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Family Provision Motivation from an Actor-Observer Perspective (Postprint)

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Abstract

The introduction of the family-providing motivation concept has propelled advances in work motivation research, offering a novel perspective for understanding employees' work behaviors. However, existing studies have emphasized the prosocial motivation attribute of family-providing motivation, while the understanding of its work motivation attribute remains incomplete. Therefore, this study focuses on family-providing motivation within the work motivation attribute, proposing that family-providing motivation comprises two independent dimensions: level and degree of control. It investigates the influence mechanism of family-providing motivation on employees' organizational citizenship behavior and its subsequent interpersonal effects. This study first explores, from the actor perspective, how family-providing motivation affects employees' organizational citizenship behavior. Then, from the observer perspective, it separately investigates observers' (interviewers') overall understanding of the work motivation attribute of family-providing motivation, as well as observers' (leaders') attributions and reactions toward organizational citizenship behaviors performed by employees driven by family-providing motivation. Through systematic theoretical construction, this study enhances comprehensive understanding of employees' family-providing motivation in the workplace and provides implications for management practice.

Full Text

Revisiting Family Motivation from the Actor Versus Observer Perspectives

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Abstract

The construct of family motivation has significantly advanced work motivation research and provided a novel lens for understanding employees' work behaviors. However, existing studies have predominantly emphasized the prosocial motivation attribute of family motivation, leaving its work motivation attribute insufficiently understood. Therefore, this study focuses on family motivation from a work motivation perspective, proposing that family motivation comprises two independent dimensions—level and controlledness. We investigate the mechanisms through which family motivation influences employees' organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs) and its subsequent interpersonal effects. This research first examines how family motivation affects employees' OCBs from the actor perspective. It then explores, from the observer perspective, how observers (interviewers) perceive the work motivation attributes of family motivation holistically and how observers (leaders) attribute and react to OCBs performed by employees driven by family motivation. Through systematic theoretical construction, this study enhances comprehensive understanding of employees' family motivation in the workplace and provides implications for management practice.

Keywords: work motivation, family motivation, actor-observer perspectives, organizational citizenship behaviors, attribution

Introduction

Age 35 has become a controversial threshold in China's job market, representing a cutoff point for most positions. Rooted in a collectivist cultural tradition that advocates loyalty and filial piety, Chinese individuals feel a strong sense of responsibility to support their families and care for their parents. Under the influence of the traditional Chinese value of "family management" (齐家), society widely expects individuals to maintain harmonious family lives, respect their elders, and care for their children. Based on this consensus, 35-year-old professionals typically bear the dual burden of supporting both aging parents and young children, leading to stereotypes that they lack energy, efficiency, and innovation. Employers openly state that "those under 35 are human resources, while those over 35 are human costs." According to a 2022 report by Liepin.com on the "35+ Crisis Phenomenon Among Contemporary Professionals," family responsibilities constitute a primary source of pressure for post-70s, post-80s, and post-90s generations in the workplace.

In reality, supporting one's family serves as an important work motivation that can enhance employee work engagement and productivity (Menges et al., 2017; Su et al., 2020), rather than merely being a stressor. Against this backdrop,

developing a deeper understanding of how family motivation influences employee work behaviors can provide crucial evidence for evaluating the rationality of the “35-year-old employment threshold.”

Family represents a significant source of motivation for individuals to engage in work. The concept of family motivation was first introduced by Menges et al. (2017), conceptualized as a special form of prosocial motivation defined as “the desire to expend effort to provide for one’s family,” which significantly enhances employee work performance. Current scholarship has primarily focused on the prosocial motivation attribute of family motivation, examining its impact on employees’ in-role behaviors and work performance, such as increasing work engagement (Su et al., 2020) and job performance (Menges et al., 2017; Tariq & Ding, 2018). Building on this foundation, Chinese scholars Zhang et al. (2020) analyzed the similarities and differences between family motivation in the work domain and controlled motivation based on self-determination theory, proposing that family motivation may represent an extrinsic work motivation with varying degrees of controlledness (i.e., internalization) across different actors. Their study further revealed that under the influence of family financial pressure, employees’ family motivation becomes highly controlled, producing a double-edged sword effect: while it drives higher work engagement and productivity, it also leads employees to view work merely as a means of livelihood, focusing only on short-term goals that yield immediate benefits, thereby reducing creativity. This research also uncovered the mediating role of job instrumentality, opening new avenues for family motivation research.

Viewed within the broader history of work motivation research, family motivation is a novel concept distinct from traditional extrinsic motivations such as promotion and personal goal achievement, potentially exerting unique and important motivational effects on employee work behaviors with numerous issues worthy of in-depth exploration. Indeed, beyond the finding that employees facing high family financial pressure experience highly controlled family motivation (Zhang et al., 2020), individuals’ family motivation may also be less controlled, such as employees with lower family financial pressure who strongly identify with their role as breadwinners, or working mothers who view economic and psychological independence as important. Therefore, this study defines family motivation as a special form of extrinsic work motivation—namely, the desire to work in order to benefit one’s family. Two critical and independent dimensions characterize this work motivation: level (the extent to which individuals wish to benefit their family through work) and controlledness (the degree of internalization of working for one’s family). High-level family motivation may stem primarily from family economic pressure (highly controlled) or from identification with the breadwinner role (less controlled). Thus, both dimensions may uniquely and importantly influence employee work behaviors.

