g., Blanch & Aluja, 2012; French et al., 2018) have examined WFC, but rather than taking a single snapshot of WFC, examining its development could offer deeper insights into its role as a barrier to the long-term process of career sustainability (De Vos et al., 2020).

However, methodological limitations in understanding how WFC develops over time are apparent. The predominant cross-sectional studies (e.g., Blanch & Aluja, 2012; Seiger & Wiese, 2009) investigate static aspects, whilst variable-centered longitudinal approaches (e.g., Li et al., 2021; Nohe & Sonntag, 2014) primarily examine fluctuations, each providing incomplete perspectives on the dynamic nature of WFC (Smith et al., 2022). These demand studies on WFC evolution, i.e., WFC trajectories, to track both stability and changes (Allen & French, 2023). However, extant trajectory studies often span longer timeframes, such as ten (Dinh et al., 2017), fourteen (Rantanen et al., 2012), and twenty (Li et al., 2021) years. Such prolonged periods see more economic, social, and technological changes (Cullati, 2014), jeopardizing the isolation of specific influences. Meanwhile, many analyses treat participants homogeneously to examine the overall trends (e.g., Cullati, 2014; Knecht et al., 2011; Rantanen et al., 2008). However, expecting a uniform evolving pattern for everyone might be simplistic, as individuals face diverse environmental and personal conditions

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(Rantanen et al., 2012). To date, few studies (e.g., Cooklin et al., 2016; Dinh et al., 2017; Kinnunen et al., 2004; Rantanen et al., 2012) have explored trajectory heterogeneity.

To address these limitations, this study uses the Work, Family, and Health Survey (WFHS) panel dataset to examine diverse WFC trajectories over one and a half years. With a large sample size over four waves within a shorter timeframe, this dataset enables in-depth analyses of WFC developments (Allen et al., 2019) and reduces the risk of unobserved causal processes (Li et al., 2021) and macro influences on WFC trends (Cullati, 2014). Using the group-based trajectory model (GBTM), distinct changing and stable profiles for both work-to-family conflict (WtFC) and family-to-work conflict (FtWC) are identified, revealing developmental heterogeneity in WFC trajectories, and highlighting both changes (in line with Conservation of Resources theory, COR) and stability (in line with Dynamic Equilibrium theory, DE) in WFC. This developmental heterogeneity may reflect the varying career stages people experience, and the different challenges they may face in balancing work and family to sustain careers (Rantanen et al., 2012; Roberson et al., 2024).

Rather than focusing primarily on identifying distinct trajectories and their outcomes (see e.g., Dinh et al., 2017; Kinnunen et al., 2004; Rantanen et al., 2012), this study examines how support-related factors shape such profiles. The impact of work and nonwork support on WFC trajectories is underexplored despite being regarded as valuable resources for managing work and family demands and closely tied to WFC levels in many studies (e.g., Adams & Golsch, 2021; Michel et al., 2011). This study thus examines how not only initial levels of, but also early changes in, support predict membership in WFC trajectories. Specifically, the impact of work support, including family-supportive supervisor behavior (FSSB) and organizational work-family climate (OCLI), and nonwork support, including social support (SCS) and spouse or partner support (SPS), is considered.

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By linking support levels and changes with changing profiles (according to COR theory) and stable profiles (according to DE theory), this study not only investigates links between support changes and WFC changes, and support levels and WFC levels, but also unveils potential connections between support changes and WFC levels, and support levels and WFC changes. That is, by integrating COR and DE theories, this study not only identifies stable and changing profiles, akin to Smith et al. (2022), but also explains how support levels and changes predict these profiles.

Furthermore, this study thoroughly examines the role of gender as a moderator in the relationship between support variables and WFC trajectories. Social role theory often associating men with breadwinning and women with caregiving (Eagly & Wood, 2012), has informed numerous studies on how work and nonwork resources affect WFC levels (e.g., Adams & Golsch, 2021; Nsair & Piszczek, 2021; Sargent et al., 2022). Moreover, gender roles are evolving, with men taking on more household duties and women engaging actively in the workforce (Goldscheider et al., 2015). These traditional and emerging trends prompt discussions on whether men and women benefit more from work or nonwork resources. However, such discussions rarely consider WFC trajectories. This study, thus, examines how gender moderates the link between support and WFC profile membership.

Gender differences in how WtFC or FtWC are prioritized, according to available resources, implicitly throw light on the continued purchase of traditional gender roles in the work-family area, offering further insights into career growth and sustainability. Entrenched gender roles encourage individuals to protect their traditional primary roles (Eagly & Wood, 2012), implying gender differences in support-WFC profile relationships that may favor men's career progress while hindering women's (Kossek et al., 2021). However, these differences may have lessened, with women more engaged in the workforce and men taking on more family responsibilities (England et al., 2020).

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Individuals embracing evolving norms are motivated to leverage resources to integrate careers with a fulfilling family life in new ways (Goldscheider et al., 2015). Thus, while more support benefits both genders, men who adhere to traditional gender norms may see more career growth, whereas both men and women who embrace evolving norms may experience greater career sustainability.

The study, thus, addresses the following questions: (1) Which WtFC/FtWC trajectories can be identified? (2) How do initial levels of, and early changes in, work and nonwork support predict membership in WtFC/FtWC trajectories? And (3) how does gender moderate the relationship between support and membership in WtFC/FtWC trajectories? The article proceeds by reviewing the relevant literature to form testable hypotheses. It then outlines the research methods and data analysis employed to test these hypotheses, followed by presenting the results of the analysis. It concludes with a discussion of findings and directions for future research.

1.1 Work-Family Conflict and Its Trajectories

WFC is a type of inter-role conflict that arises when the demands from work and family roles are incompatible with each other (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). It involves bidirectional conflict: WtFC from work obligations encroaching upon family roles, and FtWC from family demands interfering with work duties (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). This study considers each direction distinctly; it uses the umbrella term WFC for the general conflict, and WtFC/FtWC for the specific conflicts.

Although cross-sectional studies offer valuable insights, measuring WFC at a single time point precludes a grasp of the "inherently dynamic experience" (Allen et al., 2019, p. 245) occurring and reoccurring at varying rates over time. Some studies employ variable-centered longitudinal research to capture changes across multiple time points (Hofmans et al., 2020), but Smith et al. (2022) suggest that WFC is typically stable rather than highly fluctuating. Further research is

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demanded to comprehensively investigate how WFC develops, i.e., *trajectories* of WFC.

Based on prior research, WFC can exhibit upward (Nohe & Sonntag, 2014), downward (Nicklin et al., 2022), or unchanged trends (Rantanen et al., 2012). Thus, there are two prevalent evolving patterns: change and stability. COR theory can explain WFC changes (Li et al., 2021; Smith et al., 2022), but it fails to address the stability aspect. Hence, DE theory, originally explaining well-being stability (Headey, 2006; Headey & Wearing, 1989), is introduced into the work-family context (e.g., Smith et al., 2022). This study integrates both theories to understand WFC trajectories.

WFC changes. COR theory can explain how resources link to WFC occurrences and fluctuations. According to COR theory, individuals strive to acquire, maintain, and protect finite resources to achieve their goals (Hobfoll, 1989). When resources are insufficient to meet both work and family demands, WFC can arise, with sacrificing one role for the other (Allen & French, 2023). Moreover, COR theory (Hobfoll, 1989) argues that people with fewer resources, or at the risk of resource loss, are more vulnerable to further depletion (i.e., to resource loss spirals). COR theory (Hobfoll, 1989) also posits that those with more resources are better equipped to gain further resources (i.e., resource gain spirals). In other words, initial resource losses lead to future depletion and weaken the capacity to replenish those losses; while initial gains enhance the ability to acquire new ones and recover from losses (Hobfoll et al., 2018). The cumulative effects drive ongoing changes in WFC manifesting in profiles with upward or downward trajectories.

WFC stability. DE theory posits that each person has a stable psychological status at different set points, influenced by personal and environmental factors that do not frequently change (Headey, 2006; Headey & Wearing, 1989). According to Smith et al. (2022), perceived WFC is a subjective perception of the tension between work and family responsibilities, representing a negative

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psychological status to which DE theory can be applied. Therefore, extending DE theory to the work-family literature implies that individuals maintain stable WFC levels (Smith et al., 2022). Furthermore, while short-term fluctuations may occur due to external stimuli, individuals typically adapt, and return to stable states with favorable (unfavorable) baselines in response to positive (negative) stimuli (Headey, 2006), within a certain period, e.g., three months (Headey & Wearing, 1989).

Thus, COR theory proposes both short-term and long-term changes in WFC, while DE theory suggests long-term stability despite recognizing short-term fluctuations. Existing research has indeed identified both change and stability. For instance, Cullati (2014) found a gradual increase in WFC from 2004 to 2010, while French et al. (2022) revealed a linear decrease in WtFC and an inverted U-shape FtWC trajectory over 20 years. Knecht et al. (2011) noted stable WFC across six years, and Westrupp et al. (2016) reported stable WFC among working mothers from their child's infancy to age nine.

These average developmental patterns are estimated by treating participants as a whole (Hofmans et al., 2020). However, most samples do not satisfy the homogeneity criteria; rather, there exist distinct subgroups due to diverse external and personal conditions (Hofmans et al., 2020). For instance, Rantanen et al. (2008) identified changes within overall stable patterns over both one-year and six-year periods. Smith et al. (2022) found that 75-80% of the sample exhibited stable WtFC trends, with the remainder experiencing pronounced fluctuations. This phenomenon is known as developmental heterogeneity, with trajectories differing in levels or developmental directions (Rantanen et al., 2012).

To our knowledge, few studies have examined heterogeneous WFC paths. Rantanen et al. (2012) identified different joint WtFC-FtWC trajectories (i.e., Decreasing WtFC, Stable Low WtFC and FtWC, Increasing WtFC and FtWC, and Decreasing FtWC profiles) across 14 years. Cooklin et al.

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(2016) and Dinh et al. (2017) found four WFC trajectories over a decade: chronic, increasing, decreasing, and no conflict. However, such long-term timeframes usually involve important economic, societal, and technological changes (Cullati, 2014), posing challenges in discerning and isolating the effects of specific variables. These studies also do not compare the WtFC and FtWC trajectories. To gain a better understanding of how both WtFC and FtWC evolve, this study examines WtFC and FtWC trajectories separately within a shorter timeframe, anticipating distinct profiles showing continuous increases or decreases, or stability at high or low levels. Additional potential trajectories will be discussed as they emerge. It is, thus, hypothesized that:

H1: There are at least (a) four WtFC profiles and (b) four FtWC profiles, showing Increasing, Decreasing, Stable High, or Stable Low trajectories.

1.2 Antecedents of WFC Profile Membership

Only a few studies have examined the factors influencing WFC trajectories. Hokke et al. (2023) found that financial difficulties, parental care, employment types, and working hours shaped parents' WFC transitions. Smith et al. (2022) observed that role demands affected WtFC trajectories, while job autonomy and leadership had limited influence. French et al. (2022) noted that childhood psychological maltreatment predicted WFC trajectories via supervisor and spouse support. However, the influence of work and nonwork support on WFC trajectories remains neglected.

Prior studies on the effects of work and nonwork support on WFC *levels* provide insights into the impact on WFC trajectories, yet they have been criticized for neglecting fluctuations in support (Smith et al., 2022). Furthermore, examining solely either support levels or changes may yield imprecise results, as one dimension can affect the impact of the other on conflict (Li et al., 2021). For example, individuals with initially low support levels might still experience low conflict later on if

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support rapidly emerges. This study addresses these limitations by considering both initial support levels and early support changes, assuming that each dimension uniquely shapes WFC trajectories.

COR theory can explain how support levels and changes predict changing profiles, while DE theory can explain their links to stable profiles. According to COR theory's resource loss and gain spiral (Hobfoll, 1989, 2018), initial high support levels or early increases act as initial resource gains, fostering ongoing replenishment, ultimately translating into decreasing WFC profiles. In contrast, initial low support levels or early decreases serve as initial resource losses (Hobfoll, 1989, 2018), resulting in continuous depletion and consequently increasing profiles. Hence, based on COR theory, both support changes and levels predict changing profiles. On the other hand, according to DE theory (Headey, 2006), people with initially low (high) support levels will set baselines for high (low) WFC levels, respectively, and remain at this baseline. They are also expected to adapt to support changes (Headey, 2006), returning to stable states with lower (higher) WFC baselines if support increases (decreases). Accordingly, DE theory links support levels and changes to stable profiles.

