

The Impact of Family-Friendly Policies on Work Engagement of New Generation Employees

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Abstract. As times change, new generation employees have gradually become the mainstay of various public institutions. Compared with the previous generation, new generation employees not only pursue self-fulfillment but also place greater emphasis on balancing work and family. However, long working hours and frequent overtime have now become the norm, which can easily give rise to work–family conflict and thereby affect the work attitudes of new generation employees. Consequently, family-friendly policies, as an important measure to alleviate such role conflicts, have attracted growing attention in recent years; nevertheless, their effectiveness in the Chinese cultural context still warrants further investigation. Therefore, this study reviews relevant domestic and international literature, and draws on work–family boundary theory and social exchange theory, to explore the impact of family-friendly policies on new generation employees' work engagement, as well as the roles of work–family balance and family motivation in this process. Through a questionnaire survey conducted via both online and offline channels, sample data were collected from 266 new generation employees. The findings reveal the transmission pathway through which family-friendly policies enhance work engagement by improving work–family balance, and also clarify the moderating role of family motivation. These results provide theoretical grounds and practical implications for organizations to improve their family-friendly policies.

Keywords: Family-friendly policies, Work engagement, Family motivation, Work–family balance.

1. Introduction

As times change, the post-90s new generation employees have gradually entered the workplace and become a significant human resource in various organizations [1]. Shaped by their growing environment, these new generation employees exhibit personality traits distinct from those of the previous generation. They value self-fulfillment and pursue harmony between work and life [2]. At the same time, an increasing number of young female employees are joining the workforce, and the proportion of dual-earner families is gradually rising, which means that many new generation employees are required to juggle multiple roles and meet the different demands of both work and family.

However, the advancement of information technology and intensifying global competition have broken the traditional “nine-to-five” and “8-hour workday” routine [3]. Employees during their off-duty hours may be pulled back into work mode by an unexpected call from a supervisor; similarly, employees during working hours may have their attention distracted by a message from a family member. As work and family begin to permeate each other, it becomes increasingly difficult for employees to draw a clear boundary between the work domain and the family domain, thus rendering them susceptible to work–family conflict [4]. Such work–family conflict can lead to a series of negative consequences, including reduced job satisfaction, burnout and turnover intention [5], as well as decreased work engagement [6].

Consequently, how to help new generation employees coordinate resources between work and family, alleviate life pressure, balance work and family relationships, and improve work engagement has drawn considerable scholarly attention. To address this issue, researchers have actively explored various policies and strategies. Among them, family-friendly policies are regarded as an effective means to reduce inter-role conflict and balance work and family [7]. Originating in developed countries such as those in Europe and America, these policies were initially designed to help female

employees balance work and family, so as to alleviate the problem of labour reproduction caused by declining fertility rates. With social progress and economic development, more and more organizations have begun to implement family-friendly policies, and the target beneficiaries have expanded from female employees to all employees, including those who are single and have no caring responsibilities [8]. Nevertheless, some studies have found that family-friendly policies are not equally effective for every employee, and their effects may be influenced by family motivation [9].

Based on the above, this study focuses on the cohort of new generation employees, introduces two variables, namely work-family balance and family motivation, to explore the impact of family-friendly policies on new generation employees' work engagement, and aims to provide references for organizations in implementing family-friendly policies.

2. Theoretical Basis and Research Hypotheses

2.1. Work-Family Boundary Theory

Unlike traditional work-family relationship theories, Work-Family Boundary Theory posits that work and family are two distinct and bounded domains, separated by physical, temporal, and psychological boundaries. These boundaries are characterized by permeability and flexibility [10]. Existing research has primarily examined work-family boundaries in terms of physical and temporal dimensions [11]. For example, employees engaged in remote work can transition from the work domain to the family domain at any time and place, reflecting the flexibility of boundaries.