Literature Review and Current Research Critique

Family Motivation and Work Motivation Work motivation is a decisive factor influencing individual and organizational achievement (Kanfer, Chen et al., 2008; Kanfer, Frese et al., 2017). Current work motivation research primarily focuses on individuals' engagement in specific work activities (Ackerman & Kanfer, 2020; Kanfer et al., 2013), such as organizational citizenship behavior (e.g., Donia et al., 2016), voice behavior (e.g., Ng et al., 2021), and creative activities (e.g., Zhu et al., 2018). However, this perspective confines work motivation to the drivers of specific behaviors or performance in the workplace, neglecting the reasons why individuals choose to maintain their current jobs or careers rather than exit them (Ackerman & Kanfer, 2020). For instance, although many internet workers complain about the “996” work schedule, what drives them to continue in these jobs? This also falls within the scope of work motivation research.

Kanfer et al. (2013) proposed categorizing work motivation among older workers into three types: motivation at work, motivation to work, and motivation to retire. Motivation at work refers to the direction, intensity, and duration of behaviors enacted in work roles, while motivation to work refers to individuals' participation in organized employment to obtain intrinsic outcomes (e.g., enjoyment) or extrinsic outcomes (e.g., salary). Although Kanfer et al. (2013) initially developed this taxonomy to understand why older workers near retirement age choose to exit or remain in the labor force, their distinction between “motivation to work” and “motivation at work” reminds researchers to examine not only the reasons and drivers behind employees' workplace behaviors but also the motivations for choosing their current jobs or remaining in the labor market. After all, employees must first be motivated to enter the labor market before they can exhibit various behaviors at work.

Family is an important source of motivation for individuals to enter and remain in the labor market. From this perspective, family motivation is essentially a form of work motivation (motivation to work). However, management research has tended to treat family motivation as a special type of prosocial motivation (Erdogan et al., 2022; Menges et al., 2017; Stollberger et al., 2019; Tariq & Ding, 2018) rather than work motivation, possibly because family motivation can direct behaviors both within and outside the work domain (e.g., helping family members with household chores). Zhang et al. (2020) explicitly defined family motivation in the work domain as employees' desire to support their families through work. Building on self-determination theory, they proposed that individuals may work to support their families for different reasons, resulting in varying degrees of internalization of family motivation. Specifically, when individuals work for their families to meet others' expectations of their social roles or purely to earn income, their family motivation is primarily controlled motivation. When individuals identify with their responsibility to support their families and integrate it into their value system, their family motivation exhibits higher autonomy. Due to these differences in internalization, different individu-

als are driven by family motivation to participate in work for different reasons, meaning that two employees with the same level of family motivation may experience different degrees of controlledness and consequently exhibit different workplace behaviors.

Organizational behavior research typically adopts psychology's classification of motivation into intrinsic motivation (engaging in activities out of interest) and extrinsic motivation (engaging in activities to obtain desired outcomes) (Deci et al., 2017; Kanfer et al., 2017). Building on this, Gagné and Deci (2005) introduced self-determination theory to organizational behavior research, proposing that beyond intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation can be further divided into four types applicable to organizational contexts—external regulation, introjected regulation, identified regulation, and integrated regulation—along a continuum of increasing internalization and decreasing controlledness. Self-determination theory's core tenet is the distinction between autonomous motivation and controlled motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Gagné et al., 2015). Autonomous motivation includes intrinsic motivation and highly internalized extrinsic motivation (identified and integrated regulation), while controlled motivation includes external and introjected regulation, reflecting the degree to which individuals are influenced by external factors. Compared to controlled motivation, autonomous motivation yields more positive outcomes, such as significantly improved performance, organizational commitment, and job satisfaction (Deci et al., 2017; Zhang et al., 2010).

From a self-determination theory perspective, Zhang et al. (2020) proposed that the specific reasons individuals want to achieve family-support goals through work may differ, resulting in varying degrees of controlledness in their family motivation. When individuals work for their families to fulfill social role expectations or purely to earn income, their family motivation is primarily controlled. When individuals identify with their breadwinning responsibilities and integrate them into their value systems, their family motivation exhibits higher autonomy. Due to these differences in internalization, different individuals are driven by family motivation to participate in work for different reasons. Therefore, this study defines family motivation as a special form of extrinsic work motivation—the desire to work in order to benefit one's family (Zhang et al., 2020)—focusing on the drive to work. This work motivation varies across individuals not only in level but also in controlledness, making it distinctive. These two dimensions of work motivation-based family motivation are independent and may uniquely and importantly influence employee work behaviors.

Extra-Role Behaviors and Organizational Citizenship Behavior

Extra-role behaviors refer to behaviors that benefit organizational development beyond employee role expectations. Although not necessarily explicitly rewarded by the organization, they significantly impact organizational development (Van Dyne & LePine, 1998). Characterized by self-discretion, extra-role behaviors are enacted based on personal volition (McAllister et al., 2007). As

a voluntary form of extra-role behavior, organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) is typically considered the quintessential representative of extra-role behaviors, referring to work-related contributions that employees voluntarily make outside explicitly defined job requirements (Organ, 1988, 2018).

