

Work-Family Conflict and Digital Knowledge Sharing in the Work-From-Home Culture

(Konflik Kerja-Keluarga dan Perkongsian Pengetahuan Digital dalam Budaya Kerja dari Rumah)

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ABSTRACT

Organizations around the world are striving to maintain their relevance and competitiveness in the evolving post-pandemic landscape. Malaysia and Pakistan, both Muslim-majority countries with similar cultural settings, share significant challenges in strengthening their service sectors in the era of remote work. In this context, the knowledge sharing of remote workers plays a key role in the service sector's sustainable growth and survival. This study examines the influence of two types of work-family conflict, namely work interference with family (WIF) and family interference with work (FIW), on digital knowledge sharing (DKS) among remote workers in Malaysia and Pakistan. The role of psychological well-being (PWB) as a mediator in these relationships is also explored. Data was obtained using a survey instrument administered to a sample of 132 remote service sector employees from both countries. The results of structural equation modeling show no direct effect of FIW on internal DKS nor of WIF on external DKS. PWB was found to significantly mediate the effects of WIF and FIW on internal DKS, but not on external DKS. Therefore, service organizations should be aware of these nuances when crafting and improving work-from-home policies for their employees.

Keywords: Digital knowledge sharing; work interference with family; family interference with work; psychological well-being

ABSTRAK

Organisasi di seluruh dunia sedang berusaha untuk mengekalkan relevansi dan daya saing mereka dalam landskap pasca-pandemik yang terus berkembang. Malaysia dan Pakistan, yang keduanya negara majoriti Muslim dengan latar budaya yang serupa, menghadapi cabaran ketara dalam memperkukuh sektor perkhidmatan mereka dalam era kerja jarak jauh. Dalam konteks ini, perkongsian pengetahuan pekerja jarak jauh memainkan peranan utama dalam pembangunan lestari dan kesinambungan sektor perkhidmatan. Kajian ini meneliti pengaruh dua jenis konflik kerja-keluarga, iaitu gangguan kerja terhadap keluarga (WIF) dan gangguan keluarga terhadap kerja (FIW), ke atas perkongsian pengetahuan digital (DKS) dalam kalangan pekerja jarak jauh di Malaysia dan Pakistan. Peranan kesejahteraan psikologi (PWB) sebagai pengantara dalam hubungan ini juga diterokai. Data diperolehi menggunakan instrumen tinjauan yang disebarkan kepada sampel 132 pekerja sektor perkhidmatan jarak jauh dari kedua-dua negara. Keputusan pemodelan persamaan struktur tidak menunjukkan kesan langsung FIW terhadap DKS dalaman mahupun WIF terhadap DKS luaran. PWB didapati mengantara secara signifikan kesan WIF dan FIW terhadap DKS dalaman, tetapi tidak terhadap DKS luaran. Oleh itu, organisasi perkhidmatan harus menyedari nuansa ini semasa merangka dan menambah baik dasar bekerja dari rumah untuk para pekerja mereka.

Kata kunci: Perkongsian pengetahuan digital; gangguan kerja terhadap keluarga; gangguan keluarga terhadap kerja; kesejahteraan psikologi

INTRODUCTION

Knowledge management is an essential strategic asset for organizations, as it contributes to effectiveness, risk mitigation, and long-term survival in an increasingly complex, competitive, and unpredictable environment (Nonaka & Takeuchi 1995). It is a conscious approach to provide specific knowledge to the right people at the right time, as well as to encourage members to share and utilize knowledge to enhance organizational performance (Ong & Tan 2021). Notably, knowledge management has become ever more important since the COVID-19 pandemic, which presented an unprecedented threat to the survival of organizations globally. An organization's resilience in such times of crisis largely depends on its capacity to assess rapidly changing external uncertainties, evaluate potential options, and make timely, optimal decisions, all of

which are facilitated by dynamic knowledge management (Ng et al. 2021). Therefore, knowledge management has emerged as an increasingly important tool for effective risk mitigation during and after a crisis (Wang 2024).

Daroch (2003) defines knowledge management as "the process that creates or locates knowledge and manages the dissemination and use of knowledge within the organization." Fundamentally, it comprises four components: knowledge acquisition, knowledge sharing, knowledge application, and knowledge protection. Of these, knowledge sharing is particularly crucial. The sharing of know-how and exchange of ideas among employees can lead to new knowledge creation, which not only resolves problems but also produces innovations that yield competitive advantage (Akram et al. 2022; Andreeva & Kianto 2012; Koi-Akrofi 2023). For this reason, employees, particularly knowledge workers, are significant in building an organization's knowledge management system. Leaders often encourage knowledge workers to disclose their tacit knowledge to colleagues rather than keeping it to themselves (Liu & Liu 2011), especially since tacit knowledge is rooted in action, experience, and involvement in a specific context (Nonaka & Takeuchi 1995).

However, the COVID-19 pandemic has challenged the practice of knowledge sharing, as control measures such as social distancing, lockdowns, and work-from-home (WFH) policies have significantly altered business operations. Organizations were compelled to implement WFH practices for their employees during the pandemic (Amirul et al. 2021; Tønnessen et al. 2021), forcing most knowledge workers to instantly transition to remote work (Yang et al. 2020). This shift was particularly impactful for the service industry, which is highly knowledge-intensive by nature and relies heavily on complex, often face-to-face interactions for both service delivery and tacit knowledge exchange (Asogwa 2012; Colon-Aguirre 2015). In service-oriented economies like Malaysia and Pakistan, the ability to effectively share knowledge under remote conditions has since become a critical determinant of organizational success and adaptation (Tønnessen et al. 2021).

Although scholars acknowledge the positive aspects of WFH, it also yields negative consequences for both employees and employers. According to Bhatti et al. (2024) and Khazanchi et al. (2018), productive and effective remote work demands high levels of constructive communication and knowledge exchange to maintain employees' work relationships. However, research indicates that virtual colleagues tend to communicate less with each other than on-site colleagues (Yang et al. 2022). Additionally, WFH weakens organizational culture and impedes tacit knowledge sharing, as it is difficult to remotely embed internal practices and knowledge sharing norms for new workers (Schiuma et al. 2021). A New York Times (2020) opinion piece claims that "*remote environments will demand different approaches to mentorship, teamwork and fostering a shared sense of purpose.*" The article further highlights how Yahoo vetoed telecommuting in 2012, emphasizing the importance of physical attendance to minimize the speed and quality compromises associated with WFH. As the article notes, "from the midcentury-modern palaces to the playful campuses of today's tech giants, the (technology) industry has invested heavily in the idea that 'knowledge work' depends on carefully designed office environments" with "huddle rooms" and "idea parking lots."

