

Blunted Edge: The Negative Effects of Parental Gender Bias on Women's Workplace Performance

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Abstract

Research on the impact of parental gender bias on girls has predominantly focused on the family domain during early childhood and adolescence, neglecting its profound influence on women's professional domain in adulthood. Based on self-concept theory, this study explores the detrimental mechanism through which parental gender bias negatively affects women's workplace performance. Analysis of 225 multi-time-point, multi-source data reveals: (1) parental gender bias exacerbates women's career compromise by diminishing their self-esteem; (2) career compromise negatively influences women's job performance and creativity; (3) parental gender bias undermines women's job performance and creativity sequentially through self-esteem and career compromise. The findings expand the research perspective on women's workplace performance from the family-of-origin interface, offering new insights for identifying root factors affecting women's career choices and workplace performance, and for promoting workplace gender equality and women's career development.

Full Text

Lost Radiance: The Negative Impact of Parental Gender Bias on Women's Workplace Performance

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Abstract

While existing research on parental gender bias has primarily focused on its effects on girls during childhood and adolescence within the family domain, its

profound and lasting impact on women's workplace performance in adulthood has been largely overlooked. Drawing on self-concept theory, this study investigates the negative mechanisms through which parental gender bias undermines women's workplace performance. Analysis of multi-timepoint, multi-source data from 225 participants reveals that: (1) parental gender bias exacerbates women's career compromise by diminishing their self-esteem; (2) career compromise negatively affects women's work performance and creativity; and (3) parental gender bias sequentially undermines women's work performance and creativity through the dual pathways of self-esteem and career compromise. These findings extend the perspective on women's workplace performance research from the family-of-origin interface, offering new insights into identifying root causes of women's career choices and workplace outcomes, and promoting workplace gender equality and women's career development.

Keywords: parental gender bias, self-esteem, career compromise, work performance, creativity

Classification: B849: C93

1 Introduction

Although parents often claim to love children of all genders equally, China's newborn sex ratio suggests the persistence of son preference among some parents (Crotti et al., 2021)¹, and significant gender disparities exist in family human capital investment favoring boys over girls (Zheng & Lu, 2018). These preferences and disparities likely stem from parental gender bias, defined as parents holding gender stereotypes or discriminatory gender role beliefs that boys are more valuable and capable than girls (Begum et al., 2018). Parental gender bias represents a critical mechanism in the early socialization of gender inequality and exerts substantial influence on women's personality and psychological development (Kochanska et al., 2019). Gender inequality within the family may continue to constrain women's career choices and workplace performance throughout their lives (Croft et al., 2014). Despite ongoing improvements in labor market institutions and women's increasingly prominent roles in the workplace (Bonet et al., 2020; Tang et al., 2021), women's career advancement remains fraught with obstacles. For instance, women remain severely underrepresented in senior management, with an 80% gender gap compared to men (Crotti et al., 2021)². Women face a "funnel effect" in career progression, whereby their representation diminishes at higher organizational levels (Schultheiss, 2021). Women encounter substantial barriers when selecting ideal jobs and securing their first managerial positions (Sanchez & Lehnert, 2019), and this disadvantage at the "starting line" likely originates from self-limitation and self-withdrawal instilled by parental gender bias during childhood (Croft et al., 2014).

However, current research on parental gender bias has predominantly examined its effects on girls within the family domain during childhood and adolescence, such as receiving less care and investment (Lindström, 2013; Zheng & Lu, 2018),

having limited intergenerational occupational mobility opportunities (Asiedu et al., 2021), and diminished career aspirations during adolescence (Croft et al., 2014). Existing studies have largely neglected the potential impact of parental gender bias on women's workplace outcomes in adulthood, yet identifying root factors influencing women's career choices and performance is crucial for promoting women's career development (Croft et al., 2014). Does parental gender bias hinder women's persistence in pursuing ideal jobs and subsequently prevent them from becoming high-performing, creative employees? What mechanisms underlie this relationship?