Employees' OCBs generally produce positive effects for both individuals and organizations (Ocampo et al., 2018). At the individual level, although OCBs are often not explicitly incorporated into reward systems, research indicates that supervisors are more likely to consider employees who engage in OCBs when evaluating performance, allocating rewards, and recommending promotions (Mackenzie et al., 2017; Podsakoff et al., 2009). At the organizational level, employee OCBs can enhance team performance and organizational effectiveness (e.g., Bachrach et al., 2006; Nielsen et al., 2012) and increase customer satisfaction (e.g., Podsakoff et al., 2014). However, OCBs can also have negative consequences for individuals and organizations (Bolino et al., 2013; Griep et al., 2021). For example, employees' daily OCBs can hinder work progress, damaging their organizational commitment and job satisfaction (Koopman et al., 2016). Employees who initially exhibit OCBs may later display workplace deviance or counterproductive behaviors (Griep et al., 2021; Yam et al., 2017). Thus, although OCBs are generally positive, they have some negative aspects (Bolino et al., 2013). Compared to in-role behaviors, where the relationship between behavior and expected outcomes is relatively stable (e.g., higher productivity leads to higher performance), OCBs do not always yield expected positive outcomes.

Given the importance and diverse outcomes of OCBs, researchers have consistently focused on their antecedents, particularly analyzing why employees engage in OCBs from a motivational perspective. The most common classification is Rioux and Penner's (2001) taxonomy of OCB motives into prosocial values, organizational concern, and impression management, all of which predict OCB occurrence. Prosocial values motivation reflects the desire to help others and build good relationships. Organizational concern motivation reflects the desire to work hard for the organization and demonstrate pride and commitment. Impression management motivation reflects the desire to avoid creating a bad impression and to build a good image while obtaining rewards. The first two motives are generally considered "good soldier" motives—engaging in OCBs to serve others—while impression management is recognized as a "good actor" motive—engaging in OCBs for instrumental purposes (Bourdage et al., 2012; Rioux & Penner, 2001). Although prosocial values and organizational concern motives are considered stable OCB motives rarely influenced by situational changes (Halbesleben et al., 2010; Rioux & Penner, 2001), research has found that employees may exhibit higher organizational concern motives for social exchange purposes (Mo & Shi, 2017). Therefore, organizational concern motivation can serve instrumental purposes like impression management motivation.

Observer Perspectives on Employee Extra-Role Behaviors Typically, actors benefit from exhibiting extra-role behaviors. For instance, employees can receive higher leader evaluations (Brykman & Raver, 2021) and better career development (Huang et al., 2018) through voice behavior. However, growing research reveals that extra-role behaviors do not always yield positive returns for actors (e.g., Choi & Moon, 2017; Jia et al., 2021). A key reason is that behavioral outcomes depend not only on the behavior itself but also on the parties involved (Lee & Barnes, 2021; Reynolds et al., 2015). Extra-role behaviors (e.g., OCBs directed at individuals) generally involve three parties: actors, targets, and observers (Cheng et al., 2013; Reynolds et al., 2015; Rodell & Lynch, 2016). Since individual work behaviors are embedded in organizational contexts, third parties not part of the “actor-target dyad” (i.e., observers) are inevitably affected (Lin & Meng, 2022). In such cases, observers perceive and interpret employees’ behaviors and respond differently based on their interpretations (Tims & Parker, 2020). Empirical research shows that because employees’ spontaneous behaviors reflect their intentions to some extent, observers who are not directly affected by the behavior still perceive and react to actors’ behaviors (Fong et al., 2022; Sun et al., 2021). Consequently, recent research has gradually moved beyond the “actor-target” interpersonal interaction perspective to the “actor-observer” interpersonal perception perspective to more comprehensively understand why the same employee behaviors produce different outcomes (e.g., Tims & Parker, 2020; Wang et al., 2021).

Current organizational behavior research primarily examines how leaders or colleagues, as observers, attribute motives to employees’ extra-role behaviors and subsequently react. Common observer attributions include other-oriented and self-oriented motive attributions (e.g., Bowler et al., 2019; Halbesleben & Belairs, 2016; Jia et al., 2021). Other-oriented attributions refer to attributing behaviors to actors’ concern for others or the organization, most commonly prosocial values and organizational concern motives, generally considered altruistic and thus highly evaluated. Self-oriented motive attributions refer to attributing behaviors to actors’ desire to obtain self-related benefits, most commonly impression management motives, generally considered instrumental and thus negatively evaluated (e.g., Bourdage et al., 2012; Grant & Mayer, 2009; Halbesleben et al., 2010). Even when observing the same extra-role behavior, different attributions by leaders or colleagues produce different outcomes. For example, if observers believe employees help colleagues proactively out of prosocial values motives, employees gain better reputations, which particularly facilitates newcomers’ organizational integration (e.g., Choi & Moon, 2017; Jia et al., 2021).

Behavioral characteristics, actor factors, and observer factors all influence observers’ attributions and reactions to actors’ behaviors (Bolino et al., 2013; Bowler et al., 2019; Tims & Parker, 2020). For instance, high-quality leader-member exchange relationships lead leaders to attribute employees’ OCBs to altruistic motives, whereas low-quality relationships result in attributions to self-serving motives (Bowler et al., 2019). Returning to this study’s focus, Zhang et al. (2020)

noted that individuals may work to support their families for different reasons, experiencing different degrees of controlledness in their family motivation. Correspondingly, observers' perceptions of specific actors' family motivation levels and controlledness significantly influence motive attributions and subsequent behavioral reactions (e.g., social support or social undermining).

