

The Spill-Over Of Work–Family Conflict On Career Satisfaction: The Role Of Cynicism And The Boundary Condition Of Organizational Cohesion

Dewi Trirahayu

Economics and business Faculty, Universitas Pancasila

Email: dewitrirahayu@univpancasila.ac.id

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine how and when work–family conflict (WFC) affects career satisfaction, both directly and indirectly through cynicism, as well as the moderating role of organizational cohesion as a boundary condition. Data were collected via a questionnaire survey, yielding 446 valid responses. The research model was analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The findings confirm that WFC positively influences cynicism and negatively affects career satisfaction. Cynicism was found to have a negative relationship with career satisfaction and to mediate the link between WFC and career satisfaction. Furthermore, organizational cohesion served as an effective buffer, weakening the positive effect of WFC on cynicism and mitigating the negative indirect effect of WFC on career satisfaction. This study contributes to organizational behavior by identifying cynicism as a key mechanism through which WFC reduces career satisfaction. It also shows that organizational cohesion can mitigate the negative effects of WFC, particularly in supportive environments. Human resource practitioners should recognize work–family conflict as a strategic threat that can foster cynicism and ultimately diminish employees' career satisfaction.

Keywords: *Work–family conflict, Career satisfaction, Cynicism, Organizational cohesion, Social exchange theory*

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menguji bagaimana dan kapan konflik kerja–keluarga (work–family conflict/WFC) memengaruhi kepuasan karier, baik secara langsung maupun tidak langsung melalui sinisme, serta peran moderasi kohesi organisasi sebagai kondisi batas (boundary condition). Data dikumpulkan melalui survei kuesioner yang menghasilkan 446 respons valid. Model penelitian dianalisis menggunakan Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). Hasil penelitian mengonfirmasi bahwa WFC berpengaruh positif terhadap sinisme dan berpengaruh negatif terhadap kepuasan karier. Sinisme ditemukan memiliki hubungan negatif dengan kepuasan karier serta memediasi hubungan antara WFC dan kepuasan karier. Selain itu, kohesi organisasi berperan sebagai penyangga (buffer) yang efektif dengan memperlemah pengaruh positif WFC terhadap sinisme serta mengurangi dampak tidak langsung negatif WFC terhadap kepuasan karier. Penelitian ini berkontribusi pada bidang perilaku organisasi dengan mengidentifikasi sinisme sebagai mekanisme kunci yang menjelaskan bagaimana WFC menurunkan kepuasan karier. Studi ini juga menunjukkan bahwa kohesi organisasi dapat mengurangi dampak negatif WFC, khususnya dalam lingkungan kerja yang suportif. Praktisi sumber daya manusia perlu memandang konflik kerja–keluarga sebagai ancaman strategis yang dapat memicu sinisme dan pada akhirnya menurunkan kepuasan karier karyawan.

Kata kunci: *Konflik kerja–keluarga, Kepuasan karier, Sinisme, Kohesi organisasi, Teori pertukaran sosial.*

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INTRODUCTION

The equilibrium between job responsibilities and personal life is an increasingly difficult issue in the modern workplace. As more households rely on dual incomes, employees experience increasing tension between work demands and family responsibilities. This conflict, known as Work-Family Conflict (WFC), arises when the demands of work and family compete, leading to increased stress and negative impacts on mental well-being (Sohal et al., 2025). With anxiety and depression resulting in an estimated twelve billion lost working days worldwide each year, tackling WFC has become a vital necessity for both the sustainability of organizations and public health (Sohal et al., 2025).

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The study of WFC has evolved substantially over time, mirroring the broader societal shifts in workforce demographics and workplace structures. Early foundational research, rooted in role theory and the scarcity hypothesis, primarily focused on documenting the negative consequences of inter-role conflict (Al-Hammouri & Rababah, 2023; Yildirim & Aycan, 2008). Scholars initially focused on how excessive work demands—such as long working hours, irregular schedules, and psychological overload—detrimentally affected job satisfaction, mental health, and key organizational outcomes, such as turnover intentions (Namasivayam & Mount, 2004; O'Neill & Follmer, 2020; Yildirim & Aycan, 2008). This stream of research established a robust nomological network, confirming that WFC is not merely a personal inconvenience but a significant occupational stressor with tangible costs for individuals and firms alike.

Over time, the scope of WFC inquiry expanded considerably. Researchers shifted from main-effects models to examine WFC across professional groups, including healthcare workers, academics, and IT professionals (Beigi et al., 2016; Hatam et al., 2013; Nair & Millath, 2019). Findings indicate that WFC is common across sectors, with varying expressions and intensity by occupation. For instance, research among nurses—a population characterized by high emotional demands and shift work—has consistently shown that work-family tensions are a critical antecedent to burnout and turnover. More recently, the literature has moved from merely describing the problem to investigating the underlying mechanisms and boundary conditions that explain *when* and *how* WFC translates into adverse workplace outcomes (Bilodeau et al., 2023; Huang et al., 2024; Obrenovic et al., 2020).

Among the various consequences of WFC, its impact on employees' long-term evaluation of their professional lives has garnered increasing scholarly attention. Career satisfaction—defined as the overall contentment individuals derive from their career progress and achievements—represents a crucial indicator of subjective career success. Unlike short-term affective states, career satisfaction reflects a cumulative judgment of one's professional trajectory and is strongly associated with retention, psychological well-being, and organizational commitment. Despite the established link between WFC and immediate outcomes like turnover intentions, our understanding of how work-family dynamics shape career satisfaction remains limited. Emerging evidence suggests that WFC generally hurts job satisfaction. Studies indicate that both WFC and FWC are negatively correlated with job satisfaction (Pattusamy & Jacob, 2016; Tien, 2024). This negative relationship is also mediated by factors such as emotional exhaustion and role conflict. Job satisfaction mediates the relationship between perceived stress and mental well-being, highlighting its importance in mitigating the negative effects of WFC (Aggarwal-Gupta & Vatharkar, 2017). Additionally, work-family balance plays a crucial role in mediating the effects of WFC on job satisfaction (Gopalan & Pattusamy, 2020; Pattusamy & Jacob, 2016). Hence, the first aim of this study is to explore the direct and indirect relationships between WFC and career satisfaction. Moreover, this study introduces cynicism as a key mediating mechanism in career satisfaction.

