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Teachers' Work-family Conflict and Student Development in China: An Analysis Based on a Moderated Mediation Model

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Abstract: Against the backdrop of China's educational reforms, such as the Double Reduction Policy, Chinese teachers face unprecedented work-family conflict (WFC) due to heavy workloads and increased administrative responsibilities, yet the mechanism linking teachers' WFC to student comprehensive development remains underexplored in existing research. This study adopts a cross-sectional design to investigate this relationship, with a focus on the mediating role of turnover intention and the moderating role of job crafting behaviour, operationalising student development as mandated by China's Ministry of Education. Data were collected via an online survey from 583 full-time primary and secondary school teachers in Beijing, and a moderated mediation analysis was conducted using SPSS 27.0 and the PROCESS macro (Model 59), with gender, age, and professional title as control variables. The results show that WFC has no significant direct effect on student development, while turnover intention exerts a full mediating effect on the relationship between WFC and student development (effect=-0.106, SE=0.020, 95%CI [-0.148, -0.070]). Additionally, job crafting behaviour significantly moderates the link between turnover intention and student development (effect=0.179, SE=0.054, $t=3.314$, $p<0.01$), effectively attenuating the negative impact of turnover intention on student development. In contrast, its moderating effect on the WFC-turnover intention path is non-significant. Theoretically, this study enriches the application of the Conservation of Resources Theory and the Job Demands-Resources model in the educational context by uncovering the indirect mechanism by which WFC influences student development. Practically, it provides targeted implications for policymakers and school administrators: structural support is needed to alleviate WFC, and systematic interventions should be implemented to foster job crafting behaviour, thereby mitigating the adverse effects of turnover intention and promoting students' all-round development.

Keywords: Work-family conflict, Turnover intention, Job crafting behaviour, Student development, Chinese teachers.

Introduction

Work and family are two important domains in an individual's life and affect each other (Li et al., 2021; Handelzalts et al., 2024; Alsarve et al., 2024). The balance between them has a significant and positive correlation with psychological well-being (Sanoveriana & Fourianalistyawati, 2017; Bian & Sukor, 2024; Olivieri et al., 2024), reduces stress (Talip et al., 2021) and helps people live a satisfying, healthy and productive life (Kofodimos, 1993; Adisa et al., 2021). The imbalance between work and family, namely work-family conflict, may lead to negative consequences for work, non-work and personal outcomes, such as work alienation (Kobayashi et al., 2025; Dong et al., 2025), low job performance (Şahin & Yozgat, 2024), turnover intention (Belwal, 2023), ill-being (Babic et al., 2020; Fan et al., 2024), anxiety and stress (Kossek & Lee, 2017; Sun et al., 2024).

However, achieving a good balance between work and family is not easy. Employees from different industries may experience work-family conflict (Sanz-Vergel et al., 2025). In the field of education, teachers are no exception. After COVID-19, in developing countries like China, most families are facing significant challenges due to the economic downturn, which forces teachers to shoulder more family responsibilities. Meanwhile, teaching itself is a challenging, stressful and demanding job with high rates of burnout (Teng et al., 2024; Harrison et al., 2024; Ren, 2025; Beltman & Poulton, 2025). In addition, teachers undertake a heavier workload and more administrative requirements after the enactment of the "Double Reduction" Policy¹ in China. Research has shown that primary and secondary school teachers in China usually work for an average of more than 10h per day at school (Teng et al., 2024; Kong et al., 2023). As a result, Chinese

¹ According to The State Council Information Office, the "Double Reduction" Policy refers to a set of guidelines to ease the burden of excessive homework and off-campus tutoring for students undergoing compulsory education.

teachers are facing unprecedented challenges balancing work and family. They are more likely to have turnover intention (Harrison et al. 2024; Wang et al., 2024).

Turnover intention is generally regarded as the best predictor of actual turnover behaviour (Wong & Cheng, 2020; Zhu & Cheng, 2024), which may be disruptive for student academic attainment (Gibbons et al., 2021). In other words, the higher teachers' turnover intention, the more likely they are to leave the school. Probably, student development will be more affected. However, the influence of teachers on student development may be moderated by job crafting behaviour (Huang et al., 2022). It means individuals' efforts to redesign or modify their jobs (Dhanpat, 2025). Teachers who exhibit job crafting behaviours may actively cope with problems or conflicts in their work and family lives (Zheng et al., 2024). Hence, this study will treat turnover intention as a mediating variable and job crafting behaviour as a moderating variable to explore the direct and indirect influences of teachers' work-family on student development.