Current Research Critique The above literature review establishes a foundation for examining family motivation from actor-observer perspectives and identifies directions for this study. First, existing research primarily treats family motivation as a special prosocial motivation. Although scholars have proposed that family motivation in the work domain is an extrinsic motivation, they have limited this to studying highly controlled family motivation under high family financial pressure (Zhang et al., 2020). This study, building on Kanfer et al.'s (2013) definition, explicitly conceptualizes family motivation as a work motivation. Since individuals work for their families for different reasons (Zhang et al., 2020), this study further proposes, based on self-determination theory, that work motivation-based family motivation varies in controlledness across individuals. This represents an important dimension of family motivation requiring comprehensive examination. When investigating how family motivation influences employee behaviors, we must fully consider its controlledness. Therefore, this study proposes that family motivation is a special extrinsic work motivation comprising both the extent to which individuals hope to benefit their families through work (i.e., family motivation level) and the degree to which they have internalized the goal of working for their families (i.e., family motivation controlledness). High-level family motivation may stem primarily from family economic pressure (highly controlled) or from identification with breadwinning responsibilities (less controlled). Thus, level and controlledness represent two important, independent dimensions of family motivation.

Because family motivation differs from purely money-oriented extrinsic work motivation, workplace others may perceive it differently from typical extrinsic motivations. Moreover, in China's cultural context where family motivation is a salient characteristic of most professionals, workplace others' reactions to specific behaviors driven by family motivation are inevitably influenced by their perceptions of family motivation, exhibiting selective perception. Therefore, it is necessary to examine how important workplace others perceive family motivation holistically and how they perceive and react to specific behaviors driven by family motivation.

Specifically, as a special extrinsic motivation, different employees' family motivation may vary in controlledness, so its impact on extra-role behaviors cannot be directly equated with that of extrinsic motivations like impression management. Furthermore, because the interpersonal consequences of extra-role behaviors depend partly on observers' interpretations of actors' behaviors, OCBs driven by family motivation may not always yield expected positive outcomes. Leaders may form different perceptions of actors' family motivation controlled-

ness and make different attributions and behavioral reactions. Therefore, this study examines the formation of employees' extra-role behaviors driven by work motivation-based family motivation and how leaders, as observers, respond to OCBs performed by employees with different family motivation levels and controlledness.

Research Framework

This study aims to deepen understanding of work motivation-based family motivation, selecting OCB as the representative of employees' extra-role behaviors and integrating actor and observer perspectives to explore its formation process and subsequent interpersonal effects. Specifically, this study includes three components: Study 1, based on conservation of resources theory, examines from the actor perspective how family motivation (including its two key dimensions of level and controlledness) drives employees to perform OCBs; Study 2 investigates from the observer perspective how interviewers holistically perceive the work motivation attributes of family motivation; and Study 3 further examines from the observer perspective how leaders attribute and react to OCBs performed by employees with different family motivation levels and controlledness.

Study 1: The Effect of Family Motivation on Employee OCBs from the Actor Perspective Although OCBs as representative extra-role behaviors are important for individual and organizational development (Organ, 2018), few studies have examined the impact of family motivation on employees' extra-role behaviors, particularly its mechanisms. Two existing studies present contradictory conclusions. On one hand, some researchers suggest that employees with high family motivation may avoid engaging in OCBs not directly linked to explicit rewards in order to obtain clear returns (Menges et al., 2017). Conversely, other researchers provide empirical evidence that employees with high family motivation derive high self-efficacy from caring for their families, which further motivates them to help the organization or its members (Umrani et al., 2020). This inconsistency stems from different researcher perspectives: the former overemphasizes the profit-seeking aspect of family motivation, while the latter overemphasizes its prosocial nature.

Focusing on the work motivation attribute of family motivation, Study 1 proposes, based on conservation of resources theory, that employees with high family motivation may actively engage in OCBs to acquire additional resources beyond maintaining high job performance to preserve existing work resources. Moreover, this effect differs between individuals with varying degrees of family motivation controlledness: those with highly controlled family motivation value work resources more and thus have stronger motivation to perform OCBs to obtain resources. Therefore, Study 1 investigates from the actor perspective whether and how family motivation drives employees to engage in OCBs and explores its underlying mechanisms (see Figure 1 [Figure 1: see original paper]).

Figure 1. The Effect of Family Motivation on Employee OCBs and Its Mech-

anisms

Path 1: The Mediating Role of Job Instrumentality Since “supporting one’s family” typically means providing economic support (Menges et al., 2017), employees with high family motivation are more likely to view work as a means of providing financial support to their families (Zhang et al., 2020). Therefore, Study 1 proposes:

Proposition 1: Family motivation level is positively related to job instrumentality.

Since organizational functioning depends on employees’ voluntary extra-role behaviors, many studies have examined antecedents of OCBs, particularly employees’ motives for exhibiting OCBs (e.g., Koning & Van Kleef, 2015; Wei & Ni, 2020). The most common approach uses Rioux and Penner’s (2001) classification of OCB motives (prosocial values, organizational concern, and impression management). Prosocial values motivation, highly correlated with personality traits, is the most stable of the three and least affected by situational changes (Bourdage et al., 2012; Halbesleben et al., 2010; Rioux & Penner, 2001), and thus falls outside Study 1’s scope. Organizational concern motivation reflects employees’ care for and commitment to the organization (Rioux & Penner, 2001). Although typically considered other-oriented (e.g., Bourdage et al., 2012; Takeuchi et al., 2015), research shows employees may exhibit higher organizational concern motives for social exchange purposes (Mo & Shi, 2017). Similarly, employees driven by high family motivation may also have higher organizational concern motives for social exchange purposes: for example, out of concern for job stability, they may care deeply about organizational development or show high organizational commitment, essentially hoping the organization will thrive so they can thrive or obtain direct benefits. Therefore, organizational concern motivation can serve the goal of acquiring resources through work to benefit one’s family.