Beyond identifying the mediating mechanism, it is equally important to understand the conditions under which the detrimental effects of WFC can be mitigated. Prior studies have identified several moderators, such as work-family balance (Gopalan & Pattusamy, 2020; Kim & Lee, 2025; Pattusamy & Jacob, 2016), which can reduce the negative effect

of WFC on job satisfaction. On the other hand, perceptions of organizational fairness and supervisor support can mitigate the negative effects of WFC, thereby enhancing job satisfaction (Hu, 2024; Talukder, 2019). The present study thus proposes organizational cohesion as a key boundary condition. In other words, when employees perceive strong organizational support, it can buffer the adverse impacts of work-family conflict, leading to higher job satisfaction (Yan, 2013). This suggests that cohesive, supportive organizational environments can help employees manage work-family conflict more effectively. Hence, the present study proposes organizational cohesion as an alternative key boundary condition.

The present study develops and tests a moderated mediation model that examines: (a) the direct and indirect effects of WFC on career satisfaction through cynicism, and (b) the moderating role of organizational cohesion in attenuating the positive relationship between WFC and cynicism, as well as the negative indirect effect of WFC on career satisfaction. By integrating insights from the job demands-resources model, conservation of resources theory, and the work-family interface literature, this study offers three key contributions. First, it extends the nomological network of career satisfaction by identifying cynicism as a critical affective mechanism linking work-family stress to diminished career evaluations. Second, it moves beyond a main-effects approach by demonstrating how a relational climate can serve as a contingency factor that buffers employees from the negative supportive consequences of WFC. Third, it provides practically relevant insights for human resource practitioners seeking to design interventions that strengthen organizational cohesion and preserve employees' long-term career satisfaction amid inevitable work-family tensions.

Despite the extensive literature on work-family conflict (WFC), several important gaps remain. First, most prior studies have focused on proximal job-related outcomes such as job satisfaction, turnover intentions, or emotional exhaustion, while comparatively less attention has been paid to long-term evaluative outcomes such as career satisfaction. Second, although burnout—particularly emotional exhaustion—has frequently been examined as a mediating mechanism, cynicism has rarely been positioned as a distinct psychological pathway linking WFC to career-level evaluations. Unlike emotional exhaustion, which reflects a state of energy depletion, cynicism represents a cognitive-attitudinal withdrawal characterized by distrust, detachment, and reduced identification with the organization. As such, cynicism captures a qualitatively different form of resource-protection response that may have more enduring implications for how employees interpret their career trajectories. Third, prior buffering studies have predominantly emphasized supervisor support or perceived organizational support, which are hierarchical and dyadic in nature. In contrast, organizational cohesion reflects a collective relational climate characterized by solidarity, shared commitment, and horizontal social bonds among members. By integrating cynicism as a mediating mechanism and organizational cohesion as a contextual boundary condition, this study advances the WFC literature from a strain-based perspective toward a more nuanced, process-oriented model of how resource depletion translates into long-term career dissatisfaction.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND HYPOTHESIS

This research applies the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory to examine the connections among important variables. According to COR theory, people strive to acquire, maintain, and safeguard their valued resources, including personal characteristics, social support, and environmental factors (Hobfoll, 2001). According to COR theory, employees who experience loss or the potential for resource loss can experience psychological stress and negative consequences, such as burnout and decreased well-being. In this context, work-family conflict is recognized as a major stressor that drains resources. The preliminary reaction phase of work-family conflict (WFC) requires significant investment of energy, time, and emotional resources, which can lead to a defensive response characterized by cynicism—a key element of job burnout

(Schaufeli et al., 2009). To protect against the depletion of non-renewable resources, employees may develop negative attitudes (Dishon-Berkovits, 2014; Su & Jiang, 2023). As work-family conflict takes away these resources, employees find it harder to perform, build relationships, and find meaning in their jobs. This struggle can lead to lower career satisfaction. The COR theory also suggests that when individuals are in resource-rich environments, they are more likely to invest in gathering even more resources, creating a beneficial cycle. Organizational cohesion in this setting is strong social ties and benefits such as organizational support (Achmadi et al., 2023, 2022). Hence, environments with high cohesion lead to quicker resource benefits and decrease cynicism, ultimately increasing career satisfaction.

Work-family conflict, cynicism, and career satisfaction

Cynicism in the organizational context is generally understood as a negative attitude toward the organization and its management (Dean Jr. et al., 1998; Laschinger et al., 2009). Drawing on COR theory, cynicism can be conceptualized as a psychological response to resource depletion. When employees face ongoing resource depletion—such as energy, time, and emotional capacity resulting from work-family conflict—they develop cynical attitudes as a protective strategy for their remaining resources. This cynicism appears in three main forms. Firstly, it encompasses skepticism and distrust: employees tend to have a general mistrust of the organization and its leadership, often due to perceived inconsistencies and contradictions in management practices (Bergström et al., 2014; Schmitz et al., 2018). Secondly, cynicism is expressed through negative emotional states, including disillusionment and frustration, as well as behaviors that demonstrate a lack of confidence in the organization (Ince & Turan, 2011; Robledo Fernández et al., 2018). Lastly, cynical employees may resist organizational changes, perceiving them as ineffective or insincere attempts by management (Bergström et al., 2014; Freeze, 2009).

Work-family conflict (WFC) leads to increased job stress and burnout, both of which feature cynicism as a fundamental aspect. From a COR perspective, WFC serves as a major stressor that drains employees' limited personal resources. The ongoing negotiation between work and family obligations drains emotional and physical energy, leaving employees depleted and susceptible to further resource loss. Employees who experience high levels of WFC are thus more likely to feel emotionally drained and adopt a cynical attitude toward their organization to create distance from the source of their stress (Dishon-Berkovits, 2014; Tavassoli & Sunyer, 2025).