To address these questions, this study draws on self-concept theory to examine the internal mechanisms through which parental gender bias undermines women's workplace performance from the more fundamental perspective of the family of origin. We selected work performance and creativity as indicators of women's workplace performance for three reasons. First, high levels of employee performance and creativity are vital for organizational sustainability and competitiveness (Gong et al., 2013; Hirst et al., 2018), making them key concerns for managers seeking to maintain and enhance employee outcomes. Second, examining employee workplace performance through these two dimensions aligns with previous research (e.g., Hirst et al., 2018; Raja & Johns, 2010; Yu & Frenkel, 2013; Hu et al., 2020), enabling comprehensive assessment of both task completion and individual capability while facilitating theoretical dialogue with existing literature. Third, work performance and creativity typically serve complementary roles, yet research on their shared and unique antecedents remains limited (Hirst et al., 2018).

The process of career choice and development is essentially one of self-concept realization (Super, 1953). Self-concept theory posits that self-concept forms and matures before individuals enter the workforce (Super, 1963). Individuals integrate information from significant others (such as parents) to form their self-concept (Swann et al., 2002). Parental gender bias represents negative evaluation of girls, and such negative feedback from significant others becomes internalized and integrated into girls' self-concept, fostering a negative self-view and diminishing self-esteem (Crocker & Park, 2003). Self-esteem reflects individuals' overall evaluation of their self-worth and competence (Leary & Baumeister, 2000) and constitutes the metadimension of self-concept (Super, 1963). Self-concept theory emphasizes that self-esteem plays a crucial role in career preferences and choices, as individuals lacking self-esteem (particularly women) may struggle to achieve optimal matching between self and occupational roles (Betz, 1994). Lower self-esteem constrains women from pursuing traditionally male-dominated careers (Casad et al., 2019) and reduces career aspirations (Bradley-Geist et al., 2015). This self-concept cognition that narrows career choices and restricts preferences directly leads to career compromise during the selection process (Gottfredson, 1981). Thus, self-esteem may link parental gender bias to women's career compromise.

Self-concept theory further emphasizes that self-concept exerts continuous influ-

ence on career choice and adaptation (Super, 1953). We propose that self-esteem (as self-concept) may persistently influence women's workplace performance (career adaptation) through career compromise (career choice). Self-concept influences behavior through consistency based on self-expression (Schlenker, 1985); consequently, we "do" things because of who we "are," and these actions maintain a coherent self-concept (Gecas, 1982). Career compromise involves adjusting or even abandoning original career goals, often accompanied by frustration and career distress (Weng et al., 2018). This triggers reduced self-worth within self-concept (Shamir et al., 1993), which becomes bound to poor workplace performance to reduce or avoid inconsistency between self-concept and self-expression. We therefore infer that career compromise may undermine women's work performance and creativity, and further, that self-esteem and career compromise serially mediate the relationship between parental gender bias and women's workplace performance.

1.1 Parental Gender Bias and Self-Esteem

Gender-biased parents hold strong gender stereotypes and discriminatory beliefs, maintaining preferences that boys are more valuable than girls (Begum et al., 2018). Parental gender bias manifests in more negative and dismissive attitudes and behaviors toward daughters (Kuchynka et al., 2018). Self-concept originates from social reactions of others toward the self, as individuals interpret and evaluate themselves based on how others view them (Orth, 2018). Evaluations of self-worth and competence formed during socialization constitute self-esteem (Rosenberg, 1965). Parental gender bias negatively affects women's self-esteem through several mechanisms. First, gender-biased parents exhibit traditional gender attitudes when raising daughters, shaping girls according to their perceived social norms (Kuchynka et al., 2018), such as encouraging participation in stereotype-consistent activities (Wang et al., 2016). Research indicates that time spent in traditional female activities correlates with lower self-esteem (McHale et al., 2004). Second, relationship quality predicts changes in trait self-esteem over time (Kinnunen et al., 2008). When situated in social relationships characterized by parental gender bias, girls experience more threats to their core sense of personal value (Leary, 2005). Third, parental gender bias leads girls to feel undeserving of parental love and care, hindering the development of ideal parent-child relationships. Individuals' perceptions of their potential inclusion in intimate relationships affects self-esteem levels (Leary & Baumeister, 2000). More broadly, feeling valued contributes to self-esteem development (Gruenenfelder-Steiger et al., 2016), whereas girls raised in gender-biased families typically perceive themselves as less important, valuable, and worthy of attention, impeding their self-esteem development. We therefore propose:

Hypothesis 1: Parental gender bias negatively affects women's self-esteem, such that stronger parental gender bias corresponds to lower self-esteem in daughters.

1.2 Self-Esteem and Career Compromise

Self-esteem influences individuals' attitudes and behaviors (Baumeister, 1998), including those exhibited during career choice. Career compromise is defined as "the process by which people lower their current job search goals due to inability to obtain ideal positions and make career choices among available options" (Weng et al., 2018). Individuals tend to maintain existing self-concepts and thus hold attitudes consistent with self-views and make choices aligned with self-concept (Swann, 2012). Women with low self-esteem are inclined toward career compromise during job selection. First, low self-esteem women hold negative self-evaluations, feeling they lack sufficient competence and value (Leary & Baumeister, 2000). To maintain self-concept consistency and coherence, they integrate this negative self-cognition into their self-view (Swann, 2012). Aligning with low self-esteem cognitions such as "feeling inferior, lacking value, and being dissatisfied with oneself" (Rosenberg, 1965), low self-esteem women may more easily abandon pursuit of ideal careers and compromise toward more achievable alternatives. Second, self-esteem as subjective self-satisfaction influences the degree to which individuals maintain self-will in challenging job search environments (Harren, 1979). Low self-esteem individuals facing difficult career choices and decisions tend to conform to family or social expectations, potentially compromising more readily rather than steadfastly maintaining self-will. Third, self-esteem constitutes a fundamental component of resilience (Wanberg & Banas, 2000), which describes individuals' capacity to survive, recover, and even thrive amid adversity (Luthans et al., 2007). Low self-esteem individuals exhibit lower resilience, experiencing more severe psychological distress and responding to stress more negatively when facing setbacks and social pressure (Chang et al., 2012; Mäkikangas & Kinnunen, 2003). The job search process is highly stressful and uncertain, and women with lower self-esteem, lacking confidence in their professional abilities, tend toward career compromise (Creed & Gagliardi, 2015). We therefore propose:

Hypothesis 2: Self-esteem negatively affects career compromise, such that lower self-esteem in women corresponds to greater career compromise.

Integrating Hypotheses 1 and 2, we contend that parental gender bias, as information conveyed by significant others during women's self-concept formation, undermines self-esteem and creates negative self-concept. This negative self-concept leads women to narrow their career options or restrict career preferences, reducing their courage to pursue ideal careers and resulting in career compromise (Creed & Gagliardi, 2015). We therefore propose:

Hypothesis 3: Self-esteem mediates the positive relationship between parental gender bias and women's career compromise.

1.3 Career Compromise and Work Performance, Creativity

Self-concept theory suggests that employees who perceive alignment between their work and self-cognitions regarding motivation, goals, and values experience

self-concordance and perform better (Bono & Judge, 2003). However, women who compromise on their careers perceive a gap between their current occupational situation and ideal career aspirations, leading to frustration and potential self-deprecation (Creed & Gagliardi, 2015; Gati et al., 1998). This state of lost self-concordance inherent in career compromise may prevent women from becoming high-performing, creative employees. Work performance refers to the degree of effective execution of specified job requirements and behaviors, representing a non-discretionary, efficiency-focused in-role behavior (Janssen & van Yperen, 2004). Creativity represents a discretionary, extra-role behavior involving the generation of novel and useful ideas (Amabile et al., 2005).