Consequently, it is increasingly difficult for organizations to ensure that remote knowledge workers engage in digital knowledge management, particularly digital knowledge sharing (DKS). Managing the boundary between work and family is challenging for these employees, as WFH can hinder their ability to disengage from work (Eddleston & Mulki 2017). At the same time, those who work at home are often preoccupied with childcare or other family duties (Baruch 2000; Kazekami 2020). Thus, while family support is a resource, the increased proximity of work and family during involuntary WFH blurs boundaries and leads to inter-role conflict, specifically work-family conflict. Two types of work-family conflict are affected in this context: work-interference-with-family (WIF), which occurs when work demands prevent family role fulfillment, and family-interference-with-work (FIW), which occurs when family obligations disrupt professional duties (Ahmad Saufi et al. 2023).

WIF and FIW are particularly salient conflicts in collectivist cultures like those of Malaysia and Pakistan, which share several socio-cultural characteristics that justify comparative examination. Both societies are generally classified as collectivist and relatively high in power distance, where family obligations and hierarchical work structures strongly shape employee behaviors (Hofstede 2001). The sudden and unprepared shift to WFH during the pandemic in these regions, compounded by inadequate home office setups or digital infrastructure, likely exacerbated these work-family conflict dimensions for service sector employees, whose roles often require continuous engagement and collaborative knowledge sharing. Concurrently, important contextual differences remain: Malaysia is more ethnically heterogeneous (Gom et al. 2015), whereas Pakistan exhibits stronger hierarchical and patriarchal workplace tendencies, making cross-context validation particularly valuable (Hadi 2019).

In addition to work-family conflict, the inevitable distractions, blurred personal boundaries, work overload, and social isolation from co-workers during WFH (Grant et al. 2019) negatively affect the psychological well-being (PWB) of knowledge workers (Schiuma et al. 2021). These difficulties discourage them from engaging in DKS, which in turn harms organizational productivity. Thus, with the transition from meticulously designed office spaces to casually furnished home offices, organizations now face the significant challenge of mitigating the detrimental implications of WFH-driven work-family conflict on knowledge workers.

Although it is crucial to investigate the impact of work-family conflict on knowledge workers' PWB and DKS (Tortorella et al. 2021), two critical research gaps remain in the literature. First, despite scholars' acknowledgement of its significant relationship with knowledge sharing, few studies have combined WIF and FIW to provide an integrated perspective of how work-family conflict hinders knowledge workers' DKS. Second, while DKS is established as essential for organizational survival in the pandemic and post-pandemic environment (Tønnessen et al. 2021), the mechanism

through which WIF or FIW depletes knowledge workers' psychological resources and impedes their knowledge sharing remains understudied (Kim et al. 2015). PWB is posited as a crucial mediator in this process. Work-family conflict deteriorates an individual's PWB, leading to increased stress, emotional exhaustion, and reduced cognitive capacity. This directly impairs their motivation and ability to engage proactively in DKS, particularly by affecting both the willingness to contribute and the cognitive resources needed to effectively utilize digital platforms for knowledge exchange. Understanding this mediating pathway is vital, as it clarifies the underlying psychological processes linking work-family dynamics to organizational knowledge flow in remote settings.

This study attempts to fill these gaps by investigating the impact of work-family conflict dimensions (WIF and FIW) on knowledge workers' DKS via the mediating role of PWB. Drawing on Role Theory, Conservation of Resources Theory, and Person-Environment Fit Theory, the research questions guiding this study within the context of WFH culture in Malaysia and Pakistan are:

1. Does family-interference-with-work (FIW) affect internal digital knowledge sharing (IDKS) in a remote working culture?
2. Does work-interference-with-family (WIF) affect external digital knowledge sharing (EDKS) in a remote working culture?
3. Does psychological well-being (PWB) mediate the influence of work-interference-with-family (WIF) and family-interference-with-work (FIW) on digital knowledge sharing (DKS) in a remote working culture?

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

WORK-FAMILY CONFLICT AND DIGITAL KNOWLEDGE SHARING (DKS)

Researchers have examined work-family conflict from various perspectives, with conventional measurements typically being unidirectional (i.e., from work to family). However, recent studies have begun to acknowledge and incorporate the dual nature of work-family conflict by considering both directions of interference: WIF and FIW (Chen et al. 2025). These terms jointly describe a type of inter-role conflict in which "the general demands of, time devoted to, and strain created by the job (family) interferes with performing family (job) related responsibilities" (Netemeyer et al. 1996). Nonetheless, their causes and effects differ (Amstad et al. 2011; Carlson et al. 2000; Netemeyer et al. 1996). WIF is more associated with family-based outcomes such as satisfaction with one's life, marriage, or family (Allen et al. 2000; Amstad et al. 2011; Lingard & Francis 2005), while FIW typically affects work-related behaviors such as job satisfaction, turnover intention, and organizational commitment. Therefore, this study categorizes work-family conflict into the WIF and FIW dimensions.

Existing literature has predominantly viewed work-family conflict as a determinant of negative employee outcomes, for instance, absenteeism, job/life dissatisfaction, weak colleague relationships, intention to leave, poor task performance, and low job quality (Allen et al. 2000; Chen et al. 2025; Mansour & Mohanna 2017; Misfin et al. 2024; Vong & Tang 2017). In contrast, there is limited examination of how work-family conflict hinders positive work behaviors like knowledge sharing, which is a crucial employee practice in organizations (Kim et al. 2015). Addressing this gap is especially important in the context of DKS under the current WFH environment. Knowledge sharing involves employees exchanging knowledge with individuals inside or outside the organization (Lin 2007; Luo et al. 2021). Without face-to-face interaction, knowledge workers must rely on digital platforms as a substitute for in-person or on-site communications (Tønnessen et al. 2021). Researchers have accordingly highlighted that digital platforms are essential for enabling knowledge dissemination in modern organizations (Lee 2018). Given the entirely digital nature of information exchange in the current WFH context, the present study examines DKS as a critical behavioral outcome among remote workers.