Additionally, the stress resulting from WFC can carry over into the workplace, heightening feelings of distrust and disenchantment. This spillover effect occurs because resource depletion within the family context limits the resources available for positive engagement at work, leading employees to view their organization as unsupportive or even complicit in their difficulties. As a result, resource depletion amplifies organizational cynicism, as employees struggle to juggle work and family responsibilities (Dishon-Berkovits, 2014; Efeoğlu & Sanal, 2017; Tavassoli & Sunyer, 2025). Empirical research also backs up these theoretical claims. Elevated levels of WFC correlate with decreased job satisfaction and organizational loyalty. As employees grow more discontented and less devoted, their skepticism toward the organization often intensifies (Efeoğlu & Sanal, 2017; Tavassoli & Sunyer, 2025). Additionally, WFC can result in considerable psychological distress, which in turn exacerbates cynical viewpoints. Employees who struggle to balance work and family obligations may feel increasingly disenchanting and disconnected from their organization (Vahedparast et al., 2025). Therefore, based on conservation of resources (COR) theory and supported by earlier empirical evidence, we suggest the following hypothesis:

H1: Work-family conflict (WFC) is positively related to cynicism.

H2: Work-family conflict (WFC) is negatively related to career satisfaction.

Cynicism and career satisfaction

Career satisfaction pertains to the overall happiness and fulfillment an individual gains from their professional journey. It includes both intrinsic aspects—such as meaningful work and personal growth—and extrinsic elements—such as salary and promotions—that together influence a person's view of career achievement and joy (Wayne et al., 2013). According to the COR theory, career satisfaction represents a positive emotional state that arises when individuals successfully gather and safeguard resources that help them reach their career objectives. On the other hand, when resources are continuously lacking, a person's ability to feel satisfaction in their career is reduced.

Cynicism is a key aspect of job burnout, characterized by a negative, distrustful attitude toward work and the organization (Schaufeli et al., 2009). Within the COR framework, it reflects both resource depletion and maladaptive coping. Employees facing sustained resource loss and work–family conflict tend to distance themselves from their work as a self-protective measure psychologically. However, this detachment undermines the positive connections and meaningful engagement necessary for career satisfaction.

The relationship between cynicism and career satisfaction can be understood through the lens of resource investment. COR theory posits that individuals must invest resources to gain additional resources—a principle known as resource investment. Employees who are cynical about their work are reluctant to invest their remaining resources (e.g., effort, time, emotional energy) into their jobs, viewing such investments as futile or unlikely to yield returns. This reluctance creates a stagnation or further resource loss, preventing the accumulation of positive career outcomes that contribute to satisfaction, such as recognition, advancement, and skill development. Consequently, cynical employees experience a downward spiral: resource depletion fosters cynicism, which in turn inhibits resource investment, leading to diminished career satisfaction (Dishon-Berkovits, 2014; Petitta & Ghezzi, 2023).

Empirical evidence supports this theoretical logic. Research has demonstrated that work–family conflict increases stress and emotional exhaustion, which are precursors to cynicism (Dishon-Berkovits, 2014). Cynicism, in turn, mediates the relationship between WFC and career satisfaction, leading to lower job satisfaction and higher turnover intentions (Dishon-Berkovits, 2014; Petitta & Ghezzi, 2023; Tavassoli & Sunyer, 2025). Employees who develop cynical attitudes in response to resource depletion are less likely to derive meaning and fulfillment from their careers, as their negative orientation colors their interpretations of career events and achievements. Thus, grounded in COR theory and supported by prior empirical findings, we propose the following hypotheses:

H3: Cynicism is negatively related to career satisfaction.

H4: Cynicism mediates the positive relationship between work–family conflict (WFC) and career satisfaction.

The Moderating Role Of Organizational Cohesion

Organizational cohesion pertains to the sense of solidarity, belonging, and mutual support that employees feel within their teams (Holden, 2006; Nikkhah-Farkhani et al., 2022). More broadly, it includes the degree of togetherness and collective dedication among organizational members working towards shared goals, incorporating elements such as emotional bonds, common values, and collaborative efforts (Li & Zhang, 2010). Within the framework of COR theory, organizational cohesion is an essential contextual resource—an environmental factor that aids in the accumulation and safeguarding of both personal and social resources.

A high level of organizational cohesion fosters a nurturing atmosphere in which employees feel appreciated, helping diminish the adverse effects of work-family conflict on job satisfaction and career outcomes (Dixon & Sagas, 2007). Organizations with strong cohesion typically exhibit improved communication and conflict-resolution capabilities, thereby alleviating the stress associated with work-family issues (Ding & Tang, 2009; Kaymak, 2011). This connection enhances job satisfaction even during conflicts, as employees develop a deeper bond with their work and colleagues. Furthermore,

heightened perceptions of organizational support increase job satisfaction and buffer against the negative consequences of work-family conflict (Dixon & Sagas, 2007).

A unified organizational climate functions as a protective resource, moderating the relationships between WFC, cynicism, and career satisfaction. Specifically, cohesion mitigates the connection between WFC and cynicism by providing social resources that lessen the effects of inter-role conflict. Supportive team environments promote emotional backing and a shared vision, leading to a reduction in cynical attitudes. Additionally, cohesion lessens the negative correlation between WFC and career satisfaction, both directly and indirectly through cynicism. Cohesive settings improve perceptions of organizational support, helping maintain positive career assessments despite work-family challenges. Ultimately, organizational cohesion influences the entire WFC-cynicism-satisfaction relationship. Prior research has emphasized the potential of within-domain resources—such as supervisor support and collegial relationships—to lessen the negative repercussions of WFC (De Clercq et al., 2025; Dixon & Sagas, 2007; Kaymak, 2011; Yan, 2013). This study investigates organizational cohesion as a significant group-level resource affecting individual outcomes. It is grounded in COR theory and supported by prior empirical findings, which led to the development of specific hypotheses.