In this study, workplace resources, including family-supportive supervisor behavior (FSSB) and organizational family-friendly climate (OCLI), are termed “work support”, while support from nonwork sources, like social support (SCS) from friends, relatives, etc., and spouse or partner support (SPS), is labeled “nonwork support”. Meta-analyses indicate both within-domain (work support with WtFC, nonwork support with FtWC) and cross-domain associations (work support with FtWC, nonwork support with WtFC); some suggest stronger effects within the domain (Griggs et al., 2013; Michel et al., 2011), while others argue for similar effects on FtWC from both types of support (e.g., French et al., 2018; Van Daalen et al., 2006). Indeed, resources from both spheres help address work and family demands, with varying strengths across domains (Michel et al., 2011). Thus, rather than

comparing within-domain and cross-domain relationships as many existing studies do, this study examines individual differences in prioritizing the use of resources to address either WtFC or FtWC as barriers to career sustainability. These differences are expected to be explained by gender, as suggested by social role theory (Eagly & Wood, 2012). Therefore, we first consider the role of gender generally, then review in detail the influence of specific variables deploying a gendered lens.

1.2.1 The Role of Gender

Gender differences in the predictors of WFC trajectories have been noted in several studies. For instance, Cooklin et al. (2016) concluded that some job characteristics (e.g., poor job quality, a skilled occupation) and family characteristics (e.g., more children) differentiated the chronic WFC profile from the decreasing WFC profile for fathers, and long work hours and job insecurity predicted the chronic WFC profile for mothers. However, how gender affects the influence of work and nonwork support on WFC trajectories remains unclear. Studies noting how gender moderates the relationship between support variables and WFC *levels* (e.g., Adams & Golsch, 2021; Blanch & Aluja, 2012; Sargent et al., 2022) suggest gendered antecedents of WFC trajectories.

Gender differences often stem from social role theory, traditionally associating women with family and men with work (Eagly & Wood, 2012). Recent studies, however, present ambiguous findings. Some (e.g., Adams & Golsch, 2021; Blanch & Aluja, 2012) suggest that women benefit more from work support and men from nonwork support, since additional resources in the alternative domain can mitigate resource competition in the primary domain. Others (e.g., Aycan & Eskin, 2005; Van Daalen et al., 2006) argue that resources in primary domains provide greater benefits, reducing perceived threats to the prescribed traditional gender roles and increasing feelings of approval and acceptance within the relevant domain. However, Drummond et al. (2017) propose that both work

Journal Pre-proof

and nonwork support are more important for women, who now often shoulder the main caregiving roles with increasing work demands. Indeed, both work and nonwork resources help both genders manage work and family roles (Michel et al., 2011) for a sustainable career, with gender differences possibly reflected in whether they prioritize addressing either WtFC or FtWC using these resources.

Social role theory suggests that traditional gender norms may shape how support from work and nonwork spheres impacts WFC trajectories. According to Greenhaus and Powell (2006), individuals typically invest more resources in areas most essential to them. Thus, women and men tend to allocate more resources to protect their primary roles, i.e., women as caregivers and men as breadwinners (Eagly & Wood, 2012), thereby resulting in favorable experiences of WtFC for women and FtWC for men. In other words, work and nonwork support are expected to be stronger predictors for women's WtFC profiles and men's FtWC profiles. The mechanisms of influence of specific variables are considered below.

1.2.2 WtFC Profile Membership: Work and Nonwork Support for Men and Women

FSSB and OCLI have been shown to affect WtFC levels. FSSB involves emotional, instrumental, and behavioral support from supervisors to enhance employee work-family balance (Hammer et al., 2013), while OCLI reflects employees' perceptions of employer support for family life (Kossek et al., 2001). These supports foster a family-friendly workplace culture, often associated with policies like paid leave or flexible work schedules to help employees meet family demands, instead of expecting employees to perform excessive hours, or unrealistic schedules, for career success (Nsair & Piszczek, 2021; Sargent et al., 2022). Thus, work support tends to allow resources (e.g., time and energy) to flow into the family, mitigating WtFC levels and predicting membership in favorable trajectories (i.e., Stable Low and Decreasing profiles). These effects may be stronger for women, who

typically allocate more resources to family matters, compared to men who face societal and self-pressures to prioritize their breadwinner roles (Eagly & Wood, 2012). It is, thus, hypothesized that:

H2: Individuals with (a) larger early increases in, and (b) higher initial levels of, FSSB, are more likely to belong to WtFC Decreasing or Stable Low profiles than Increasing or Stable High profiles; (c) These relationships are more pronounced for women.

H3: Individuals with (a) larger early increases in, and (b) higher initial levels of, OCLI, are more likely to belong to WtFC Decreasing or Stable Low profiles than Increasing or Stable High profiles; (c) These relationships are more pronounced for women.

Nonwork support from relatives, friends, spouses, or partners, is an essential predictor for WtFC. This support typically includes emotional assistance, like empathy, affection, and genuine concern, as well as instrumental aid in managing household duties and family obligations (Brough et al., 2005). However, Adams and Golsch (2021) and Brough et al. (2005) found no significant effect of nonwork support on WtFC levels, as it may not directly address work demands. In contrast, Annink et al. (2016) and Annor (2016) reported positive correlations, possibly because people (especially men as breadwinners) receiving aid in family roles may allocate more resources to their work.

However, investing more resources in work may not necessarily lead to perceived non-fulfillment in family roles. Employees receiving nonwork support could feel assisted and confident that their home responsibilities will be met (Carlson et al., 2021). Emotional support also helps individuals overcome work-related challenges by strengthening psychological resources such as resilience, optimism, and persistence (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006), thereby reducing negative work-to-family spillover. Moreover, instrumental support for sharing family demands enables women, as primary caregivers, to allocate more time and energy to other family duties, enhancing their

Journal Pre-proof

fulfillment of family responsibilities (Eagly & Wood, 2012). Thus, the well-supported mitigating role of nonwork support on WtFC levels (e.g., Adams & Golsch, 2021; Griggs et al., 2013; Michel et al., 2011) suggests that nonwork support could predict favorable WtFC profile membership, implying particularly pronounced effects for women prioritizing family demands. It is hypothesized that:

H4: Individuals with (a) larger early increases in, and (b) higher initial levels of, SCS, are more likely to belong to WtFC Decreasing or Stable Low profiles than Increasing or Stable High profiles; (c) These relationships are more pronounced for women.

H5: Individuals with (a) larger early increases in, and (b) higher initial levels of, SPS, are more likely to belong to WtFC Decreasing or Stable Low profiles than Increasing or Stable High profiles; (c) These relationships are more pronounced for women.

1.2.3 FtWC Profile Membership: Work and Nonwork Support for Men and Women

Most studies suggest negative correlations between work support and FtWC (e.g., French et al., 2018; Michel et al., 2011), though some report positive links, especially for women (e.g., Brough et al., 2005; Hammer et al., 2005). This positive relationship may stem from family-friendly support empowering women to meet increased societal expectations of family roles (Hammer et al., 2005). Consequently, this support might prompt them to take on additional family burdens instead of helping manage existing demands (Hammer et al., 2005). However, the ability to handle household affairs is reinforced by supportive workplace policies and supervisors (Michel et al., 2011). Even if work support's mitigating effect on women's FtWC is weak, it can still help men, as the main breadwinners, manage family matters (Van Daalen et al., 2006). Moreover, with proper work support, shouldering family duties may not impair work performance. For instance, flexible working schedules can boost work engagement and reduce absenteeism for family matters (Nsair & Piszczek,

Journal Pre-proof

2021). Indeed, people in family-friendly environments believe that using family-friendly perks will not harm their careers (Aycan & Eskin, 2005). This effect is expected to be stronger for men, who traditionally care more about work performance (Eagly & Wood, 2012). It is, thus, hypothesized that:

H6: Individuals with (a) larger early increases in, and (b) higher initial levels of, FSSB, are more likely to belong to FtWC Decreasing or Stable Low profiles than Increasing or Stable High profiles; (c) These relationships are more pronounced for men.

H7: Individuals with (a) larger early increases in, and (b) higher initial levels of, OCLI, are more likely to belong to FtWC Decreasing or Stable Low profiles than Increasing or Stable High profiles; (c) These relationships are more pronounced for men.

Nonwork support is expected to significantly affect FtWC levels, thereby shaping FtWC trajectories. Specifically, instrumental assistance helps share family demands such as child caregiving and chores (Adams & Golsch, 2021); emotional support, like understanding and encouragement, boosts well-being and work-related self-esteem, fostering positive family-to-work spillover (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006). Moreover, nonwork support serves as a protective mechanism, shielding individuals from perceiving family demands as stressors, thereby reducing family resource depletion (Seiger & Wiese, 2009). This mitigating effect might be stronger for men, who may be more engaged in work when receiving nonwork support, while societal and self-expectations motivate women to prioritize family obligations (Eagly & Wood, 2012). It is, thus, hypothesized that:

H8: Individuals with (a) larger early increases in, and (b) higher initial levels of, SCS, are more likely to belong to FtWC Decreasing or Stable Low profiles than Increasing or Stable High profiles; (c) These relationships are more pronounced for men.

H9: Individuals with (a) larger early increases in, and (b) higher initial levels of, SPS, are more

Journal Pre-proof

likely to belong to FtWC Decreasing or Stable Low profiles than Increasing or Stable High profiles; (c) These relationships are more pronounced for men.

2 Methods

2.1 Data

This study utilized the longitudinal Work, Family, and Health Survey (WFHS) data (see https://projects.iq.harvard.edu/wfhn) collected from two U.S. industries: extended-care (NH) facilities and information technology (IT) (Hammer et al., 2016). Data were gathered in four waves from September 2009 to December 2012, at baseline (T1), and six (T2), twelve (T3), and eighteen months (T4) post-baseline. Although now over a decade old, the comprehensive questionnaires on work and family domains, and the substantial sample size across four-time intervals, render the dataset exemplary for work-family studies (e.g., DePasquale et al., 2018; Fan et al., 2019; Hammer et al., 2016; Paek, 2024) and highly suitable for answering the present research questions. The combined sample size of employees and managers declined from 2,752 to 2,342, 2,117, and lastly 1,982, respectively, at each wave. To capture WFC trajectories over four waves, the sample was limited to a balanced panel, i.e., to respondents present at all waves. Of the initial 2,752 participants, 905 individuals who did not complete all waves, and four with missing values for WtFC/FtWC, were dropped, resulting in 1,843 individuals for the trajectory analysis. Regression analysis involved 1,642 respondents, due to additional missing values in support variables at T1 or T2.

Appendix Table A1 (available in supplementary material) shows that the 909 dropouts were more likely to be women, younger, single, non-supervisory employees, NH workers, and those with lower education levels, fewer working hours, and lower FSSB. No differences were found regarding race/ethnicity, caregiving responsibilities, condition, OCLI, or SCS. There were also no differences

Journal Pre-proof

between the dropouts and non-dropouts in WtFC (t (2,746) = -0.666, p = 0.506) and FtWC (t (2,748) = -0.863, p = 0.388), suggesting that attrition was unlikely to affect WtFC/FtWC trajectories. The study sample (N=1,843) was mostly women (69.29%) and white (69.65%), with 57.35% in NH and 83.34% in non-management. The average age was 43.042 years (SD=11.151), and participants worked an average of 41.842 hours per week (SD=8.249). Notably, 51.98% were in the control group, 42.11% had child caregiving responsibilities, and 42.35% held a college degree.

2.2 Measures

Family-supportive supervisor behavior (FSSB) was measured by the FSSB Short Form (Hammer et al., 2013), with reliability validated in prior studies (e.g., Fan et al., 2019; Hammer et al., 2016). This measure comprises four items (e.g., "Your supervisor demonstrates effective behaviors in how to juggle work and non-work issues"; α=0.88 at T1 and T2), rated on a five-point scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*), as detailed in Appendix Table A2, along with other variables.

Organizational family-friendly climate (OCLI) was assessed with a three-item scale from Kossek et al. (2001) (e.g., "In your workplace, employees are expected to take time away from their family or personal lives to get their work done"; α=0.71-0.76 from T1-T2). Items were rated on a five-point scale ranging from 1 (*strongly agree*) to 5 (*strongly disagree*). This scale has shown high reliability and validity in prior studies (e.g., Hammer et al., 2016; Nsair & Piszczek, 2021).

