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Understanding Impact of Work-Family Conflict on Workplace Deviance Behavior: A Case of Mediation and Moderation of Moral Disengagement and Job Insecurity

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Abstract

This study helps to investigate the impact of work-family conflict on workplace deviant behaviour by exploring how stress arising from conflicting role demands can lead employees to get themselves involved in counterproductive work behaviours. Also, this study ascertains the mediating role of moral disengagement between work-family conflict and workplace deviant behaviour and the moderating function of job insecurity among work-family conflict and workplace deviant behaviour. A self-administered questionnaire was used to collect data, where the target population were individuals working in the education sector in Punjab-Pakistan. Two-step data analysis was performed; at first, model fitness was determined through a measurement model (CFA) and second, hypotheses were tested through a structure equation model (SEM). SPSS and AMOS statistical packages were deployed to perform data analysis, whereas Hays process macros were used for testing mediation and moderation analysis. Data analysis showed significant positive results for all hypothesized relationships.

Key Words

Work-Family Conflict (WFC), Moral Disengagement (MDE), Workplace Deviance Behavior (WDB), Job Insecurity (JI), Education Sector, Students

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Introduction

In recent decades, the world has experienced sudden economic fluctuations and incremental changes that have led to significant transformations in the labour market (Mauno & Kinnunen, 1999). These changes are curtailed for organizations and governed by industrial restructuring, advancement in information technology, cutthroat global competition and economic recession (Hartley et al., 1991). In this challenging working atmosphere, workers are likely to exhibit emotions of distress. According to Applbaum et al. (2005), in almost every organization, workplace deviant behaviour (WDB) has developed significant distress. Some researchers have argued that WDB is an important area to investigate for its causes and consequences (Colbert et al., 2004; Bennett & Robinson, 2003). An individual's intentions that can significantly interrupt organizational rules and can threaten or violate organizational safety rules or its members are referred to as "deviant workplace behaviour" (Robinson & Bennett, 1995). Through its damaging/ negative effects on the organizational working environment, WDB is considerably responsible for

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withholding organizational capability of profit maximization or saving from operational losses (Applebaum et al., 2005).

Work-family conflict (WFC), also known as inter-role conflict, is a form of conflict created due to incompatibility between assigned job roles at the workplace and that of family domains. In this case, by virtue of participating in family roles, the work role is considered more difficult, and vice versa (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). Some previous researchers have argued WFC is a significant predictor of WDB (Rubab, 2017; Malisetty et al., 2016; Ametorwo et al., 2021). According to Shah et al. (2023), WFC can help increase WDB in services sector employees. Similarly, Li et al. (2022) have found a positive relationship between WFC and WDB. A number of issues, including absenteeism, fraud and theft, sexual harassment, and workplace aggression, are different examples of WDB. These behaviours can actually be proven as harmful to organizational well-being (Bennett & Robinson, 2003).

In the services sector like education, Moral Disengagement (MDE) is recognized as a key psychological mechanism that can mediate the relationship between stress (WFC) and workplace deviant behaviour (WDB) (Yildiz et al., 2015; Newman et al., 2020). Due to increasing workload and role ambiguity, students and administration often face occupational stress. Under prolonged stress, WFC is obvious, and thus, such individuals can experience emotional exhaustion, which can erode their self-regulatory capacity to exhibit MDE at work. This exhibition of MDE can allow individuals to justify deviant actions by deactivation their internal moral standards (Bandura, 1999). In such situations, individuals working in the education sector can justify deviant behaviour by representing absenteeism, displaying verbal aggression or neglecting assigned tasks. According to Fida et al. (2015), with the activation of MDE, stressed individuals are likely to represent WDB without feeling guilt. Accordingly, this study aims to investigate the relationship between WFC and WDB in the education sector with the mediating role of MDE.