For new generation employees, managing both work and family domains is a common challenge. The permeability of work-family boundaries often exposes them to inter-role interference between work and family. However, the flexibility of these boundaries provides potential avenues for mitigating such negative effects. Due to the permeability and flexibility of work-family boundaries, employees can effectively integrate resources from the work domain and flexibly apply them to the family domain. Simultaneously, resources from the family domain can also be properly integrated and effectively incorporated into the work domain. This cross-domain flow and enrichment of resources not only enhances the quality of role performance in both work and family but also further promotes harmony and balance between the two domains [12].

2.2. Social Exchange Theory

In the 1960s, Homans first proposed Social Exchange Theory, suggesting that individuals possess different resources and, based on the principle of reciprocity, engage in exchanges to achieve mutual benefit. When one party receives favorable treatment, they may feel obligated to reciprocate with extra effort [13].

Drawing upon Social Exchange Theory, it can be posited that a social exchange relationship exists between new generation employees and their organizations. New generation employees contribute intellectual and physical value to the organization, while the organization provides corresponding compensation or spiritual incentives. When organizations adopt family-friendly policies, employees perceive that they have received additional benefits. In accordance with the principle of reciprocity, they tend to reciprocate with favorable attitudes and behaviors, such as increased work engagement.

In summary, Work-Family Boundary Theory indicates that work and family are two distinct yet clearly bounded domains, characterized by permeability and flexibility. Permeability often causes new generation employees to experience interference between work and family. Meanwhile, family-friendly policies provide supportive resources for new generation employees to manage work-family relationships, effectively facilitating the optimal allocation of resources across different domains and enhancing their sense of work-family balance. Based on Social Exchange Theory, new generation employees gain supportive resources from family-friendly policies and, driven by the principle of reciprocity, may increase their work engagement as a form of reciprocation to the organization.

2.3. Family-Friendly Policies and Work Engagement

Family-friendly policies refer to organizational policies and programs designed to assist employees in managing family affairs [14]. These policies enable employees to arrange their work schedules flexibly, allowing sufficient time for rest and recovery after work, thereby reducing work and family-related stress and enhancing well-being [15]. When organizational human resource practices promote employee well-being, employees perceive themselves as important, valued, and trusted by the organization, leading them to invest more energy into their work. Conversely, when employees lack supportive management practices, they tend to adopt negative work attitudes and reduce work engagement to avoid resource loss [16].

Specifically, family-friendly policies encompass four dimensions: flexible policies, leisure leave, dependent care, and employee assistance. Flexible policies refer to flexible work arrangements that allow employees to adjust their work schedules, locations, and methods according to family needs [7]. Liu et al. found that both temporal and spatial flexibility positively influence work engagement [17]. Furthermore, Bal et al. found that the effectiveness of flexible policies is related to employee age, with new generation employees showing stronger positive reactions to flexible policies in terms of work engagement [18]. Leisure leave provides time resources for employees with childcare and eldercare responsibilities; dependent care extends the benefits of policies to family members, assisting employees in sharing family responsibilities; and employee assistance represents organizational support for employees' personal lives [7]. In summary, flexible policies, leisure leave, dependent care, and employee assistance all provide supportive resources for employees' family and personal lives. According to Social Exchange Theory, when employees receive work-related support resources that can be transferred to their personal lives and benefit their families, they are motivated by reciprocity to invest greater effort into their work [19]. Therefore, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

H1: Family-friendly policies have a significant positive impact on new generation employees' work engagement.

2.4. The Mediating Role of Work-Family Balance

Work-family balance refers to the perceptual state of balance resulting from the interaction between work-family conflict and work-family enrichment [20]. Today, many new generation employees simultaneously assume the roles of parents and professionals, bearing dual responsibilities from both family and workplace, which may expose them to conflicts between work and family domains [21]. Consequently, they need to invest time and energy to achieve work-family balance.