Social support (SCS) was measured using a three-item scale adapted from Seeman and Berkman (1988) (e.g., "Can you count on a friend or relative to provide you with emotional support"; α=0.70-0.74 from T1-T2), with reliability validated in previous studies (e.g., Coyle et al., 2017; Ho et al., 2013). Items were rated on a three-point scale ranging from 1 (*no, there isn't anyone like that*) to 3 (*yes, always*) to assess SCS availability, adapted from the original scale that evaluated both

Journal Pre-proof

attitudes towards, and availability, of SCS.

Spouse or partner support (SPS) was assessed using five items adapted from Schuster et al. (1990) (e.g., “How much does your spouse/partner really care about you”; α = 0.83-0.84 from T1-T2), shown to be reliable in prior studies (e.g., DePasquale et al., 2018; Li et al., 2021). The original items were rated on a four-point scale from 1 (*not at all*) to 4 (*a lot*) for individuals with partners/spouses. The partnered group’s mean on this continuous SPS scale at each respective wave served as the cutoff to distinguish relatively low from relatively high support, with partnered individuals scoring below the mean classified as 1 "Low SPS" and those scoring above as 2 "High SPS". This yielded a more balanced and empirically interpretable classification aligned with the observed distribution. To incorporate employees both with and without romantic relationships, a three-way categorical SPS variable was then created: 0 = Single, 1 = Low SPS, and 2 = High SPS.

Work-to-family conflict (WtFC) and ***Family-to-work conflict (FtWC)***. A ten-item scale developed by Netemeyer et al. (1996) was used to assess WtFC (five items; e.g., “The demands of your work interfere with your family or personal time”; α=0.90-0.91 from T1-T4) and FtWC (five items; e.g., “You have to put off doing things at work because of demands on your time at home”; α=0.83-0.86 from T1-T4). Items were rated on a five-point scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). This scale has received considerable support regarding its reliability and validity in prior studies (e.g., Hammer et al., 2016; Nohe & Sonntag, 2014; Nsair & Piszczek, 2021).

Changes from T1 to T2 were assessed as raw score differences. FSSB, OCLI, and SCS changes were measured as continuous variables, with positive scores indicating increased support and negative scores indicating decreased support. For the categorical variable SPS, individuals who remained single, at low, or at high SPS, were classified as unchanged (=0). Those who shifted from

high SPS to low SPS were categorized as decreasing support (=1), while those who moved from low SPS to high SPS were classified as increasing support (=2). Individuals (whether with low or high SPS at T1) ending a romantic relationship were categorized as dissolution (=3)[2] .

Moderator. Gender (0: men; 1: women) acted as a moderator interacting with support variables, while also serving as an independent variable when moderation effects were not modeled.

Control variables. We controlled for age, industry (0: IT; 1: NH), working hours, and caregiving responsibilities (0: none; 1: child(ren); 2: adult(s); 3: both) at T1, given their known impact on the variables of interest (Michel et al., 2011). As a workplace intervention was implemented to improve job control and supervisor support between T1 and T2, we introduced a binary variable to distinguish individuals in the intervention group (=0) from those not in the group (=1). Finally, unobserved variables before the research period (or during the early stages) might influence WFC at T1, thereby affecting the subsequent development. Thus, we controlled for WtFC and FtWC at T1 to ensure a more precise evaluation of the impact of early-stage support on WtFC and FtWC profiles.

2.3 Analysis

This study consists of two stages of analysis: Group-based Trajectory Modeling (GBTM) for trajectory analysis, and Multinomial Logistic Regression (MNL) with moderation analysis to examine the relationship between support and WFC profiles, as well as the moderating role of gender. All analyses were conducted in Stata 17. The analytical strategy and corresponding results are discussed in the following section to enhance understanding of the analytical approach.

3 Results

Table 1 shows the variable means and standard deviations (SD), and the correlations

[2] Individuals who entered a romantic relationship at T2 were excluded from the analysis because they were not asked about partner/spouse support at T2.

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between variables for the full sample. WtFC levels decreased from 2.927 to 2.762 overall, while FtWC levels remained relatively stable, only slightly declining from T3 to T4.

3.1 Trajectory Analysis

GBTM, a latent growth modeling technique, was used to model WtFC and FtWC trajectories separately, assigning a unique model to each individual and grouping them based on similarities among their respective models (Nagin, 2005). Using the GBTM program *Traj* in Stata (Jones & Nagin, 2013), we followed a stepwise approach to determine the optimal number of profiles, as advised by van der Nest et al. (2020), starting from one to six classes. The Bayesian information criterion (BIC) was the primary criterion for model selection, supplemented with the Akaike information criterion (AIC), with values closer to 0 indicating a better model fit[3] (Nagin, 2005). An average posterior probability of assignment (APPA) above 0.70, entropy values near 1, and odds of correct classification (OCC) exceeding 5, indicate decreased classification uncertainty (van der Nest et al., 2020).

For WtFC, Model 5 in Appendix Table A3, chosen for its best fit, had the BIC value closest to 0, high entropy (0.77), APPA > 0.70, and OCC > 5. The five profiles in this model are shown in Figure 1: (1) WtFC Stable Low (4.2% group membership); (2) WtFC Stable Fairly-low (44.6%); (3) WtFC Decreasing (14%); (4) WtFC Increasing (16.5%); (5) WtFC Stable High (20.7%). The Stable Low, Stable Fairly-low, and Stable High profiles, totaling 69.5%, indicated consistent stability in WtFC for most individuals, with levels notably below (1.33), moderately below (2.27), and above (3.93) the overall average (2.82), respectively. The Decreasing profile started with above-average WtFC but declined notably between T1 and T3, while the Increasing profile began near the average and rose linearly. These findings supported ***H1a***, identifying WtFC Increasing, Decreasing, Stable High, and Stable Low

[3] In the traditional BIC/AIC formula, higher likelihood and lower complexity produce a lower positive BIC/AIC value, indicating a better fit. In the GBTM Stata program we use, BIC/AIC values are usually reported as negative numbers; in this case, higher likelihood and lower complexity result in a less negative (closer to 0) value, also indicating a better fit (Nagin, 2005).

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profiles, along with an additional profile, Stable Fairly-low, exhibiting moderately low WtFC levels[4].

Model 5 in Appendix Table A4, with the BIC value closest to 0 and high entropy (0.84), along with appropriate APPA (>0.70) and OCC (>5) values, was determined as the best-fitting model for FtWC trajectories. The five FtWC profiles illustrated in Figure 2 are: (1) FtWC Stable Low (15.1% group membership); (2) FtWC Stable Fairly-low (64.9%); (3) FtWC Decreasing (10.3%); (4) FtWC Increasing (5.5%); (5) FtWC Stable High (4.2%). The Stable Low, Stable Fairly-low, and Stable High profiles, comprising 84.2% of the sample, consistently exhibited stable patterns over time, with levels notably lower (1.36), fairly lower (2.04), and higher (3.30) than the overall average (2.07), respectively. The Decreasing profile started with above-average FtWC levels and exhibited a linear decrease over time. Conversely, the FtWC Increasing profile showed a linear increase, shifting from average levels initially to levels approaching the Stable High profile by T4. These findings supported ***H1b***, revealing four expected profiles (Increasing, Decreasing, Stable High, and Stable Low), along with an additional profile, Stable Fairly-low, characterized by persistently moderately low levels of FtWC[5].

Appendix Tables A5 and A6 show the demographics for WtFC and FtWC profiles, respectively. All profiles generally had higher proportions of non-supervisory employees, married individuals, women, whites, those with child caregiving responsibilities, and those with some college education or higher. NH workers were more common in all profiles, except for the WtFC/FtWC Stable High and WtFC Decreasing ones. Younger individuals were more likely to be in the WtFC/FtWC Increasing and Stable High profiles. Each profile had a relatively balanced representation of intervention and control group participants. However, notable differences were observed in support variables across profiles.

[4] As the WtFC Stable Fairly-low and Stable Low profiles represent subgroups with consistently low WtFC levels (moderately low and very low, respectively), we can maintain our initial hypothesis that higher levels of, and larger increases in, work and nonwork support steer individuals towards low-levels profiles (i.e., the WtFC Stable Low/Fairly-low profiles).

[5] Since these findings mirror those concerning the WtFC profiles, we again maintain our initial hypotheses regarding FtWC (see previous footnote).

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Table 1

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations Among Variables

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
1 Age T1	1																					
2 Gender T1	-0.121***	1																				
3 Industry T1	-0.276***	0.581***	1																			
4 Caregiving duties T1	-0.025	0.056*	0.038	1																		
5 Working hours T1	0.201***	-0.305***	-0.495***	-0.018	1																	
6 Condition T1	-0.019	0.008	0.069**	0.017	-0.013	1																
7 FSSB T1	0.028	-0.062*	-0.077**	0.016	0.051*	0.036	1															
8 △ FSSB	0.045+	-0.029	-0.042+	-0.038	0.033	-0.064*	-0.453***	1														
9 OCLI T1	-0.027	0.039	0.115***	-0.060*	-0.102***	0.012	0.214***	-0.062*	1													
10 △ OCLI	0.077**	-0.045	-0.143***	-0.011	0.142***	-0.034	-0.042	0.095***	-0.471***	1												
11 SCS T1	0.003	0.023	0.019	-0.129***	-0.007	0.006	0.207***	-0.028	0.172***	0.010	1											
12 △ SCS	0.032	0.001	0.009	0.010	0.018	-0.025	-0.047+	0.034	-0.044+	0.012	-0.404***	1										
13 SPS T1	0.097***	-0.211***	-0.215***	-0.011	0.145***	-0.001	0.143***	-0.017	0.046+	0.061*	0.217***	-0.055*	1									
14 △ SPS	-0.114***	0.011	0.099***	0.013	-0.050*	0.022	-0.044	-0.004	0.026	-0.039	-0.042+	0.017	0.097***	1								
15 WtFC T1	-0.065**	-0.086***	-0.190***	0.077**	0.285***	-0.064**	-0.298***	0.093***	-0.452***	0.152***	-0.222***	0.087***	-0.007	-0.010	1							
16 WtFC T2	-0.087***	-0.071**	-0.122***	0.102***	0.189***	-0.034	-0.197***	-0.081**	-0.294***	-0.114***	-0.201***	0.014	-0.048+	-0.007	0.611***	1						
17 WtFC T3	-0.056*	-0.083***	-0.144***	0.108***	0.187***	-0.034	-0.199***	-0.056*	-0.268***	-0.077**	-0.203***	-0.014	-0.058*	0.001	0.577***	0.659***	1					
18 WtFC T4	-0.083***	-0.052*	-0.117***	0.093***	0.157***	0.006	-0.165***	-0.039	-0.300***	-0.010	-0.182***	-0.004	-0.078**	0.003	0.556***	0.601***	0.662***	1				
19 FtWC T1	-0.131***	-0.040	-0.046+	0.119***	-0.026	-0.077**	-0.124***	0.043+	-0.156***	0.032	-0.162***	0.002	-0.108***	-0.056*	0.359***	0.270***	0.250***	0.285***	1			
20 FtWC T2	-0.135***	-0.052*	-0.035	0.125***	-0.046+	-0.020	-0.075**	-0.051*	-0.121***	-0.115***	-0.164***	-0.039	-0.102***	-0.003	0.260***	0.407***	0.326***	0.318***	0.542***	1		
21 FtWC T3	-0.097***	-0.044+	-0.055*	0.131***	-0.026	-0.024	-0.102***	-0.041	-0.139***	-0.054*	-0.169***	-0.034	-0.087***	-0.004	0.257***	0.336***	0.440***	0.334***	0.483***	0.571***	1	
22 FtWC T4	-0.115***	-0.060*	-0.049*	0.103***	-0.030	-0.015	-0.087***	-0.037	-0.111***	-0.038	-0.157***	-0.039	-0.086***	-0.016	0.221***	0.281***	0.316***	0.421***	0.477***	0.536***	0.590***	1
Mean	42.923	0.686	0.555	1.136	41.781	0.516	3.784	-0.017	2.858	0.080	2.478	-0.013	1.182	0.261	2.927	2.817	2.784	2.762	2.080	2.074	2.077	2.057
SD	11.121	0.464	0.497	1.015	8.236	0.500	0.836	0.744	0.868	0.829	0.521	0.439	0.823	0.677	0.930	0.893	0.897	0.877	0.612	0.583	0.580	0.579

Note. Gender (0 = men; 1 = women), and Industry (0 = IT; 1 = NH), Caregiving duties (0 = none; 1 = child caregiving; 2 = adult caregiving; 3 = child and adult caregiving), and Condition (0 = intervention group; 1 = control group) are categorical variables. FSSB = family-supportive supervisor behavior; OCLI = organizational work-family climate; SCS = social support; SPS[6] = spouse or partner support (0 = single individuals; 1 = partnered individuals with low SPS; 2 = partnered individuals with high SPS); WtFC = work-to-family conflict; FtWC = family-to-work conflict; T = measurement wave; Δ = raw change score from T1 to T2. *** p < 0.001, ** p < 0.01, * p < 0.05, + p < 0.1.