Career compromise negatively affects women's work performance. First, career compromise implies misalignment between occupational interests, ideals, and one's knowledge and skills with the chosen career (Weng et al., 2018). Women who compromise cannot fully leverage their strengths or utilize available methods, resources, and technologies to address work challenges and complete tasks, resulting in lower performance. Second, career-compromised women question their sense of work meaning (Weng et al., 2018), experiencing reduced purposefulness, career distress, and diminished competence (Creed & Gagliardi, 2015). These reduced work adaptations may even generate turnover intentions (De Clercq, 2022). Such negative thoughts and beliefs raise personal action thresholds, with compromised women less likely to actively engage in problem-solving or strive for higher-quality task performance. We therefore propose:

Hypothesis 4a: Career compromise negatively affects women's work performance, such that greater career compromise corresponds to lower work performance.

Career compromise also reduces women's creativity at work. First, creativity is closely related to self-worth perception (Ng & Yam, 2019) and personal expression (Goncalo & Katz, 2020). Creativity enhances self-affirmation as it directly reflects one's abilities and intelligence (Amabile et al., 2005). Career-compromised women typically maintain low-expectation dissatisfaction, associated with weaker work identity (Creed et al., 2020), and may not deploy substantial resources and effort toward strategies like creativity to exceed standard goals (Bataille & Vough, 2022). Second, career compromise involves adjusting or abandoning original ideal career goals, potentially generating dissatisfaction with current work, frustration, and negative emotions (Creed & Blume, 2013). Research has established that positive emotions at work enhance employees' creative output (Parke et al., 2015). Positive emotions signal safety, increasing joyfulness and cognitive flexibility—key to generating novel, useful ideas (Amabile & Pratt, 2016)—whereas negative emotions from career compromise undermine women's creativity (Amabile et al., 2005). We therefore propose:

Hypothesis 4b: Career compromise negatively affects women's workplace creativity, such that greater career compromise corresponds to lower creativity.

1.4 The Serial Mediating Role of Self-Esteem and Career Compromise

Self-concept theory posits that career choice and development are essentially processes of self-concept realization (Super, 1953), with self-concept forming before workforce entry and continuously influencing career choice and adaptation (Super, 1953). Based on the relationships predicted in H1, H2, H3, and H4a/b, parental gender bias serves as an important external information source during women's early self-concept formation. Negative gender evaluations from parents become internalized and integrated into women's self-concept, creating negative self-views and lower self-esteem. Lower self-esteem leads women to narrow and restrict their career identity and self-concept, increasing the likelihood of career compromise. Career compromise reduces self-evaluation, and given self-concept's persistent consistency, compromised women may exhibit self-expression consistent with lower self-evaluation, triggering poor workplace performance—namely lower work performance and creativity—and ultimately causing women to lose their radiance in the workplace. We therefore propose the following serial mediation hypotheses:

Hypothesis 5a: Parental gender bias negatively affects women's work performance through the serial mediation of self-esteem and career compromise.

Hypothesis 5b: Parental gender bias negatively affects women's workplace creativity through the serial mediation of self-esteem and career compromise.

The theoretical model of this study is presented in Figure 1 [Figure 1: see original paper].

2 Method

2.1 Participants

To reduce common method bias, this study employed a multi-timepoint, multi-source research design. Recognizing that employees with long tenure might have unclear memories of career compromise at entry, we selected female college seniors transitioning into the workplace as our sample. Collaborating with the career services office at a university in northern China, we obtained a list of graduating female students from economics and management programs, including student ID, name, major, and contact information. Research assistants screened female graduates and assigned each a 6-digit invitation code. Using invitation codes as matching identifiers across three surveys avoided collecting names and phone numbers, thereby protecting participant privacy and encouraging candid responses.