Exploring the link between WFC and student development is urgent in the current Chinese educational context: the Double Reduction Policy and post-pandemic recovery have exacerbated WFC. In contrast, students' comprehensive development in six dimensions is a core goal of China's education modernisation. This research benefits society by providing evidence for policies to alleviate teachers' WFC and optimize school management, and advances academia by enriching educational application of WFC theory and filling the gap of empirical research on WFC and students' comprehensive development in Chinese context—existing studies mostly focus on the impact of WFC on teachers themselves or the single effect of turnover intention on students' academic performance, with little exploration of the indirect mechanism and the moderating role of job crafting behavior. This study aims to explore new empirical findings on this relationship in China's unique educational and cultural context, clarifying the transmission pathways and boundary conditions between teachers' WFC and student development. This study focuses on exploring the influence mechanism of teachers' WFC on students' six-dimensional comprehensive development, with the core focus on verifying the mediating role of turnover intention and the moderating role of job crafting behaviour in this relationship, and analysing the particularity of this mechanism under China's teacher culture and educational policy background. The overall aim of this study is to construct and empirically test a moderated mediation model to reveal how WFC affects student development, and provide scientific empirical evidence and practical suggestions for education administrators to alleviate teachers' WFC, reduce turnover intention and foster job crafting behaviour. To achieve this aim, three core research questions are proposed: (1) Do teachers' WFC have a direct, significant negative impact on students' comprehensive development in the Chinese educational context? (2) Does turnover intention mediate the relationship between teachers' WFC and student development, and if so, is it full or partial mediation? (3) Does job crafting behaviour moderate the paths of WFC→turnover intention, WFC→student development and turnover intention→student development, and if so, what are the characteristics of the moderation effect? Hence, this study will treat turnover intention as a mediating variable and job crafting behaviour as a moderating variable to examine the direct and indirect effects of teachers' work-family conflict on student development.

Literature Review (Cambria, font size 12 pt, bold, left-alignment)

Teachers' work-family conflict and its impact

Work-family conflict, or work-family interference, is a type of inter-role conflict (Kahn et al., 1964; Handelzalts et al., 2024) that occurs when the demands of work and family roles conflict or are mutually incompatible (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Byron, 2005; Zakaria & Ismail, 2017). It is increasingly recognised as a bidirectional construct (Qiu & Fan, 2015; Shockley et al., 2017; Smoktunowicz et al., 2023). Specifically speaking, work-to-family conflict occurs when work interferes with family life, while family-to-work conflict occurs when family life interferes with work (Frone et al., 1997; Aboobaker, 2017). Teachers

have multiple roles, such as those of parents and educators (Regulo, 2024), so they often experience conflict between student development and family responsibilities.

The consequences of teachers' work-family conflict are diverse and multidimensional, including turnover intention, a major concern in the field of education (Nurmukhamed et al., 2025). It is a subjective willingness to leave the current job within a specified period (Lazzari et al., 2022; Contreras, 2024), indicating the likelihood of leaving the profession (Belete, 2018; Gün et al., 2025). Turnover intention may lead to lower job satisfaction and performance, diminished enthusiasm, and reduced self-efficacy, ultimately undermining teacher well-being and student achievement (Saeed et al., 2014; Liu et al., 2025). As student performance is increasingly used to monitor and evaluate teachers' teaching achievement (Glassow, 2024), the influence of teachers' turnover intention on student development should not be neglected. Hong et al. (2023) found that turnover intention negatively affects children's outcomes because when teachers leave the profession, the close relationship between children and teachers is disrupted, potentially leading to emotional and social risks for children. Gibbons et al. (2021) noted that teachers' turnover typically harms students' performance. Sorensen and Ladd (2020) conclude that turnover hurts students' academic performance by disrupting the continuity of the learning process. Overall, most studies have confirmed the negative impact of turnover intention, especially turnover behaviour, on students. Still, few have discussed the impact of teachers' work-family conflict on student development through turnover intention.

Student development and its cause

Student development is an important indicator for evaluating educational quality (Rodríguez et al., 2022). Rodgers (1990) defined student development as how a student grows, progresses, or enhances his or her developmental capabilities as a result of enrollment in an institution of higher education. Long (2012) highlighted that students should be developed in psychology, cognition, interaction with the environment and social responsibility. In China, student development is comprehensive and all-round, aiming to foster a new generation of young people with moral, intellectual, physical, and aesthetic grounding and a hard-working spirit (The State Council of the People's Republic of China, 2019).

Many factors influence student development, among which teachers matter (Chetty et al., 2014). They make a difference in student development at different levels. Regarding academic outcomes and progress, Brophy and Jere (1986) conducted a review of the literature that indicates that students achieve more when their teachers manage the classroom effectively, check homework seriously, adapt curriculum materials to students' characteristics, etc. With respect to cognitive development, teachers with growth mindsets show a mild, positive, and statistically significant association with students' growth mindsets (Mesler & Corbin, 2021). In terms of emotional states, when teachers experience work-family conflict, they tend to be depressed, annoyed or unkind. Teachers' emotions may impact students through direct transmission effects and indirect effects via teacher behaviours (Frenzel, 2021; Li et al., 2025). To conclude, teachers not only influence students' academic performance and achievement but also their psychological well-being, cognitive development and emotions. These influences can be both direct and indirect.