[6] The original continuous SPS scale was designed for partnered individuals only (N = 1,330), with a mean score of 3.651 (SD = 0.469) on items rated from 1 to 4 at T1. Individuals scoring below the mean—reflecting comparatively low support—were classified as 1 “Low SPS,” while those scoring above the mean—indicating relatively high support—were classified as 2 “High SPS” at T1. Subsequently, a three-way categorical SPS (0 = Single; 1 = Low SPS; 2 = High SPS), now including single individuals, was used in our regression analysis. The mean of this three-way categorical SPS variable was 1.182 (SD = 0.823) at T1, as shown in Table 1.

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Figure 1

WtFC Profiles

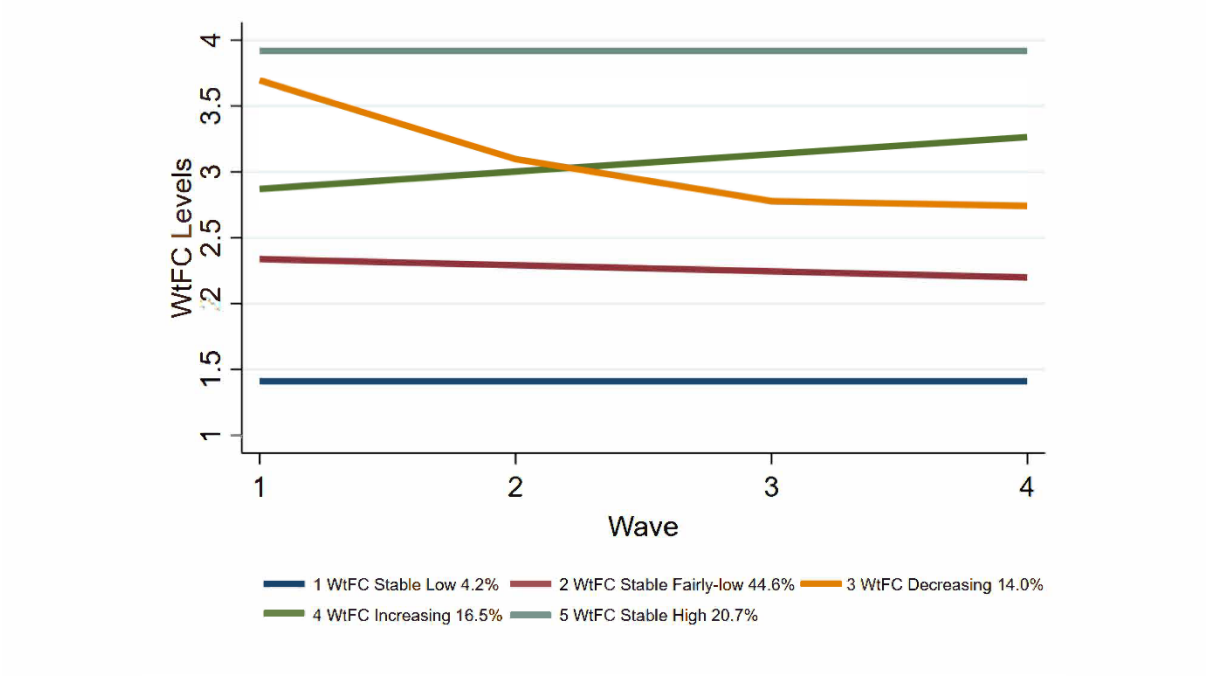
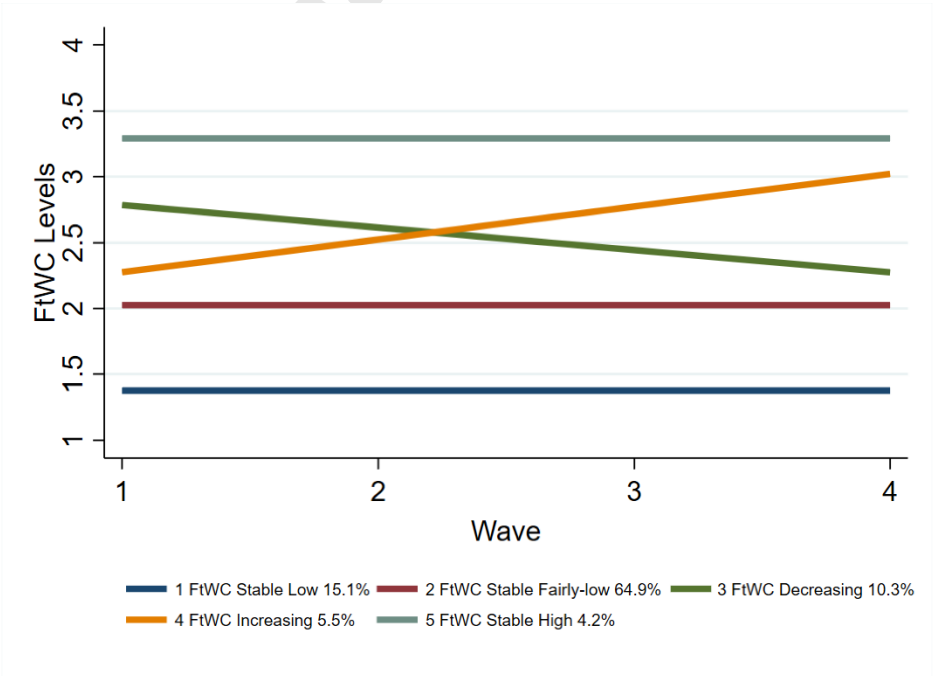


Figure 2

FtWC Profiles



3.2 The Relationship Between Support Variables and WFC Profile Membership

MNL, recommended for dependent variables with multiple categories (Wulff, 2015), was used to assess how support levels at T1 and changes from T1 to T2 predicted WFC profiles from T1 to T4 over 18 months. First, links between support variables and WtFC/FtWC profiles were examined for the full sample. Gender interactions with each support variable were then added to explore moderating effects. Due to the challenge of interpreting logit coefficients (Wulff, 2015), we also computed the average marginal effect (AME) of each independent variable through Stata's *margins* command after conducting MNL. The AME estimates the percentage point change in the probability of belonging to a specific profile with a one-point increase in the independent variable (Wulff, 2015).

The within-domain and cross-domain relationships between work/nonwork support and WtFC/FtWC profile membership were examined. Tables 2 and 3 display the AME derived from the MNL analysis (see full results in Appendix Tables A7-A10). Statistically significant AME at the 5% level ($p < 0.05$) are marked in bold. Models linking profiles with only support levels (support-level specific model), only support changes (support-change specific model), or both (support-level-change model) showed notable fitness ($p < 0.001$) as shown in Appendix Tables A11 and A12. However, the *support-level-change model* used in this study yielded higher Pseudo R^2 values, showing greater 'goodness-of-fit'. Variance inflation factors were below 2, indicating no notable multicollinearity issues.

3.2.1 Antecedents of WtFC Profile Membership

Work Support

H2 and H3 posited that work support levels and changes predicted WtFC profile membership. From Table 2, ***larger increases in FSSB*** moved women toward the Stable Fairly-low profile (AME = 0.071, 95%CI = [0.035, 0.106]), while diverting them away from the Increasing (AME =

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-0.057, 95%CI = [-0.088, -0.027]) and Stable High profiles (AME = -0.048, 95%CI = [-0.072, -0.024]). Though not statistically significant at 5% level, larger increases shifted women toward the Decreasing profile (AME = 0.022) with p<0.1[7]. Moreover, women with ***higher FSSB levels*** tended to be in the Decreasing profile (AME = 0.027, 95%CI = [0.005, 0.049]) rather than the Stable High profile (AME = -0.038, 95%CI = [-0.059, -0.016]). Thus, higher FSSB levels or larger increases favored falling into the Stable Fairly-low or Decreasing profiles, rather than the Stable High or Increasing ones, supporting ***H2a*** and ***H2b***. ***H2c*** was also confirmed, with these effects particularly pronounced for women.

OCLI changes significantly impacted both genders' WtFC profiles, with larger increases similarly steering them away from the Stable High profile (men: AME = -0.060, 95%CI = [-0.103, -0.017]; women: AME = -0.072, 95%CI = [-0.095, -0.049]) toward the Stable Fairly-low profile (men: AME = 0.061, 95%CI = [0.008, 0.113]; women: AME = 0.080, 95%CI = [0.050, 0.109]), as shown by overlapping confidence intervals. Larger increases also moved women away from the Increasing profile (AME = -0.025) with p<0.1. OCLI changes thus had a slightly stronger effect on women.

Higher OCLI levels similarly shifted both genders away from the Stable High profile (men: AME = -0.045, 95%CI = [-0.081, -0.010]; women: AME = -0.037, 95%CI = [-0.063, -0.011]) and toward the Stable Fairly-low profile (men: AME = 0.054, 95%CI = [0.007, 0.100]; women: AME = 0.039, 95%CI = [0.009, 0.070]), as shown by overlapping confidence intervals, while exclusively diverting men toward the Stable Low profile (AME = 0.021, 95%CI = [0.005, 0.036]). Thus, OCLI levels had stronger effects for men. Overall, higher OCLI levels and larger increases favored falling into the WtFC Stable Low/Fairly-low profiles over the Stable High profile, supporting ***H3a*** and ***H3b***. ***H3c*** was partially supported, with OCLI changes affecting women more and OCLI levels affecting men more.

[7] AME results supported at the 10% significance level (p < 0.1) are discussed for insights into gender differences.

Journal Pre-proof

Nonwork Support

H4 and H5 posited that nonwork support changes and levels affected WtFC profiles. In Table 2, ***larger increases in SCS*** shifted men toward the Stable Low profile (AME = 0.053, 95%CI = [0.020, 0.085]) and women toward the Stable Fairly-low profile (AME = 0.063, 95%CI = [0.009, 0.117]), while moving the full sample[8] away from the Stable High profile (AME = -0.037, 95%CI = [-0.073, -0.001]) and women away from the Increasing profile (AME = -0.062, 95%CI = [-0.107, -0.017]), supporting ***H4a***. These effects were stronger for women, especially on Stable Fairly-low and Increasing profiles.

Higher SCS levels diverted women away from the Stable High profile (AME = -0.046, 95%CI = [-0.083, -0.009]), while shifting individuals toward the Stable Low profile (men: AME = 0.037, 95%CI = [0.010, 0.064]; women: AME = 0.026, $p<0.1$), confirming ***H4b***. Although the effect on the Stable Low profile was statistically significant at 5% level for men, and weakly indicated for women ($p<0.1$), no significant gender differences were observed at 5% level, since the confidence intervals overlapped. Overall, SPS levels presented stronger effects for women, particularly on the Stable High profile. Thus, ***H4c*** was supported, with SCS changes and levels more pronouncedly affecting women.

Compared to unchanged SPS, ***decreasing SPS*** diverted men away from the Stable Low profile (AME = -0.024, 95%CI = [-0.034, -0.014]), while ***increasing SPS*** shifted women from the Stable High profile (AME = -0.072, 95%CI = [-0.133, -0.012]) to the Decreasing profile (AME = 0.125, 95%CI = [0.039, 0.211]), and moved men away from the Increasing profile (AME = -0.090, 95%CI = [-0.177, -0.002]). Thus, increasing SPS favored falling into the Decreasing profile rather than the Stable High and Increasing profiles, while decreasing SPS reduced the likelihood of being in the Stable Low profile, supporting ***H5a***. However, ***SPS levels*** did not significantly predict WtFC profile membership,

[8] When results are significant only for the full sample, and not for the gendered ones, we only discuss the full sample results. When results are significant for both the gendered and full samples, we only discuss the gendered results.

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rejecting ***H5b***. The effects of SPS levels were weakly indicated (p<0.1), with high SPS inclining women toward the Stable Fairly-low profile (AME = 0.053), and low SPS shifting men away from the Stable Low profile (AME = -0.034). No gender differences emerged in SPS changes' effects, as decreasing SPS affected only men and increasing SPS more pronouncedly impacted women, thus rejecting ***H5c***.