Data collection began in February 2021 and was completed within the same year to ensure participants faced similar macro-level employment conditions, controlling for employment market effects on female graduates' career compromise. In Wave 1, participants completed measures of parental gender bias, self-esteem, and demographic information. We tracked job signing status through our contact at the career services office. When participants submitted signed

employment contracts, research assistants contacted them. Upon confirmation of employment, participants received the Wave 2 survey, which measured career compromise and collected information on start date and contract duration. Based on start dates, contract terms, and referencing Article 19 of China's Labor Contract Law regarding probationary periods, we calculated participants' official hiring date plus three months. Research assistants then contacted participants for Wave 3. The majority of participants had 6-month probationary periods, though some ranged from 2-6 months (surveys terminated if participants had left their Wave 2 employer). We conducted Wave 3 three months after participants completed probation (i.e., after 5-9 months of employment) because work performance, creativity, and perceived gender bias require time to manifest. In Wave 3, participants completed measures of perceived gender bias at work and provided their direct supervisors' email addresses, with assurance that data would be used solely for academic research, participation was completely voluntary, and they could withdraw at any time without job consequences. Research assistants contacted supervisors, explained the academic background and purpose, and solicited their support. Upon receiving supervisors' consent, we sent them survey links and the corresponding 6-digit invitation code to evaluate participants' work performance and creativity (since invitation codes corresponded to participant names, research assistants could directly inform supervisors which employee to rate).

In Wave 1, 500 questionnaires were distributed, yielding 430 valid responses. Wave 2 distributed 430 questionnaires, yielding 385 valid responses. Wave 3 distributed 385 questionnaires, yielding 225 valid matched "employee-supervisor" pairs. The final response rate was 45%. To assess potential non-response bias, we tested for significant differences between attrited and final samples on demographic and key variables. T-tests for continuous variables and chi-square tests for categorical variables revealed no significant differences between attrited and final samples on household registration ($\chi^2(1) = 0.97, p = 0.32$), only-child status ($\chi^2(1) = 1.21, p = 0.27$), maternal employment ($\chi^2(1) = 2.29, p = 0.13$), paternal education ($t = -1.54, p = 0.12$), maternal education ($t = -1.56, p = 0.12$), paternal gender bias ($t = 1.61, p = 0.11$), maternal gender bias ($t = 1.44, p = 0.15$), self-esteem ($t = 1.59, p = 0.11$), career compromise ($t = 0.07, p = 0.95$), or perceived gender discrimination at work ($t = -0.23, p = 0.82$).

2.2 Measures

All measures except the career compromise scale were adapted from established English-language instruments using rigorous translation-back-translation procedures to ensure accurate expression of original meanings. All items used 7-point Likert scales, with career compromise scales ranging from completely dissatisfied (=1) to completely satisfied (=7), and other scales ranging from completely disagree (=1) to completely agree (=7).

Parental Gender Bias: We used the 15-item Attitudes Toward Women Scale (AWS) developed by Spence and Hahn (1997). Sample items include: "Generally,

in child-rearing matters, the father should be obeyed and should have greater authority than the mother” and “Men should share housework such as washing dishes and laundry (reverse-scored).” Participants rated their perceptions of both fathers’ and mothers’ attitudes during upbringing. Because ratings for fathers and mothers were highly correlated, we averaged them to represent overall parental ratings for each item.

Self-Esteem: We used the 10-item Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES; Rosenberg, 1965). A sample item is: “I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.”

Career Compromise: We used the 12-item Career Compromise Scale developed by Weng et al. (2018), which assesses satisfaction with various aspects of participants’ current jobs to reflect whether the job represents a desirable choice or a compromise. The scale comprises three dimensions: Development Opportunity Compromise (e.g., “opportunities to learn new job knowledge,” “promotion opportunities”); Career Fit Compromise regarding position-self match (e.g., “degree of utilizing my knowledge,” “match with my interests,” “relevance to my work ideals and career goals”); and Social Expectation Compromise (e.g., “consistency with family expectations,” “corresponding social status”). We reverse-coded items so that higher scores indicated greater compromise.