Literature Review
Work-Family Conflict and Workplace Deviance Behavior
According to Rubab (2017), Work-Family conflict (WFC) is a positive significant predictor of Workplace Deviance Behavior (WDB). Similarly, some other researchers also reported WFC impairing the working atmosphere, which further can negatively affect employee performance and can influence individuals' WDB, and these employees can show intentions towards absenteeism, leaving their job, suffering from stress-related problems and moral disengagement (O'Leary et al., 2004). According to "Conservation of Resource Theory (COR)", while dealing with conflicting demands between work-family issues, individuals with maladaptive coping mechanisms can show WDB to conserve resources (Hobfoll, 1989). Some empirical studies have also shown a positive association between WFC and WDB in response to the perception of overload and lack of support at work (Bragger et al., 2005; Zhang et al., 2012). So, keeping in view the above discussion, we formulated the following hypothesis:

H1: *WFC will positively impact WDB.*

Work-Family Conflict, Moral Disengagement and Workplace Deviance Behavior
According to Bandura (1999), Moral Disengagement (MDE) can be referred to as an individual's cognitive mechanism, which can provide justifications to act unethically without feeling self-condemnation. So, by experiencing high levels of stress (WFC, emotional exhaustion and role ambiguity) at work, employees, by impairing moral self-regulation, can suspect themselves of moral disengagement (Li et al., 2022). According to the self-regulation depletion perspective, the experience of continuous conflict between work-family roles can deplete psychological resources, thus creating weakness in the ability to uphold ethical standards (Christian & Ellis, 2011). This weakness in upholding moral standards under WFC can provide a justification (MDE) to show WDB (Li et al.,

2022). Thus, WFC can (not only) affect job performance but can also increase the risk for an individual to get involved in ethical laps (WDB) through MDE.

Moral Disengagement (MDE) can facilitate the representation of Workplace deviant behaviour (WDB) by rationalizing unethical behaviours without feeling self-censure or guilt in an organizational context, as MDE involves self-cognition (such as neglecting or disobedience from assigned responsibilities) to bypass an individual's self-moral standards, which can positively deplete psychological barriers to express WDB by expression of behaviours like interpersonal aggression and can also include intentions to theft or sabotage (Moore et al., 2008). In their study about understanding counterproductive work behaviour, according to Fida et al. (2015), individuals exhibiting higher levels of MDE are more likely to exhibit WDB. So, keeping in view of the above discussion, we formulated the following hypothesis:

H2: *WFC will positively impact MDE.*
H3: *MDE will positively impact WDB.*
H3a: *MDE will mediate the relationship between WFC and WDB.*

Moderating Role of Job Insecurity

According to Sverke and Hellgren (2002), "Job Insecurity (JI) is an individual's perception that his/her job is at risk, particularly when it is anticipated that continuity of this threat can act as stressful event and can reinforce its belief. When workers perceive their job as unstable, they get themselves into stress; when these individuals associate this stress with family-related issues, it can become more pronounced. This association between job usability (job insecurity) and that of WFC potentially can overwhelm their moral self-regulation mechanism (Probst, 2005). So, under such circumstances, while perceiving high job insecurity, individuals, by rationalizing themselves, can engage themselves in WDB as a strategy to coup personal strains. Some empirical results also suggested that JI, by promoting cognitive justification among employees suffering from WFC, can perform unethical actions (like WDB) (Kim & Beehr, 2018). This phenomenon also aligns with "Conservation of Resource Theory (COR)", which suggests that under the threat of losing resources (like JI), individuals can get themselves involved in unethical actions to conserve or regain control (Hofoll, 1989). So, keeping in view the above discussion, we formulated the following hypothesis:

H4: JI will moderate the relationship between WFC and WDB.

So, building upon the study literature review, we proposed the following research framework to investigate the interplay between WFC, MDE, and WDB, the mediating role of MDE between WFC and WDB, and the moderating function of JI among WFC and WDB. Figure 1 represents the graphical representation of the research conceptual framework.

Figure 1
Research Conceptual Framework
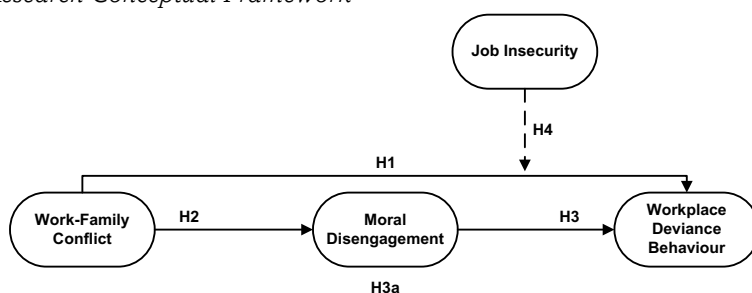
Methodology