Additionally, dissolution moved men from the Stable High (AME = -0.212, 95%CI = [-0.244, -0.180]) to the Increasing profile (AME = 0.331, 95%CI = [0.045, 0.616]), and from the Decreasing (AME = -0.135, 95%CI = [-0.166, -0.105]) to Stable Low profile (AME = 0.132, 95%CI = [0.044, 0.220]).

3.2.2 Antecedents of FtWC Profile Membership

Work Support

H6 and H7 posited that work support changes and levels predicted membership in FtWC profiles. In Table 3, ***larger increases in FSSB*** diverted men towards the Stable Low profile (AME = 0.049, 95%CI = [0.000, 0.098]), supporting ***H6a.*** They also diverted women away from the Increasing profile (AME = -0.014) and men away from the Stable Fairly-low profile (AME = -0.056) with p<0.1. ***High FSSB levels*** failed to predict FtWC profile membership, rejecting ***H6b***. ***H6c*** was thus partially supported, given the stronger influences of FSSB changes for men.

Larger increases in OCLI reduced the probability of being in the Stable High (men: AME = -0.025, 95%CI = [-0.044, -0.006]), Increasing (women: AME = -0.018, 95%CI = [-0.032,-0.004]), and (unexpectedly) Decreasing (men: AME = -0.040, 95%CI = [-0.071, -0.009]) profiles, partially supporting ***H7a***. They also steered men toward the Stable Low profile (AME = 0.034) and women away from the Stable High profile (AME = -0.014) with p<0.1. OCLI changes had stronger effects on men, with exclusive effects on men's Stable Low/Decreasing profiles and women's Increasing profile, and similar effects on both genders' Stable High profile (shown by overlapping confidence intervals).

Higher OCLI levels steered women away from the Increasing profile (AME = -0.016, 95% CI = [-0.032, -0.001]) and men away from the Stable High profile (AME = -0.021, 95% CI = [-0.036, -0.006]), supporting ***H7b.*** They also moved women away from the Decreasing profile (AME = -0.018), while shifting men away from the Increasing profile (AME = -0.027) toward the Stable Fairly-low profile (AME = 0.048) with $p<0.1$. Overall, OCLI levels showed stronger effects for men, with exclusive effects on men's Stable Fairly-low and High profiles and women's Decreasing profile, and similar effects on both genders' Increasing profile (indicated by the overlapping confidence intervals). ***H7c*** was thus supported, indicating stronger effects of OCLI changes and levels for men.

Nonwork Support

H8 and H9 posited that nonwork support changes and levels predict FtWC profile membership. In Table 3, ***larger increases in SCS*** shifted the full sample toward the Stable Low profile (AME = 0.045, 95%CI = [0.002, 0.087]) and women away from the Stable High profile (AME = -0.036, 95%CI = [-0.063, -0.008]). ***SCS levels*** also predicted women's FtWC profile membership, particularly in the 'FtWC Stable Low' profile (AME = 0.060, 95%CI = [0.015, 0.105]). Thus, higher SCS levels and larger increases favored falling into the Stable Low profile over the Stable High profile, confirming ***H8a*** and ***H8b***. ***H8c*** was rejected, given the exclusive effects of SCS levels and changes for women.

SPS changes predicted FtWC profile membership, with ***decreasing SPS*** moving men from the Decreasing profile (AME = -0.068, 95%CI = [-0.133, -0.002]) toward the Stable High profile (AME = 0.075, 95%CI = [0.018,0.132]), while ***increasing SPS*** (unexpectedly) steering women away from the Decreasing profile (AME = -0.045, 95%CI = [-0.086, -0.005]), compared to unchanged SPS, partially supporting ***H9a***. Decreasing SPS shifted women away from the Stable Fairly-low (AME = -0.106) and Stable High (AME = -0.028) profiles with $p<0.1$. However, no substantial gender differences were

observed, as decreasing SPS more strongly affected men, and increasing SPS impacted only women.

Compared to being single, ***low SPS*** moved men from the Stable Low (AME = -0.124, 95%CI = [-0.220, -0.028]) to the Stable Fairly-low profile (AME = 0.165, 95%CI = [0.034, 0.297]), while unexpectedly shifting women from the Stable High (AME = -0.025, 95%CI = [-0.050, -0.000]) to the Decreasing profile (AME = 0.043, 95%CI = [0.006, 0.079]). Low SPS also steered men away from the Stable Fairly-low profile (AME = -0.070) with $p<0.1$. ***High SPS*** shifted men towards the Stable Fairly-low profile (AME = 0.139, 95%CI = [0.026, 0.252]). Overall, ***H9b*** was partially supported. Moreover, the mitigating effects of SPS levels on FtWC experience were stronger for men, while SPS changes presented similar effects for both genders, thereby partially supporting ***H9c***.

Additionally, compared to unchanged group, the dissolution group was less likely to fall into Increasing (men: AME = -0.064, 95%CI = [-0.094, -0.034]; women: AME = -0.040, 95%CI = [-0.052, -0.027]), Stable High (men: AME = -0.039, 95%CI = [-0.053, -0.025]; women: AME = -0.044, 95%CI = [-0.055, -0.032]), and Decreasing (men: AME = -0.109, 95%CI = [-0.135, -0.083]) profiles, while more likely to belong to the Stable Fairly-low profile (men: AME = 0.234, 95%CI = [0.019, 0.450]).

Table 4 summarizes the results for all hypotheses, confirming both within-domain and cross-domain relationships. Other significant factors were also identified (see Appendix Tables A7-A10). Older individuals were more likely to be in the WtFC Stable Low profile and less in the FtWC Increasing profile, while childcare duties were linked to the FtWC Stable High profile. NH workers were less likely to be in the Stable High FtWC profile than IT workers; longer working hours shifted people from the FtWC Stable Fairly-low to Stable Low profile. Support-level and support-change specific models showed weaker effects on WtFC and FtWC profiles (Appendix Tables A13-A16), with support levels and changes typically having less impact than in the combined level-change model.

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Table 2

The Average Marginal Effects of Support Levels and Support Change on WtFC Profiles

Variables	WtFC Stable Low			WtFC Stable Fairly-low			WtFC Decreasing			WtFC Increasing			WtFC Stable High		
	Full AME [CI]	Men AME [CI]	Women AME [CI]	Full AME [CI]	Men AME [CI]	Women AME [CI]	Full AME [CI]	Men AME [CI]	Women AME [CI]	Full AME [CI]	Men AME [CI]	Women AME [CI]	Full AME [CI]	Men AME [CI]	Women AME [CI]
△FSSB	0.014+ [-0.002, 0.031]	0.010 [-0.005, 0.025]	0.013 [-0.010, 0.035]	**0.057*** ** [0.028, 0.086]	0.033 [-0.017, 0.084]	**0.071*** ** [0.035, 0.106]	0.016 [-0.005, 0.036]	0.003 [-0.033, 0.038]	0.022+ [-0.004, 0.048]	**-0.047*** ** [-0.072, -0.021]	-0.017 [-0.065, 0.030]	**-0.057*** ** [-0.088, -0.027]	**-0.040*** ** [-0.061, -0.020]	-0.028 [-0.064, 0.007]	**-0.048*** ** [-0.072, -0.024]
FSSB T1	0.005 [-0.010, 0.021]	-0.009 [-0.023, 0.005]	0.007 [-0.013, 0.028]	0.006 [-0.023, 0.035]	0.015 [-0.034, 0.065]	0.005 [-0.029, 0.040]	**0.020*** [0.000, 0.039]	0.002 [-0.035, 0.038]	**0.027*** [0.005, 0.049]	-0.006 [-0.031, 0.019]	-0.012 [-0.058, 0.033]	-0.002 [-0.032, 0.027]	**-0.025*** [-0.044, -0.005]	0.004 [-0.031, 0.039]	**-0.038*** ** [-0.059, -0.016]
△OCLI	0.004 [-0.007, 0.015]	0.001 [-0.013, 0.014]	0.003 [-0.010, 0.017]	**0.073*** ** [0.048, 0.099]	**0.061*** [0.008, 0.113]	**0.080*** ** [0.050, 0.109]	0.013 [-0.006, 0.033]	0.009 [-0.030, 0.049]	0.014 [-0.008, 0.036]	-0.021+ [-0.044, 0.003]	-0.010 [-0.054, 0.034]	-0.025+ [-0.053, 0.003]	**-0.070*** ** [-0.090, -0.049]	**-0.060** ** [-0.103, -0.017]	**-0.072*** ** [-0.095, -0.049]
OCLI T1	0.008 [-0.002, 0.019]	**0.021** ** [0.005, 0.036]	0.005 [-0.008, 0.018]	**0.043*** ** [0.018, 0.069]	**0.054*** [0.007, 0.100]	**0.039*** [0.009, 0.070]	0.007 [-0.014, 0.029]	-0.003 [-0.041, 0.035]	0.012 [-0.013, 0.037]	-0.018 [-0.043, 0.006]	-0.026 [-0.070, 0.017]	-0.019 [-0.049, 0.011]	**-0.040*** ** [-0.063, -0.018]	**-0.045*** [-0.081, -0.010]	**-0.037** ** [-0.063, -0.011]
△SCS	0.024+ [-0.000, 0.049]	**0.053** ** [0.020, 0.085]	0.019 [-0.011, 0.049]	0.045+ [-0.001, 0.090]	-0.014 [-0.095, 0.066]	**0.063*** [0.009, 0.117]	0.017 [-0.019, 0.052]	0.025 [-0.039, 0.088]	0.012 [-0.031, 0.055]	**-0.049*** [-0.088, -0.010]	-0.021 [-0.097, 0.054]	**-0.062** ** [-0.107, -0.017]	**-0.037*** [-0.073, -0.001]	-0.042 [-0.105, 0.022]	-0.032 [-0.075, 0.010]
SCS T1	0.024+ [-0.001, 0.048]	**0.037** ** [0.010, 0.064]	0.026+ [-0.002, 0.055]	-0.006 [-0.051, 0.039]	-0.060 [-0.146, 0.025]	0.004 [-0.048, 0.056]	0.025 [-0.007, 0.058]	0.015 [-0.042, 0.072]	0.030 [-0.011, 0.070]	0.001 [-0.038, 0.039]	0.043 [-0.032, 0.118]	-0.014 [-0.059, 0.032]	**-0.043** ** [-0.075, -0.012]	-0.034 [-0.090, 0.021]	**-0.046*** [-0.083, -0.009]
Unchanged SPS															
Decreasing SPS	-0.020 [-0.046, 0.006]	**-0.024*** ** [-0.034, -0.014]	-0.016 [-0.050, 0.018]	0.017 [-0.053, 0.087]	0.071 [-0.027, 0.170]	-0.017 [-0.098, 0.063]	-0.027 [-0.078, 0.025]	-0.029 [-0.110, 0.053]	-0.029 [-0.090, 0.031]	-0.012 [-0.081, 0.056]	-0.050 [-0.144, 0.044]	0.016 [-0.066, 0.097]	0.042 [-0.015, 0.100]	0.031 [-0.047, 0.109]	0.047 [-0.026, 0.121]
Increasing SPS	0.012 [-0.054, 0.077]	0.062 [-0.052, 0.176]	0.018 [-0.063, 0.099]	-0.021 [-0.119, 0.078]	-0.015 [-0.173, 0.143]	-0.050 [-0.170, 0.069]	**0.094** ** [0.026, 0.162]	0.038 [-0.068, 0.143]	**0.125** ** [0.039, 0.211]	-0.043 [-0.112, 0.026]	**-0.090*** [-0.177, -0.002]	-0.020 [-0.112, 0.072]	-0.042 [-0.101, 0.016]	0.005 [-0.102, 0.111]	**-0.072*** [-0.133, -0.012]
Dissolution	0.029 [-0.035, 0.092]	**0.132** ** [0.044, 0.220]	0.026 [-0.046, 0.097]	-0.034 [-0.158, 0.090]	-0.115 [-0.397, 0.167]	-0.016 [-0.150, 0.117]	-0.082+ [-0.168, 0.005]	**-0.135*** ** [-0.166, -0.105]	-0.074 [-0.166, 0.019]	-0.028 [-0.121, 0.065]	**0.331*** [0.045, 0.616]	-0.041 [-0.137, 0.055]	0.115+ [-0.017, 0.247]	**-0.212*** ** [-0.244, -0.180]	0.105 [-0.029, 0.240]
Single T1 *Low SPS*	-0.013 [-0.038, 0.012]	-0.034+ [-0.069, 0.000]	-0.006 [-0.037, 0.024]	0.021 [-0.032, 0.074]	0.014 [-0.091, 0.119]	0.018 [-0.043, 0.080]	-0.008 [-0.050, 0.034]	0.011 [-0.069, 0.091]	-0.022 [-0.071, 0.027]	0.008 [-0.040, 0.055]	0.054 [-0.042, 0.150]	-0.004 [-0.060, 0.052]	-0.007 [-0.053, 0.039]	-0.045 [-0.133, 0.044]	0.013 [-0.039, 0.066]
High SPS	-0.004 [-0.023, 0.015]	0.000 [-0.039, 0.038]	-0.007 [-0.031, 0.017]	0.046+ [-0.000, 0.093]	0.037 [-0.058, 0.132]	0.053+ [-0.001, 0.108]	0.008 [-0.033, 0.049]	0.011 [-0.062, 0.084]	0.008 [-0.042, 0.057]	-0.010 [-0.054, 0.033]	0.011 [-0.068, 0.090]	-0.021 [-0.074, 0.032]	-0.041+ [-0.085, 0.004]	-0.059 [-0.139, 0.022]	-0.033 [-0.085, 0.019]

Note. AME = average marginal effects; FSSB = family-supportive supervisor behavior; OCLI = organizational work-family climate; SCS = social support; SPS = spouse or partner support; WtFC = work-to-family conflict; T = measurement wave; Δ = raw change score from T1 to T2. *** p < 0.001, ** p < 0.01, * p < 0.05, + p < 0.1. Significant AME at p < 0.05 are highlighted in bold font. CI denotes a 95% confidence interval based on robust standard errors.