While scholars have emphasized the critical value of DKS during the pandemic (Alonso et al. 2020), its mechanisms in the broader WFH context remain less understood (Waizenegger et al. 2020). This knowledge is crucial, as hybrid work models combining on-site office work and WFH are expected to become the new norm in the post-pandemic period (Jaiswal & Arun 2020). Notably, research has emphasized that DKS can occur both internally (among colleagues and supervisors) and externally (with customers and other stakeholders), making it important to consider both aspects when examining this concept (Charband & Navimipour 2016; Lee et al. 2020). Van der Maulen et al. (2019) further observed that integrating a wide range of information from various digital resources both within (internal DKS, or IDKS) and beyond (external DKS, or EDKS) the firm can boost performance in a WFH environment (Tønnessen et al. 2021).

To establish the link between work-family conflict and DKS among remote workers, this study draws on Role Theory, which examines how individuals in specific social positions are presumed to behave and how they presume others will behave (Hindin, 2001). According to the theory, role strain occurs when there is a conflict in role demands, with two common subtypes being role overload and role conflict. Role overload happens when an individual cannot fulfill all their expected roles; for example, a woman balancing full-time employment, motherhood, and other familial responsibilities may feel she has insufficient time, energy, or resources to perform these roles to the satisfaction of others. Role conflict, on the other hand, occurs when there are contradictory or incompatible demands from different roles, such as when an employer's overtime demands clash with a parent's need to attend to young children.

When employees experience work-family conflict, whether WIF or FIW, it negatively affects DKS through several role-based mechanisms. First, work-family conflict drains time, energy, and attention, reducing the ability to share knowledge on digital platforms (Tønnessen et al. 2021). Second, it exacerbates stress and emotional exhaustion, lowering motivation for voluntary knowledge exchange (Giunchi 2023). Third, work-family conflict can weaken work engagement and role identification, reducing participation in collaborative digital activities (Asatiani & Norström 2023). Fourth, family interruptions in remote work cause cognitive switching and fragmented attention, limiting informal digital interactions (Asatiani & Norström 2023; Tønnessen et al. 2021). Finally, employees may respond defensively by hiding knowledge or withdrawing to conserve resources (Giunchi 2023). Together, these mechanisms explain why work-family conflict consistently lowers DKS.

Although research shows that work-family conflict affects various work outcomes including knowledge-related behaviors, few studies have examined the direct effect of WIF and FIW on DKS. Most empirical work embeds these effects within broader mechanisms such as stress, resource depletion, or emotional strain. Thus, while theory supports these direct relationships, past empirical studies have rarely examined them independently. This study addresses this gap by proposing two distinct negative effect paths: FIW on IDKS and WIF on EDKS.

FIW occurs when family responsibilities intrude into work time, creating interruptions and reducing focus. Such disruptions directly hinder employees' participation in DKS, particularly internal knowledge sharing activities requiring sustained attention and collaboration. Empirical evidence shows that frequent family interruptions reduce concentration and limit engagement in workplace knowledge exchange (Carvalho et al. 2024; Cheng et al. 2023; Kangas et al. 2023). Conversely, WIF occurs when work demands spill over into family time, making it difficult for employees to mentally disconnect from work. This direct interference reduces their available time, energy, and attention for discretionary behaviors such as knowledge sharing. Studies note that extended work hours and constant digital connectivity limit employees' willingness to engage in knowledge exchange, especially externally (Cho et al. 2020; Santos et al. 2023). Technology-driven boundary blurring also contributes to strain that directly disrupts participation in DKS activities (Adams & Schwarz 2024; Entgelmeier & Rinke 2023).

Therefore, grounded in Role Theory, this study posits that remote workers experiencing substantial levels of work-family conflict (i.e., WIF and FIW) are less likely to share knowledge through digital platforms, both internally and externally. The inter-role conflict triggered by WIF and FIW affects their affective and behavioral outcomes by continuously depleting their energy and resources. In this state of discomfort, burnout, stress, and dissatisfaction, employees are driven to minimize resource loss by reducing effort (Allen et al. 2000; Mansour & Mohanna 2017; Vong & Tang 2017). Consequently, WFH employees facing WIF or FIW may decrease DKS more than other prosocial behaviors. This study thus proposes the following hypotheses:

- H₁ Family-interference-with-work (FIW) negatively influences internal digital knowledge sharing (IDKS).
- H₂ Work-interference-with-family (WIF) negatively influences external digital knowledge sharing (EDKS).

PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING (PWB) AS A MEDIATOR

Ryff and Keyes (1995) conceptualized PWB as a multidimensional construct comprising six core dimensions: (i) self-acceptance, which involves positive self-regard and acceptance of one's past; (ii) autonomy, entailing the capacity for self-determination and independence from social pressures; (iii) environmental mastery, denoting the ability to effectively manage life situations; (iv) purpose in life, which refers to having meaningful goals and a sense of direction; (v) personal growth, indicating the ongoing development and realization of one's potential; and (vi) positive relations with others, reflecting warm and trusting interpersonal connections. These dimensions collectively represent well-being in the form of self-realization and purposeful engagement rather than mere happiness. The PWB model has been widely empirically validated and provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the various facets of psychological health and functioning (Ryff & Keyes 1995).

PWB is shaped by a person's positive and negative emotions (Fredrickson 2001), with a high level of well-being typically achieved when positive emotions outweigh negative ones. In other words, a person's state of well-being is determined by the extent to which pleasure exceeds pain in their life (Rahim & Siti-Rohaida 2015). Consequently, positive or negative emotions stemming from work-family conflict may alter an employee's PWB, which in turn influences their attitude toward DKS. As DKS in a remote working culture is a result of employees' psychological state, it is anticipated that the direct impact of WIF and FIW on DKS can be clarified by the underlying mechanism of PWB.

Specifically, those with higher PWB are more inclined to contribute, collaborate, and help colleagues through digital platforms, whereas lower PWB often leads to withdrawal, reduced engagement, and knowledge withholding. Therefore, the negative effects of WIF and FIW on DKS can be understood through the mediating mechanism of PWB, whereby work-family conflict diminishes well-being, which in turn lowers employees' capacity and willingness to share knowledge digitally.

According to Kim et al. (2015), work-family conflict (WIF and FIW) can be interpreted through the Conservation of Resources Theory, which argues that stress emerges when individuals lose or must heavily invest personal resources such as time, energy, and emotional capacity. When employees juggle competing work and family demands, their resources

become depleted, leaving fewer resources available for voluntary behaviors like knowledge sharing. Continuous resource strain may also prompt employees to conserve what remains, which can indirectly weaken job attitudes and performance (Kim et al. 2015).