Sample and Procedure

The research population consists of individuals working in secondary schools (education sector) from Punjab (Pakistan). A purposive sampling technique was deployed to collect data from both public and private schools through a self-administered questionnaire. During data collection, maximum effort was made to collect data from individuals who were directly involved in teaching (participating in the student learning process as teachers), teaching coordination (teaching as well as working and administrating the learning process through other teachers) and teaching administration (managing or supervising teachers to ensure learning like HOD/ Principal). After data collection, it was screened for missing information, incomplete data and the Hallo effect. After screening, a sample of N=650 was determined suitable and considered fit for analysis and hypotheses testing. Applications including Microsoft Excel, SPSS and AMOS Graphics were used to generate results.

Measurement

Measures for this study were adapted from previous research. To measure WFC, an 8-item scale developed by Burley (1989) was used. In order to measure MDE, an eight-item scale developed by Bandura et al. (1996) was used. For measuring WDB, 19 19-item scales developed by Robinson and Bennet (2000) were used, and for JI, 9 9-item scales developed by Oldham et al. (1986) were used. Table 1 shows that all variables of the study reached the required threshold of Cronbach's Alpha value (>0.7). Two items from WFC and four items from WDB were considered weak and were deleted to improve reliability (Hair et al., 2014).

Table 1

Reliability

Variable	Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Work-Family Conflict (WFC)	6	0.865
Morel Disengagement (MDE)	8	0.862
Workplace Deviance Behavior (WDB)	15	0.925
Job Insecurity (JI)	8	0.876
Total Scale	37	0.957

Sample Demographic Details

Table 2 represents demographic details (N=650), including information regarding gender (female 46.9%, male 53.1%), age (majority 70.1% between 25 to 42 years of age), qualification (majority 82.6% between Matric to Master), marital status (Un-married 40.3%, married 59.7%), job nature (teaching 74.6% with greater than one year of experience), serving sector (Govt. 36.3%, Private 63.7%).

Table 2

Demographics of Sample (N=650)

Variable	Scale	Frequency	Percentage
	Female	305	46.9
Gender	Male	345	53.1
	Total	650	100.0
	18-24	80	12.3
	25-31	139	21.4
	32-37	116	17.8
Age	38-42	201	30.9
	43-49	82	12.6
	50-up	32	4.9
	Total	650	100.0

Variable	Scale	Frequency	Percentage
Qualification	Less than Matric	79	12.2
	Matric	123	18.9
	Intermediate	120	18.5
	Graduation	199	30.6
	Master	95	14.6
	MPhil and above	34	5.2
	Total	650	100.0
Marital Status	Un Married	262	40.3
	Married	388	59.7
	Total	650	100.0
Job Nature	Teacher (<1 year of service)	44	6.8
	Teacher (<3 years of service)	215	33.1
	Teacher (>3 years of Service)	168	25.8
	Teaching with Coordinator	102	15.7
	Vice Principal	86	13.2
	Principal	35	5.4
	Total	650	100.0
Sector	Government	236	36.3
	Private	414	63.7
	Total	650	100.0

Data Reliability and Validity

Table 3 shows data about the research variables' reliability and validity. Principal Component Analysis was performed with "Varimax with Kaiser Normalization", which revealed values of "Rotated Component Matrix" to reach the required threshold (>0.4), the value of "KMO" reached (0.944), and "Bartlett's test showed significant result (p<0.05), hence represent the suitability of data for analysis (Hair et al., 2014). Values of "Composite Reliability" for all study variables reached the required values (CR>0.07); further values of "Skewness" and "Kurtosis" were found among the normal range. Values of "Average Variance Extracted" reached a threshold (>0.5) for WFC and were found adequate (>0.4) for MDE, WDBA and JI, respectively, as the value of AVE (<0.5) is acceptable if the value of composite reliability (>0.7) is adequate (Lam, 2012; Ho et al., 2020; Maruf et al., 202). "Average Shared Variance (AVE)" values of all study variables were found to be less than AVE, hence establishing discriminant validity (Hair et al., 2014).

