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# Hidden Dangers of Identity Switching: The Influence of Work-Family Status Consistency on Emotional Exhaustion and Workplace Deviance

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**Abstract:** Workplace deviance is an important problem in organization management. Previous studies focused too much on the influence of various factors in the workplace and ignored the interference of family factors. We integrate emotional social function theory and emotional labor theory, and examine the effect of (in) congruence between work and family status on workplace deviance. Using longitudinal data and polynomial regression, we find that: (1) Emotional exhaustion is higher when work and family status are congruent; (2) In the case of work-family congruence, emotional exhaustion is higher when work and family status are aligned at a low level than when they are at a high level; (3) Differences (and similarities) between work and family status can have consequential effects on emotional exhaustion and, ultimately, workplace deviance; (4) Organizational tenure positively regulates the above mediation model. These findings broaden work-family and deviance research by highlighting the role of congruence between work and family status and how it helps reduce workplace deviance.

**Keywords:** Work status; family status; workplace deviance; organizational tenure; emotional labor

## 1 Introduction

Workplace deviance refers to employees' voluntary behavior that violates normative expectations in organizations [1]. A growing body of research has indicated the deleterious outcomes of workplace deviance such as increasing individual group tardiness [2], raising team conflict [3], and reducing performance [4]. Despite researchers and managers are aware of the negativity and attempt to reduce workplace deviance, it is still quite pervasive in organizations. Therefore, the research on critical antecedents of workplace deviance has attracted increasing academic attention [5].

Previous research has investigated various antecedents of workplace deviance including organizational policies [6], organizational climates [7], leadership [7], narcissism personality [8], and cultural values [9]. Despite the proliferation of evidence unveiling organizational, leadership, and individual factors that trigger deviance behavior, all of the studies focus on the organizational setting and the role of family has been ignored. In particular, employees have similar of different status at work and at home. The transition between work and family status may affect the psychology and behavior of employees. However, the question of how the work and family status transition influences employees' work behaviors especially workplace deviance is still underdeveloped.

As one of the important factors affecting individual behavior, emotion has been proved to have an impact on various outcomes in the workplace, such as performance [10], resignation intention [11], and job satisfaction [12]. According to emotion social function theory, emotional experience and expression can



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convey important information such as individual social intention [13], relationship orientation [14], social relationship status [15], and help individuals form and maintain beneficial interpersonal relationships to coordinate social interaction [16]. Therefore, individuals with different status will have different rules of emotional expression. Individuals in a specific status need to express corresponding emotions, and the change of status will cause the change of emotional expression norms. Emotional labor theory indicates that a highly restricted range of emotions simply increases the chances that expected emotion will conflict with genuinely felt emotion [17]. When work and family status are congruent, individuals will have similar emotional expression norm, which limits the range of emotional expression and increases the time and probability of individuals expressing the same repetitive emotions. As a consequence, emotional exhaustion and workplace deviance may occur. Moreover, we also consider the moderating role of organizational tenure. That is, employees with longer organizational tenure face the conflict between expected emotion and real emotion in work-family for a longer time, which may trigger emotional exhaustion and further generate workplace deviance. Hence, we intend to focus on the emotional responses and subsequent behavioral effects of work-family status differences on employees, and examine the mediating effect of emotional exhaustion and the moderating effect of organizational tenure.

We aim to examine work-family status congruence and workplace deviance from the following aspects. First, to our knowledge, this is the first study examining work-family status congruence and workplace deviance. Previous studies have only considered the effects of organizations, leadership and individuals on workplace deviance [6,7,18], the role of family has been neglected. We provide important insight to the work-family literature by considering the congruence of employees' work and family status and how it influences employees' deviance behavior at work. Second, based on the perspective of emotional labor, we unveil the intervening mechanism between work-family status congruence and workplace deviance. Prior work-family research has primarily applied conservation of resource and social exchange theories [19,20] to investigate work-family construct. We introduce the emotional labor approach that expand the theoretical underpinning of work-family literature. Moreover, we attempt to examine the boundary condition of organization tenure and how it influences work-family status congruence and workplace deviance.