A substantial body of research demonstrates that family-friendly policies significantly and positively affect work-family balance. Ronda et al. surveyed nearly 17,000 dual-earner families across Europe and found that family-friendly policies enhance work-family balance [22]. Kundi et al., based on sample data from 369 full-time employees across multiple enterprises, found that family-friendly policies promote work-family enrichment while effectively reducing work-family interference [23]. Specifically, Chung et al. found that flexible policies positively influence work-family balance [24]. Liu et al. found that flexible work schedules reduce employees' work-family conflict [17]. Yan et al. demonstrated that providing family-friendly policies to employees of childbearing age, such as extended maternity or paternity leave, helps male employees share family responsibilities and alleviates work-family conflict among female employees [25]. As a key component of organizational benefits, family-friendly policies provide ongoing resources or services to employees and their families, helping employees better adapt to both work and family roles [26] and achieve balance between work and family.

Positive spillover from work to family is an important condition for stimulating employees' proactive behaviors and positive attitudes [19]. Zhang et al. indicated that harmonious family relationships alleviate employee stress, reduce fatigue resulting from high-intensity work, and enable employees to engage more actively in their work [27]. Xu et al. found that both work interference with family and family interference with work significantly and negatively affect employees' work engagement [28].

In summary, family-friendly policies, through various forms such as flexible policies and leisure leave, provide supportive resources for new generation employees, alleviating work-family conflict arising from dual roles and enhancing work-family balance. Employees who perceive organizational support are likely to demonstrate greater work engagement [29]. Therefore, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

H2: Work-family balance mediates the relationship between family-friendly policies and new generation employees' work engagement.

2.5. The Moderating Role of Family Motivation

Influenced by the family planning policy, the inverted-pyramid "421" family structure has become prevalent in Chinese society. New generation employees not only face work-related pressure but also bear the responsibilities of raising children and caring for aging parents [30]. The family exerts a significant influence on work, and employees may develop a motivation to exert effort for the benefit of their families—a concept defined as family motivation [31]. Higher family motivation indicates stronger intentions to work for the sake of the family, a phenomenon particularly salient in collectivist cultures [32].

Family motivation is an important factor influencing employees' perception and utilization of family-friendly policies. Employees with low family motivation show less willingness to use family-friendly policies, whereas those with high family motivation adopt more positive attitudes toward such policies [26]. They are more likely to utilize flexible work arrangements and leave to address family matters, as well as leverage resources provided for family members and employees themselves to share family responsibilities, thereby facilitating work-family balance and enhancing work-family balance. For employees with high family motivation, organizational implementation of family-friendly policies and enhanced work flexibility are more conducive to achieving work-to-family enrichment [33].

Employees with strong family motivation are more sensitive to whether they are fulfilling their family-supporting responsibilities through work [34]. Wu et al. conducted a meta-analysis of 99 empirical studies with 112 independent samples from 1983 to 2020, finding that employees with greater family responsibilities benefit more from family-friendly policies than those with fewer family responsibilities, and the relationship between family-friendly policies and work-family conflict is more pronounced [35]. Therefore, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

H3: Family motivation moderates the relationship between family-friendly policies and new generation employees' work-family balance.

In summary, this study takes family-friendly policies as the independent variable, work engagement as the dependent variable, work-family balance as the mediating variable, and family motivation as the moderating variable. It investigates whether family-friendly policies influence work engagement, whether work-family balance mediates the relationship between family-friendly policies and work engagement, and whether family motivation moderates the relationship between family-friendly policies and work-family balance. Based on the above analysis, the theoretical model of this study is presented in Fig. 1.