Person-Environment Fit Theory offers a complementary perspective, suggesting that the fit between an individual and their work environment influences their well-being, satisfaction, and performance (Kumar & Chaturvedi 2017). This framework can be applied to understand the mediating role of PWB in the relationship between work-family conflict (FIW and WIF) and DKS. When employees experience high levels of WIF or FIW, their person-job fit and person-organization fit becomes weaker, which negatively affects PWB and retention rates (Ahmad Saufi et al. 2023). Conversely, lower levels of WIF or FIW are associated with better PWB, particularly among individuals who are able to successfully navigate their work and family roles. Specifically, individuals who perceive a good fit between their work and family roles report higher levels of PWB, even when experiencing high levels of FIW. When there is a poor fit between an individual's personal life and work environment, the result is high stress, low well-being, and ultimately, disengagement from work. When the fit is good, on the other hand, individuals may experience heightened PWB, which can buffer against stress and facilitate greater knowledge sharing. From a person-environment fit perspective, therefore, it is likely that PWB mediates the influence of WIF and FIW on DKS.

To our knowledge, no prior research has explored PWB as a mediating mechanism between work-family conflict (WIF or FIW) and DKS. To fill this gap, this study proposes the following hypotheses:

- H_{3a} Psychological well-being (PWB) mediates the effect of work-interference-with-family (WIF) on internal digital knowledge sharing (IDKS).
- H_{3b} Psychological well-being (PWB) mediates the effect of work-interference-with-family (WIF) on external digital knowledge sharing (EDKS).
- H_{4a} Psychological well-being (PWB) mediates the effect of family-interference-with-work (FIW) on internal digital knowledge sharing (IDKS).
- H_{4b} Psychological well-being (PWB) mediates the effect of family-interference-with-work (FIW) on external digital knowledge sharing (EDKS).

Figure 1 presents the conceptual framework of this study.

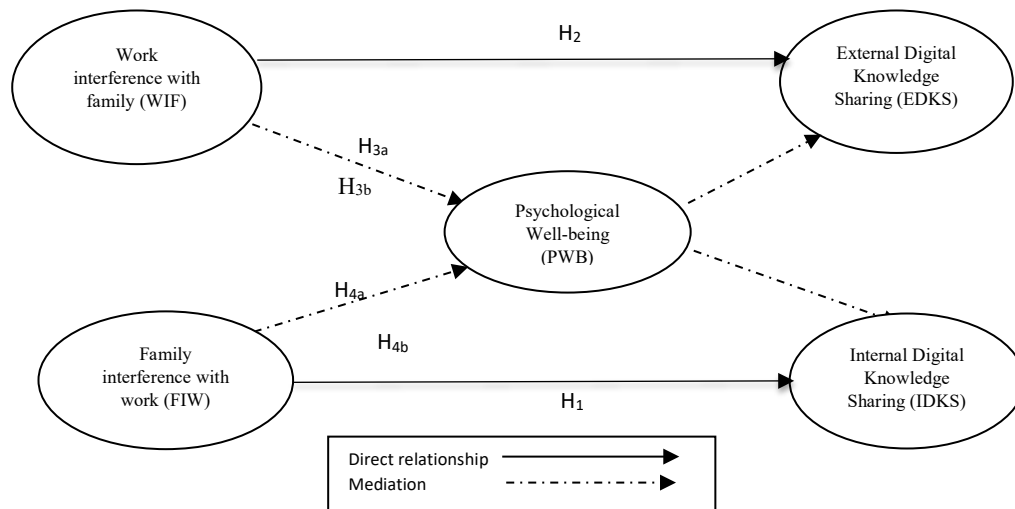


FIGURE 1. Research Framework

METHODOLOGY

SAMPLE AND DATA

This study aimed to explore the influence of work-family conflict on DKS among employees working within a WFH setting. The target population comprised remote knowledge workers in the service industry in Malaysia and Pakistan. These two countries were selected as the research setting due to the rapid growth of digital technologies and the emergence of digitalized working environments, prompted by the extensive COVID-19 lockdowns that led countries worldwide to shift to remote work practices (Duan & Deng 2021).

The sampling technique employed was purposive sampling, with the following inclusion criteria for respondents: service industry professionals; actively working from home or engaged in a remote work arrangement; and had family commitments. To ensure the relevance of responses, strict screening mechanisms were implemented at the outset of the

survey. Respondents were presented with mandatory filter questions to verify their eligibility: specifically, they were asked to confirm their current WFH employment status, their marital status or family commitments requiring work-family boundary management, and their current employment within the service industry. Only respondents who fulfilled all three criteria were permitted to proceed with the questionnaire, ensuring that the collected data directly addressed the study's scope and hypotheses.

A total of 132 responses were collected. The respondents' demographic profile was analyzed using SPSS. Of the 132, 68 were from Malaysia and 64 were from Pakistan, indicating a relatively even representation from both cultural contexts. Gender distribution was also balanced, with 56% being female and 44% being male. Similarly, around half (53%) of respondents were married while 46% were single. A significant proportion of respondents (76.5%) fell within the 24–44 age range. Additionally, 62% were from private organizations and 30% were from the public sector.

INSTRUMENTATION

Using a quantitative methodology, an online survey was created and distributed to remote knowledge workers across different service sub-sectors in Malaysia and Pakistan. Surveys are effective for empirically investigating the causes of phenomena such as individual attitudes and behaviors (Deng et al. 2019). This method was chosen given the confirmatory nature of this research, which required real-world data to validate the relationships proposed in the research framework (Creswell & Creswell 2017).

The survey included demographic questions as well as scales to measure each variable. To ensure the reliability of the measurement instruments, all constructs were operationalized using items adapted from previously validated scales following an extensive review of relevant literature. Five items each for WIF and FIW were adapted from Netemeyer et al. (1996). The 18-item PWB scale was sourced from Ryff and Keyes (1995), comprising three items for each of its six sub-dimensions: autonomy, self-acceptance, environmental mastery, personal growth, purpose in life, and positive relations with others. Six items from Deng et al. (2022) were used to measure IDKS, while four items from Carmeli et al. (2013) were used to assess EDKS. All items were rated on a five-point Likert scale, with 1 indicating strongly disagree and 5 indicating strongly agree. A complete list of measurement items and sources is presented in Appendix 1.

ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Data analysis was performed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), a robust multivariate statistical technique chosen not only for its predictive orientation, but also for its ability to handle complex models, non-normal data, and relatively smaller sample sizes when investigating novel frameworks. PLS-SEM was particularly appropriate for this study given the exploratory nature of the latent construct relationships and the theoretical grounding in Role Theory. Following the two-stage approach, the PLS-SEM analysis involved an assessment of the measurement model to ensure the reliability and validity of the reflective and formative constructs, followed by an assessment of the structural model to test and validate the research hypotheses. Mediation hypotheses were evaluated using two-tailed bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples at 95% bias-corrected confidence intervals, in accordance with standard PLS-SEM reporting practice (Hair et al. 2017). Significance was determined at $p < 0.05$ (two-tailed), corresponding to a t-value threshold of 1.96 and a 95% confidence interval that excludes zero. All analyses were conducted using SmartPLS 4 software due to its versatility and efficiency in managing both measurement and structural model evaluations.

First, the measurement model was rigorously evaluated to establish the reliability and validity of the latent constructs, involving assessments of individual item reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. As shown in Table I, individual item reliability was confirmed, as factor loadings for most items exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.70. However, three items fell slightly below this threshold: IDKS2 (0.607) for IDKS, and PWB7 (0.588) and PWB13 (0.488) for PWB. Following recommendations for exploratory studies and scale adaptation to new cultural contexts, loadings between 0.40 and 0.70 are considered acceptable, provided that the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for the overall construct remains satisfactory (Hair et al. 2017; Chin 1998). In this study, the constructs containing these items (IDKS and PWB) still achieved acceptable AVE values of 0.549 and 0.613, respectively, indicating that more than 50% of the variance was explained by the items (Hair et al. 2017). Retaining these items was also deemed theoretically important to maintain the comprehensive scope of the original scales.

For convergent validity, composite reliability (CR) values for EDKS, IDKS, WIF, and PWB all exceeded the acceptable threshold of 0.70, indicating good internal consistency (Hair et al. 2017). AVE values for these constructs met or surpassed the threshold of 0.50, confirming that the proportion of variance captured by each construct exceeded measurement error. However, the FIW construct presented a potential concern, with slightly lower CR and AVE values of 0.67 and 0.53, respectively. While this warrants careful consideration, FIW was retained on account of its theoretical relevance (Hair et al. 2017).

TABLE I. Reliability and convergent validity

Constructs	Items	Loadings	CR	AVE
EDKS	EDKS1	0.784	0.916	0.732
	EDKS2	0.891		

IDKS	EDKS3	0.924	0.782	0.549
	EDKS4	0.816		
	IDKS2	0.607		
	IDKS4	0.814		
FIW	IDKS5	0.784	0.674	0.530
	FIW1	0.820		
	FIW2	0.880		
	FIW3	0.899		
	FIW4	0.878		
WIF	FIW5	0.863	0.945	0.775
	WIF1	0.868		
	WIF2	0.906		
	WIF3	0.902		
	WIF4	0.914		
PWB	WIF5	0.807	0.826	0.613
	PWB1	0.799		
	PWB2	0.822		
	PWB3	0.725		
	PWB4	0.740		
	PWB5	0.673		
	PWB6	0.812		
	PWB7	0.588		
	PWB8	0.943		
	PWB9	0.820		
	PWB10	0.825		
	PWB11	0.864		
	PWB12	0.856		
	PWB13	0.488		
	PWB14	0.907		

Note: EDKS = External Digital Knowledge Sharing; IDKS = Internal Digital Knowledge Sharing; FIW = Family-Interference-with-Work; WIF = Work-Interference-with-Family; PWB = Psychological Well-Being

The Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio was examined to assess discriminant validity (see Table II). All HTMT ratios fell below the conventional threshold of 0.85, indicating satisfactory discriminant validity and confirming that the latent constructs were sufficiently distinct.

TABLE II. Discriminant validity (HTMT)

		1	2	3	4	5
1	PWB					
2	EDKS	0.346				
3	FIW	0.183	0.530			
4	IDKS	0.279	0.770	0.283		
5	WIF	0.205	0.613	0.460	0.634	

Note: EDKS = External Digital Knowledge Sharing; IDKS = Internal Digital Knowledge Sharing; FIW = Family-Interference-with-Work; WIF = Work-Interference-with-Family; PWB = Psychological Well-Being

As all the constructs fulfilled the reliability and validity criteria of the measurement model, the analysis proceeded to the assessment of the structural model, which offers a comprehensive examination of the hypothesized interconnections among the variables. Figure 2 depicts the structural model of this study.

As shown in Table III, the direct effect of FIW on IDKS was not statistically significant ($\beta = 0.065$, $p = 0.220$), leading to the rejection of H_1 . Similarly, H_2 was not supported, as the effect of WIF on EDKS was non-significant ($\beta = 0.110$, $p = 0.092$). Turning to the mediation results (see Table IV), PWB significantly mediated the effects of both WIF ($\beta = -0.061$, $p = 0.022$) and FIW ($\beta = -0.080$, $p = 0.018$) on IDKS, supporting H_{3a} and H_{4a} . Conversely, PWB did not significantly mediate the effect of FIW on EDKS ($\beta = 0.049$, $p = 0.070$), nor the effect of WIF on EDKS ($\beta = 0.037$, $p = 0.154$). The 95% bias-corrected confidence intervals for H_{3b} (-0.004 to 0.102) and H_{4b} (-0.014 to 0.088) both included zero, confirming non-significance under two-tailed testing. Therefore, H_{3b} and H_{4b} were not supported.