Work Performance: We used the 5-item scale revised by Eisenberger (2010) from Williams and Anderson (1991). A sample item is: “At work, this employee adequately completes assigned duties.”

Creativity: We used the 4-item scale developed by Baer and Oldham (2006). A sample item is: “This employee suggests innovative ideas for improving work.”

Control Variables: Previous research indicates that urban household registration facilitates access to higher occupational status compared to rural registration (Shang & Wang, 2020). Girls raised in larger families with siblings more strongly endorse traditional gender divisions (Farré & Vella, 2013), making them more susceptible to gender stereotypes in career choice. Parental education affects children’s adult occupational status (Becker et al., 2019), and maternal employment increases daughters’ likelihood of employment, leadership roles, work hours, and wages (McGinn et al., 2019). We therefore controlled for demographic and family background information including household registration, only-child status, parental education, and maternal employment. We also controlled for perceived gender discrimination at work, as it may affect women’s workplace performance (Corwin et al., 2022; Faniko et al., 2017), using the 3-item scale by Sharon et al. (2006). A sample item is: “At work, I sometimes feel my gender is a limitation.”

2.3 Analytical Strategy

We used structural equation modeling (SEM) in Mplus 8, incorporating both measurement and path models, to test Hypotheses 1, 2, 3, and 4. Because

indirect effects rarely satisfy normality assumptions and traditional mediation testing (e.g., Baron & Kenny, 1986) is often inadequate (MacKinnon et al., 2007), we used bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples to generate confidence intervals (CIs) for indirect effects. CIs excluding zero indicate significant mediation.

3 Results

3.1 Confirmatory Factor Analysis

We conducted confirmatory factor analysis in Mplus 8 to examine discriminant validity among parental gender bias, self-esteem, career compromise, work performance, creativity, and perceived gender discrimination at work. The six-factor model fit the data well ($\chi^2 = 1820.52$, $df = 1109$, $p < 0.001$; SRMR = 0.05, RMSEA = 0.05, CFI = 0.91, TLI = 0.90) and outperformed all alternative models (see Table 1), supporting the distinctiveness of the six factors (Hu & Bentler, 1999).

3.2 Descriptive Statistics

Table 2 presents means, standard deviations, correlations, and reliability coefficients for all variables.

3.3 Hypothesis Testing

We tested the mediation model using SEM in Mplus 8. The model fit the data acceptably ($\chi^2 = 2106.06$, $df = 1336$, $p < 0.001$, SRMR = 0.06, RMSEA = 0.05, CFI = 0.90, TLI = 0.90). Table 3 presents parameter estimates for main paths.

Model 1 in Table 3 shows that parental gender bias negatively related to women's self-esteem ($\beta = -0.16$, $SE = 0.05$, $p = 0.004$), supporting Hypothesis 1. Specifically, we examined relationships separately for paternal and maternal gender bias, finding both paternal ($\beta = -0.11$, $SE = 0.05$, $p = 0.02$) and maternal ($\beta = -0.14$, $SE = 0.05$, $p = 0.004$) bias negatively related to women's self-esteem. Although maternal bias showed a larger absolute coefficient, the difference between coefficients was not significant ($diff = 0.03$, $SE = 0.07$, $p = 0.67$), indicating no significant difference between fathers' and mothers' effects on daughters' self-esteem.

Model 2 in Table 3 shows that self-esteem negatively related to career compromise ($\beta = -0.39$, $SE = 0.10$, $p < 0.001$), supporting Hypothesis 2. Hypothesis 3 proposed that self-esteem mediates the relationship between parental gender bias and women's career compromise. Bootstrapping with 5,000 samples revealed a significant indirect effect (indirect effect = 0.06, 95% CI [0.02, 0.13]), supporting Hypothesis 3.

Model 3 in Table 3 shows that career compromise negatively related to women's work performance ($\beta = -0.28$, $SE = 0.08$, $p = 0.001$), supporting Hypothesis 4a.