The role of turnover intention

According to the Conservation of Resources Theory, individuals tend to preserve, protect, and acquire resources (Hobfoll, 1989). Both potential and actual threats of resource loss can trigger tension and stress in individuals (Liao et al., 2022), which can potentially reduce the willingness to take proactive actions, leading to negative internal emotions and output effects, such as low job satisfaction, job burnout, high turnover intention, etc (Chen et al., 2024). For teachers, when teachers' excessive workload interferes with their family life, they will increase their resource investment in the family to maintain their quality of life, thereby reducing their resource investment in the teaching field, leading to decreased work vitality and

enthusiasm (Wei et al., 2024), resulting in a decrease in work performance and work engagement (Li, 2015). Ultimately, when resource conflicts reach an imbalance, teachers are more likely to engage in role avoidance, that is, turnover intention (Zhang et al., 2022).

Turnover intention can indirectly affect student development by influencing teachers' internal and external behavioural responses. On the one hand, turnover intention affects teachers' external work engagement. Several empirical studies confirm a negative correlation between teacher turnover and student achievement. Ronfeldt et al. (2014) found that turnover significantly reduces student math and ELA scores. Similarly, Gibbons et al. (2018) observed that higher turnover rates were associated with slight declines in exam scores.

On the other hand, turnover intention impairs teacher-student emotional communication and classroom support by affecting teachers' internal psychological emotions, hindering student development. According to Self-Determination Theory (SDT), an individual's behavioural motivation and development depend on the degree to which three basic psychological needs are satisfied: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. When these needs are satisfied, individuals are more inclined to form intrinsic motivation, exhibiting higher levels of engagement, persistence, and creativity, thereby promoting their positive development at the cognitive, emotional, and behavioural levels (Zhang et al., 2018; Wang et al., 2025). Under this theoretical framework, if teachers can provide students with a self-supporting environment, it will help meet their psychological needs for autonomy, stimulate their internal motivation, and ultimately improve academic performance. However, teachers' turnover intention may undermine the stability of this supportive environment by affecting their teaching engagement, student interaction, and emotional support (Zhang et al., 2022), thereby indirectly affecting students' psychological needs satisfaction and academic achievement.

The role of job crafting behaviour

As an active form of self-regulation, job crafting behaviour manifests as employees' spontaneous adjustments to job demands and resources to achieve or optimise personal work goals (Tims et al., 2012). Based on the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017), job characteristics can be categorised into two types: job demands that deplete individual resources and job resources that replenish individual resources. Employees become positive when resources sufficiently cover demands. When demands chronically outweigh resources, negative outcomes emerge. Job crafting behaviour serves as a core regulatory strategy for JD-R imbalances, optimising resources and transforming demands to minimise depletion and enhance well-being. It mitigates psychological exhaustion's negative impact on occupational well-being (Wang et al., 2025), safeguards cognitive and emotional resources through management (Petrou et al., 2012), and counteracts emotional overload via localised innovations and interactional restructuring (Zheng et al., 2024), thereby blocking the transmission of resource depletion.

Grounded in Job Embeddedness Theory, turnover intention is influenced by the degree of individual-organisational "Links-Fit-Sacrifice" (Mitchell et al., 2001). High embeddedness can suppress turnover intention despite job dissatisfaction when teachers form extensive social networks, achieve value alignment and perceive high sacrifice costs. Studies indicate that employees maintain embeddedness through autonomous behaviours such as cross-departmental collaboration and work method adjustments (Tims et al., 2012; Zheng et al., 2024). However, work-family conflict erodes embeddedness through sustained resource depletion, such as reduced collaboration and undermining professional identity caused by fatigue and role conflict, thereby inducing turnover intention. As a resource-regenerating self-regulation strategy (Tims et al., 2012), job crafting behaviour enables teachers to repair damaged embeddedness dimensions, sustaining organisational embeddedness and reducing turnover intention.

According to the Conservation of Resources Theory (Hobfoll, 2001), individuals strive to acquire and protect resources to prevent negative outcomes from resource loss. Work-family conflict persistently depletes teacher resources such as time, energy and emotion, potentially triggering reduced instructional investment. Job crafting behaviour may interrupt the depletion of resources for teaching behaviour transmission through resource supplementation and demand transformation, thereby protecting the pedagogical efficacy required for student development (Petrone et al., 2012). Furthermore, turnover intention results from job dissatisfaction, resource exhaustion, emotional exhaustion, or obstructed resource acquisition (Griffeth et al., 2000). High turnover intention signals entry into a resource-protective state (Hobfoll, 2001), in which teachers partially or fully disengage cognitively and emotionally. Behaviorally, they may reduce investment by diminishing lesson depth and simplifying student interactions to conserve residual resources for impending turnover or job searches. Job crafting behaviour, however, through proactive resource adjustment like innovating teaching methods and restructuring interactions (Zheng, Huang, & Yu, 2024), may sustain foundational instructional commitment, thereby attenuating the negative impact of turnover intention on student development.