In most cases, how important workplace others like leaders view employees affects performance evaluations and career development (Bolino et al., 2016). Consequently, employees widely use impression management strategies as a tool to obtain desired outcomes (McFarland et al., 2023). Based on consistent instrumental purposes, those who view work as a means of making money are more likely to be driven by impression management motives to exhibit OCBs to accumulate work resources. Therefore, Study 1 proposes:

Proposition 2: Family motivation level is positively related to OCBs through the chain mediation of (a) job instrumentality and organizational concern motivation, and (b) job instrumentality and impression management motivation.

Path 2: The Mediating Role of Job Security Concern On the other hand, high “breadwinning” demands may trigger employees’ concerns about current job security. Therefore, Study 1 introduces job security concern as a

new work perception variable, defined as “worrying about losing one’s current job and desiring to remain in the current position or organization.” According to conservation of resources theory, individuals always seek to protect existing resources (e.g., jobs) or acquire more resources (Hobfoll et al., 2018). Since both family and work are individuals’ most valuable resources (Hobfoll et al., 2018), when individuals’ desire to maintain their current jobs strengthens alongside their desire to support their families, they become more willing to invest work resources by engaging in OCBs. In other words, individuals’ motivation to engage in OCBs strengthens in hopes of maintaining their work resources and thereby their family resources. Specifically, when job security concern is high, employees’ organizational concern and impression management motives may both strengthen. On one hand, because OCBs play a crucial role in organizational survival and development (e.g., Ma & Qu, 2011; Takeuchi et al., 2015), individuals become more willing to care about the organization and exhibit more OCBs to maintain current job stability and preserve work as a conditional resource. On the other hand, as OCBs have gradually become an important criterion supervisors consider when evaluating performance and allocating rewards, employees tend to exhibit OCBs for impression management purposes. Therefore, Study 1 proposes:

Proposition 3: Family motivation level is positively related to job security concern.

Proposition 4: Family motivation level is positively related to OCBs through the chain mediation of (a) job security concern and organizational concern motivation, and (b) job security concern and impression management motivation.

The Moderating Role of Family Motivation Controlledness: Individual Differences Because employees work for their families for different reasons, family motivation controlledness varies across individuals. The same level of family motivation may be highly controlled extrinsic motivation or more autonomous extrinsic motivation (Zhang et al., 2020). For example, when married women choose to work to support their families to play the same “breadwinner” role as their husbands, or when individuals who identify with breadwinning responsibilities voluntarily work hard to support their families, family motivation is a more internalized extrinsic work motivation. When employees are “forced” to bear high family financial pressure but do not internally accept the breadwinner role, family motivation is highly controlled extrinsic motivation (Zhang et al., 2020). Therefore, work motivation-based family motivation may be highly controlled or highly autonomous (i.e., less controlled) for different employees.

According to self-determination theory, under the most controlled form of extrinsic regulation, individuals behave solely to obtain desired outcomes or avoid undesired outcomes (Gagné & Deci, 2005). Therefore, under high family motivation, higher controlledness leads individuals to value job instrumentality and stability more. Specifically, for employees who only want to earn money to support their families but have low identification with breadwinning respon-

sibilities, pursuing job instrumentality aligns with their money-making goals, making high family motivation particularly likely to lead them to view work as a means of making money. Additionally, because stable jobs mean stable income, employees with highly controlled family motivation worry more about current job stability. Moreover, highly controlled work motivation reduces employees' experienced autonomy (Gagné & Deci, 2005), while low autonomy leads individuals to attribute outcomes to external factors, believing job stability is beyond their control and thus experiencing job insecurity (Debus et al., 2014; Wu et al., 2015) or job security concerns. Therefore, even with the same family motivation level, employees with highly controlled family motivation experience greater job stability concerns than those with less controlled family motivation. Thus, Study 1 proposes:

Proposition 5: Family motivation controlledness moderates the relationships between family motivation level and (a) job instrumentality and (b) job security concern, such that these positive relationships are stronger for employees with highly controlled family motivation than for those with less controlled family motivation.

Proposition 6: The indirect effect of family motivation level on OCBs is moderated by family motivation controlledness, such that the indirect effect is stronger for employees with highly controlled family motivation than for those with less controlled family motivation.

Observer Perspective on Employees' Family Motivation In Studies 2 and 3, observers are defined as interviewers and leaders, respectively. Study 2 aims to understand how important workplace others holistically perceive the work motivation attributes of family motivation, with job interviews providing a natural context for evaluating potential employees. Leaders participate in recruitment, and their attitudes toward applicants' attributes affect hiring decisions and future work interactions. Study 3 examines how important workplace others attribute and react to OCBs performed by employees with different family motivation levels and controlledness, with leaders being key evaluators of employees' work behaviors. These observer definitions align with this study's overall logic.