H5: Organizational cohesion moderates the positive relationship between work-family conflict and cynicism, such that the relationship is weaker when organizational cohesion is high.

H6: Organizational cohesion moderates the negative relationship between work-family conflict and career satisfaction, such that the relationship is weaker when organizational cohesion is high

In this study, organizational cohesion is conceptualized and measured as **perceived organizational cohesion**, reflecting employees' subjective evaluations of solidarity, belongingness, and collective unity within their workgroups. Although cohesion may conceptually operate at the group level, the present research focuses on individual-level perceptions, as these perceptions directly shape employees' psychological responses to work-family conflict. Thus, all constructs in the model are examined at the individual level, consistent with the theoretical focus on resource appraisal within Conservation of Resources (COR) theory.

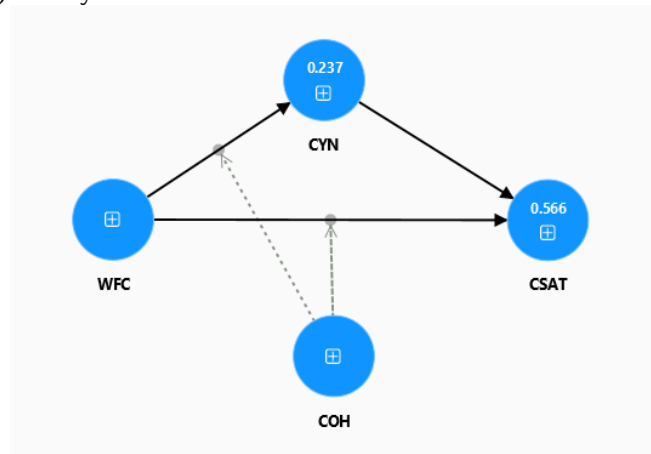


Figure 1. Research model

METHODS

The target population for this study was early-career employees with less than ten years of work experience. Using a convenience sampling approach (Hendryadi et al., 2025), data were collected through social media platforms over 14 days in December 2025. Participation was voluntary, and respondents received no compensation for their involvement. Informed consent was obtained through an initial agreement statement at the beginning of the questionnaire; by completing the survey, respondents indicated their willingness to participate. A total of 446 valid responses were retained for analysis.

The demographic profile of the 446 respondents reveals a relatively balanced age distribution, with a slight majority (53.8%) aged 25 or older and 46.2% aged 25 or younger, reflecting the study's early-career focus. In terms of gender, female respondents comprised 60.1% of the sample, while males accounted for 39.9%, indicating a higher participation rate among women. Regarding employment, the largest proportion of respondents worked in the private manufacturing sector (53.1%), followed by the private service sector (26.2%), the public sector (15.2%), and other sectors (5.4%). This distribution suggests that the sample is predominantly drawn from the private sector, particularly manufacturing, which may influence the generalizability of findings to other industry contexts (see Table 1).

Table 1. Characteristics of the study respondents

<i>Characteristics</i>	<i>Count</i>	<i>% of Total</i>
Age		
< 25 years	206	46.2%
> 25 years	240	53.8%
Gender		
Male	178	39.9%
Female	268	60.1%
Sector		
Public sector	68	15.2%
Private sector: Service	117	26.2%
Private sector: Manufacturing	237	53.1%
Other	24	5.4%

All variables in this study were measured using established scales previously validated by prior researchers. Unless otherwise indicated, respondents rated each item on a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Work-family conflict (WFC) was measured using a five-item scale developed by Netemeyer et al. (1996). This scale assesses the extent to which work demands interfere with family responsibilities. Sample items include: "My job produces strain that makes it difficult to fulfil family duties" and "The demands of my work interfere with my home and family life" (Netemeyer et al., 1996). Cynicism was measured using a five-item behavioral cynicism scale adapted from Helvaci (2017). This scale captures employees' negative and detached attitudes toward organizational practices, particularly during periods of change. A sample item is: "I find myself making fun of the new change initiatives in the workplace during the change process." Career satisfaction was measured using a five-item scale adapted from Spurk et al. (2016). This scale assesses individuals' subjective evaluations of their career success and fulfillment. A sample item is: "I am satisfied with the success I have achieved in my career." Organizational cohesion was measured using a five-item scale adapted from Manata (2016) to assess team cohesiveness. Respondents evaluated the social cohesion within their workgroups. A sample item is: "I enjoy being a part of my current workgroup/team"

RESULTS

Measurement Model Assessment

The measurement model was evaluated to assess the reliability and validity of the constructs prior to testing the structural relationships. As presented in Table 2, the results demonstrated strong psychometric properties for all four constructs: work-family conflict (WFC), cynicism, career satisfaction, and organizational cohesion. First, indicator reliability was examined through outer loadings. All item loadings exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.70 (ranging from 0.74 to 0.89), confirming that each indicator adequately represented its respective construct (Hair et al., 2019). The lowest loading was 0.74 for CYN2 and CSAT5, while the highest was 0.89 for WFC5, all well above the acceptable level. Second, multicollinearity among indicators was assessed using

variance inflation factors (VIFs). All VIF values ranged from 1.59 to 2.66, well below the conservative threshold of 3.0, indicating that common method bias and multicollinearity were not concerns in this study (Hair & Alamer, 2022).

Third, internal consistency reliability was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha (α) and composite reliability (CR). All constructs demonstrated excellent reliability, with Cronbach's alphas ranging from 0.85 to 0.91 and CRs ranging from 0.86 to 0.91, all exceeding the recommended cutoff of 0.70 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). The highest reliability was observed for work-family conflict ($\alpha = 0.91$, CR = 0.91), followed by cynicism ($\alpha = 0.87$, CR = 0.89), career satisfaction ($\alpha = 0.85$, CR = 0.86), and organizational cohesion ($\alpha = 0.86$, CR = 0.88).