Hence, this study aims to address the following research questions:

1. Do teachers' work-family conflict directly affect student development?
2. Does turnover intention mediate the relationship between work-family conflict and student development?
3. Does job crafting behaviour moderate the relationship between work-family conflict and turnover intention, the direct path between work-family conflict and student development, and the relationship between turnover intention and student development?

Based on the discussion and review above, five hypotheses are proposed as follows. The research model is shown in Fig. 1.

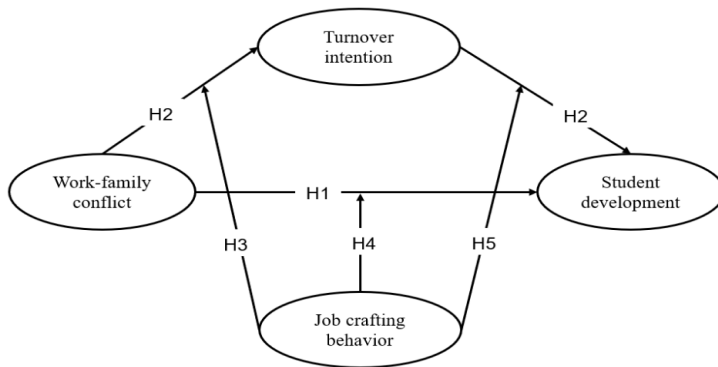
H1: Teachers' work-family conflict negatively influences student development.

H2: Turnover intention mediates the relationship between teachers' work-family conflict and student development.

H3: Job crafting behaviour negatively moderates the relationship between teachers' work-family conflict and turnover intention.

H4: Job crafting behaviour negatively moderates the direct path between teachers' work-family conflict and student development.

H5: Job crafting behaviour negatively moderates the relationship between turnover intention and student development.

Figure 1*Proposed moderated mediation model*

Materials and Methods

Participants

Participants were recruited through Wenjuanxing, a widely used online survey platform in China that allows random distribution and anonymous responses. The target population was full-time teachers working in public primary and secondary schools in Beijing. A total of 1,082 teachers accessed the survey, and 583 completed questionnaires were retained after removing incomplete or inconsistent responses. Participants were given three days to complete the survey voluntarily to reduce time pressure and potential bias. Demographic and professional characteristics are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1

Sample demographics of the participants (N = 583)

Variable	Category	Sample	
		N	Percent(%)
Gender	Male	142	24.3
	Female	441	75.7
Age	X < 30	83	14.2
	30 ≤ X ≤ 40	202	34.7
	X > 40	298	51.1
Marital status	Married	497	85.2
	Unmarried	86	14.8
Education level	Junior college and below	40	6.9
	Bachelor's degree	455	78.0
	Master's degree	88	15.1
	No title	27	4.6
Professional title	Primary title	167	28.7
	Intermediate title	248	42.5
	Senior title	141	24.2

Measures

In addition to demographic data and questionnaire-collected data on some control variables, four key factors in this study were measured using scales adapted into Chinese.

Work-family conflict: Work-family conflict was measured with a scale adapted from Netemeyer et al. (1996). There are ten items in total, including “I am too tired to do things I like after work” and “There is so much work to do that I have to give up some of my hobbies.” The scale uses a 6-point scoring system, with options ranging from 1 (“strongly disagree”) to 6 (“strongly agree”). Higher scores indicate greater work-family conflict. In this study, the Cronbach’s alpha coefficient for the work-family conflict scale was 0.815.

Student development: Student development was assessed using six items adapted from the Notice on Issuing the Guidelines for the Evaluation of Compulsory Education Quality (Ministry of Education of China, 2019). The scale covers six dimensions, including moral development, intellectual development, physical health, aesthetic literacy, labour skills, and social adaptation. Sample items include “Students demonstrate good moral character and behaviour” and “Students achieve expected academic progress.” Responses were recorded on a 6-point scale from 1 (“very poor”) to 6 (“excellent”). The scale demonstrated excellent reliability in this study (Cronbach’s $\alpha = 0.965$).

Turnover intention: Turnover intention was measured using four items from Mobley et al. (1979), adapted to the teaching context. Sample items include “I often think about leaving my current school” and “I will probably look for a new job in the next year.” Responses ranged from 1 (“strongly disagree”) to 6 (“strongly agree”). The scale showed acceptable reliability (Cronbach’s $\alpha = 0.727$), consistent with previous studies using brief turnover measures.

Job crafting behaviour: Job crafting behaviour was assessed using the 21-item scale developed by Tims et al. (2012), which comprises four dimensions: increasing structural job resources, increasing social job resources, increasing challenging job demands, and decreasing hindering job demands. Sample items include “I try to develop my capabilities” and “I try to ensure that my work is less emotionally taxing.” Responses were recorded on a 6-point frequency scale from 1 (“never”) to 6 (“always”). The scale showed high internal consistency (Cronbach’s $\alpha = 0.936$).