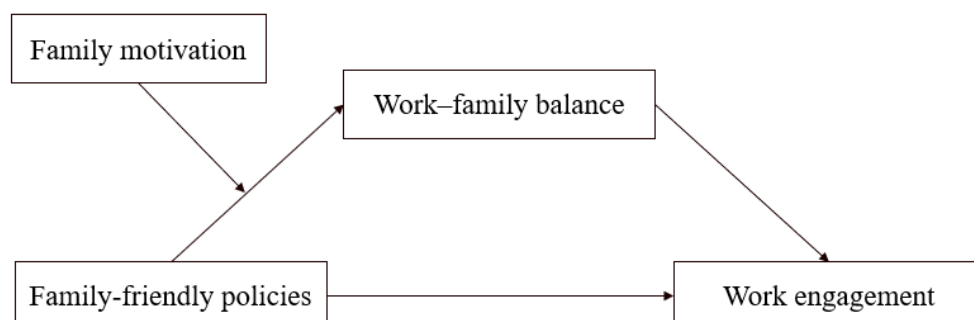


Fig. 1 Theoretical Model

3. Research Methods

3.1. Sample Selection and Data Collection

This study employed both offline and online methods to collect data through random sampling. Offline data collection was primarily conducted by identifying eligible respondents across multiple regions in China, while online data collection was carried out using the Questionnaire Star platform to distribute questionnaires. The aim was to collect questionnaire data covering diverse demographic characteristics to ensure the generalizability of the research findings.

To ensure data quality, the questionnaire included an age item to filter out respondents who did not meet the age criteria, i.e., non-new generation employees. Additionally, a screening question was embedded in the middle of the questionnaire to identify and exclude respondents who did not read the questions carefully and answered randomly. A total of 357 questionnaires were collected. After excluding 91 invalid responses due to age ineligibility or incorrect answers to the screening question, 266 valid questionnaires were retained, yielding an effective response rate of approximately 74.51%.

In terms of age, respondents under 25 years old accounted for 50.4%, while those aged 25-35 accounted for 49.6%. Regarding gender, male respondents comprised 48.9% and female respondents 51.1%. In terms of marital status, married respondents accounted for 46.6%, while unmarried respondents accounted for 53.4%, slightly outnumbering the married group. With respect to the number of family members requiring care, the proportions of respondents with no family members to care for, one member to care for, and two members to care for were relatively balanced, at 30.5%, 31.2%, and 30.1%, respectively. Respondents with three or more family members requiring care accounted for a smaller proportion, at 8.3%. In terms of job nature, respondents in management, technical, service, administrative, and other positions accounted for 21.8%, 30.1%, 25.6%, 13.5%, and 9.0%, respectively, covering a wide range of industries and occupations. Regarding average monthly income, respondents with monthly incomes of 5,000 RMB or below, 5,001-10,000 RMB, 10,001-20,000 RMB, and above 20,000 RMB accounted for 31.2%, 47.4%, 16.9%, and 4.5%, respectively, with the majority earning below 10,000 RMB per month.

3.2. Variable Measurement

This study involved four main variables: the independent variable was family-friendly policies, the moderating variable was family motivation, the mediating variable was work-family balance, and the dependent variable was work engagement. Mature scales from both domestic and international sources were adopted as references and appropriately modified to fit the specific context of this study. A 5-point Likert scale was employed, where "1" indicated "strongly disagree" and "5" indicated "strongly agree."

Family-Friendly Policies. Drawing on the scale developed by Zhang et al. based on the Chinese cultural context [7], a measurement scale for family-friendly policies was constructed. This scale measures four dimensions of family-friendly policies: flexible policies, leisure leave, dependent care, and employee assistance, comprising a total of 13 items. Sample items include "Employees can flexibly arrange their work schedules according to family care needs" and "The enterprise provides paid leave for employees (e.g., maternity leave, paternity leave)." Higher scores indicate greater perceived availability of organizational family-friendly policies.

Family Motivation. Family motivation was measured using the Family Motivation Scale developed by Menges et al. [31], consisting of 5 items. A sample item is "I want to support my family through this job." Higher scores indicate higher levels of employee family motivation.