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Table 3

The Average Marginal Effects of Support Levels and Support Change on FtWC Profiles

Variables	FtWC Stable Low			FtWC Stable Fairly-low			FtWC Decreasing			FtWC Increasing			FtWC Stable High		
	Full	Men	Women	Full	Men	Women	Full	Men	Women	Full	Men	Women	Full	Men	Women
	AME [CI]	AME [CI]	AME [CI]	AME [CI]	AME [CI]	AME [CI]	AME [CI]	AME [CI]	AME [CI]	AME [CI]	AME [CI]	AME [CI]	AME [CI]	AME [CI]	AME [CI]
△FSSB	0.018	**0.049***	0.006	-0.005	-0.056+	0.018	0.003	0.014	-0.004	-0.013+	-0.007	-0.014+	-0.004	0.000	-0.006
	[-0.007, 0.043]	[0.000, 0.098]	[-0.023, 0.034]	[-0.035, 0.026]	[-0.113, 0.001]	[-0.018, 0.053]	[-0.015, 0.022]	[-0.022, 0.049]	[-0.028, 0.020]	[-0.027, 0.001]	[-0.037, 0.024]	[-0.027, 0.000]	[-0.015, 0.007]	[-0.014, 0.015]	[-0.022, 0.011]
FSSB T1	0.014	0.010	0.013	-0.013	-0.026	-0.004	0.012	0.030	0.005	-0.008	-0.010	-0.006	-0.005	-0.004	-0.008
	[-0.007, 0.035]	[-0.025, 0.045]	[-0.012, 0.038]	[-0.041, 0.016]	[-0.078, 0.027]	[-0.037, 0.029]	[-0.006, 0.030]	[-0.009, 0.068]	[-0.015, 0.025]	[-0.021, 0.005]	[-0.041, 0.020]	[-0.020, 0.008]	[-0.017, 0.006]	[-0.020, 0.013]	[-0.023, 0.008]
△OCLI	**0.021***	0.034+	0.018	0.026+	0.030	0.017	-0.013	**-0.040***	-0.003	-0.015+	0.002	**-0.018***	**-0.019****	**-0.025****	-0.014+
	[0.001, 0.041]	[-0.005, 0.072]	[-0.006, 0.042]	[-0.001, 0.053]	[-0.024, 0.083]	[-0.014, 0.049]	[-0.029, 0.004]	[-0.071, -0.009]	[-0.024, 0.017]	[-0.031, 0.001]	[-0.040, 0.043]	[-0.032, -0.004]	[-0.031, -0.007]	[-0.044, -0.006]	[-0.029, 0.002]
OCLI T1	0.008	0.014	0.007	**0.035***	0.048+	0.026	-0.011	-0.015	-0.018+	**-0.020****	-0.027+	**-0.016***	-0.011+	**-0.021****	0.002
	[-0.011, 0.027]	[-0.022, 0.051]	[-0.016, 0.030]	[0.008, 0.061]	[-0.001, 0.098]	[-0.005, 0.057]	[-0.028, 0.006]	[-0.045, 0.016]	[-0.039, 0.003]	[-0.035, -0.005]	[-0.058, 0.004]	[-0.032, -0.001]	[-0.023, 0.000]	[-0.036, -0.006]	[-0.013, 0.016]
△SCS	**0.045***	0.063	0.031	-0.028	-0.007	-0.024	0.001	-0.034	0.025	-0.006	-0.039	0.004	-0.011	0.016	**-0.036***
	[0.002, 0.087]	[-0.023, 0.149]	[-0.019, 0.080]	[-0.078, 0.022]	[-0.109, 0.095]	[-0.082, 0.033]	[-0.027, 0.029]	[-0.089, 0.022]	[-0.007, 0.057]	[-0.029, 0.017]	[-0.094, 0.017]	[-0.019, 0.027]	[-0.032, 0.009]	[-0.010, 0.043]	[-0.063, -0.008]
SCS T1	**0.049****	0.017	**0.060****	-0.011	-0.001	-0.015	-0.010	-0.010	-0.012	-0.016	-0.004	-0.016	-0.012	-0.002	-0.017
	[0.013, 0.085]	[-0.041, 0.074]	[0.015, 0.105]	[-0.057, 0.035]	[-0.085, 0.084]	[-0.070, 0.039]	[-0.036, 0.016]	[-0.060, 0.039]	[-0.043, 0.019]	[-0.037, 0.005]	[-0.055, 0.047]	[-0.038, 0.006]	[-0.027, 0.004]	[-0.022, 0.019]	[-0.039, 0.005]
Unchanged SPS															
Decreasing SPS	0.006	-0.043	0.045	-0.054	0.015	-0.106+	-0.008	**-0.068***	0.054	0.032	0.020	0.036	0.024	**0.075****	-0.028+
	[-0.051, 0.062]	[-0.122, 0.036]	[-0.030, 0.119]	[-0.138, 0.030]	[-0.105, 0.135]	[-0.216, 0.004]	[-0.064, 0.048]	[-0.133, -0.002]	[-0.017, 0.125]	[-0.030, 0.094]	[-0.080, 0.120]	[-0.039, 0.111]	[-0.017, 0.066]	[0.018, 0.132]	[-0.060, 0.003]
Increasing SPS	-0.001	-0.081	0.039	0.007	-0.007	0.015	-0.011	0.054	**-0.045***	0.009	0.033	-0.005	-0.003	0.002	-0.003
	[-0.077, 0.075]	[-0.185, 0.023]	[-0.054, 0.132]	[-0.089, 0.103]	[-0.180, 0.165]	[-0.090, 0.121]	[-0.062, 0.041]	[-0.075, 0.182]	[-0.086, -0.005]	[-0.036, 0.054]	[-0.072, 0.139]	[-0.049, 0.038]	[-0.034, 0.027]	[-0.038, 0.041]	[-0.048, 0.042]
Dissolution	-0.005	-0.023	0.010	0.044	**0.234***	0.009	0.051	**-0.109*****	0.064	**-0.047*****	**-0.064*****	**-0.040*****	**-0.043*****	**-0.039*****	**-0.044*****
	[-0.107, 0.097]	[-0.236, 0.190]	[-0.108, 0.129]	[-0.091, 0.178]	[0.019, 0.450]	[-0.154, 0.172]	[-0.040, 0.142]	[-0.135, -0.083]	[-0.051, 0.179]	[-0.058, -0.036]	[-0.094, -0.034]	[-0.052, -0.027]	[-0.051, -0.035]	[-0.053, -0.025]	[-0.055, -0.032]
Single T1															
Low SPS	-0.034	**-0.124***	-0.018	0.017	**0.165***	-0.018	0.014	-0.070+	**0.043***	0.018	0.018	0.018	-0.015	0.010	**-0.025***
	[-0.078, 0.009]	[-0.220, -0.028]	[-0.067, 0.032]	[-0.040, 0.075]	[0.034, 0.297]	[-0.082, 0.046]	[-0.019, 0.048]	[-0.141, 0.002]	[0.006, 0.079]	[-0.014, 0.049]	[-0.067, 0.103]	[-0.013, 0.049]	[-0.038, 0.008]	[-0.030, 0.051]	[-0.050, -0.000]
High SPS	-0.015	-0.063	-0.016	0.031	**0.139***	0.012	0.001	-0.050	0.011	-0.011	-0.025	-0.007	-0.006	-0.001	0.000
	[-0.053, 0.022]	[-0.144, 0.018]	[-0.059, 0.028]	[-0.021, 0.083]	[0.026, 0.252]	[-0.047, 0.072]	[-0.036, 0.038]	[-0.121, 0.021]	[-0.031, 0.053]	[-0.038, 0.016]	[-0.092, 0.043]	[-0.034, 0.020]	[-0.032, 0.019]	[-0.043, 0.040]	[-0.031, 0.030]

Note. AME = average marginal effects; FSSB = family-supportive supervisor behavior; OCLI = organizational work-family climate; SCS = social support; SPS = spouse or partner support; FtWC = family-to-work conflict; T = measurement wave; Δ = raw change score from T1 to T2. *** p < 0.001, ** p < 0.01, * p < 0.05, + p < 0.1. Significant AME at p < 0.05 are highlighted in bold font. CI denotes a 95% confidence interval based on robust standard errors.

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Table 4

Hypotheses Overview

Hypotheses	Results
H1	
H1a: There are at least four WtFC profiles, showing Increasing, Decreasing, Stable High, or Stable Low trajectories.	Supported
H1b: There are at least four FtWC profiles, showing Increasing, Decreasing, Stable High, or Stable Low trajectories.	Supported
H2	
H2a: Individuals with larger early increases in FSSB are more likely to belong to WtFC Decreasing or Stable Low profiles than Increasing or Stable High profiles.	Supported
H2b: Individuals with higher initial levels of FSSB are more likely to belong to WtFC Decreasing or Stable Low profiles than Increasing or Stable High profiles.	Supported
H2c: These relationships are more pronounced for women.	Supported
H3	
H3a: Individuals with larger early increases in OCLI are more likely to belong to WtFC Decreasing or Stable Low profiles than Increasing or Stable High profiles.	Supported
H3b: Individuals with higher initial levels of OCLI are more likely to belong to WtFC Decreasing or Stable Low profiles than Increasing or Stable High profiles.	Supported
H3c: These relationships are more pronounced for women.	Partially supported
H4	
H4a: Individuals with larger early increases in SCS are more likely to belong to WtFC Decreasing or Stable Low profiles than Increasing or Stable High profiles.	Supported
H4b: Individuals with higher initial levels of SCS are more likely to belong to WtFC Decreasing or Stable Low profiles than Increasing or Stable High profiles.	Supported
H4c: These relationships are more pronounced for women.	Supported
H5	
H5a: Individuals with larger early increases in SPS are more likely to belong to WtFC Decreasing or Stable Low profiles than Increasing or Stable High profiles.	Supported
H5b: Individuals with higher initial levels of SPS are more likely to belong to WtFC Decreasing or Stable Low profiles than Increasing or Stable High profiles.	Rejected
H5c: These relationships are more pronounced for women.	Rejected
H6	
H6a: Individuals with larger early increases in FSSB are more likely to belong to FtWC Decreasing or Stable Low profiles than Increasing or Stable High profiles.	Supported
H6b: Individuals with higher initial levels of FSSB are more likely to belong to FtWC Decreasing or Stable Low profiles than Increasing or Stable High profiles.	Rejected
H6c: These relationships are more pronounced for men.	Partially supported
H7	
H7a: Individuals with larger early increases in OCLI are more likely to belong to FtWC Decreasing or Stable Low profiles than Increasing or Stable High profiles.	Partially supported
H7b: Individuals with higher initial levels of OCLI are more likely to belong to FtWC Decreasing or Stable Low profiles than Increasing or Stable High profiles.	Supported
H7c: These relationships are more pronounced for men.	Supported
H8	
H8a: Individuals with larger early increases in SCS are more likely to belong to FtWC Decreasing or Stable Low profiles than Increasing or Stable High profiles.	Supported
H8b: Individuals with higher initial levels of SCS are more likely to belong to FtWC Decreasing or Stable Low profiles than Increasing or Stable High profiles.	Supported
H8c: These relationships are more pronounced for men.	Rejected
H9	
H9a: Individuals with larger early increases in SPS are more likely to belong to FtWC Decreasing or Stable Low profiles than Increasing or Stable High profiles.	Partially supported
H9b: Individuals with higher initial levels of SPS are more likely to belong to FtWC Decreasing or Stable Low profiles than Increasing or Stable High profiles.	Partially supported
H9c: These relationships are more pronounced for men.	Partially supported

Note. WtFC = work-to-family conflict; FtWC = family-to-work conflict; FSSB = family-supportive supervisor behavior; OCLI = organizational work-family climate; SCS = social support; SPS = spouse or partner support.