## **2 Structure Hypothesis Development**

### ***2.1 Work-Family Status Congruence***

Social hierarchy is an inevitable phenomenon in daily life. When individuals gather, there is a hierarchy of status between them, and some individuals gain higher respect and social value than others through that process [21]. As gaining and maintaining high status is a basic motivation for human beings [22], most individuals hope to have a high social status in the group [23]. Status has significant meanings for individuals, and generates important influences on their work and family life [24]. The impact of status differences runs through all levels of work scenarios, from the position of individual actors in a group [25] to the standing of a department in an organization or the status of an organization in an industry or market [26]. However, the gathering of people is not only present in the workplace, but also in the family scene. Thus, like the status orders in organizations, employees may perceive similar status order at home. For example, in a patriarchal society, the status of men is generally higher than that of women. In essence, work status and family status are rooted in the aggregation and ordering of individuals, they should have similar effects on individual psychology and behavior.

Previous studies on workplace deviance have focused on the work field, such as organizational salary policy [6], organizational ethics atmosphere [18], charismatic leadership [27]. Most researchers adopt the resource conservation theory [28], arguing that activities in the workplace that help individuals acquire new resources or prevent resource loss can help offset stress [29] and avoid deviant behaviors. However, individual activity is not confined to the workplace. As employees need to switch roles between work and family domains in their daily work lives, the congruence of work and family status matters in determining employees work behaviors. Work-family status congruence refers to the congruent subjective belief of one's status in terms of respect, significance, and power at work and at home. Introducing the concept of work-family status consistency is helpful to discuss the influence of work-family interaction on individual behavior.

## **2.2 Work-Family Status Congruence and Emotional Exhaustion**

We anticipate work-family status congruence has influences on employee emotional exhaustion. This argument stems from emotion research. As indicated by Keltner et al. [16], employees can convey social affiliation through emotion [14,15]. Thus, employees in a particular position are required to conform to the corresponding emotional expression norms. Emotional expression norms limit the types and expressions of emotions that should be expressed in specific situations [30]. Employees are bound to emotional expressions norms at work, and they are likely to display emotional labor when working with others [31]. Emotional labor is defined as “the effort, planning, and control needed to express organizationally desired emotion during interpersonal transactions” [17]. Specifically, supervisors and employees hold the agreement that following emotional expression norms is required by their work rules [32]. Thus, employees will be involved in emotional labor in the workplace. In essence, emotional labor is one’s emotional regulation behaviors along with organizational norms on emotional regulation [31].

Work-family status consistency enables employees to have similar emotional regulation norms in the workplace and at home, and reduces the diversity of employee emotional expression. Limiting the emotional range will increase the possibility of employees expressing non-real emotions [33], thereby increasing the frequency of emotional labor [34]. If there is a conflict between external expectations and internal feelings, employees will experience the tension and pressure caused by cognitive dissonance [35] and need to consume extensive resources to suppress the real emotional reaction [36], which is more likely to lead to emotional exhaustion [37]. In addition, there is direct evidence that employees with less choice in emotional expression are more likely to experience emotional exhaustion [38].

Put together, we argue that when work status and family status are congruent, employees are more likely to feel emotionally exhausted. That is, when the congruence occurs, employees have limited option on their emotional expression. Thus, they are likely to experience the conflict between expected and actual emotions, and this will result in more emotional exhaustion because of the occurring emotional dissonance. When work and family status are incongruent, employees perceive more autonomy and options on choosing approaches for emotional expression, which reduces the likelihood of conflict between expected emotions and real emotions and avoid the occurrence of emotional exhaustion. Thus, we propose that:

*Hypothesis 1: Employee emotional exhaustion will be higher when their work and family status are congruent.*

Furthermore, we discuss two situations of congruence: high-high work-family status and low-low work-family status. Existing research has found the mutual supportive relationship between status and power. High status brings more individual power, while individual power further strengthens high status [39]. In addition, based on the approach/inhibition theory of power by Keltner et al. [40], personal power will increase employees’ positive experiences and emotional expression, entailing employees to find consistence between the inherit characteristics and the external expression without contextual constrains. Therefore, employees in a high-high work-family status congruence have more autonomy of emotional expression, which reduces emotional exhaustion; employees in a low-low work-family status congruence will not have the autonomy, leading a higher level of emotional exhaustion.