Work-Family Balance. The scale developed by Grzywacz and Marks was adopted as a reference [36], which includes four dimensions: work interference with family, family interference with work, work enhancement of family, and family enhancement of work. Among these, items in the work interference with family and family interference with work dimensions were reverse-scored. Items with similar semantic meanings were merged (e.g., "Busy work leaves me no time to participate in family activities" and "Work is so exhausting that I have no energy to deal with family matters").

Ultimately, 10 items were retained. Higher scores indicate higher levels of employee work-family balance.

Work Engagement. The UWES-9 scale developed by Schaufeli et al. [37] was adopted as a reference. Items with similar semantic meanings were merged (e.g., "At my work, I feel bursting with energy" and "When I am working, I feel strong and vigorous"), resulting in 5 retained items. A sample item is "At my work, I feel bursting with energy." Higher scores indicate higher levels of employee work engagement.

Control Variables. Based on previous research identifying demographic characteristics that influence the effectiveness of family-friendly policies, this study selected six control variables: age, gender, marital status, number of family members requiring care, job nature, and income level.

4. Data Analysis and Hypothesis Testing

4.1. Common Method Bias

The Harman's single-factor test was employed to examine common method bias. The results showed that the variance explained by the first factor was 35.45%, which is below the critical threshold of 40% [38], indicating that common method bias is not a serious concern in this study.

4.2. Descriptive Statistical Analysis and Correlation Analysis

This study used SPSS 19.0 to conduct descriptive statistical analysis and correlation analysis among the main variables. The results are presented in Table 1. As shown in Table 1, the independent variable (family-friendly policies), the mediating variable (work-family balance), and the dependent variable (work engagement) were significantly and positively correlated with each other. The moderating variable (family motivation) was not correlated with either the independent variable or the mediating variable, allowing for further hypothesis testing.

Table 1. Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlation Coefficients of Variables

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Age	1.500	0.501	1					
2. Gender	1.510	0.501	-0.068	1				
3. Marital Status	1.530	0.500	-0.308**	0.066	1			
4. Number of Family Members Requiring Care	2.160	0.956	0.242**	0.016	-0.197**	1		
5. Job Nature	2.580	1.224	-0.015	-0.029	0.048	-0.077	1	
6. Monthly Income	1.950	0.813	0.240**	-0.119	-0.135*	0.108	-0.056	1

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

4.3. Confirmatory Factor Analysis

This study employed AMOS 27.0 software to test the discriminant validity of the scales. Model fit was assessed using indices including χ^2/df , RMSEA, GFI, CFI, NFI, and TLI. Generally, χ^2/df value between 1 and 3 indicates excellent fit, with values closer to 1 indicating better fit; RMSEA value below 0.08 indicates acceptable fit, and below 0.05 indicates excellent fit, with values closer to 0 indicating better fit; GFI, CFI, NFI, and TLI values above 0.8 indicate acceptable fit, and above 0.9 indicate excellent fit, with values closer to 1 indicating better fit.

The factor models and fit results are presented in Table 2. Among them, the four-factor model demonstrated the best fit ($\chi^2/df = 2.397$, RMSEA = 0.073, GFI = 0.814, CFI = 0.875, IFI = 0.876, TLI = 0.865), indicating good discriminant validity.

Table 2. Discriminant Validity Test Results

Model	χ^2/df	RMSEA	GFI	CFI	IFI	TLI
Criterion	<3	<0.08	>0.8	>0.8	>0.8	>0.8
Four-factor model (A, B, C, D)	2.397	0.073	0.814	0.875	0.876	0.865
Three-factor model (A, B, C+D)	3.375	0.095	0.664	0.787	0.788	0.771
Two-factor model (A+B, C+D)	5.222	0.126	0.527	0.620	0.622	0.593
One-factor model (A+B+C+D)	6.066	0.138	0.482	0.543	0.545	0.512

Note: A = Family-Friendly Policies, B = Family Motivation, C = Work-Family Balance, D = Work Engagement.