Model 4 shows that career compromise negatively related to women' s creativity ($\beta = -0.44$, $SE = 0.12$, $p < 0.001$), supporting Hypothesis 4b.

Hypotheses 5a and 5b proposed serial mediation of parental gender bias' s effects on work performance/creativity through self-esteem and career compromise. The serial indirect effect on work performance was significant (indirect effect = -0.03 , 95% CI $[-0.07, -0.01]$), supporting Hypothesis 5a. The serial indirect effect on creativity was also significant (indirect effect = -0.02 , 95% CI $[-0.05, -0.01]$), supporting Hypothesis 5b.

3.4 Supplementary Analysis

Given growing research on workplace gender bias and stereotypes' negative effects on women' s performance and career development (Corwin et al., 2022; Faniko et al., 2017), we examined perceived gender discrimination at work as a potential moderator of the career compromise-performance/creativity relationships. Results showed marginally significant moderation of the career compromise-creativity relationship ($\beta = -0.12$, $SE = 0.07$, $p = 0.097$) but non-significant moderation of the career compromise-performance relationship ($\beta = -0.01$, $SE = 0.05$, $p = 0.84$). This suggests workplace gender discrimination may exacerbate career compromise' s negative effect on creativity. As this was a post-hoc finding without a priori theoretical support, we follow Hollenbeck and Wright' s (2017) recommendation to transparently report it as such. Given the marginal significance and limited theoretical foundation, we encourage future research with larger samples to further explore this moderation.

4 Discussion

4.1 Theoretical Contributions

This study makes several theoretical contributions to literature on gender bias, career compromise, and women' s career development. First, it reveals antecedents of women' s career development barriers from the family-of-origin perspective. Previous research has shown that adolescent girls' fear of losing friends impedes ideal career acquisition and leads to compromise (Sinclair et al., 2014), and that girls modify career interests to maintain same-gender friendships (Sinclair et al., 2019). Our study extends this temporal influence further back to parental gender bias in the family of origin, identifying a more distal yet fundamental factor underlying women' s career development barriers. This temporal independence clarifies causal relationships and expands research perspectives on female career obstacles. Our findings provide empirical evidence for the proposition that "gender inequality at home continues to constrain gender equality at work" (Croft et al., 2014). Additionally, while emerging literature has examined family-of-origin effects on workplace entry—such as exposure to parental aggression predicting abusive supervision (Garcia et al., 2014) and parental income negatively predicting leadership effectiveness (Martin et al., 2016)—this research stream has focused primarily on leadership development. Our study

complements and enriches this literature by examining general employee workplace performance.

Second, this study reveals that parental gender bias negatively affects women's workplace performance through self-esteem and career compromise, with no difference between fathers' and mothers' influence. This provides two-fold expansion to literature on parenting's far-reaching effects. On one hand, it complements previous research emphasizing maternal gender bias's effects on boys' care investment (Lindström, 2013) and intergenerational mobility (Asiedu et al., 2021). On the other hand, it extends research linking paternal absence to low self-esteem in children and adolescents (Luo et al., 2011; Orth, 2018) and paternal involvement in housework to girls' career aspirations (Croft et al., 2014), demonstrating that paternal influence extends into daughters' workplace experiences.

Third, this study integrates internal and external factors to identify mechanisms driving women's career compromise and expands research on its consequences. Previous studies examined antecedents of women's limited career development from either internal factors (e.g., motivation, interests, aspirations) or external factors (e.g., gender discrimination) (Koch et al., 2015). Recent scholarship calls for recognizing that career development is shaped by both individual choices and complex external environments (Meeussen et al., 2022). Our study, grounded in parental gender bias (external) and self-esteem (internal), enriches research on women's career compromise mechanisms from a personality trait perspective. Additionally, by focusing on complementary performance and creativity outcomes, we extend previous research on career compromise's "defensive" consequences (e.g., burnout, Weng et al., 2018; turnover intentions, De Clercq, 2022) to include the "promotive" factor of creativity, and enrich work-life interface literature related to creativity and career development (Deen et al., 2021; Harrison & Wagner, 2016).