TABLE III. Summary of direct effects

Hypothesis	Path	Direct effect (β)	Standard Error	T values	P values	Decision
H_1	FIW $\rightarrow$ IDKS	0.065	0.084	0.772	0.220	Not supported
H_2	WIF $\rightarrow$ EDKS	0.110	0.083	1.327	0.092	Not supported

Significance level: $p < 0.05$

Note: FIW = Family-Interference-with-Work; WIF = Work-Interference-with-Family; EDKS = External Digital Knowledge Sharing; IDKS = Internal Digital Knowledge Sharing

TABLE IV. Summary of indirect effects (mediation)

Hypothesis	Path	Indirect Effect (β)	Standard Error	T values	P values	LL	UL	Mediation
H_{3a}	WIF $\rightarrow$ PWB $\rightarrow$ IDKS	-0.061	0.027	2.289	0.022	-0.107	-0.019	Yes
H_{3b}	WIF $\rightarrow$ PWB $\rightarrow$ EDKS	0.037	0.026	1.429	0.154	-0.014	0.088	No
H_{4a}	FIW $\rightarrow$ PWB $\rightarrow$ IDKS	-0.080	0.034	2.359	0.018	-0.139	-0.028	Yes
H_{4b}	FIW $\rightarrow$ PWB $\rightarrow$ EDKS	0.049	0.027	1.813	0.070	-0.004	0.102	No

Two-tailed bootstrapping (5,000 resamples); Significance level: $p < 0.05$; 95% Bias-Corrected Confidence Intervals

Note: LL = Lower Confidence Interval; UL = Upper Confidence Interval; FIW = Family-Interference-with-Work; WIF = Work-Interference-with-Family; EDKS = External Digital Knowledge Sharing; IDKS = Internal Digital Knowledge Sharing; PWB = Psychological Well-Being

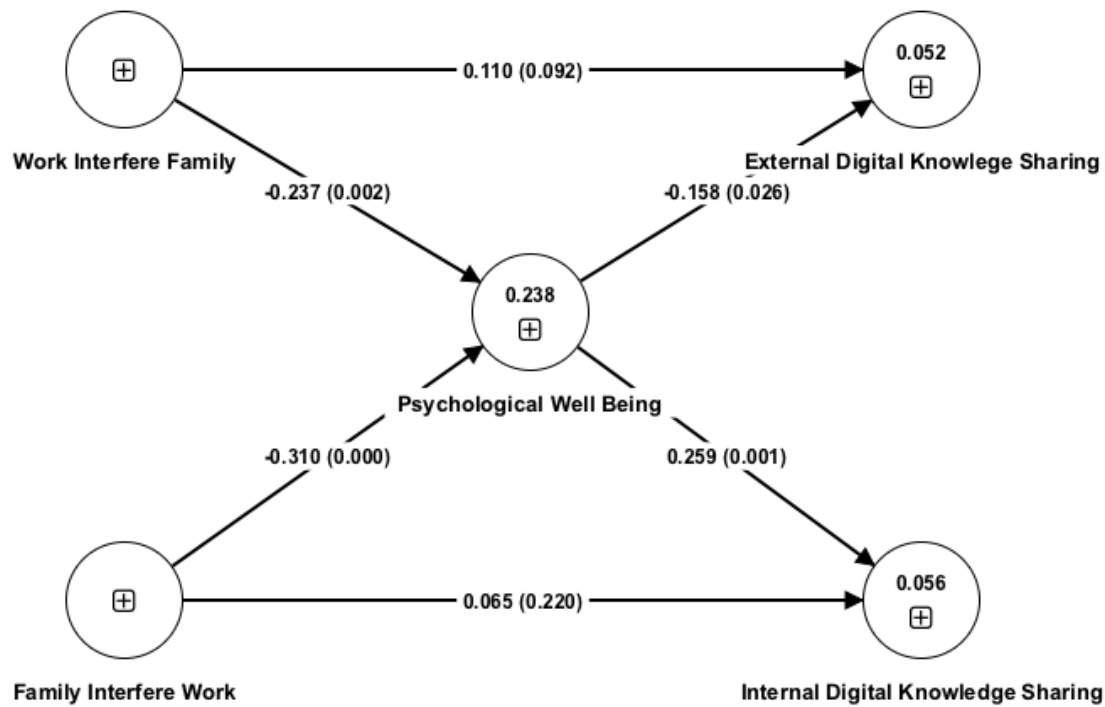


FIGURE 2. Structural model

DISCUSSION

Knowledge sharing in contemporary organizations now relies heavily on digital platforms, emphasizing the importance of both internal and external DKS within the framework of Role Theory (Lee 2018). Accordingly, this study set out to address three research questions, focusing on the direct and indirect effects of FIW and WIF on DKS via the mediating role of PWB. A total of 132 responses were gathered from WFH employees across various service industries (e.g., education, banking/finance/insurance, accounting, information technology, telecommunications, and consulting) in Malaysia and Pakistan.

The results of PLS-SEM show that WIF and FIW do not significantly influence external and internal DKS, respectively. These findings align with those of Schiuma et al. (2021), Eddleston and Mulki (2017), Khan et al. (2017), and Kim et al. (2015), implying that in the Malaysian and Pakistani service sectors, work-family conflict plays no significant role in remote workers' DKS. Vyas and Butakhieo's (2021) notion that WFH is impractical in certain environments may thus not hold true universally, at least in the context of these two service sectors. Their argument was premised on limited access to resources like office documents or technology, the blurring of personal and professional spaces, and the tendency of people in Hong Kong to live in multi-generational households with less physical space than their Western counterparts; yet, these constraints do not appear to have suppressed DKS among the present Malaysian and Pakistani sample.

Nonetheless, the results confirm that PWB is a significant underlying mechanism linking both WIF and FIW to IDKS, with both relationships being significant and negative. Previous studies have found that employee well-being can be disrupted by work-family conflict, leading to exhaustion and negative work-family interactions (Obrenovic et al. 2020; Vong & Tang 2017; Wang et al. 2019). The adverse impact on PWB can subsequently affect an employee's physical condition, behavior, cognition, and emotion in their day-to-day activities (Allen et al. 2000). A WFH employee's emotional strength contributes to PWB, which directly shapes their attitudes and behaviors. In the context of knowledge sharing, addressing PWB is crucial, as it influences workers' intrinsic motivation and is therefore a vital component of voluntary contributions to knowledge exchange (Kim 2021). As explained by the Conservation of Resources Theory, lower PWB leads to depleted internal resources, manifesting as a pessimistic outlook, less resilience, and decreased efficiency. By generating negative emotions, work-family conflict adversely affects PWB, resulting in negative attitudes toward discretionary duties such as knowledge sharing and reduced employee effectiveness (Obrenovic et al. 2020). This process underscores the role of PWB as a key underlying mechanism.