4.4. Hypothesis Testing

4.4.1. Main Effect Test of Family-Friendly Policies on Work Engagement

In this analysis, the independent variable was family-friendly policies, the dependent variable was work engagement, and the control variables were age, gender, marital status, number of family members requiring care, job nature, and monthly income. The regression results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Regression Analysis of Work Engagement on Family-Friendly Policies

Variables	Dependent Variable: Work Engagement	
	Model 1	Model 2
Age	-0.022	0.049
Gender	0.016	0.048
Marital Status	0.054	0.035
Number of Family Members Requiring Care	0.011	0.030
Job Nature	-0.121	-0.050
Monthly Income	0.123	0.054
Family-Friendly Policies		0.515***
R ²	0.032	0.282
Adjusted R ²	0.010	0.263
F	1.437	14.475***

Note: Values in the table are standardized regression coefficients. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

Model 1, with work engagement as the dependent variable and control variables (age, gender, marital status, number of family members requiring care, job nature, monthly income) entered, yielded an R^2 of 0.032, indicating that the control variables explained 3.2% of the variance in work engagement, with an F-value of 1.437. Based on Model 1, the independent variable (family-friendly policies) was added to form Model 2, yielding an R^2 of 0.282, representing a 25% increase in explanatory power compared to Model 1. The F-value was 14.475, significant at the $p < 0.001$ level, indicating that family-friendly policies significantly and positively affect work engagement ($\beta = 0.515, p < 0.001$). Therefore, family-friendly policies have a significant positive effect on work engagement, and Hypothesis 1 is supported.

4.4.2. Mediation Effect Test of Work-Family Balance

According to Baron and Kenny [39], three conditions must be met to establish mediation: the independent variable significantly affects the dependent variable; the independent variable significantly affects the mediator; and when the mediator is introduced, if the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable decreases significantly but remains significant, partial mediation is indicated; if the effect becomes non-significant, full mediation is indicated. The first condition has been verified above—family-friendly policies significantly affect work engagement. Next, the second condition is tested by examining whether family-friendly policies significantly affect the mediator (work-family balance). The results are presented in Table 4.

As shown in Table 4, Model 1, with work-family balance as the dependent variable and control variables entered, yielded an R^2 of 0.019, indicating that the control variables explained 1.9% of the variance in work-family balance, with an F-value of 0.847. Based on Model 1, the independent variable (family-friendly policies) was added to form Model 2, yielding an R^2 of 0.451, representing a 45.1% increase in explanatory power compared to Model 1. The F-value was 30.253, significant at the $p < 0.001$ level, indicating that family-friendly policies significantly and positively affect work-family balance ($\beta = 0.677, p < 0.001$). Therefore, family-friendly policies significantly affect the mediator (work-family balance), allowing for further testing.

Table 4. Regression Analysis of Work-Family Balance on Family-Friendly Policies

Variables	Dependent Variable: Work-Family Balance	
	Model 1	Model 2
Age	0.014	0.108*
Gender	-0.016	0.026
Marital Status	-0.054	-0.079
Number of Family Members Requiring Care	-0.048	-0.023
Job Nature	0.003	0.096*
Monthly Income	0.112	0.022
Family-Friendly Policies		0.677***
R ²	0.019	0.451
Adjusted R ²	-0.003	0.436
F	0.847	30.253***

Note: Values in the table are standardized regression coefficients. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