Table 3
Study Variables Reliability and Validity

Variables	Items Nos.	Loading[123]	CR Value	AVE Value	ASV Value	Skewness Value	Kurtosis Value
Work-Family Conflict	WFC1	0.668				-0.604	-0.358
	WFC2	0.669				-0.505	-0.599
	WFC3	0.579	0.866	0.520	0.397	-0.555	-0.310
	WFC4	0.583				-0.376	-0.822
	WFC7	0.675				-0.500	-0.387
	WFC8	0.632				-0.538	-0.209
Moral Disengagement	MDE1	0.777				-0.486	0.067
	MDE2	0.735				-0.368	-0.055
	MDE3	0.799				-0.488	0.118
	MDE4	0.722	0.858	0.441	0.307	-0.355	-0.014
	MDE5	0.402				-0.360	-0.345
	MDE6	0.481				-0.522	-0.217
	MDE7	0.498				-0.483	-0.191
	MDE8	0.544				-0.266	-0.503

Variables	Items Nos.	Loading[1][2][3]	CR Value	AVE Value	ASV Value	Skewness Value	Kurtosis Value
Workplace Deviance Behavior	WDB1	0.401				-0.641	-0.084
	WDB2	0.659				-0.576	-0.557
	WDB4	0.557				-0.573	-0.474
	WDB5	0.596				-0.722	-0.324
	WDB6	0.635				-0.554	-0.484
	WDB7	0.656				-0.691	-0.282
	WDB8	0.598				-0.613	-0.453
	WDB9	0.617	0.923	0.444	0.376	-0.574	-0.249
	WDB10	0.663				-0.691	-0.251
	WDB12	0.647				-0.815	0.025
	WDB14	0.679				-0.458	-0.633
	WDB15	0.761				-0.533	-0.520
	WDB16	0.662				-0.604	-0.401
	WDB18	0.568				-0.592	-0.281
	WDB19	0.637				-0.614	-0.483
Job Insecurity	JI1	0.586				-0.673	0.264
	JI2	0.571				-0.520	0.138
	JI3	0.524				-0.641	0.437
	JI4	0.696	0.878	0.473	0.360	-0.649	0.153
	JI5	0.565				-0.504	-0.446
	JI6	0.571				-0.683	0.160
	JI7	0.669				-0.509	-0.433
	JI8	0.671				-0.625	-0.031

1. Rotated Component Matrix values, 2. Varimax with Kaiser Normalization, 3. Principal Component Analysis.

Model Fitness

Table 4 represents model fitness values of the measurement model (CFA) as X^2/df (3.789), IFI (0.871), CFI (0.870) and RMSEA (0.066). Similarly, model fitness values of the structural equation model (SEM) as X^2/df (3.577), IFI (0.907), CFI (0.908) and RMSEA (0.063), hence providing support for the models for testing hypotheses.

Table 4
Research Models Fitness

Model	X^2	df	X^2/df	IFI	CFI	RMSEA
CFA	2322.834	613	3.789	0.871	0.870	0.066
SEM	1298.594	363	3.577	0.907	0.908	0.063

Correlations

Table 5 represents "Pearson" correlation, mean and standard deviation values of study variables. This table shows significant positive (+ve) results among all study variables, where association among all study variables is found adequate (moderate), hence declaring suitability for relationship prediction.

Table 5
Correlation Values

Variable	M	STD	WFC	MDE	WDB	JI
WFC	23.22	4.244	-			
MDE	29.13	4.668	0.561**	-		
WDB	60.29	9.348	0.636**	0.631**	-	
JI	30.31	5.205	0.673**	0.582**	0.583**	-

Notes: M=Mean values; STD=Standard Deviation values; N=650, *$p<.05$; **$p<0.01$

Hypotheses Testing Results

Table 6 represents AMOS "standardized regression weights" of hypothesized relationships among study variables. According to table-6, there is a positive (p<0.05) relationship between WFC and WDB, a positive (p<0.05) relationship between WFC and MDE and a positive (p<0.05) relationship between MDE and WDE, hence providing support for H1, H2 and H3, respectively. Further, Fig.2 represents the adequate relationship of variance (R-square) among study endogenous and exogenous variables.