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4 Discussion

Career sustainability, which enables employees to have positive career experiences in the present while maintaining long-term career engagement, is crucial for both organizational effectiveness and individual well-being (De Vos et al., 2020). A key factor in achieving sustainable careers is the ability to avoid excessive sacrifices of involvement in one domain (home or career) for the other, i.e., WFC, ensuring that resources across domains are mutually enriching rather than depleting (De Vos et al., 2020). This study examined WtFC and FtWC trajectories and their antecedents, specifically work and nonwork support, to provide insights into the sustainable integration of vocational life with a fulfilling family life. It identified five distinct profiles for both WtFC and FtWC, and then established that individuals reporting higher levels of, and larger increases in, work support (FSSB and OCLI) and nonwork support (SCS and SPS) were more likely to belong to Stable Low/Fairly-low or Decreasing profiles, rather than Stable High or Increasing ones. Gender differences emerged, with support generally having stronger impacts on women's membership in WtFC profiles and men's in FtWC profiles, although significant effects were also observed on women's FtWC profiles and men's WtFC profiles. Thus, work and nonwork support could foster career sustainability by helping individuals address WtFC and FtWC, with gender shaping how these resources are utilized.

4.1 Theoretical Contributions

4.1.1 WFC Trajectories

Allen et al. (2019) highlighted the frequent fluctuations in WFC, yet Rantanen et al. (2008) and Knecht et al. (2011) observed its stability. This inconsistency demands further research along the lines pursued here. Unlike prior research (e.g., Cullati, 2014; French et al., 2022) primarily examining

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overall trends, this study used a person-centered approach deploying GBTM to reveal five subgroups in WtFC and in FtWC trajectories, with stable trajectories (Stable Low/Fairly-low/High) predominant, but changing patterns (Increasing and Decreasing) also evident. This underscores the dynamic nature of WFC, revealing noteworthy changes alongside much stability in both WtFC and FtWC, aligning with other person-centered studies on joint WtFC-FtWC trajectories (Rantanen et al., 2012) and WFC trajectories (Cooklin et al., 2016; Dinh et al., 2017), whilst extending the insights of Smith et al. (2022) who highlighted stability specifically in WtFC. Hence, COR theory may not fully explain the longitudinal traits of WFC. DE theory addresses this limitation by emphasizing the presence of stable WFC baselines and the adaptive mechanisms individuals use to manage changes (Smith et al., 2022).

The prevalence of stable trajectories may raise concerns that most individuals may not see significant improvements in WFC, even with additional resources. However, it is encouraging that a majority of people in the sample fell into the Stable Low/Fairly-low profiles, suggesting they likely already had sufficient resources to balance work and family roles before the study's observational period. Consequently, further support may yield limited improvements, and, together with individuals' adaptability to their environments, this leads to the relative prevalence of these more favorable profiles (Headey, 2006). Interestingly, WtFC appears less stable than FtWC (69.5% vs 84.2% membership in stable profiles), contradicting the findings from Rantanen et al. (2008). This implies that WtFC may be more context-bound than FtWC, indicating the stronger effects of unobserved events (De Lange et al., 2003), e.g., changes in work content, on WtFC.

While stable profiles are common, the less prevalent yet significant changing trajectories are also important to acknowledge. Following COR theory (Hobfoll et al., 2018), resource gains, or losses, have cumulative properties, resulting in beneficial gain, or detrimental loss, spirals. Thus, downward

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or upward WFC patterns are essential to overall development. Specifically, the total decrease of 1.14 for the WtFC Decreasing profile contributed to the overall decline in WtFC levels. Despite moving in opposite directions, the FtWC Increasing and Decreasing profiles exhibited similar shifts in levels, typically ranging between 0.6-0.8, which balanced out and contributed to the overall stability.

Furthermore, this study uncovers developmental heterogeneity in WFC trajectories within a shorter timeframe. Unlike many existing studies focusing on extended timeframe trajectories (e.g., Cooklin et al., 2016; Dinh et al., 2017), which are more affected by macro factor changes (Cullati, 2014), the examination of shorter timeframe trajectories could shed light on the impact of micro factors, such as work and nonwork support. Future studies could compare heterogeneous trajectories between different timeframes, similar to Rantanen et al. (2008) comparing homogeneous one-year WFC trajectories with those spanning six years.

These distinct trajectories also likely relate to varying career stages. Given that individuals in the Increasing and Stable High WtFC/FtWC profiles were typically younger than those in other profiles, they are more likely to be in the career establishment phase (ages 25-40), where they often experience career growth, or actively pursue advancement opportunities (Roberson et al., 2024). The trade-off perspective posits that an intense focus on a career can deplete resources for the family (Kossek et al., 2021) and increase perceived interruptions from family matters during work hours (Adkins & Premeaux, 2012), leading to unfavorable WFC experiences. This depletion of resources in the two domains undermines individuals' health, well-being, and productivity (Li et al., 2021), making it more difficult to achieve a sustainable career (De Vos et al., 2020). WFC can thus be a significant barrier to career sustainability during the career establishment stage.

In contrast, other profiles are more likely to be associated with the career maintenance stage

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(ages 40-65) (Roberson et al., 2024), where people are prepared to reduce their work activities to leave more resources for family (Rantanen et al., 2012), facilitating a sustainable integration of career and family. Thus, to understand career sustainability, it is crucial to investigate the factors that shape WFC trajectories, for instance, how both work and nonwork support can help address work-family challenges arising from career growth.

4.1.2 Antecedents of WFC Profile Membership

Despite numerous studies (e.g., French et al., 2018; Seiger & Wiese, 2009) exploring links between work and nonwork support and WFC levels, few have investigated how these supports predict WFC trajectories. This study found that both support levels at T1, and support changes from T1 to T2, uniquely predicted membership in WtFC and FtWC profiles, demonstrating their lasting impact on alleviating conflict. The effects of FSSB, OCLI, and SCS were typically more pronounced for women's WtFC profile membership, while SPS changes comparably influenced both genders. Moreover, FSSB, OCLI, and SPS tended to have a greater impact on men's FtWC profile membership, while SCS exclusively predicted women's FtWC profile membership. Larger increases in, and higher levels of, these variables generally moved individuals away from WtFC/FtWC Stable High or Increasing profiles toward Stable Low/Fairly-low or Decreasing profiles. Larger increases in FSSB (at $p<0.1$) and OCLI even moved men from the FtWC Stable Fairly-low, and FtWC Decreasing profiles, to the more favorable Stable Low profile, respectively. That is, improved resource situations usually predict better WFC experiences (see also Blanch & Aluja, 2012). Nevertheless, some variables (e.g., OCLI levels) were more significant in predicting membership in the WtFC/FtWC Stable Fairly-low profile than in the Stable Low profile, likely due to the former's larger group size.

This study extends prior research by examining the antecedents of WFC trajectories. While

Journal Pre-proof

existing studies mainly identify distinct profiles and their outcomes (e.g., Dinh et al., 2017; Kinnunen et al., 2004; Rantanen et al., 2012), we explore how support variables shape these trajectories through COR and DE theories. COR theory (Hobfoll et al., 2018) explains how support acts as a resource that predicts the changing WFC profiles through resource loss/gain spirals, whereas DE theory (Headey, 2006) sheds light on how individuals adapt to their support status, resulting in stable profiles. By integrating these theories, our study not only recognizes stability and changes in WFC, aligning with findings from Smith et al. (2022), but also provides a theoretical framework for understanding how resource factors influence these trajectories, a topic previously underdeveloped. Thus, this study helps bridge a gap in the literature and offers further theoretical insights.

Moreover, this study not only adds to traditional level-to-level and change-to-change approaches, but also unveils potential level-to-change and change-to-level paths. That is, support levels not only correlate with WFC levels but also shape WFC changes, whilst support changes do not inevitably translate into WFC changes; they may also lead to stable profiles. This extends Smith et al.'s (2022) study linking WtFC stability to the persistence of drivers and its changes to the fluctuation of drivers, thus opening avenues for further research. Additional support-change and support-level specific analyses reveal weaker effects on WFC profile membership, suggesting that the impact of support levels or changes on conflict profiles might be obscured by each other, highlighting the need to analyze support levels and changes simultaneously to clarify their unique, independent effects.

Furthermore, this study illuminates how resources from both organizational and other contexts might shape a person's WtFC and FtWC experiences, potentially supporting current career growth and long-term career sustainability, rather than solely focusing on work factors, as suggested by De Vos et al. (2020). We discerned both within-domain relationships, where work support

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predicts WtFC profile membership and nonwork support predicts FtWC profile membership, and cross-domain relationships, where work support predicts FtWC profile membership and nonwork support predicts WtFC profile membership. Notably, support variables have greater impacts on WtFC profiles than on FtWC, possibly due to higher WtFC levels throughout the period, as found by Li et al. (2021). Therefore, individuals may prioritize mitigating WtFC, leading them away from unfavorable experiences. FtWC levels may reach a saturation point, with diminishing reductions in FtWC as support input increases, resembling the principle of diminishing marginal returns.

Other factors, including age, industry, working hours, and caregiving responsibilities, also affected WFC trajectories. As discussed earlier, older employees, likely due to their position in the career maintenance stages and reduced family demands with age, encountered better WFC experiences (Rantanen et al., 2012). NH workers had fewer unfavorable FtWC experiences than their IT counterparts, possibly stemming from their greater job flexibility in accommodating family needs. Childcare duties increased FtWC, aligning with the findings of Cooklin et al. (2016). Interestingly, longer working hours were linked with persistently low FtWC levels, challenging the findings of Michel et al. (2011) that longer hours led to non-fulfillment in family roles. However, Adkins and Premeaux (2012) proposed an inverted U-shaped relationship between working hours and FtWC, suggesting that beyond a certain threshold, employees may seek additional assistance to reduce FtWC. Thus, longer working hours may yield higher income, enabling better long-term support for sharing family responsibilities, as reflected in the FtWC Stable Low profile in this study.

4.1.3 Gender Differences in Antecedents of WFC Profile Membership

The effects of support variables on membership in women's WtFC profiles and men's FtWC profiles typically adhere to social role theory, which assumes that women usually prioritize family,

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while men generally prioritize work (Eagly & Wood, 2012; Goldscheider et al., 2015). This tendency likely reflects the strategy of resource allocation, with women investing more in family roles and men in work, leading to favorable WtFC experiences for women and favorable FtWC experiences for men.

The present study also suggests shifting gender roles. As societal norms evolve, men are increasingly valuing family and taking more active roles in family life (Goldscheider et al., 2015). Thus, they leverage resources to mitigate the interference from work to family (Blanch & Aluja, 2012). This is apparent in the impact of OCLI, SCS, and SPS on men's WtFC profiles, with SPS changes affecting both genders similarly, and OCLI levels even having a stronger impact on men's profiles. Meanwhile, the effects of FSSB changes (at $p<0.1$), OCLI/SPS levels and changes on women's FtWC profiles were also noticeable, though less pronounced than for men. These effects may reflect women's growing career ambitions despite their main caregiving roles (Goldscheider et al., 2015). These forms of support alleviate concerns about family hindering work performance (Nsair & Piszczek, 2021), thereby promoting better FtWC experiences for women. Thus, our results suggest that traditional gender roles persist alongside significant shifts, with women participating in the workplace while taking the primary family responsibilities, and men involved in the family while retaining the primary work role (Blanch & Aluja, 2012; Drummond et al., 2017).