Data Analysis

Data were analysed using SPSS 27.0 and the PROCESS macro (Model 59). Common method bias was assessed using Harman’s single-factor test, which showed that the first factor accounted for 36.4% of the variance, below the 40% threshold. Descriptive statistics, correlations, and moderated mediation analyses were conducted. Bootstrap confidence intervals (5,000 resamples) were used to test indirect and moderating effects. Control variables included gender, age, and professional title.

Results

Common method bias test

To prevent common method bias, the questionnaires were completed and collected anonymously. Harman’s single-factor test was conducted to assess the common method bias. The results indicated the extraction of 7 common factors, each with an eigenvalue greater than 1.0, from all the question items. The first factor accounted for 36.4% of the variance, which was below the 40% critical value. These findings suggest that there is no common-method bias in this study.

According to Table 2, the mean work-family conflict score was 3.66, indicating a medium level of conflict. The mean turnover intention score was 2.33, indicating that teachers in the sample had low turnover intention. And the mean values for student development and job crafting behaviour were high, respectively 4.93 and 5.02. Additionally, work-family conflict was significantly and positively related to

turnover intention ($r = 0.301, p < 0.001$). And it was not significantly related to student development ($r = -0.068, p = 0.101$) or job crafting behaviour ($r = 0.000, p = 0.997$). Student development was significantly related to turnover intention ($r = -0.392, p < 0.001$) and job crafting behaviour ($r = 0.425, p < 0.001$). Turnover intention was significantly and negatively related to job crafting behaviour ($r = -0.305, p < 0.001$).

Table 2

Descriptive statistics and correlation analysis (N=583)

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4
1=Work-family conflict	3.66	0.85	1			
2=Student development	4.93	0.94	-0.068	1		
3=Turnover intention	2.33	1.02	0.301**	-0.392**	1	
4=Job crafting behavior	5.02	0.65	0.000	0.425**	-0.305**	1

Note: M=mean; SD=standard variation. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$ (two-tailed)

Evaluations of the moderated mediating model

The moderated mediation analysis was conducted using PROCESS Model 59. The direct effect of work-family conflict on student development was not significant (effect=0.053, SE=0.043, 95%CI [-0.032, 0.138]). The indirect effect through turnover intention was significant (effect=-0.106, SE=0.020, 95%CI [-0.148, -0.070]), supporting full mediation.

To explore the model of how work-family conflict affects student development, this study used Model 59 in SPSS macro PROCESS. While controlling for factors such as gender, age and professional title, it analysed the mediating role of turnover intention and the moderating role of job crafting behaviour between work-family conflict and student development, with work-family conflict as the independent variable, student development as the dependent variable, turnover intention as the mediator, and job crafting behaviour as the moderator.

According to Table 3, the direct path from work-family conflict to student development was not significant (effect=0.053, SE=0.043, 95%CI [-0.032, 0.138]), because the 95%CI included 0. The indirect path from work-family conflict to student development via turnover intention was significant (effect = -0.106, SE = 0.020, 95% CI = [-0.148, -0.070]). Thus, the mediating effect was valid. Besides, due to the insignificant direct path, turnover intention fully mediated the relationship between work-family conflict and student development. Thus, H1 was not verified, but H2 was supported.

Table 3

Test of the mediating effect of turnover intention

Path	Effect	SE	95%CI	
			Lower	Upper
Direct effect	0.053	0.043	-0.032	0.138
Indirect effect	-0.106	0.020	-0.148	-0.070

Regarding moderation effects, job crafting behaviour did not significantly moderate the path between work-family conflict and turnover intention (effect = -0.028, SE = 0.063, $t = -0.442, p = 0.659$). However, it significantly moderated the path between turnover intention and student development (effect size = 0.179,

SE = 0.054, $t = 3.314$, $p < 0.01$). The interaction between work-family conflict and job crafting behaviour on student development was also significant (effect = -0.187, SE = 0.056, $t = -3.328$, $p < 0.01$). Simple slope analysis indicated that the negative effect of turnover intention on student development was weaker at high levels of job crafting behaviour (see Table 5 and Fig. 2).

Table 4

Test of the moderated mediating model.

Variables (N=583)		Overall Fit Coefficient					
Result variable	Predictive variable	R	R-sq	F	effect	SE	t
TI		0.465	0.216	19.747			
	WFC				0.355	0.047	7.559***
	JCB				-0.467	0.059	-7.917***
	WFC×JCB				-0.028	0.063	-0.442
SD		0.548	0.301	24.600			
	WFC				0.053	0.043	1.216
	TI				-0.299	0.037	-8.164***
	JCB				0.407	0.058	7.077***
	WFC×JCB				-0.187	0.056	-3.328**
	TI×JCB				0.179	0.054	3.314**

Note: WFC=work-family conflict; TI=turnover intention; SD=student development; JCB=job crafting behavior. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$ (two-tailed)

Further simple slope analysis revealed that when job crafting behaviour was at a low level (M-1SD) (Fig. 2), turnover intention significantly and negatively predicted student development, with the effect size of -0.416 (95%CI [-0.517, -0.314]). When job crafting behaviour was high (M+1SD), the predictive effect of turnover intention on student development was still negative, with the effect size of -0.183 (95% CI [-0.281,- 0.085]). However, comparing the slopes of the two lines indicates that the moderating effect of low job crafting behaviour on the impact of turnover intention on student development is more significant than that of high job crafting behaviour. Overall, the moderating effect of job crafting behaviour on the relationship between turnover intention and student development is positive, aligning with the result in Table 4.