Study 2: Observers' (Interviewers') Holistic Perception of Work Motivation-Based Family Motivation Self-determination theory's emphasis on the positive effects of autonomous motivation typically implies that controlled motivation has limited positive effects and may even produce negative outcomes. Although recent research has found that controlled extrinsic motivation significantly correlates with intrinsic motivation (e.g., Gerhart & Fang, 2015) and that intrinsic and extrinsic motivation have positive joint effects on performance (e.g., Cerasoli et al., 2014), managers' knowledge updates lag behind academia, and they still evaluate and value employees' intrinsic motivation more highly than extrinsic motivation (Derfler-Rozin & Pitesa, 2020; Woolley

& Fishbach, 2018). Specifically, recent cutting-edge research has identified the phenomenon of “motivation purity bias”: a series of experiments examined how candidates expressing different degrees of extrinsic and intrinsic motivation during interviews affect interviewers’ hiring decisions and ratings (Derfler-Rozin & Pitesa, 2020). The findings show that candidates’ intrinsic motivation significantly increases hiring likelihood and ratings, while extrinsic motivation does not significantly predict these outcomes. Moreover, once candidates appear extrinsically motivated, regardless of whether they show interest in the work itself (intrinsic motivation), interviewers perceive their intrinsic motivation as insufficient and reduce hiring likelihood (Derfler-Rozin & Pitesa, 2020).

Similarly, research on work orientation bias has used scenario experiments to examine how employees expressing different work orientations affect managerial decisions (Cho & Jiang, 2022). Results show that employees who work for personal fulfillment and to make a difference in the world (calling orientation) receive more positive leader evaluations than those who view work as a means of making money (job orientation). Managers tend to perceive calling-oriented employees as more loyal and are more willing to provide them with promotion and salary increase opportunities (Cho & Jiang, 2022). These findings indicate that important workplace others prefer less controlled, more autonomous work motivations.

For different employees, work motivation-based family motivation may be highly controlled external regulation (working purely to earn money for the family), introjected regulation (playing the breadwinner role to avoid threatening self-concept), or less controlled identified regulation (fully identifying with the breadwinner role and investing in work). When applicants or employees express a third type of work motivation beyond intrinsic motivation and external regulation—family motivation—managers’ reactions may fall between their positive evaluation of intrinsic motivation and negative evaluation of external regulation, given that working for one’s family involves deeper purposes (i.e., different controlledness). Therefore, Study 2 proposes:

Proposition 7: Interviewers’ overall evaluation of applicants expressing family motivation is (a) more positive than their evaluation of applicants expressing external regulation and (b) less positive than their evaluation of applicants expressing intrinsic motivation.

Because women are more likely than men to exhibit autonomous work motivation (Cho & Jiang, 2022; Zhang et al., 2020), Study 2 further examines how applicant gender moderates the relationship between expressing different motivation types and interview evaluations. According to gender role theory, men are generally expected to bear primary breadwinning responsibilities and “must” ensure good family financial conditions (Tinsley et al., 2015; Zhang et al., 2020). Based on this belief, when applicants show the same level of family motivation, men’s family motivation is more likely to be perceived as highly controlled than women’s, resulting in lower evaluations. Therefore, Study 2 proposes:

Proposition 8: Applicant gender moderates the relationship between expressing family motivation (vs. external regulation vs. intrinsic motivation) and evaluation, such that (a) the difference in interviewers' evaluations between male applicants expressing family motivation versus external regulation is smaller than the corresponding difference for female applicants, and (b) the difference in interviewers' evaluations between male applicants expressing family motivation versus intrinsic motivation is larger than the corresponding difference for female applicants.

Study 3: Observers' (Leaders') Attributions for OCBs Performed by Employees with Different Family Motivation Attribution theory suggests that when an unusual and self-relevant event occurs, people naturally tend to interpret others' behaviors from a motivational perspective as a way to understand their environment (Weiner, 1985). According to attribution theory, events that deviate from norms or expectations prompt observers to seek underlying causes (Gardner et al., 2019; Wong & Weiner, 1981). Similarly, event system theory proposes that “the more novel and unexpected an event, the more it triggers observers' in-depth information processing” (Liu & Liu, 2017). When high family motivation employees invest effort in OCBs not directly tied to rewards, this contradicts others' typical “money-making” perception and likely triggers leaders' attributions about actors' motives. Therefore, Study 3 examines how leaders, as observers, attribute and react to OCBs performed by employees with different family motivation, focusing on the role of leaders' perceptions of employees' family motivation level and controlledness (see Figure 2 [Figure 2: see original paper]).

Figure 2. Leaders' Attributions and Reactions to OCBs Performed by Employees with Different Family Motivation

One key basis for observers' OCB attributions is the frequency with which actors engage in OCBs, reflecting stability (Halbesleben et al., 2010). The more frequently actors engage in OCBs (reflecting behavioral stability), the more observers (e.g., leaders) tend to attribute them to stable factors like prosocial values. Conversely, occasional OCBs lead observers to attribute them to impression management motives (Halbesleben et al., 2010). Since organizational concern motivation can be both other-oriented (e.g., Bourdage et al., 2012; Halbesleben et al., 2010) and self-oriented for social exchange purposes, observers have difficulty making this attribution. In fact, recent observer attribution research has primarily considered prosocial values and impression management motives (e.g., Cheng et al., 2013; Choi & Moon, 2017; Jia et al., 2021). Therefore, Study 3 examines only prosocial values and impression management attributions.

Research indicates that observers' attributions for employees' OCBs are influenced not only by behavioral characteristics but also by actor characteristics (Bolino et al., 2013). Compared to situational features, observers' perceptions are more easily influenced by actors' salient characteristics, leading to selective perception when evaluating actors, such as halo effects (Jones & Nisbett, 1987).