Fourth, convergent validity was assessed through the average variance extracted (AVE). All AVE values exceeded the minimum threshold of 0.50, confirming that each construct explained more than half of the variance in its indicators (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The AVE values were 0.72 for work-family conflict, 0.66 for cynicism, 0.63 for career satisfaction, and 0.65 for organizational cohesion, all indicating strong convergent validity. Fifth, discriminant validity was established using the heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT) of correlations. All HTMT values were substantially below the conservative threshold of 0.90, with the maximum value being 0.68 (Franke & Sarstedt, 2019; Henseler & Schuberth, 2020). This confirms that each construct is empirically distinct from the others in the model. Collectively, these results establish that the measurement model possesses adequate reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity, providing a solid foundation for subsequent structural analysis.

Table 2. Measurement Evaluation Results

	<i>Outlier loading</i>	<i>VIF</i>	<i>Cronbach's alpha</i>	<i>CR</i>	<i>AVE</i>
<i>Cohesion</i>			0.86	0.88	0.65
COH1	0.80	2.42			
COH2	0.82	1.90			
COH3	0.78	2.31			
COH4	0.80	2.58			
COH5	0.81	2.44			
<i>Career satisfaction</i>			0.85	0.86	0.63
CSAST1	0.86	2.44			
CSAT2	0.76	1.79			
CSAT3	0.82	2.16			
CSAT4	0.79	1.86			
CSAT5	0.74	1.59			
<i>Cynicism</i>			0.87	0.89	0.66
CYN1	0.76	2.02			
CYN2	0.74	1.94			
CYN3	0.81	1.95			
CYN4	0.86	2.41			
CYN5	0.87	2.55			
<i>Work-family conflict</i>			0.91	0.91	0.72
WFC1	0.83	2.24			
WFC2	0.85	2.50			
WFC3	0.84	2.41			
WFC4	0.85	2.13			
WFC5	0.89	2.66			

Table 3. Heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT) results

	Mean	SD	<i>COH</i>	<i>CSAT</i>	<i>CYN</i>	<i>WFC</i>
Cohesion	2.63	0.14				
Career satisfaction	2.59	0.45	0.51			
Cynicism	3.51	0.84	0.35	0.68		
Work-family conflict	2.62	0.57	0.59	0.65	0.50	

Structural Model Assessment

The structural model was evaluated to test the hypothesized relationships among work-family conflict (WFC), cynicism (CYN), career satisfaction (CSAT), and the moderating role of organizational cohesion (COH). Before hypothesis testing, multicollinearity was assessed using variance inflation factors (VIF). All VIF values

ranged from 1.09 to 1.65, well below the conservative threshold of 5, indicating that multicollinearity does not bias the results (Hair et al., 2019). The model explained 24% of the variance in cynicism ($R^2 = 0.24$) and 52% of the variance in career satisfaction ($R^2 = 0.52$), indicating moderate to substantial explanatory power (Hair et al., 2019).

The model explains 24% of the variance in cynicism ($R^2 = 0.24$), which can be considered moderate within behavioral research contexts (Hair et al., 2019). While this suggests that work–family conflict is a meaningful predictor of cynicism, it also indicates that cynicism is influenced by additional antecedents beyond inter-role conflict. From a theoretical standpoint, this is consistent with organizational behavior literature, which conceptualizes cynicism as a multidetermined construct shaped not only by resource depletion from work–family conflict but also by leadership behaviors, perceptions of organizational justice, workload pressures, and change-related experiences.

Importantly, the relatively modest R^2 reflects the parsimonious nature of the present model, which intentionally focuses on a theoretically coherent pathway grounded in Conservation of Resources (COR) theory rather than attempting to maximize explained variance through the inclusion of numerous predictors. By isolating work–family conflict as a key stressor, the study clarifies its unique contribution to the development of cynical attitudes. Future research may extend this framework by incorporating leadership quality, fairness perceptions, and workload intensity as additional predictors to build a more comprehensive explanatory model of cynicism.

Predictive relevance was assessed using Stone–Geisser’s Q^2 via blindfolding with an omission distance of 7. The Q^2 values for cynicism (0.144) and career satisfaction (0.319) were both greater than zero, confirming that the model has predictive relevance for these endogenous constructs (Geisser, 1974; Stone, 1974). Hypothesis testing was conducted using bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples to generate path coefficients, standard errors, and confidence intervals. The results are summarized in Table 4.

Table 4. Structural Model Evaluation Results

<i>Hypothesis</i>	β	<i>SD</i>	<i>t-value</i>	<i>p-value</i>	<i>2.5% CI</i>	<i>97.5% CI</i>	f^2	<i>VIF</i>
H1 WFC → CYN	0.43	0.06	6.63	0.000	0.30	0.55	0.17	1.417
H2 WFC → CSAT	-0.35	0.06	6.15	0.000	-0.46	-0.24	0.23	1.656
H3 CYN → CSAT	-0.38	0.05	8.08	0.000	-0.47	-0.29	0.15	1.311
H4 WFC → CYN → CSAT	-0.16	0.03	5.32	0.000	-0.23	-0.11		
H5 COH × WFC → CYN	-0.14	0.06	2.42	0.016	-0.26	-0.03		1.121
H6 COH × WFC → CSAT	0.17	0.05	3.75	0.000	0.08	0.26		1.092
<i>Endogenous Construct</i>	R^2							
Cynicism (CYN)	0.24							
Career Satisfaction (CSAT)	0.52							
<i>Predictive Relevance (Q^2)</i>								
CYN	0.144							
CSAT	0.319							

Hypothesis 1 proposed a positive relationship between WFC and cynicism. The analysis revealed a significant positive effect ($\beta = 0.43$, $t = 6.63$, $p < 0.001$, $f^2 = 0.17$), indicating that higher work–family conflict is associated with increased cynicism. Thus, H1 is supported. H2 predicted a negative relationship between WFC and career satisfaction. The results confirmed a significant negative effect ($\beta = -0.35$, $t = 6.15$, $p < 0.001$, $f^2 = 0.23$), supporting H2. H3 posited that cynicism negatively affects career satisfaction. The path coefficient was negative and significant ($\beta = -0.38$, $t = 8.08$, $p < 0.001$, $f^2 = 0.15$), providing support for H3.