It is also important to consider the specific conditions under which these results were obtained. There is a significant difference between regular or intentional WFH and pandemic-enforced WFH. In knowledge-intensive sectors, WFH is usually a voluntary arrangement mutually agreed upon by employers and employees (Platts et al. 2022). The pandemic, however, pushed employees into abrupt and unprepared WFH situations, often without the essential competencies of communication, collaboration, adaptability, and schedule management (Pass & Ridgway 2022). Both employers and employees were forced to accept this transition, likely placing both parties in a "shock mode" that demanded rapid

adaptation to new work settings. Such involuntary WFH, particularly during periods of organizational change, produces negative outcomes like a social deficit arising from reduced interpersonal interaction (Parry et al. 2021). Indeed, WFH, telework, and other forms of remote work, which are already challenging under regular circumstances, become far more problematic during crises such as the pandemic (Al-Jubari et al. 2022).

Nevertheless, many organizations continue to implement hybrid work practices. In such environments, sufficient communication, feedback, and social and moral support from colleagues are critical for WFH employees to perform effectively (Costa et al. 2015). However, the sudden shift to widespread WFH has jeopardized social relationships and interactions among colleagues (Tønnessen et al. 2021). For instance, the reduction of ad hoc meetings during WFH has been found to hinder knowledge sharing (Waizenegger et al. 2020). The resulting lack of face-to-face interaction erodes trust between colleagues and undermines collaboration. Ultimately, employees who feel exposed to high interpersonal risk in the work setting tend to withdraw from collaborative activities, leading to reduced job performance (Obrenovic et al. 2020).

Although this study found that PWB mediates the effects of both FIW and WIF on EDKS, it does not mediate their effects on EDKS. Under two-tailed testing, both H_{3b} ($WIF \rightarrow PWB \rightarrow EDKS$) and H_{4b} ($FIW \rightarrow PWB \rightarrow EDKS$) were not supported, with small and statistically non-significant indirect effect values for both pathways. Several factors may explain this pattern. First, it is important to distinguish between the two components of work-family conflict. WIF refers to a person's inability to meet family demands due to work obligations, while FIW refers to a person's inability to meet work demands due to family pressures (Byron 2005). Work-related factors such as job involvement, work hours, workplace support, job stress, and schedule flexibility are more strongly associated with WIF, whereas non-work factors, including family support, non-work hours, family stress, number of children, spousal employment, and marital status, are more closely associated with FIW. In essence, job-related factors are expected to affect WIF more substantially, while personal and familial factors are more influential in shaping FIW.

The effect of FIW on EDKS is not significantly mediated by PWB (H_{4b} not supported; $\beta = 0.049$, $p = 0.070$, 95% CI $[-0.004, 0.102]$). Although the indirect effect is marginally positive, it did not reach statistical significance under two-tailed testing. This suggests that while family support resources may partially buffer family-related strain, the pathway is insufficient to significantly elevate PWB to a level that measurably enhances external knowledge sharing. The non-significant mediation may also be attributable to the relatively small sample size ($n = 132$), which limits statistical power (Fritz & MacKinnon 2007; Cohen 1988). Nevertheless, the positive direction of the effect is consistent with the theoretical expectations of resource conservation and person-environment fit. Stable contextual resources and social and familial support shape job outcomes in the long term by accumulating resources (Shin et al. 2021). When employees are supported by family, strain and exhaustion can be reduced, ultimately improving their well-being and performance.

The literature also corroborates that family support, particularly spousal support, enhanced employees' well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic. During this period, married individuals were found to be distinctly better at sustaining community relationships and managing stress, given their greater access to financial and social resources compared to their unmarried counterparts (Liu & Hsieh 2023). Liu and Hsieh's (2023) study also reported that unmarried individuals, including those who were cohabiting, divorced, widowed, or never married, generally reported greater unhappiness during the pandemic than their married counterparts. Meanwhile, Çemberci et al. (2022) showed that marital status contributes positively to work engagement, with married employees displaying stronger focus and involvement, particularly in post-pandemic and flexible work settings. Meyer et al. (2021) further found that women employees receive significant social support from their families, particularly their husbands, which improves their PWB, job performance, and organizational citizenship behavior. In fact, the demographic profile of the current study shows that 53% of respondents are married. This is consistent with prior research showing that spousal and family support enhances employee well-being (Chan et al. 2020; Soulsby & Bennett 2015) and subsequently improves knowledge sharing performance (Chung et al. 2015).

Likewise, PWB does not significantly mediate the influence of WIF on EDKS (H_{3b} not supported; $\beta = 0.037$, $p = 0.154$, 95% CI $[-0.014, 0.088]$). WIF is adversely shaped by work-related factors, and when employees perceive excessive pressure and stress, particularly in a pandemic environment, their motivation to engage with the work environment diminishes. Mansour and Tremblay (2016) found that workers who perceive organizational support for their personal lives dedicate more high-quality time to family, resulting in lower stress levels. Conversely, work overload, exhaustion, inadequate reinforcement, and limited autonomy can lead to dissatisfaction in both work and family domains. As mentioned earlier, the pandemic forced many workers into sudden and even involuntary WFH situations. The significant shift in the location and methods of work, training, and meetings has introduced various difficulties and ambiguities for workers (Sun et al. 2020). This situation is further exacerbated by insufficient support from supervisors or coworkers, which negatively impacts employees' physical and mental well-being (Restubog et al. 2020). As such, during periods of organizational change or crises, WFH practices can lead to negative consequences, including difficulty disengaging from work due to the constant virtual accessibility of the online workplace (Saridakis et al. 2023). Notably, high work demands, excessive workloads, and limited social support during prolonged WFH arrangements increase stress levels and undermine well-being (Al-Jubari et al. 2022), which in turn suppresses EDKS (Meyer et al. 2021).

Together, the rejection of H_{3b} and H_{4b} indicates that the mediation of PWB between work-family conflict and EDKS is not statistically robust under two-tailed testing in this sample. The non-significance of both direct and indirect relationships involving EDKS is likely explained by the cultural context of respondents from Malaysia and Pakistan, both

of which Hofstede (1980) characterized as high power distance cultures where employees are expected to comply with hierarchical authority, respect organizational rules, and follow formal communication procedures (De Long & Fahey 2000; Suppiah & Sandhu 2011). EDKS involves disclosing information beyond organizational boundaries; in this context, employees are generally unable to share information with external parties without prior approval or consent from their superiors (De Long & Fahey 2000; Suppiah & Sandhu 2011). As such, EDKS in high power distance cultures is governed more by compliance with authority and professional protocol than by voluntary behavior driven by PWB. Another possible reason is that incompatibility and miscommunication among external partners can impede efficient knowledge acquisition and creation (Song 2014). Without strong inter-partner bonds, knowledge transfer within an alliance network weakens (Inkpen et al. 2005) regardless of WIF arising from heavy workloads and inadequate organizational support.