We also observed more complex gender differences. Firstly, SPS affected the two genders differently, with low/decreasing SPS moving men toward less favorable FtWC profiles but unexpectedly steering women away from them. Holt-Lunstad et al. (2008) suggest that low-quality partnerships, such as those with less partner support, can lead to worse outcomes than being single. Our study supports this, showing that, compared to being single, low SPS reduced men's likelihood of being in the WtFC Stable Low profile (at $p<0.1$) and pushed men from the FtWC Stable Low profile to

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the less favorable FtWC Stable Fairly-low one; high SPS increased women's likelihood of being in the WtFC Stable Fairly-low profile (at $p<0.1$) and men's being in the FtWC Stable Fairly-low profile. This suggests that single individuals may not expect support from partners, while those in relationships likely do so[9]. Consequently, inadequate support may more negatively impact those with such expectations (Holt-Lunstad et al., 2008), worsening WFC. This study thus illuminates the distinct WFC implications of being single and being in low-quality partnerships, bridging the gap left by analyses centered on the effect of partnership per se, neglecting relationship quality (Kruse et al., 2013).

In contrast, women with low SPS were more likely to fall into the more favorable, FtWC Decreasing profile than the Stable High profile; increasing SPS moved women away from the FtWC Decreasing profile, while decreasing SPS moved them away from the FtWC Stable High profile (at $p<0.1$). This could be because SPS might prompt women to take on more family responsibilities to reciprocate this support, worsening their FtWC. Minnotte and Minnotte (2018) indicate that family support received by women often alleviates their husbands' FtWC rather than their own, as women typically invest more family resources to secure this support, while men benefit without significantly engaging in this kinship maintenance. Thus, low or decreasing SPS may lessen women's further obligation to family roles, potentially preventing worsening FtWC. Nevertheless, decreasing SPS still reduced their likelihood of being in the more favorable FtWC Stable Fairly-Low profile (at $p<0.1$), suggesting a mitigating, albeit weak, effect of SPS on women. This highlights the complexity of SPS's impact on women's FtWC, which may depend on whether they perceive the support as a resource or as an additional demand. Further research into the underlying mechanisms would be valuable.

Secondly, the exclusive effect of SCS levels and changes on women's FtWC profile

[9] This insight was contributed by an anonymous reviewer. We appreciate their valuable input.

Journal Pre-proof

membership challenges the hypothesis of stronger impacts on men. This is likely because women often seek assistance from relatives and friends (Van Daalen et al., 2006), while men possibly rely more on their spouses, to share family duties (Minnotte & Minnotte, 2018). Another reason could be that the initial mitigating effects of SCS on FtWC may fade for men over time, while remaining evident for women. Men typically seek instrumental support, while women focus more on emotional support (Carlson et al., 2021). Despite SCS including both dimensions in this study, gender differences may persist in its measurement, with SCS scores reflecting more instrumental aspects for men and emotional aspects for women. However, instrumental SCS is considered a stronger predictor of FtWC episodes rather than enduring FtWC experiences (Shockley & Allen, 2015). Conversely, emotional support tends to influence FtWC levels consistently. These results indicate that initial SCS levels and changes may not impact men's FtWC profile membership. Moreover, as noted earlier, women with SPS may face even greater FtWC. Thus, it appears that men may benefit more from support provided by their spouse (Minnotte & Minnotte, 2018), whereas women often gain more from support from friends and relatives in mitigating long-term FtWC (Van Daalen et al., 2006).

Overall, our findings reveal gender differences in the support–WtFC/FtWC profile relationships, thus affecting the pathway to career growth and sustainability. Traditional norms, as social role theory suggests, tend to advance men's careers while hindering women's (Kossek et al., 2021). Specifically, the stronger support effects on women's WtFC and men's FtWC profiles may create feedback loops, with men who prioritize work more likely to advance their careers and reinforce their breadwinner role, while women focusing on family may become more entrenched in traditional roles, risking a downward career spiral (Kossek et al., 2021). Thus, while support helps balance work and family, traditional gender norms often direct resources within their primary

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domains (Eagly & Wood, 2012), potentially limiting resources for other areas and impeding career sustainability, which requires a well-aligned work-family life in the long term (De Vos et al., 2020).

However, those who embrace shifting gender roles, perhaps especially but not only women, may experience more career growth, along with greater career sustainability, when better supported. Social expectations have evolved from traditional roles to encourage both genders to engage in work and family (England et al., 2020). Thus, women leverage support for FtWC, broadening job opportunities without compromising family roles, while men use support for WtFC, promoting family involvement without hindering their careers (Goldscheider et al., 2015). Therefore, as gender roles evolve, resources are more evenly invested in both work and family (England et al., 2020), ultimately fostering career sustainability for both men and women.

Still, traditional roles may offer men relatively greater career benefits (Kossek et al., 2021), which may underlie the asymmetric shift in gender roles observed in previous studies, where women's career engagement is outpacing changes in men's domestic roles (England et al., 2020; Goldscheider et al., 2015). For instance, England et al. (2020) found that women's paid work hours increased more significantly than men's involvement in family duties like housework, parental care, and shopping. Our study implicitly reflects a less pronounced asymmetry in roles in this U.S. sample. The US is committed to policies promoting female employment and a gender-egalitarian culture, encouraging equal distribution of work and family duties between genders (England et al., 2020). Consequently, both genders may invest resources in two domains such that significant effects of support on both genders' WtFC/FtWC profiles are observed. Overall, while support helps manage work and family demands for both genders, men who adhere to traditional gender norms may see more career growth (Kossek et al., 2021), whereas both women and men who embrace evolving

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norms may experience greater career sustainability (De Vos et al., 2020).

Moreover, dissolution (ending a partnership) shapes WFC trajectories. Wanberg et al. (2023) suggest that, although dissolution groups might face adverse outcomes, such as a negative mood, they often adopt strategies to prevent further resource loss by reallocating resources from less fulfilling domains (e.g., family) to more rewarding ones (e.g., work), and may experience fewer competing demands due to reduced pressure from partners and societal expectations to be present at home. Perhaps as a result, dissolution mitigates WFC, by shifting individuals from less favorable FtWC profiles toward the FtWC Stable Fairly-Low profile and from WtFC Stable High (with persistently high conflict) to the Increasing profile or from WtFC Decreasing to Stable Low profile. However, effects were weaker for women, perhaps reflecting mothers who retain primary caregiving roles (Wanberg et al., 2023).

Therefore, this study provides a valuable platform for examining WFC experiences among individuals in, without, and ending romantic relationships. Prior studies on SPS (e.g., Blanch & Aluja, 2012; Van Daalen et al., 2006) have focused mainly on individuals in relationships, which simplifies the analysis but overlooks how those without partners or those who experienced relationship changes manage WFC (Boyar et al., 2008). This study thus offers a broader understanding of WFC beyond traditional partner-based models, showing that not only support from partners, but also being single or experiencing relationship dissolution, could shape long-term WtFC and FtWC for both genders (Kruse et al., 2013). Future research could further explore these effects on career and family life, considering parental status and custody arrangements (Wanberg et al., 2023).

4.2 Practical Implications

To foster career sustainability, which benefits both organizational effectiveness and

individual well-being, organizations should consider moving beyond traditional expectations of the ideal employee who prioritizes work over all other aspects of life (De Vos et al., 2020). They are encouraged to adopt strategies, such as promoting a family-supportive organizational climate and supervisor behaviors, to help individuals balance work and family. Organizations should also consider how to assist employees experiencing career growth (e.g., promotions) in balancing it with family roles (Kossek et al., 2021; Roberson et al., 2024). The present study emphasizes the importance of cultivating supportive relationships with organizations, supervisors, partners, relatives, and friends, to balance personal and professional lives more effectively.

Moreover, this study highlights the lasting impact of early-stage support on WFC trajectories. However, it does not imply that organizations should resort to only short-term support for employees' family life. Consistent, long-term work support is recommended to maintain favorable WFC experiences, as evidenced by the predominance of membership in Stable Low and Fairly-low profiles. Similarly, the absence or reduction of support could lead to enduring unfavorable experiences. Although this study reveals that women actively seek support to manage work and family demands, it does not recommend family-supportive policies tailored for female employees, as such support may burden women with additional family matters (Hammer et al., 2005) and discourage men from using these resources (Sargent et al., 2022). Gender-equitable support can help both men and women balance work and family, promoting career growth and encouraging equal family involvement for a sustainable professional and family life (England et al., 2020).

4.3 Limitations and Future Research

Despite its contributions, this research has limitations. First, only monotonic changes were observed, indicating a need for longer-term datasets to explore potential U-shape or inverted U-

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shape patterns, or transitions between stable and changing profiles. Second, while this study did not focus on industry-specific WFC trajectories, the generalizability of findings might be limited, as the dataset concerned the IT and NH sectors. Given the broader relevance of WFC (Allen & French, 2023), research encompassing other sectors is necessary. Third, we should note that an intervention was conducted during the data collection period. However, we do not consider that this complicates our interpretation. No significant differences were observed between the control and intervention groups in predicting WtFC or FtWC profiles. Moreover, Hammer et al. (2016) also reported no significant effects of this intervention on FSSB, WtFC, or FtWC.

Fourth, the SPS measurement primarily focuses on emotional aspects, potentially restricting the understanding of its impact. Further investigation is needed to examine the role of instrumental support, a significant factor for WFC (Shockley & Allen, 2015), and to compare the explanatory power of emotional versus instrumental SPS for both WtFC and FtWC (French et al., 2018). Moreover, this study is designed to identify distinctions among individuals in, out of, and leaving romantic relationships, which may enhance the generalizability of the findings whilst complicating the analysis and presentation (Boyar et al., 2008). Additionally, while the dichotomization of the original continuous SPS scale facilitates the construction of a categorical SPS variable encompassing both partnered and unpartnered individuals, it introduces limitations. Small differences in individual scores around the cutoff may lead to different group assignments (e.g., “Low” vs. “High” SPS), and individuals moderately and substantially below the threshold are treated identically, potentially reducing the precision of estimated associations (DeCoster et al., 2009). Individuals with high and low SPS at T1 were both classified as dissolution if they became single at T2, potentially masking differences in their experience. Our study highlights the need for caution in dichotomizing or

Journal Pre-proof

categorizing variables.

Looking ahead, the evolution of WFC across life (e.g., marriage, childbirth) and career stages (e.g., growth, decline) would be an intriguing focus (Roberson et al., 2024). These stages bring different work and family demands that may shape WFC trajectories (Smith et al., 2022). Variations in individual responses to work and nonwork support are then expected, explaining why individuals react differently to the same practices and policies. Furthermore, this study only focused on support variables at early stages, neglecting how their evolution over four waves impacts WFC. Future studies could employ panel data analysis to delve deeper into these relationships and to consider cultural and national influences on gender trends in the work-family domain (Allen & French, 2023). Moreover, in addition to WFC as a key barrier, other challenges, such as career burnout or career plateau (De Vos et al., 2020), offer promising avenues for future research on sustainable careers.

5 Conclusion

A key factor in fostering career sustainability is to minimize WFC (De Vos et al., 2020). This study identified five distinct trajectories for both WtFC and FtWC, highlighting the developmental heterogeneity in WFC and emphasizing its dynamic nature that encompasses both changing and stable patterns. It also displayed within-domain and cross-domain relationships between support variables and WtFC/FtWC trajectories, showing that not only initial levels of, but also early changes in, work and nonwork support predicted membership in both changing and stable profiles. Traditional gender roles associating women with caregiving and men with breadwinning were evident, with support variables significantly predicting women’s membership in WtFC profiles and men’s in FtWC profiles. However, signs of shifting gender roles were also observed, with women's growing work involvement and men’s increasing family participation expressed in the effects of

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support on women's FtWC and men's WtFC profiles. Overall, work and nonwork support guide individuals away from unfavorable WFC trajectories, with gender shaping how these resources are utilized, likely benefiting career sustainability. Ultimately, this study thus integrates COR and DE theorization to understand developments in WFC in a gender-sensitive manner.

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Declaration of interests

☒ The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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Highlights

- Five profiles, of changes and stability, are identified for each type of conflict
- Greater support levels/increases are less linked to Stable High/Increasing profiles
- Women's work-to-family conflict profiles are more strongly linked to support
- Men's family-to-work conflict profiles are more strongly linked to support
- Traditional and evolving gender roles contribute to these gender differences

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