Hypothesis 4 tested the mediating role of cynicism in the relationship between WFC and career satisfaction. The indirect effect was significant ($\beta = -0.16$, $t = 5.32$, $p < 0.001$, 95% CI [-0.23, -0.11]), confirming that cynicism partially mediates the WFC–career satisfaction link. The direct effect of WFC on career satisfaction remained significant after including the mediator ($\beta = -0.35$, $p < 0.001$), indicating partial mediation. Thus, H4 is supported.

Hypothesis 5 examined whether organizational cohesion moderates the relationship between WFC and cynicism. The interaction term (COH × WFC) was negative and significant ($\beta = -0.14$, $t = 2.42$, $p = 0.02$, 95% CI [-0.26, -0.03]), indicating that organizational cohesion weakens the positive effect of WFC on cynicism. As hypothesized, when organizational cohesion is high, the detrimental impact of WFC on cynicism is attenuated. Hence, H5 is supported. H6 tested the moderating effect of organizational cohesion on the direct relationship between WFC and career satisfaction. The interaction term was positive and significant ($\beta = 0.17$, $t = 3.75$, $p < 0.001$, 95% CI [0.08, 0.26]), suggesting that organizational cohesion buffers the negative effect of WFC on career satisfaction. Specifically, the negative relationship between WFC and career satisfaction is weaker when organizational cohesion is high. Thus, H6 is supported (see Figure 2).

PLS-Predict assessment

To assess the predictive power of the structural model outside of the sample, the PLSpredict method was utilized, employing 10-fold cross-validation with 10 repetitions (Shmueli et al., 2019). The analysis yielded two primary metrics: predictive relevance ($Q^2_{predict}$) for each indicator and predictive accuracy, which was evaluated by contrasting the root mean squared error (RMSE) and mean absolute error (MAE) of the PLS-SEM model with two naive benchmarks—the linear model (LM) and the indicator average (IA) model.

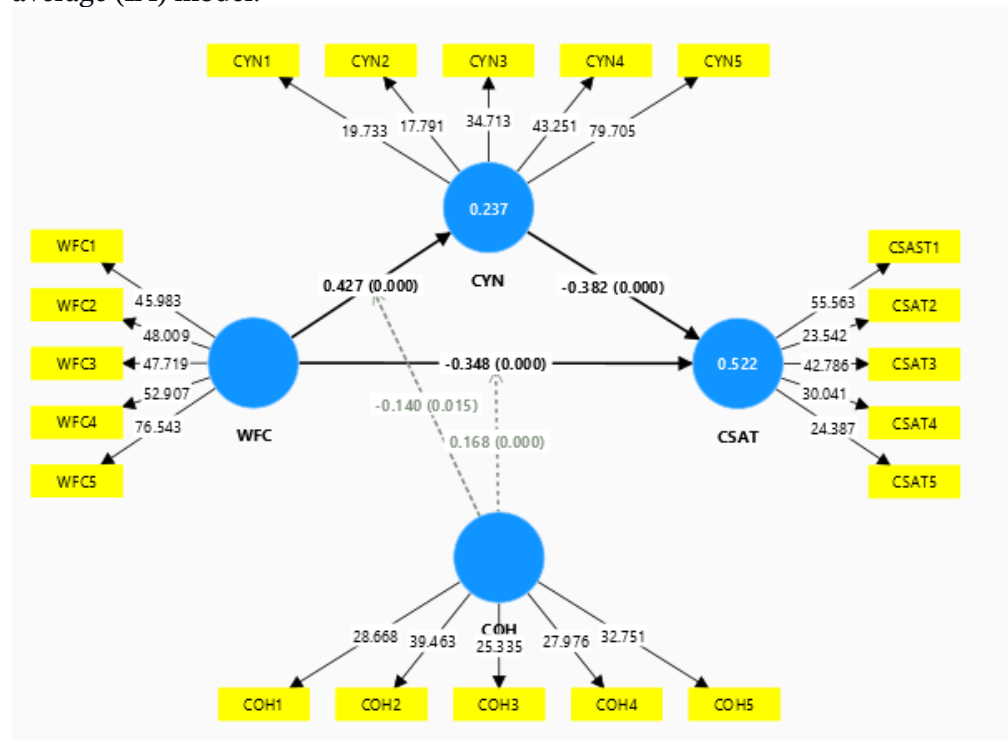


Figure 2. Structural model results

As shown in Appendix 1, all $Q^2_{predict}$ values for the specific indicators of cynicism (ranging from 0.05 to 0.22) and career satisfaction (ranging from 0.20 to 0.29) are positive. These results suggest that the model effectively predicts these endogenous constructs, indicating that it offers valuable out-of-sample predictions that surpass simple mean-based predictions (Legate et al., 2023). In terms of predictive accuracy, comparing RMSE and MAE reveals a consistent trend. For most indicators, the PLS-SEM model yields lower prediction errors than both the linear model and the indicator-average model. Specifically, regarding cynicism indicators, the PLS-SEM RMSE values are either equivalent to or lower than those of the LM benchmark (e.g., CYN1: PLS-SEM RMSE = 1.28 vs. LM RMSE = 1.28; CYN3: 1.41 vs. 1.43) and are consistently lower than those of the IA benchmark. Likewise, for career satisfaction indicators, PLS-SEM RMSE values are

generally less than those of both benchmarks (e.g., CSAST1: 1.22 vs. LM 1.24 and IA 1.44). This illustrates the enhanced predictive accuracy of the proposed model.

The formal model comparison test further substantiates this advantage. The PLS loss (mean squared prediction error) is significantly lower than the IA loss for both career satisfaction (PLS loss = 1.65, IA loss = 2.18, average loss difference = -0.53, $t = 7.86$, $p < 0.001$) and cynicism (PLS loss = 1.77, IA loss = 2.05, average loss difference = -0.28, $t = 4.57$, $p < 0.001$). The cumulative average loss difference across all indicators is -0.40, which is statistically significant ($t = 7.09$, $p < 0.001$). These findings provide robust empirical evidence that the PLS-SEM model has significantly greater out-of-sample predictive power than a naive model based on indicator averages.