IMPLICATIONS

This study presents significant theoretical contributions by validating an integrated framework that addresses gaps in the existing literature. Drawing on Role Theory, Conservation of Resources Theory, and Person-Environment Fit Theory, the findings confirm the influence of work-family conflict (WIF and FIW) on DKS through the mediating role of PWB among remote knowledge workers in the service sectors of Malaysia and Pakistan. As Muslim-majority countries with similar cultural settings, both nations share common challenges in growing and strengthening their service sectors, and each can learn from the other's practices in light of this study's findings. Although comparative analysis between the two countries could not be conducted effectively due to the insufficient sample size, the current research offers an avenue for future empirical investigations.

Apart from theoretical contributions, this study offers actionable managerial implications. In the post-pandemic era, WFH has become well-established and widely accepted. Organizations must therefore be mindful of actively engaging employees and supporting their PWB to enhance knowledge sharing in remote settings. Notably, the findings suggest that service sector managers should recognize the importance of PWB and accordingly, adopt targeted interventions that support employees' well-being in both remote and hybrid working environments. Managers should establish clear communication norms, workload management protocols, and well-defined role expectations, while also offering flexible scheduling and promoting work-life boundary management practices to help employees better cope with WIF and FIW. Regular well-being assessments, employee assistance programs, virtual social interactions, and mental health support initiatives can further help sustain the psychological health of remote workers. By fostering a supportive work culture, organizations can mitigate the adverse effects of work-family conflict and strengthen employees' PWB. Given that DKS is essential to organizational learning and innovation, investing in employees' PWB should be treated as a strategic priority.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations that propose directions for future research. First, the response rate was low, yielding an insufficient sample size that made comparative analysis between Malaysia and Pakistan not possible. Although both countries are Asian and share some cultural values (e.g., high power distance and collectivism), demographic variations exist in gender, age, industry composition, and broader institutional environments. Caution is therefore advised when generalizing the findings across these two contexts. Additionally, while this study advances understanding of the relationships among work-family conflict, PWB, and DKS, further investigation is warranted into contextual and organizational factors that may shape these relationships. Future research could examine how factors such as leadership style or team climate further influence the work-family conflict - PWB - DKS relationship. In the absence of proactive leadership, employees may struggle to initiate work-related interactions, and strong leadership could mitigate the negative consequences of work-family conflict on PWB and ultimately boost DKS (Tanpipat et al. 2021). This study also employed a cross-sectional design, which limits the ability to capture the dynamic and progressive nature of DKS. Longitudinal methods would allow future researchers to track the development of PWB, work-family conflict (WIF and FIW), and DKS over time. Finally, self-reported data may be susceptible to common method variance, although collinearity analysis in the present study ruled out the presence of common method bias.

CONCLUSION

As work cultures increasingly embrace WFH, technological advancements play a crucial role in improving productivity and performance. This study investigated the relationships among work-family conflict (WIF and FIW), PWB, and DKS. The findings reveal that the direct relationships, namely between FIW and IDKS and between WIF and EDKS, are not statistically significant. However, PWB significantly mediates the effects of WIF and FIW on IDKS, affirming the vital role of employees' well-being in explaining how work-family conflict can diminish knowledge sharing internally. In contrast, PWB does not significantly mediate the influence of WIF and FIW on EDKS. Overall, this study enhances understanding of the interplay among work-family conflict, PWB, and DKS in a WFH culture. The findings contribute empirical evidence on the mediating role of PWB in the relationship between work-family conflict and DKS. In doing so,

this article offers a valuable contribution to the WFH and knowledge management literature, particularly within the service sectors of Malaysia and Pakistan.

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX 1. Measurement items and sources

Construct		Item	Source
Internal Digital Knowledge Sharing (IDKS)		Routinely share knowledge using digital technologies. Routinely seek out knowledge using digital technologies. Routinely share ideas openly using digital technologies. The team is good at using team members' knowledge. Colleagues are willing to help others through digital technologies. Colleagues keep their best ideas (R)	Deng et al. (2022)
External Digital Knowledge Sharing (EDKS)		Meet and exchange ideas regularly with people outside this organization. Access people outside this organization and exchange new ideas and developments with them. Interact with people outside this organization to discuss suggestions and ideas. Available for sharing experiences with people outside this organization.	Carmeli et al. (2013)
Psychological Well-being (PWB)	Self-Acceptance (SA)	I like most aspects of my personality. When I look at the story of my life, I am pleased with how things have turned out. In many ways I feel disappointed about my achievements in life. (R)	Ryff and Keyes (1995)
	Positive Relations with Others (PR)	Maintaining close relationships has been difficult and frustrating for me. (R) People would describe me as a giving person, willing to share my time with others. (R) I have not experienced many warm and trusting relationships with others. (R)	
	Autonomy (AU)	I tend to be influenced by people with strong opinions. (R) I have confidence in my opinions, even if they are contrary to the general consensus. I judge myself by what I think is important, not by the values of what others think is important.	
	Environmental Mastery (EM)	The demands of everyday life often get me down. (R) In general, I feel I am in charge of the situation in which I live. I am good at managing the responsibilities of daily life.	
	Purpose in Life (PL)	Some people wander aimlessly through life, but I am not one of them. I live life one day at a time and don't really think about the future. (R) I sometimes feel as if I've done all there is to do in life. (R)	
	Personal Growth (PG)	For me, life has been a continuous process of learning, changing, and growth. I think it is important to have new experiences that challenge how I think about myself and the world. I gave up trying to make big improvements or changes in my life a long time ago. (R)	
Work-Family Conflict (WIF)		The demands of my work interfere with my home and family life. The amount of time my job takes up makes it difficult to fulfill family responsibilities. Things I want to do at home do not get done because of the demands my job puts on me. My job produces strain that makes it difficult to fulfill family duties. Due to work-related duties, I have to make changes to my plans for family activities.	Netemeyer et al. (1996)
Family-Work Conflict (FIW)		The demands of my family or spouse/partner interfere with work-related activities. I have to put off doing things at work because of demands on my time at home. Things I want to do at work don't get done because of the demands of my family or spouse/partner. My home life interferes with my responsibilities at work such as getting to work on time, accomplishing daily tasks, and working overtime. Family-related strain interferes with my ability to perform job-related duties.	