Table 6

AMOS Regression Weights (Standardized)

Hypothesis	Variable Relationship			Estimate Values	P	Comments
H1	WDB	<---	WFC	0.492	***	H1; Supported
H2	MDE	<---	WFC	0.616	***	H2; Supported
H3	WDB	<---	MDE	0.375	***	H3; Supported

Notes: *p<.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

Figure 2

SEM Diagram
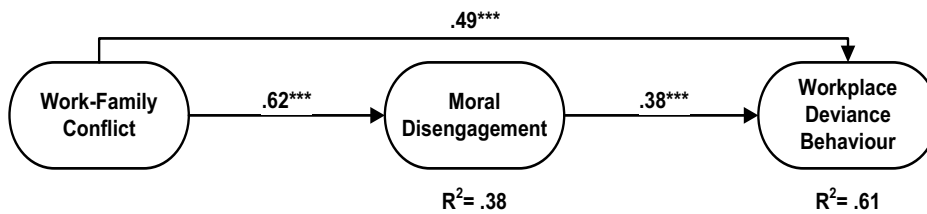
Mediation of MDE

By using Model-4 of Hays Process Macros (with several bootstrap samples of 5000), mediation effects were tested. Table 7 shows significant values of total effects (1.401, p<0.05), direct effects (0.907, p<0.05) and indirect effects (0.494, p<0.05). Figure 3 shows the significant relationship between WFC and MDE (a=0.617, p<0.05) and a significant relationship between MDE and WDB (b=0.801, p<0.05). As both direct and indirect effects represent significant results, they provide support for H3a.
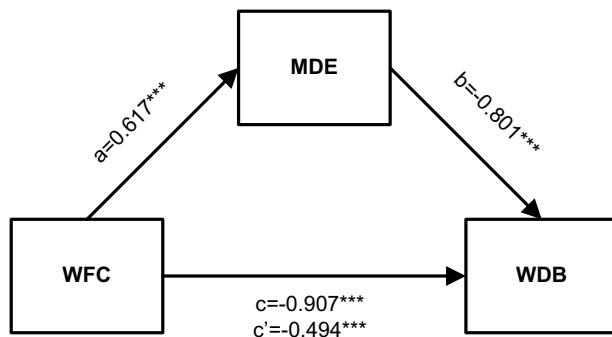
Table 7

Mediation Results of MDE between WFC & WDB

Effect Type	Effect Size	S.E	P Values	CI (95%)	
				LLCI	ULCI
Total	1.401	0.067	0.000	1.269	1.532
Direct	0.907	0.729	0.000	0.764	1.049
Indirect	0.494	0.477	0.000	0.404	0.590

Mediator, WE (Bootstrap sample size=5000); CI=Confidence Interval

Figure 3
Mediation of MDE

Moderation of JI

By using Model-1 of Hays Process Macros (confidence intervals 95%, with a bootstrap sample of 5000), moderation effects of JI among WFC and WDB were tested. The model summary in Table 8 shows values for R^2 (0.468, $p<0.05$), hence representing the proper functionality of model variables. The results of the interaction coefficient (0.066, $p<0.05$) represent a significant moderating role of JI among WFC and WDB, hence providing support for H4. Fig-4 probes conditional effects of JI at different levels, i.e., Lower level ($\beta=1.239$, $p<0.05$), Medium level ($\beta=0.714$, $p<0.05$) and Higher level ($\beta=0.452$, $p<0.05$), hence provides support for H4 at all levels (Lower, Medium and higher).

Table 8
Moderation of JI among WFC & WDB

Model Summary: $F(3, 646) = 189.623$, $p < 0.05$, $R^2 = 0.468$					
Variable	Point of Estimate	SE	P-value	Confidence Interval	
				Lower	Lower
WFC → WDB	2.814	0.385	0.000	2.058	3.570
JI → WDB	2.037	0.320	0.000	1.409	2.663
Int_I	0.066	0.013	0.000	0.092	0.034