DISCUSSION

Hypothesis 1, which suggested a positive relationship between work-family conflict (WFC) and cynicism, was strongly supported. This aligns with COR theory, which states that individuals facing resource depletion adopt defensive strategies to protect their remaining resources (Hobfoll, 2001). WFC is a major stressor that diminishes employees' time, energy, and emotional capacity, leading to cynicism—marked by detachment and distrust—as a psychological coping mechanism (Dishon-Berkovits, 2014; Tavassoli & Sunyer, 2025). This finding supports previous research linking WFC to burnout, particularly cynicism (Schaufeli et al., 2002). It extends COR theory by identifying cynicism as a specific outcome of resource depletion in the work-family context.

Hypothesis 2, which suggested a negative relationship between work-family conflict (WFC) and career satisfaction, was supported. This aligns with existing literature indicating that WFC negatively impacts perceptions of career success (Hoobler et al., 2010; Wayne et al., 2013). From a Conservation of Resources (COR) perspective, career satisfaction relies on the effective use of personal resources. Chronic WFC depletes these resources, hindering employees' performance, relationships, and meaning from their work, ultimately reducing career satisfaction. This underscores the resource-dependent nature of career satisfaction and the long-term effects of unresolved work-family conflict.

Hypothesis 3, which posited that cynicism negatively affects career satisfaction, was confirmed. This finding enhances our understanding of the effects of workplace cynicism. Within the COR framework, cynicism not only indicates resource depletion but also discourages further investment in resources such as effort and emotional energy, as employees view such investments as futile (Petitta & Ghezzi, 2023). This reluctance leads to stagnation and prevents the accumulation of positive career outcomes, ultimately lowering career satisfaction. This research extends previous findings linking cynicism to reduced job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Efeoğlu & Sanal, 2017) by examining its relationship with overall career satisfaction.

Hypothesis 4 proposed that cynicism mediates the relationship between work-family conflict (WFC) and career satisfaction, and this was strongly supported. The mediation illustrates how WFC leads to career dissatisfaction by fostering cynical attitudes that undermine positive career evaluations. The significant indirect effect, along with a remaining direct effect, indicates partial mediation, highlighting that cynicism is a key pathway through which WFC operates.

This finding addresses a gap in the literature regarding the psychological processes underlying the relationship between WFC and work-related outcomes. The study introduces a process-oriented model based on Conservation of Resources (COR) theory, positioning cynicism as the mechanism that transforms resource depletion from WFC into reduced career satisfaction. By showing that WFC negatively impacts career satisfaction, at least in part through cynicism, the research offers a clearer framework than models that treat these factors separately. It also responds to calls for more research on affective mechanisms in the work-family interface and enhances the theoretical understanding of how family conflict affects long-term career evaluations.

Hypothesis 5 examined the moderating role of organizational cohesion on the relationship between work-family conflict (WFC) and cynicism. The significant negative

interaction indicated that cohesion diminishes the positive effect of WFC on cynicism. This aligns with the stress-buffering hypothesis, as organizational cohesion provides social support and shared purpose, helping employees cope with resource depletion from inter-role conflict. Consequently, this reduces defensive detachment and lessens the development of cynical attitudes.

Hypothesis 6 proposed that organizational cohesion moderates the direct relationship between work–family conflict (WFC) and career satisfaction. The significant positive interaction indicates that cohesion attenuates the negative impact of WFC on career satisfaction. This finding can be theoretically explained through the Conservation of Resources (COR) framework, which posits that contextual resources play a critical role in buffering the detrimental effects of stressors on valued outcomes. From a COR perspective, career satisfaction represents a cumulative evaluative judgment that depends on sustained access to psychological, relational, and developmental resources. Work–family conflict depletes these resources by diverting time, emotional energy, and cognitive attention away from career advancement and professional growth. However, in environments characterized by high perceived organizational cohesion, employees are embedded within strong relational networks that provide socio-emotional reassurance, shared identity, and collective efficacy. These relational resources help offset the perceived losses triggered by WFC, thereby preserving positive career evaluations.

Importantly, this buffering effect operates not merely through emotional relief but through cognitive reappraisal processes. Cohesive climates foster a sense of belonging and collective purpose, which may reframe work-related strain as manageable or temporary rather than career-threatening. In this way, cohesion functions as a resource caravan passageway (Hobfoll, 2001), facilitating access to social capital that stabilizes long-term career perceptions even when short-term strain persists. This extends prior WFC literature, which has largely focused on supervisor support or dyadic exchanges, by demonstrating that a collective relational climate can directly protect career-level outcomes beyond immediate job attitudes.

Thus, the moderation observed in H6 supports the argument that contextual social resources are instrumental in interrupting the resource-loss spiral proposed by COR theory. When cohesion is high, the negative translation of work–family conflict into diminished career satisfaction becomes substantially weaker, highlighting the strategic importance of cultivating cohesive organizational climates.

This study advances the work–family conflict (WFC) literature in several meaningful ways. While prior research has consistently demonstrated that WFC predicts job dissatisfaction, burnout, and turnover intentions, relatively fewer studies have examined its implications for long-term evaluative outcomes such as career satisfaction. By focusing on career satisfaction rather than short-term job attitudes, the present study shifts the analytical lens from immediate strain reactions to cumulative career-level consequences.

Compared to earlier models that primarily positioned emotional exhaustion as the mediating mechanism, this study identifies cynicism as a distinct cognitive–attitudinal pathway. Emotional exhaustion reflects energy depletion, whereas cynicism represents a defensive reorientation toward the organization characterized by detachment, distrust, and reduced identification. This distinction is theoretically important because career satisfaction is fundamentally evaluative and cognitive in nature. Cynicism, as a belief-based orientation, is therefore more proximally aligned with career appraisal processes than purely affective fatigue. In doing so, this research refines existing strain-based explanations and offers a more nuanced understanding of how work–family pressures translate into diminished long-term career evaluations.