*Hypothesis 2: Emotional exhaustion will be lower when employees’ work and family statuses are congruent at a high level compared with when employees’ work and family status are congruent at a low level.*

## **2.3 Work-Family Status Congruence, Emotional Exhaustion and Workplace Deviance**

Involving in deviant behaviors, employees are perceived as violators on organizational norms and harm the well-being of organizations and other members [41]. Researchers have further broken workplace deviance behaviors into organizational deviance (e.g., working slowly and sharing confidential company information) and interpersonal deviance (e.g., violence and gossip) [42]. However, existing research has also suggested that the two dimensions of workplace deviance are highly correlated [41,43], and it is plausible to consider workplace deviance as a whole [44]. Thus, we focus on workplace deviance as a holistic construct in this study.

Deviance behavior is a function of certain cognitive processes [41], such as revenge [45,46,47], the eager for personal benefit [48], and the need for releasing negative affect [1,49]. We speculate that emotional expression flexibility helps to understand the occurrence of workplace deviance. Previous studies have indicated that employees following regular, normative work requirements for custom service are inclined to delay their work process, destroy organizational properties, impair interpersonal relationships and abuse other colleagues or clients [50,51,52]. Employees experience emotional dissonance when they have to perform certain emotion that is either not existing or opposed with the internal authentic feelings [53]. Emotional dissonance is detrimental as it is highly correlated with aggressive and revenge behaviors toward clients [54]. Moreover, emotional exhaustion also explains unethical organizational behavior. To save emotional resources, individuals tend to take an avoidance approach under the situation of emotional exhaustion [55]. Emotional exhaustion also significantly predicts employees' lower self-esteem, which leads to inefficient productivity and lower performance. In this context, employees may ignore organizational ethical code and conduct unethical behavior [56].

To sum up, we anticipate that when employees' work and family statuses are congruent, employees are more likely to experience emotional exhaustion. That being said, when work and family statuses are congruent at a higher level, employees' emotional expression flexibility becomes lower. Subsequently, employees will experience emotional dissonance that triggers emotional exhaustion, which triggers deviance behavior. In contrast, when work and family statuses are congruent at a lower level, employees will have a higher emotional expression flexibility. As a result, employees will report less emotional exhaustion and further less workplace deviance behavior. Thus, we propose that:

*Hypothesis 3: Emotional exhaustion mediates the relationship between work-family status congruence and workplace deviance.*

## **2.4 Tenure as a Moderator**

Organizational tenure refers to the time period of one's organizational working experience [57,58]. Tenure may be positively related with job tenure, team tenure, and hierarchical ranking, but organizational tenure pertains to one's period on certain positions. Employees with longer organizational tenure will stay in their behavior norm longer, thereby they are experience greater persistence and intensity of the mismatch between expected and actual emotions. When employees are required to show non-real emotions, they need to consume a lot of cognition and resources for disguised expression [59], which is more likely to lead to emotional disorders. Emotional disorders will enhance the sense of unreality of individuals. When employees disguise for wages, they will be further away from the true self [53]. This internal stressful situation will yield emotional exhaustion. Therefore, employees with longer organizational tenure are more likely to report negative psychological processes. Thus, we suggest that:

*Hypothesis 4a: Employee organizational tenure will moderate the relationship between work-family status congruence and emotional exhaustion, such that the relationship will be stronger when employee organizational tenure is longer.*

Based on what we argued above, work-family status congruence will influence workplace deviance through employees' emotional exhaustion. Compared with employees with shorter organizational tenure, employees with longer organizational tenure experience the conflict between expected and actual emotions for a longer time, raising a higher level of emotional dissonance, which triggers emotional exhaustion and further generate workplace deviance. Thus, we hypothesize that:

*Hypothesis 4b: Employee organizational tenure moderates the mediating relationship among work-family status congruence, emotional exhaustion, and workplace deviance, such that the mediating relationship will be stronger when employee organizational tenure is longer.*

### 3 Method

#### 3.1 Sample and Procedure

Through snowball sampling and social recruitment, we invited employees in China to participate in this study. Survey data was collected at three timepoints. At Time 1, we invited 900 employees to complete questions about their work status and family status. A total of 858 responses were collected, yielding a response rate of 95.3%. At Time 2, which was about two weeks later, we asked those 858 participating employee respondents to complete questions about their emotional exhaustion. A total of 617 responses were collected, yielding a response rate of 71.9%. Two weeks later, we asked those 617 participating employee respondents to complete questions about their workplace deviance and demographic information at Time 3. A total of 425 responses were collected, yielding a response rate of 68.9%. Finally, we screened 403 valid questionnaires according to the principles of time, rule and reverse selection logic, and the effective questionnaire rate was 94.8%. There were 210 females (52.1%) and 193 males (47.9%). Among the 403 employee respondents, 198 (49.1%) were unmarried, 197 (48.9%) were married, and 8 (2%) were divorced. 90.3% respondents had more than one year's work experience, and 51.9% respondents had a college degree or above.