Hierarchical regression was used to test the mediating effect of work-family balance on the relationship between family-friendly policies and work engagement. Control variables were entered first, followed by the independent variable (family-friendly policies), and finally work-family balance. The results are presented in Table 5 Model 1, with work engagement as the dependent variable and control variables (age, gender, marital status, number of family members requiring care, job nature, monthly income) entered, yielded an R² of 0.032, indicating that the control variables explained 3.2% of the variance in work engagement, with an F-value of 1.437. In Model 2, with the independent variable (family-friendly policies) added, R² increased to 0.282, with an F-value of 14.475, significant at the $p < 0.001$ level. Family-friendly policies significantly and positively affected work engagement ($\beta = 0.515, p < 0.001$). In Model 3, with the mediator (work-family balance) added, R² increased to 0.401, representing an 11.9% increase in explanatory power compared to Model 2, with an F-value of 21.518, significant at the $p < 0.001$ level. The effect of family-friendly policies on work engagement remained significant, but the standardized regression coefficient decreased (Model 2: $\beta = 0.515, p < 0.001$; Model 3: $\beta = 0.200, p < 0.01$). Therefore, work-family balance partially mediates the relationship between family-friendly policies and work engagement.

Table 5. Mediation Effect Regression Analysis

Variables	Dependent Variable: Work Engagement		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Age	-0.022	0.049	-0.001
Gender	0.016	0.048	0.036
Marital Status	0.054	0.035	0.072
Number of Family Members Requiring Care	0.011	0.030	0.041
Job Nature	-0.121	-0.050	-0.095
Monthly Income	0.123	0.054	0.044
Family-Friendly Policies		0.515***	0.200**
Work-Family Balance			0.466***
R ²	0.032	0.282	0.401
Adjusted R ²	0.010	0.263	0.382
F	1.437	14.475***	21.518***

Note: Values in the table are standardized regression coefficients. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

4.4.3. Moderation Effect Test of Family Motivation

Prior to regression analysis, the independent variable (family-friendly policies) and the moderating variable (family motivation) were mean-centered to reduce multicollinearity, and the interaction term was computed.

Hierarchical regression was used to test the moderating effect of family motivation on the relationship between family-friendly policies and work-family balance. The results are presented in Table 6 Model 1, with work-family balance as the dependent variable and control variables (age, gender, marital status, number of family members requiring care, job nature, monthly income) entered, yielded an R^2 of 0.019, indicating that the control variables explained 1.9% of the variance in work-family balance, with an F-value of 0.847. In Model 2, with the independent variable (family-friendly policies) and the moderating variable (family motivation) added, R^2 increased to 0.451, with an F-value of 26.426, significant at the $p < 0.001$ level. In Model 3, with the interaction term (mean-centered family-friendly policies $\times$ mean-centered family motivation) added, R^2 increased to 0.480, representing a 2.9% increase in explanatory power compared to Model 2, with an F-value of 26.240, significant at the $p < 0.001$ level. The interaction term had a significant positive effect on work-family balance ($\beta = 0.174, p < 0.001$). Therefore, family motivation positively moderates the relationship between family-friendly policies and work-family balance.

Table 6. Moderation Effect Regression Analysis

Variables	Dependent Variable: Work-Family Balance		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Age	0.014	0.106*	0.110*
Gender	-0.016	0.026	0.021
Marital Status	-0.054	-0.079	-0.094
Number of Family Members Requiring Care	-0.048	-0.028	-0.043
Job Nature	0.003	0.097*	0.106*
Monthly Income	0.112	0.022	0.002
Family-Friendly Policies		0.679***	0.655***
Family Motivation		0.024	0.015
Family-Friendly Policies $\times$ Family Motivation			0.174***
R^2	0.019	0.451	0.480
Adjusted R^2	-0.003	0.434	0.462
F	0.847	26.426***	26.240***

Note: Values in the table are standardized regression coefficients. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

To more intuitively illustrate the moderating effect of family motivation on the relationship between family-friendly policies and work-family balance, this study plotted a moderation effect graph. As shown in Fig. 2, the higher the family motivation, the stronger the positive effect of family-friendly policies on work-family balance. Conversely, the lower the family motivation, the weaker the positive effect of family-friendly policies on work-family balance.