In China's cultural context, family motivation is a salient characteristic of most professionals. On one hand, employees' demographic characteristics enable others to form perceptions of their family motivation level. For example, people generally perceive married employees with children as having higher family motivation than married employees without children, who in turn are perceived as having higher family motivation than unmarried employees (Su, 2020). On the other hand, because workplace others can perceive employees' work orientation and intrinsic motivation through daily cues (Cho & Jiang, 2022; Kwon et al., 2023), observers can also infer actors' family motivation level and controlledness through daily workplace cues. When employees actively or passively reveal their family motivation in the workplace, leaders may form holistic impressions based on this signal and affect their decisions (Cho & Jiang, 2022). Therefore, leaders' perceptions of employees' family motivation level and controlledness may further influence their attributions for different employees' OCBs.

First, if leaders perceive actors' family motivation as purely external regulation (highly controlled)—that is, simply wanting to earn money to support their families without accepting or identifying with this family responsibility—then due to selective perception, leaders tend to generalize this perception, viewing the employee as utilitarian, money-seeking, status-oriented, and job-security-focused, and consequently attribute the actor's OCBs to instrumental impression management motives. If leaders perceive employees' family motivation as primarily based on identified regulation (less controlled)—that is, employees identify with their responsibility to support their families—then due to selective perception, leaders tend to generalize this perception, viewing the employee as responsible and prosocial, and attribute their OCBs to stable prosocial values motives. Therefore, Study 3 proposes:

Proposition 9: In the attribution process, leaders' perceived controlledness of employees' family motivation moderates the effect of observed OCB stability on motive attributions. Specifically, the higher the perceived controlledness, the weaker the positive relationship between OCB stability and (a) prosocial values attribution, and the weaker the negative relationship between OCB stability and (b) impression management attribution.

Leaders' perceived family motivation level may further moderate the moderating effect of perceived controlledness. Family motivation level reflects the extent to which individuals hope to benefit their families through work (Menges et al., 2017). When leaders perceive that employees have very strong motives to benefit their families, selective perception is more likely than when facing low family motivation employees, leading leaders to attribute OCBs by employees driven by external regulation to impression management motives and OCBs by employees driven by identified regulation to stable factors (i.e., prosocial values). Conversely, when leaders perceive low family motivation levels, they do not form perceptions of employees' family motivation controlledness, and their perceptions of family motivation (including level and controlledness) do not affect the relationship between OCB stability and motive attributions. Therefore,

Study 3 proposes:

Proposition 10: In the attribution process, the three-way interaction among leaders' observed OCB stability, perceived controlledness of employees' family motivation, and perceived family motivation level jointly influences motive attributions. Specifically, the higher the perceived family motivation level, the stronger the moderating effect of perceived controlledness on the relationships between OCB stability and (a) prosocial values attribution and (b) impression management attribution.

Further, according to social information processing theory, how individuals interpret social information determines their subsequent attitudes and behaviors (Pfeffer, 1978), so observers' motive attributions for employees' OCBs trigger different behavioral reactions (Bolino et al., 2013). Research shows that when leaders attribute employees' OCBs to prosocial values or organizational concern motives, they tend to make positive emotional and behavioral responses, such as giving higher performance evaluations or providing various forms of support (e.g., Halbesleben et al., 2010; Jia et al., 2021; Rodell & Lynch, 2016). Conversely, when leaders attribute OCBs to impression management motives, they tend to make negative responses, such as being unwilling to build high-quality exchange relationships or provide positive feedback (e.g., Chen et al., 2021; Minnikin et al., 2022). Therefore, Study 3 proposes:

Proposition 11: In the attribution process, leaders' (a) prosocial values attributions for employees' OCBs are positively related to social support, and (b) impression management attributions are positively related to social undermining.

Although Study 3 focuses on how leaders' perceptions of actors' family motivation affect OCB attribution processes and outcomes, other factors may also influence attribution. For example, good relationship quality enables observers to view actors' behaviors positively (Barry & Crant, 2000). Therefore, when leader-member exchange quality is high, leaders tend to attribute employees' OCBs to altruistic motives (Bowler et al., 2019). Additionally, due to gender stereotypes, women are perceived as friendly, gentle, and interpersonally oriented (Jin et al., 2021), leading observers to view women's OCBs as more driven by intrinsic personal traits than extrinsic instrumental motives. In contrast, men are perceived as career-oriented and competitive (Block et al., 2018), leading observers to view men's OCBs as more driven by extrinsic reasons like instrumental impression management motives. Therefore, leader-member exchange quality and actor gender play significant roles in observers' attributions for actors' OCBs and may influence how leaders' perceptions of family motivation affect attribution processes. These significant interfering variables should be comprehensively considered and controlled when examining leaders' attributions and reactions to OCBs performed by employees with different family motivation.

Discussion

This study integrates actor and observer perspectives to investigate the role of work motivation-based family motivation in the formation of OCBs and subsequent interpersonal effects. By identifying that work motivation-based family motivation comprises both level and controlledness (i.e., autonomy) dimensions, this research addresses three questions. First, from the actor perspective, it examines how employees' family motivation level and controlledness influence extra-role behaviors represented by OCBs and the specific mechanisms involved. Second, from the observer perspective, it investigates how important workplace others (including interviewers and leaders) holistically perceive work motivation-based family motivation and how they perceive and react to OCBs performed by employees with different family motivation. This study not only expands understanding of work motivation-based family motivation but also enriches research on the long-term interpersonal effects of family motivation from an interaction perspective.