#### 3.2 Measures

**Work status and family status.** A 5-item scale compiled by Djurdjevic et al. [60] was used to measure work status. Sample items include “I have a high reputation in the company.” and “I have a high position in the company.” The measurement of family status was obtained on the basis of the work status scale, and “in the workplace” was changed to “in the family”, both of which were 5 questions. We used a five-point Likert scale (1 = very inconsistent and 5 = very consistent) for these items. The reliability for work status was 0.914 and the reliability for family status was 0.901.

**Emotional exhaustion.** We adopted the emotional exhaustion scale in the MBI-GS scale adapted by Schanfeld et al. [61], with a total of 5 items. Sample items include “I feel emotionally drained from work”. We used a seven-point Likert scale (1 = never and 7 = always) for these items. The reliability for emotional exhaustion was 0.933.

**Workplace deviance.** The scale compiled by Bennett et al. [41] and revised by Christian et al. [5] was used to measure workplace deviance. There were 17 questions in total, including 10 questions for organizational deviant behaviors and 7 questions for interpersonal deviant behaviors. Sample items include “Made fun of someone at work.” and “Taken property from work without permission.” We used a five-point Likert scale (1 = never and 5 = always) for these items. The reliability for workplace deviance was 0.977.

**Control variables.** We controlled for individual's gender, age, education level, marital status and enterprise nature.

#### 3.3 Analytical Strategy

**Tests of (in) congruence effect.** Using polynomial regression and response surface methodology [62,63], we tested Hypotheses 1 and 2 by estimating the following equation (to simplify, we omitted all control variables):

$$M = b_0 + b_1W + b_2F + b_3W^2 + b_4(WF) + b_5F^2 + e \quad (1)$$

where M represents the mediator (viz., emotional exhaustion), and W and F are work and family status, respectively. We then used the regression coefficients to plot the three-dimensional response surfaces in which W and F were plotted on the perpendicular horizontal axes, and M was plotted on the vertical axis.

To test Hypothesis 1 (i.e., congruence effect between work and family status), we examined the incongruence line on the response surface where  $W = -F$ . In order to claim support for the hypothesized congruence effect, the curvature along the incongruence line (i.e., calculated as  $b_3 - b_4 + b_5$ ) should be negative (curved downward).

To test the asymmetrical incongruence effect posited in Hypothesis 2, we calculated the slope and

curvature of the congruence line on the response surface where  $W = F$ . If the slope (i.e., calculated as  $b1 + b2$ ) is negative and reaches the level of statistical significance, then the curvature (i.e., calculated as  $b3 + b4 + b5$ ) does not significantly differ from zero. Such a finding would provide support for Hypothesis 2.

To test the mediating effects in Hypotheses 3 and 4 (i.e., work-family status congruence on workplace deviance are transmitted through emotional exhaustion), we followed the “block variable” approach outlined by Edwards et al. [64]. We combined the estimated coefficients (see Eq. (1)) to obtain a weighted linear composite (i.e., the block variable). We then regressed the mediator, emotional exhaustion, on the block variable to obtain a regression coefficient commonly referred to as the “a” path in mediated models. We next regressed Y on the mediating variable and the block variable. The regression coefficients for the mediating variable on both outcomes represent the “b” path. We used the coefficients obtained from these analyses to compute an estimate of the indirect effect (i.e.,  $a \times b$ ) for each outcome. The significance of the indirect effects was tested using bias-corrected CIs constructed from 20,000 bootstrap samples.

## 4 Results

### 4.1 Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

Tab. 1 shows the means, standard deviations, and correlations among the study variables.