Finally, by sampling female graduates entering the workforce in the same year, we partially controlled for macro employment conditions and recruitment gender bias effects on career compromise. By controlling for perceived gender discrimination at work, our findings reveal parental gender bias's unique and enduring impact on girls, offering new perspectives for identifying root causes of women's career choices and performance and promoting workplace gender equality. The study underscores how parents' negative influence during early socialization persistently affects women's personality and psychological development, extending into workplace performance. More broadly, motivation literature views self-evaluation within self-concept as an important intrinsic motivator (Kwang & Swann, 2010; Shamir et al., 1993). By positioning self-esteem, career compromise, performance, and creativity as self-expression consistent with the negative self-concept induced by parental gender bias, this study contributes to literature on parental gender bias and women's career development while connecting to motivational theory and enhancing understanding of barriers women face in career development.

4.2 Practical Implications

This study's examination of career compromise antecedents and consequences emphasizes that women's career development is a lifelong, continuous process. Gender equality is both a fundamental Chinese national policy and a global goal. Addressing traditional parental gender inequality during women's development has profound practical and social significance for adjusting family education, career guidance, and protecting women's workplace rights. Our findings offer practical guidance for both parenting and women's self-development.

For family education, parents must recognize the persistent negative consequences of son preference. Parental gender bias affects daughters not temporarily but throughout their lives, impacting self-esteem, career choice, and workplace performance—essentially causing daughters to “lose their radiance” and harming them for life. Parents should abandon gender bias, establish healthy parent-child relationships, and model correct gender role attitudes. During daughters' upbringing, parents should encourage diverse personal interests and career perspectives, even when these contradict traditional stereotypes.

For women's self-development, resisting bias influence is crucial. Women should recognize bias's existence and consciously avoid accepting stereotypical messages, cultivate contingent self-esteem (e.g., organization-based, job-based) to enhance overall self-esteem, and build psychological defenses against bias. Women should also develop proper job search perspectives, matching careers to their interests, ideals, and skills while reducing family or social expectation influences. Even when market competition necessitates compromise, women can mitigate negative career development effects through proactive career self-management.

4.3 Limitations and Future Directions

Despite its contributions, this study has limitations. First, although SEM supports the proposed path from parental gender bias through self-esteem to career choice and performance, this may not be the only plausible model. For instance, despite parental gender bias, working mothers may provide positive role models, making daughters more labor market-oriented and career-driven. Future research should explore additional mechanisms linking gender bias to workplace performance and control for factors like academic performance, job search perspectives (e.g., “employment first, career choice later”), and employment environment perceptions (e.g., perceived employment difficulty) to isolate parental bias's unique incremental effect. Second, this study selected performance and creativity as workplace outcomes; future research could examine more proximal outcomes for new employees, such as proactive career behaviors and career growth, or voice behavior (particularly promotive voice) that facilitates career opportunity identification. Finally, we call for future research to explore boundary conditions, such as career development strategies and goal adjustment (Creed & Blume, 2013), to identify factors that mitigate career compromise's negative effects and guide interventions.

5 Conclusion

This study examined how parental gender bias causes women to lose their radiance in the workplace. Analysis of multi-timepoint, matched employee-supervisor data revealed that self-esteem and career compromise serially mediate parental gender bias' s negative effects on women' s work performance and creativity. Parental gender bias undermines women' s self-esteem, increases career compromise in decision-making, and ultimately prevents them from becoming high-performing, creative employees. Grounded in self-concept theory and focusing on the family-of-origin interface, this study provides theoretical and empirical evidence for understanding women' s limited career development, offering new insights for identifying root causes of women' s career choices and performance and promoting workplace gender equality and women' s career development.

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