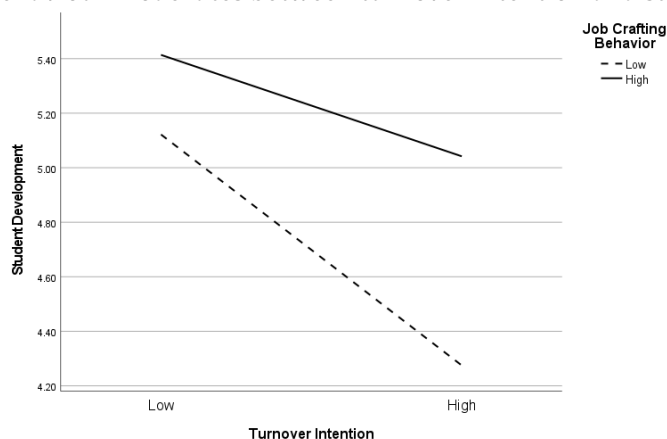
Table 5

Moderated mediating effects at different levels of job crafting behaviour.

	JCB	Effect	SE	95%CI
TI→SD	M-1SD	-0.416	0.052	[-0.517, -0.314]
	M	-0.299	0.037	[-0.371, -0.227]
	M+1SD	-0.183	0.050	[-0.281,- 0.085]

Figure 2

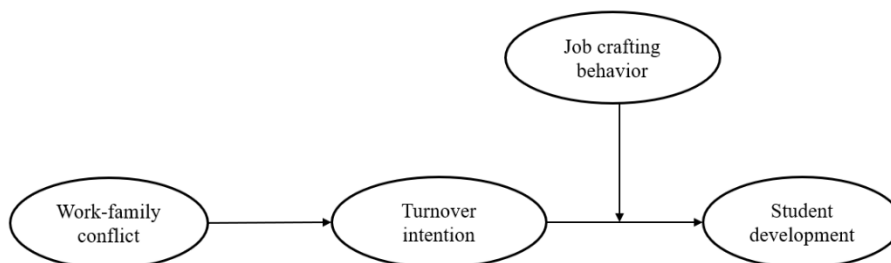
Job crafting behaviour moderates between turnover intention and student development.



According to Table 4, the mediating effect of turnover intention between work-family conflict and student development is significant. Meanwhile, job crafting behaviour only serves as a moderator between turnover intention and student development. With improvements of job crafting behaviour, the negative impact of turnover intention on student development is gradually decreasing. The moderating role of job crafting behaviour is not significant for work-family conflict and turnover intention, or for work-family conflict and student development. Thus, it can be concluded that job crafting behaviour only moderates the indirect path from turnover intention to student development in this mediating model. Consequently, only H5 is supported. The actual model of this study is as follows (Fig. 3).

Figure 3

The framework of the moderated mediation model in this study.



Discussion

This study examined a moderated mediation model linking teachers' work-family conflict to student development via turnover intention, with job crafting behaviour as a moderator. The results indicate that work-family conflict does not directly affect student development, but exerts an indirect negative effect through increased turnover intention. Job crafting behaviour was found to buffer the negative impact of turnover intention on student development, but did not moderate the conflict–turnover intention link. Below, we interpret these findings in light of theory and prior research.

Teachers' work-family conflict has no significant direct impact on student development

This study found that teachers' work-family conflict has no significant direct effect on students' development (effect=0.053, SE=0.043, 95% CI [-0.032, 0.138]). Previous studies have shown that the higher

the conflict between family and work, the lower the employee's job performance. Tewal et al. (2021), Yan et al. (2022), and Dharmawan et al. (2024) consistently found that work-family conflict directly reduces employee performance in banking, aviation, and insurance sectors, respectively. Wei et al. (2025) further demonstrated that this negative effect occurs through worsened sleep quality among manufacturing workers. However, these studies mostly explore employee job performance in the context of factories and enterprises. Although student development falls under teacher job performance, there are still some differences in conclusions compared to related research in factories and enterprises. This article explores the impact of teachers' work-family conflict on students' development in the context of Chinese culture and finds that although the impact is negative, it is not significant.