**Table 1:** Descriptive statistics and correlation among key variables

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Gender										
2. Age	0.02									
3. Education	-0.12*	0.01								
4. Marital status	0.06	0.68**	-0.01							
5. Enterprise nature	-0.11*	0.25**	0.48**	0.18**						
6. Organization tenure	0.01	0.82**	0.01	0.63**	0.34**					
7. Work status	-0.09*	0.24**	0.16**	0.11*	0.14**	0.25***				
8. Family status	-0.08*	0.15**	0.2***	0.07	0.23**	0.14**	0.52**			
9. Emotional exhaustion	0.11*	-0.17**	-0.26**	-0.11*	-0.20**	-0.10*	-0.38**	-0.43**		
10. Workplace deviance	-0.08*	-0.01	-0.24**	-0.01	-0.15**	0.06	-0.13**	-0.32**	0.54**	
<i>M</i>	1.52	2.48	2.50	3.18	1.53	1.60	2.89	3.29	3.24	1.92
<i>SD</i>	0.50	1.11	1.00	1.36	0.54	0.65	1.02	0.95	1.44	0.85

Note.  $N = 403$ . significance (bilateral). \* $p < 0.05$ . \*\* $p < 0.01$ .

### 4.2 Confirmatory Factor Analysis

To verify the discriminant validity of our latent variables, we tested four critical variables via confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). The results as shown in Tab. 2 indicate that, compared to other models, the four-factor model fitted the best ( $\chi^2/df = 3.25$ ;  $CFI = 0.91$ ;  $RMSEA = 0.08$ ), indicating that there was obvious distinguish between four construct the four concepts, and the validity of the measurement scale was relatively good.

**Table 2:** Comparison of confirmatory factor analysis

Model	<i>df</i>	$\chi^2$	$\chi^2/df$	<i>CFI</i>	<i>TLI</i>	<i>RMSEA</i>	<i>SRMR</i>	<i>AIC</i>
Alternative four-factor model	458	1487.24	3.25	0.91	0.90	0.08	0.05	30615.28
Alternative three-factor model	461	2266.07	4.92	0.84	0.82	0.10	0.08	31388.11
Alternative two-factor model	463	3549.27	7.67	0.72	0.70	0.13	0.15	32667.31
Alternative single-factor model	464	5239.69	11.29	0.57	0.54	0.16	0.16	34355.73

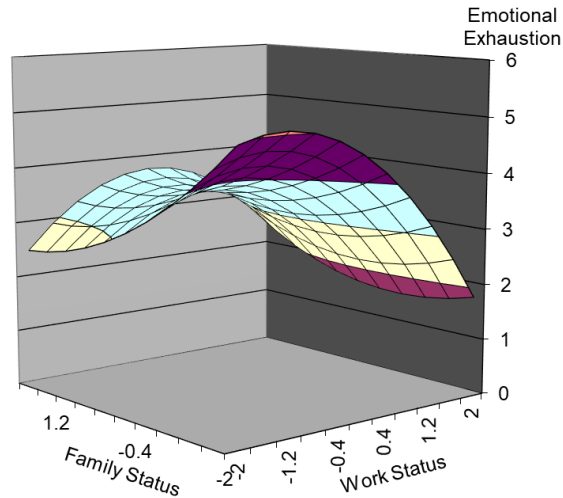
### 4.3 Hypothesis Testing

Tab. 3 shows the results of polynomial regression and response surface analysis. As shown in Model 3, the curvature of the response surface along the incongruence ( $W = -F$ ) line is significant and negative ( $a_4 = -0.37$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), which indicates that the more work-family status congruence, the more prone to emotional exhaustion. Hypothesis 1 is verified. Based on the data of Model 3, we draw a response surface graph: the graph is convex. The inconsistency curve projected to the response surface province shows an inverted u-shaped curve, which indicates that emotional exhaustion increases as the work status tends to the family status from small to large. When work status passes through the point (0,0) and exceeds family status, emotional exhaustion gradually declines. On Congruence ( $W = F$ ) line, the slope is significant and negative ( $a_1 = -0.58$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), and the curvature is not significant ( $a_2 = 0.04$ , n.s.). Therefore, when work status and family status were at the same level, individuals with higher work-family status had lower emotional exhaustion than those with lower work-family status, and hypothesis 2 is supported.