Figure 4
Moderation of JI
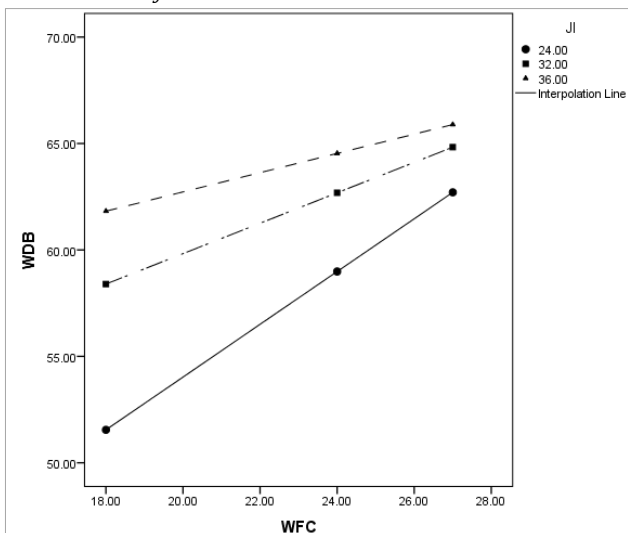
Discussion

The findings of this research provide valuable insights into the interplay between work-family conflict (WFC), moral disengagement (MDE) and workplace deviant behaviour (WDB). Additionally, this research also provides valuable information regarding the mediating role of MDE between WFC and WDB and the moderating function of job insecurity (JI) among WFC and WDB. Data respondents (N=650) of this study were individuals working in the education sector (both public and private) from Punjab-Pakistan.

The results of this research provide support for H1 by representing a positive (p<0.05) relationship between WFC and WDB. Study shows WFC to be a positive predictor of WDB, which is consistent with previous study results (Rubab, 2017). Further, according to Li et al. (2022), experiencing high levels of stress due to WFC employees impairing moral self-regulation can cause them to suspect themselves of MDE, which is consistent with our study results and thus provides support for H2. According to Christian and Ellis (2011) and Li et al. (2022), the experience of continuity in WFC can deplete psychological resources, thus causing weakness in the ability to uphold ethical standards, which can uphold moral standards to promote MDE and a justification to show WDB, which further provides support for H3 and H3a. Due to increasing workload, individuals working in the education sector often feel professional stress; in continuation to this stress, WFC is obvious, and such individuals, by experiencing negative emotions, can erode their self-regulatory capacity to exhibit WDB. When these individuals perceive their job to be insecure, they get themselves into stress, where the presence of WFC can become more obvious. This association between JI and WFC potentially can overwhelm their moral self-regulation mechanism (Probst, 2005), thus improving the likelihood of expressing WDB at work, which is also consistent with our study results by providing support to H4.

As for study implications, first of all, this study provides a standpoint to understand both direct and indirect relationships among WFC, MDE, WDB and JI study variables. Secondly, in the education sector (schools, colleges and universities), individuals working with different types of social behaviour (positive and negative) can influence their colleagues. In this situation, the presence of WFC can change an individual's capacity to work positively, which curtails organizational success. So, depending upon the nature of WFC, managers can probe policies to avoid such conditions. Results also suggested that policies and strategies to reduce the impact of WFC should be incorporated to avoid negative emotions like feelings of JI, which can help decrease the negative impact of MDE and WDB.

This study also has some limitations and future directions. First of all, data from this study was collected from secondary schools in Punjab-Pakistan, which represent a specific culture. Thus, the results of the study cannot be generalized for schools, higher education institutes (HEIs) and universities across the country. Secondly, a cross-sectional data collection technique was deployed for this study; in the future, time-lagged data collection is suggested to avoid biases. Lastly, this model should be tested for significance in other service sectors, which may include hospitals and banking as well. Further, a control variable (which may include gender, marital status and age) based study is also recommended to test for significance.

Conclusion

This research helps to investigate the impact of WFC on WDB and MDE in the education sector. It also helps to investigate the mediating role of MDE between WFC and WDB along with the moderating function of JI among WFC and WDB. This study also shed light on understanding how stress factors like WFC can impact negative behaviour like WDB on employees working in secondary schools in Punjab-Pakistan. The theoretical framework of this research was established from previous studies; hence, this research study is deductive in nature. Cross-sectional data from 650 individuals was collected by means of a self-administered questionnaire. After an initial

screening of data, the research model was tested through a measurement model (CFA), and hypotheses were tested through a structural equation model (SEM). Hays Process Macros in SPSS were used to derive mediation and moderation results.

Study results showed a significant positive (+) relationship between WFC and WDB, a significant positive (+) relationship between WFC and MDE and a significant positive (+) relationship between MDE and WDB, respectively. It also showed a significant mediating role of MDE between WFC and WDB, and it showed a significant moderating function of JI among WFC and WDB, as well. The results of this study are helpful for managers to design strategies that may reduce WFC for employees, which further can help decrease the negative impact of MDE and WDB.

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