This phenomenon may be traced back to China's unique teacher culture. In the West, teaching is primarily viewed as a specialised profession, whereas in China, since ancient times, "respecting teachers and valuing education" has been the core value of Chinese civilisation (Liu, 2022). Under this tradition, teachers hold higher social status and prestige, thus possessing a stronger sense of mission and spiritual consciousness. They are deeply influenced by the ethical character of the spirits of educators (Xu et al., 2025), with the values of "having a big heart" and "enjoying teaching and loving students". They have a strong work ethic and are willing to work hard and be patient. When faced with problems and difficulties, Chinese teachers are often able to solve them on their own, always keeping the student at the centre. Therefore, when Chinese teachers experience work-family conflict, they can still wholeheartedly devote themselves to education and teaching, wholeheartedly promote student development, and not have a significant negative effect on their development.

Future research can expand into cross-cultural contexts to explore whether work-family conflict experienced by teachers from different cultural backgrounds affects student development.

Turnover intention fully mediates the relationship between teachers' work-family conflict and student development

Turnover intention fully mediates the relationship between work-family conflict and student development (effect = -0.106, SE = 0.020, 95% CI = [-0.148, -0.070]). Although teachers' work-family conflict does not exhibit a significant direct effect on student development, research findings confirm that turnover intention serves as a full mediator in this relationship. Specifically, increased work-family conflict significantly predicts higher turnover intention (effect=0.355, SE=0.047, $t=7.559$, $p<0.001$), which, in turn, significantly and negatively predicts student development (effect=-0.299, SE=0.037, $t=-8.164$, $p<0.001$).

This aligns with the Conservation of Resources Theory (Hobfoll, 1989). Work-family conflict is reflected in competition and consumption of limited resources, such as time, energy, and emotions, between teachers in the work and family domains. Excessive conflict can deplete teachers' limited resources, prompting them to take resource conservation actions. Our analysis confirms that work-family conflict significantly increases turnover intention, as teachers seek to mitigate resource loss by disengaging from the current work environment. This turnover intention, reflecting psychological withdrawal, subsequently reduces resource allocation to teaching and negatively impacts student development. The absence of a direct WFC→SD effect validates turnover intention as a full mediator, consistent with Conservation of Resources Theory. (Hobfoll, 1989; Wei et al., 2024). Consequently, from this perspective, the work-family conflict experienced by Chinese teachers should not be disregarded despite its non-significant direct effect on student development, given its empirically established indirect negative impact mediated through heightened turnover intention.

Job Crafting Behaviour Exclusively Moderates the Relationship between Turnover Intention and Student Development

The results demonstrate that turnover intention negatively impacts student development, but this effect is moderated by the level of job crafting behaviour (effect=0.179, SE=0.054, $t=3.314$, $p<0.01$). Specifically, high-level job crafting behaviour weakens the negative impact of turnover intention on student development, whereas low levels of job crafting behaviour intensify it. Despite turnover intentions, teachers with high-level job crafting behaviour may still maintain instructional investment and implement systematic work transition protocols, thereby mitigating disruptions to student development during turnover. Conversely, teachers with low-level job crafting behaviour tend to exhibit resource-protective withdrawal, manifesting as reduced lesson preparation depth and simplified teacher-student interactions, which amplifies negative impacts on student development.

From the Job Demands-Resources model perspective (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017), job crafting behaviour breaks resource-depleting cycles by restructuring demands and amplifying resources, thereby sustaining pedagogical efficacy during turnover transitions (Tims et al., 2013). According to the Conservation of Resources Theory (Hobfoll, 2001), job crafting behaviour delays entry into resource conservation states, extending professional commitment until actual turnover. This finding aligns with Wang et al. (2025), who found that job crafting behaviour moderated the relationship between psychological exhaustion and job well-being through analogous resource management pathways. Crucially, Zheng et al. (2024) documented that Chinese EFL teachers used bidirectional gratitude mechanisms to sustain instructional engagement in the face of turnover intention, providing direct empirical support for this moderation model.

Additionally, the results indicate that job crafting behaviour does not moderate the relationship between work-family conflict and turnover intention. This suggests that the impact of work-family conflict on turnover intention is objective, and that such intention may be understood as a form of emotional venting for teachers coping with conflict, rather than necessarily leading to actual turnover behaviour. Furthermore, the empirical data show that job crafting behavior does not moderate the relationship between work-family conflict and student development, as their direct path was not significant (effect=0.053, SE=0.043, 95% CI [-0.032, 0.138]).