**Table 3:** Polynomial regression results for emotional exhaustion

Variable	Emotional Exhaustion		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Constant	3.25**	3.52**	3.61**
Gender	0.25	0.16	0.16
Age	-0.39**	-0.29*	-0.29*
Education	-0.31**	-0.16*	-0.15*
Marital status	-0.08	-0.19	-0.21
Enterprise nature	-0.17	-0.15	-0.15
Organization tenure	0.24	0.32**	0.32**
$W$ (b1)		-0.31**	-0.37**
$F$ (b2)		-0.38**	-0.21*
$W^2$ (b3)			-0.30**
$W \times F$ (b4)			0.20*
$F^2$ (b5)			0.14
R2	0.11	0.27	0.29
$\Delta R^2$		0.15	0.03
Congruence ( $W = F$ ) line			
Slope (b1 + b2)			-0.58**
Curvature (b3 + b4 + b5)			0.04
Incongruence ( $W = -F$ ) line			
Slope (b1 - b2)			-0.16
Curvature (b3 - b4 + b5)			-0.37*

Note.  $N = 403$ . Unstandardized regression coefficients are reported. \* $p < 0.05$ . \*\* $p < 0.01$ .



**Figure 1:** Congruence effect of work-family status congruence values on emotional exhaustion

Tab. 4 shows the results of the polynomial regression of Indirect Effects Tests. It can be seen from the table that block variable has a significant positive impact on the Emotional exhaustion ( $a = 0.98$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Additionally, emotional exhaustion has a significant positive impact on workplace deviance ( $b = 0.30$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), and the effect of the block variable on workplace deviance is not significant ( $c' = 0.10$ , n.s.) when emotional exhaustion is taken into account (a pattern consistent with full mediation). Finally, bias-corrected bootstrapped CIs of the indirect effect ( $ab$ ) of work-family status congruence on workplace deviance ( $ab = 0.29$ ,  $CI95 = [0.20, 0.41]$ ), 95% CI exclude zero, thereby providing support for Hypothesis 3.

**Table 4:** Results of indirect effects tests

Variable	Mediator Variable	Outcome Variable
	Emotional Exhaustion	Workplace Deviance
Coefficient of the block variable (a path)	0.98***	
Coefficient of EE, controlling for the block variable (b path)		0.30***
Coefficient of the block variable, controlling for EE (c' path)		0.10
Indirect effect ( $a \times b$ ) of congruence via EE		0.29***
99% bootstrapped CIs for indirect effect ( $a \times b$ )		[0.20, 0.41]

Note.  $N = 403$ . Standardized coefficients are reported. Bootstrap  $N = 20,000$ . Bias-corrected confidence intervals (CIs) are reported. EE = Emotional exhaustion. Control variables (gender, age, education, marital status, enterprise nature, and organization tenure) have been omitted from the table. \* $p < 0.05$ . \*\* $p < 0.01$ .

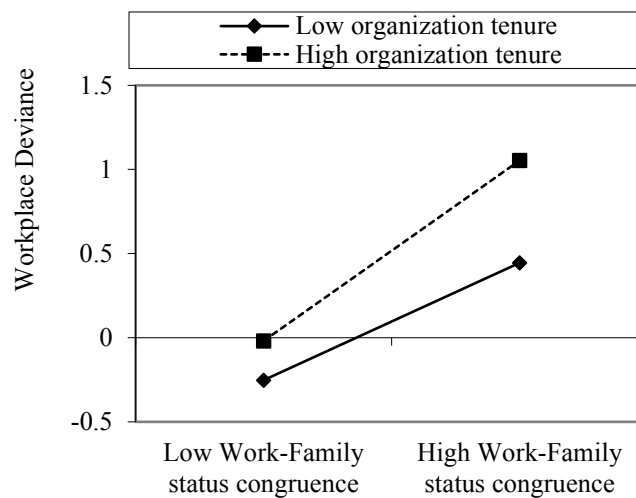
Tab. 5 shows the results of interaction effects tests. As shown in Model 4, the interaction between work-family status congruence and organization tenure has a positive impact on workplace deviance ( $\beta = 0.10$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). As also shown in Model 2, the interaction of the work-family status congruence and organization tenure has a positive impact on the emotional exhaustion ( $\beta = 0.10$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Model 5 shows emotional exhaustion has a positive impact on workplace deviance ( $\beta = 0.48$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Furthermore, the simple slope test is adopted to analyze the regulating role of the tenure on the work-family status congruence and the emotional exhaustion relationship, as shown in Fig. 2. The employee with a long tenure (the average plus one standard deviant), the work-family status congruence has a significant positive impact on emotional exhaustion ( $\beta = 4.90$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). The lower tenure group (the average minus one standard deviant), the work-family status congruence has a significant positive impact on the emotional exhaustion ( $\beta = 3.18$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Therefore, hypothesis 4 has been verified.