First, this study reviews relevant literature on work motivation and family motivation, clarifying that in work domain research, family motivation is a work motivation (motivation to work) that energizes individuals to remain in the labor market. Only with this understanding can family motivation drive individuals to exhibit specific workplace behaviors. Self-determination theory is one of the most academically influential theories in motivation and emphasizes the positive effects of autonomous motivation represented by intrinsic motivation (Deci et al., 2017). However, for many people, intrinsic motivation is not the primary work driver; many workers “soldier on” to support their families. As a special extrinsic motivation, family motivation differs substantially from other extrinsic motivations driven by personal goal achievement (Zhang et al., 2020). Because individuals may work to support their families for different reasons, their family motivation internalization varies (Zhang et al., 2020). Therefore, beyond level, controlledness represents another important dimension of family motivation that substantially influences employees' workplace behaviors. This study proposes that work motivation-based family motivation has both level and controlledness dimensions, suggesting that both should be considered when examining its effects on work behaviors.

Second, this study deeply explores the mechanisms through which work motivation-based family motivation influences employees' extra-role behaviors, substantially advancing family motivation research and broadening understanding of high family motivation employees. Existing research has found that high family motivation employees are “short-sighted” —avoiding possible costs and exhibiting less creativity (Zhang et al., 2020)—and may even sacrifice organizational interests for family benefits through unethical behaviors (Liu et al., 2020). However, these studies emphasize employees' family financial pressure levels, considering only the effects of highly controlled family motivation on work behaviors. This study, while acknowledging that family motivation controlledness varies, examines the relationship between family motivation

and organizationally beneficial OCBs and potential mechanisms. Based on conservation of resources theory, this study proposes that employees driven by high family motivation not only value work's instrumental value for obtaining income to support their families but may also experience job security concerns, leading to more OCBs. Importantly, this effect is stronger for employees with highly controlled family motivation than for those with less controlled family motivation. Additionally, this study introduces job security concern as a new work perception variable defined as "worrying about losing one's current job and desiring to remain in the current position or organization." Future research can explore family motivation outcomes from the perspective of job security concern, opening new paths for family motivation studies. Investigating how family motivation influences extra-role behaviors and their mechanisms points to new directions for work motivation research and helps scholars develop more systematic and comprehensive work motivation models.

Third, this study adopts an actor-observer perspective, examining observers' attributions and reactions to expand the boundaries of family motivation research. Traditionally, actors benefit from their extra-role behaviors. However, growing evidence shows that extra-role behaviors may bring unexpected negative consequences for actors because observers' interpretations affect their evaluations of and reactions to actors (Jia et al., 2021; Rodell & Lynch, 2016; Sun et al., 2021). Therefore, it is necessary to examine how employees' extra-role behaviors affect actors themselves through observers' interpretations and attributions. Building on research about family motivation's effects on extra-role behaviors, this study incorporates the observer perspective.

Fourth, this study not only examines how important workplace others holistically perceive work motivation-based family motivation but also focuses on how leaders, as key observers, perceive specific actors' family motivation level and controlledness and how these perceptions affect their attributions for and reactions to actors' OCBs. Although existing research has proposed that family motivation formed for different money-making reasons varies in controlledness (Zhang et al., 2020), current studies have limited their focus to the controlled nature of family motivation. This study goes beyond identifying differences in controlledness to examine observers' perceptions of actors' family motivation controlledness, combined with their perceptions of family motivation level, as important factors influencing observers' attributions for and reactions to employees' OCBs. Research shows that actor characteristics influence observers' OCB attributions (Bolino et al., 2013), and in China's cultural context, family motivation is a salient actor characteristic. Due to selective perception, observers' attributions for actors' OCBs are easily influenced by their perceptions of actors' family motivation. This exploration not only enhances comprehensive understanding of work motivation-based family motivation but also provides more systematic knowledge about the subsequent interpersonal outcomes of employees' extra-role behaviors driven by family motivation. Notably, although observers' perceptions of actors' family motivation influence their motive attributions and behavioral reactions, this study does not address the accuracy

of these perceptions. From a long-term dynamic perspective, inconsistency between observers' attributions and actors' actual motives may hinder long-term development for both organizations and actors (Bolino et al., 2013). For example, if leaders incorrectly attribute employees' OCBs to altruistic rather than actual self-serving motives, actors may receive promotions or rewards based on this positive interpretation (e.g., Donia et al., 2018; Johnson et al., 2002). However, once promoted or receiving salary increases, employees originally driven by impression management motives may ultimately reduce OCBs (Hui et al., 2000) or even engage in workplace deviance due to moral licensing effects from prior OCBs (Yam et al., 2017). Future research could further investigate the effects of consistency between observers' motive perceptions and actors' actual motives.

This study's integration of actor-observer perspectives to investigate the effects and mechanisms of work motivation-based family motivation on employees' extra-role behaviors has important practical implications for both employees and managers. For managers, understanding how family motivation level and controlledness influence specific work behaviors can help determine effective staffing criteria. If family motivation indeed leads to more OCBs, organizations can benefit from hiring high family motivation employees, providing reliable justification for eliminating the "35-year-old employment threshold." If managers and colleagues hold biases against high family motivation employees, this study can help reduce such biases. For employees, understanding how important workplace others (e.g., interviewers and leaders) attribute and react to their extra-role behaviors can help them decide whether to disclose their family motivation in the workplace.

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