Implications

Firstly, research results show that work-family conflict cannot directly influence student development, but it can negatively affect student development through turnover intention. This means that work-family conflict can induce various other negative factors (Martinsone et al., 2024; Qin, 2021), then influencing student development. Especially for Chinese teachers, characterized by high resilience and ability to endure hardships (Du, 2025; Sun et al., 2024), teachers' work-family conflict should not be infinitely increased simply because they hold abilities to overcome difficulties and stress (Wang, 2025; Zhang, 2025), thereby exerting a negative impact on student development, highlighting the imperative to reduce teachers' work-family conflict. First of all, labor laws must be strictly enforced to protect teachers' personal time, ensuring reasonable working hours and fair compensation for overtime (Kim, 2013). Next, schools should reduce non-teaching tasks, such as excessive paperwork and administrative duties, so educators can focus on their core responsibilities (Chen, 2022). Finally, both teachers and schools should adopt a "teaching priority" (Li et al., 2024; Pan et al., 2023), prioritizing educational quality (Lee & Lee, 2024). By addressing legal protections, workload management, and core priorities, we can significantly reduce work-family conflict and support teachers' well-being (Cinamon & Rich, 2005; Hong et al., 2021; Seong-Hee & Yang, 2024).

Secondly, according to the data, job crafting behaviour is positively related to student development and negatively related to turnover intention. In this research model, job crafting behaviour serves as a moderator between turnover intention and student development. In other words, job crafting behavior can reduce the negative impact of turnover intention on student development. Also, teachers' job crafting behaviour is beneficial for improving teachers' work performance and achievements (Raquel Perez-Nebra et al., 2022). Hence, it is necessary to focus on reinforcing teachers' job crafting behaviour.

To begin with, providing comprehensive digital tool support is essential, equipping educators with AI-assisted grading systems, collaborative online platforms, and adaptive learning technologies (Alfredo et al., 2024; Lee et al., 2024). These can significantly reduce administrative burdens while creating space for pedagogical innovation. Secondly, institutional structures should be redesigned to grant teachers enhanced autonomy and flexibility, whether through customizable curricula, flexible scheduling options, or greater decision-making authority in classroom management (Grant et al., 2020; Runge et al., 2023). Most crucially, sustained investment in professional development must be prioritised, including targeted training programs, mentorship initiatives, and clear career advancement pathways (Abakah, 2023). By implementing these measures collectively, schools can cultivate an environment where teachers feel both enabled and inspired to continuously redefine and optimise their professional roles, ultimately leading to improved job crafting behaviour (Nie et al., 2023; Shang, 2022).

Moreover, research results indicate that teachers' turnover intention is more influenced by the environment. Thus, efforts should be focused on improving their working environment. According to Job Embeddedness Theory, a supportive work environment strengthens teachers' psychological embeddedness and material embeddedness, increasing retention (Biddle, 2010; Gong, 2012). Poor conditions in either dimension reduce attachment, raising turnover risk (Robinson et al., 2013; Wilke et al., 2011). Therefore, it is necessary to improve teachers' work environment.

For one thing, to maximise teacher satisfaction, schools should focus on intrinsic motivators, such as providing professional autonomy, meaningful recognition, and clear career progression pathways (Zhou & Hawrot, 2025). Concurrently, to minimise dissatisfaction, institutions must address extrinsic factors. It is supposed to ensure manageable workloads through streamlined administrative processes, offer competitive compensation packages, and maintain well-resourced classrooms (Cupidore, 2017). For another thing, implementing supportive mentorship programs and fostering positive school cultures further reinforce these two aspects. This dual approach creates an environment where educators feel both valued and practically supported in their vital roles (Hollingworth et al., 2018; Karcher, 2008).

Limitations

There are several limitations in this study. First, the study provides basic information about participants, including gender, age, marital status, educational level, and professional title. Still, it did not explore the influence of these variables on the relationship between teachers' work-family conflict and student development. A further study will be needed to determine how gender, age, and other variables can affect the outcomes identified. Secondly, given the research design and data collection methods, questionnaires were distributed only to teachers in Beijing, and the sample was relatively limited. It might not represent the entire Chinese nation. In future research, large-sample investigations can be conducted both in China and in other countries. Thirdly, this study adopts a cross-sectional design, which collects static data at a single time point and has inherent limitations for causal inference. It is unable to reveal the causal sequence and dynamic developmental changes among core variables, such as teachers' work-family conflict, turnover intention, and student development, nor can it verify the long-term directional influence among variables. Future research can adopt a longitudinal tracking design to collect multi-wave panel data by following teachers and their corresponding students for a long time, to accurately capture the dynamic

changes of variables and verify the causal relationship and temporal effect among them; cross-lagged panel design can also be used to further clarify the causal sequence between variables and enhance the causal inference of the research conclusions. Fourthly, data comprising self-reports may be subject to subjective bias. Future research should triangulate teacher reports, observation and student reports.

Conclusion

The present study examined an underexplored topic in teachers' work-family conflict within the Chinese educational context, using a moderated mediation framework. The results revealed that teachers' work-family conflict did not influence student development directly, but indirectly, negatively and significantly through turnover intention. As teachers may proactively reshape job demands and resources, their job crafting behaviour mitigated the adverse effect of turnover intention on student development. Still, it didn't moderate the direct relations between work-family conflict and turnover intention or between work-family conflict and student development. These findings can not only help people gain deeper insight into Chinese teachers but also help policy-makers and school administrators reduce teachers' workload and create a supportive environment for teaching.

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Conflict of Interest

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

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