**Table 5:** Results of interaction effects tests

Variable	Emotional Exhaustion		Workplace Deviance		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Gender	0.09	0.05	-0.12*	-0.15**	-0.17**
Age	-0.15*	-0.19*	0.01	-0.12	-0.03
Education	-0.23**	-0.08	-0.22**	-0.10	-0.06
Marital status	-0.01	-0.08	-0.01	-0.08	-0.04
Enterprise nature	-0.04	-0.08	-0.05	-0.11	-0.07
Work-Family Status congruence		0.44**		0.31**	0.09
Organization tenure		0.21**		0.30**	0.20**
Work-Family Status congruence * Organization tenure		0.10*		0.10*	0.10
Emotional exhaustion					0.48**
Emotional exhaustion * Organization tenure					0.04
R2	0.11	0.30	0.07	0.19	0.35
$\Delta R^2$		0.19		0.12	0.16

Note.  $N = 403$ . Standardized regression coefficients are reported. \* $p < 0.05$ . \*\* $p < 0.01$ .



**Figure 2:** Interaction effect for work-family status congruence and organization tenure on emotional exhaustion

## 5 Discussion

This study explores the role of work-family status congruence in workplace deviance through an emotional labor perspective. The findings have suggested that emotional exhaustion mediates the relationship between work-family status congruence and workplace deviance. We also found evidence that organizational tenure strengthens the mediating relationship among work-family status congruence, emotional exhaustion, and workplace deviance.

### 5.1 Theoretical Implications

The present study and findings add theoretical value on work-family and workplace deviance in several ways. First, this is the first research explaining the link between work-family status congruence and workplace deviance. Previous studies have taken an interactive approach between organizations and employees (e.g., organizational policies, leadership, and individual traits) to examine workplace deviance

behavior [6,18,27]. However, these studies are constrained within the organizational context, and how the role of family determines workplace deviance remains unknown. We have taken into consideration both organizational and family factors that lead to workplace deviance.

In addition, this study reveals the intervening mechanism of emotional exhaustion between work-family status congruence and workplace deviance. Existing work-family studies (e.g., work-family conflict or work-family enrichment) have stemmed from Conservation of Resources theory [19] or social exchange theory [20]. According to the resource-based perspective, employee status and organizational tenure symbolize personal resources. Thus, when employees' work and family statuses are congruent at a high level, employees have sufficient resource supplement. But the current findings have shown that emotion matters more to employees' behaviors than personal resources, bringing innovative insight into work-family research.

Last but not least, this study has provided a nuanced understanding of various combinations of work-family status congruence (high-high, high-low, low-high, and low-low) and how these different combinations predict emotional exhaustion and workplace deviance. Furthermore, we consider the boundary condition of organizational tenure, which has been underestimated in previous literature regarding the relationship between work-family status and workplace deviance.

### ***5.2 Practical Implications***

The study also has several practical implications. First, both work and family matter for employees' psychological wellbeing and behavior. Employee behavior should be the function of both work and family factors. The findings indicate that employees seek for distinct emotional expression when switching between different life status. The discrepancy of emotional expression in the switching process is the key reason that influences employees' workplace deviance. The overlapped, intensive, and similar emotional expression between work and family status triggers employees' emotional exhaustion, which generates workplace deviance. Organizational managers could apply relevant policies or programs (e.g., role play) to help employee release their emotions, which will reduce the possibility of workplace deviance.

In addition, as our study indicates that the low-low work-family status congruence is more harmful than other combinations of work-family status congruence. Managers need to provide substantial focus on these employees with low-low work-family status congruence. Providing particular tangible and emotional support will be helpful to reduce the influence of low-low work-family status congruence on emotional exhaustion.

### ***5.3 Limitations and Future Research***

Despite the theoretical and practical implications, we recognize the limitations of the study. First, although this study introduced the perspective of work-family status into workplace deviance, the family was broadly defined without considering different structures (e.g., dual-earner couples, single and childless, single parent). We suggest that future research could specify the definition of family and provide more nuanced approaches to the current model. Second, the data were based solely on self-reports from employees. Although we examined multicollinearity in the analysis, we encourage future research to collect multiple source data. Finally, although we used emotional labor theory to explain the mediating mechanism of emotional exhaustion, we did not measure emotional labor directly. Future research could move forward to theorize and operate the mediating role of emotional labor between work-family status congruence and workplace deviance.

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