Furthermore, this study contributes to the boundary condition literature by extending beyond dyadic resources such as supervisor support or perceived organizational support. While prior research has emphasized vertical support mechanisms, the present findings highlight the buffering capacity of a collective relational climate—organizational cohesion. Cohesion represents horizontal social embeddedness and shared identity among members, suggesting that protective mechanisms may operate not only through

hierarchical support but also through collective solidarity. This distinction broadens the theoretical understanding of how contextual resources operate, indicating that group-level relational climates may stabilize career perceptions even when direct stressors persist.

The findings also offer a more process-oriented perspective on the work–family interface. Rather than conceptualizing WFC merely as a stressor that produces direct negative outcomes, the results illustrate a mechanism in which resource strain fosters cynical interpretations, which then reshape how individuals evaluate their career trajectories. This layered process helps explain why some employees experience enduring dissatisfaction beyond temporary stress episodes.

Taken together, these contributions refine the theoretical architecture of WFC research by:

- (1) elevating career satisfaction as a central outcome,
- (2) distinguishing cynicism from exhaustion-based mechanisms, and
- (3) identifying collective cohesion as a structurally distinct protective resource.

Practical Implications

The findings offer several actionable implications for human resource practitioners and organizational leaders. First, organizations should recognize work–family conflict as a strategic threat that can foster cynicism and ultimately diminish employees' long-term career satisfaction. This suggests the need for proactive interventions, such as flexible work arrangements, family-friendly policies, and workload management, to reduce the incidence of WFC. Second, given the mediating role of cynicism, organizations should monitor employee cynicism as an early warning indicator of potential disengagement and implement targeted interventions—such as counseling, mentorship, and recognition programs—to address cynical attitudes before they crystallize. Third, and most importantly, organizations should invest in building cohesive work environments. The buffering effects of organizational cohesion demonstrate that when employees feel a strong sense of belonging and mutual support, the psychological toll of work–family conflict is significantly reduced. This can be achieved through team-building initiatives, cross-departmental collaboration, transparent communication channels, and leadership training that emphasizes supportive behaviors. Fourth, the model's strong predictive power suggests that organizations can use these findings to identify employees at risk of low career satisfaction and target interventions accordingly. By addressing both the resource-depleting effects of WFC and the resource-enhancing properties of cohesion, organizations can preserve employee attachment and long-term career satisfaction amid inevitable work–family tensions.

Limitations

This research enhances the understanding of the work–family interface and its impact on career satisfaction, but it has significant limitations. Firstly, the use of convenience sampling restricts the ability to generalize findings across various organizational, industry, and cultural contexts. Future studies should include diverse samples from various sectors and countries to enhance external validity. Additionally, the present study uses the cross-sectional approach, which limits causal assertions, as simultaneous measurement of variables prevents definitive conclusions, despite support from the Conservation of Resources theory. Longitudinal or diary-based research could shed light on the temporal dynamics of these relationships.

Second, the reliance on self-reported data may introduce common-method bias and social desirability issues. Utilizing multiple data sources, such as supervisor assessments or objective career metrics, could provide a more thorough evaluation of the constructs. Fourthly, although the proposed model demonstrated explanatory power, it did not account for all pertinent variables. Other factors, such as supervisory support or individual differences, may also influence the relationships among work–family conflict, cynicism, and career satisfaction. Future research should look into these additional moderators. Moreover, this study was executed in a general context, which could lead to overlooking industry-specific differences. Future investigations should examine these relationships within particular sectors to yield actionable insights.

Although organizational cohesion is often discussed as a group-level construct, this study examined perceived cohesion at the individual level. Future research may adopt a multilevel design to explore cross-level buffering effects of objectively shared cohesion climates.

CONCLUSION

This study, grounded in Conservation of Resources theory, confirms that work–family conflict (WFC) diminishes career satisfaction both directly and indirectly through the cultivation of cynicism. The findings demonstrate that employees experiencing WFC develop cynical attitudes toward their organization, which in turn erodes their long-term career fulfillment. Crucially, organizational cohesion emerges as a protective buffer, weakening the positive effect of WFC on cynicism and mitigating its negative impact on career satisfaction. These results underscore that while WFC poses a significant threat to employee well-being, cohesive work environments can preserve career satisfaction by providing social resources that offset resource depletion. Organizations should therefore implement family-supportive policies alongside initiatives that foster solidarity and mutual support among employees.

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Appendix 1. The PLS Predict results

	<i>Q²predict</i>	<i>PLS- SEM_R MSE</i>	<i>PLS- SEM_MAE</i>	<i>LM_RMS E</i>	<i>LM_MA E</i>	<i>IA_RMSE</i>	<i>IA_MAE</i>
Cynicism							
CYN1	0.11	1.28	1.00	1.28	1.01	1.35	1.12
CYN2	0.05	1.27	0.98	1.27	1.00	1.31	1.04
CYN3	0.14	1.41	1.09	1.43	1.10	1.53	1.20
CYN4	0.15	1.43	1.07	1.44	1.09	1.55	1.26
CYN5	0.22	1.24	0.96	1.26	0.98	1.40	1.14
Career Satisfaction							
CSAST1	0.28	1.22	0.94	1.24	0.95	1.44	1.20
CSAT2	0.20	1.19	0.91	1.19	0.90	1.33	1.06
CSAT3	0.23	1.38	1.05	1.39	1.07	1.57	1.26
CSAT4	0.20	1.27	0.94	1.26	0.95	1.41	1.11
CSAT5	0.29	1.36	1.01	1.36	1.03	1.61	1.31
CVAT							
	<i>PLS loss</i>	<i>IA loss</i>	<i>Average loss difference</i>	<i>t value</i>	<i>p value</i>		
CSAT	1.65	2.18	-0.53	7.86	0.00		
CYN	1.77	2.05	-0.28	4.57	0.00		
Overall	1.71	2.11	-0.40	7.09	0.00		