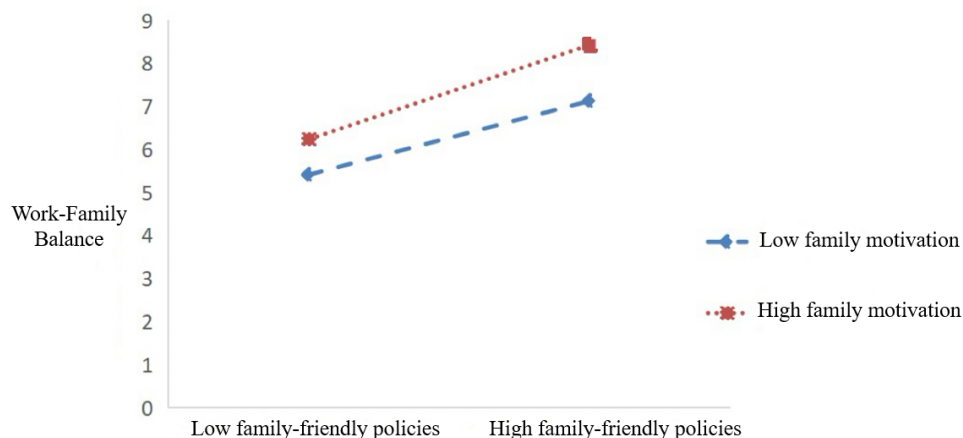


Fig. 2 Moderation Effect of Family Motivation

5. Discussion

This study, based on a sample of 266 new generation employees, proposed research hypotheses and constructed a mediation and moderation model of the effects of family-friendly policies on new generation employees' work engagement, grounded in a comprehensive theoretical analysis of the interrelationships among family-friendly policies, work engagement, work-family balance, and family motivation. The results showed that family-friendly policies have a significant positive effect on new generation employees' work engagement. Work-family balance partially mediates the relationship between family-friendly policies and work engagement. Family motivation moderates the relationship between family-friendly policies and new generation employees' work-family balance. Specifically, the higher the family motivation, the more significant the positive effect of family-friendly policies on work-family balance.

5.1. Theoretical Implications

First, this study enriches the research perspective on the effects of family-friendly policies. Academic research on the impact of family-friendly policies on new generation employees is relatively scarce. Currently, new generation employees in China are gradually becoming the backbone of the workforce. Their personality characteristics are notably different from those of the previous generation, as they place greater emphasis on work experience. This study focuses on the group of new generation employees, exploring the influence of family-friendly policies on their work engagement, thereby providing a new perspective for research on family-friendly policies.

Second, this study examines the impact of family-friendly policies on work attitudes within the Chinese context. A comprehensive review of domestic and international literature reveals that no consensus has been reached regarding the effectiveness of family-friendly policies. Some scholars argue that family-friendly policies significantly affect employees' work attitudes, while others hold the opposite view, contending that such policies have no significant impact. This study, situated in the Chinese context, finds that family-friendly policies positively influence work-family balance, which in turn positively affects new generation employees' work engagement, thereby enriching the relevant research on family-friendly policies.

Finally, this study enriches the research on individual-level influencing factors of family-friendly policies. Existing research on the antecedents of family-friendly policies has largely focused on the organizational level. However, the implementation and utilization of family-friendly policies depend on the joint effect of organizational and individual factors, and employees' own needs also influence the effectiveness of such policies. By employing family motivation as a moderating variable, this study explores the influence of family-friendly policies on work engagement, contributing to the research on individual-level moderators in the field of family-friendly policies.

5.2. Practical Implications

First, organizations should improve family-friendly policies to enhance employees' work engagement. With the renewal of the labor force, new generation employees are gradually becoming the mainstay of various organizations. Due to their unique upbringing, new generation employees possess characteristics and needs that differ from those of other employees. How to improve the work engagement of new generation employees is a challenge faced by many enterprises. Organizations should improve their family-friendly policies and utilize various types of policy measures to enhance new generation employees' work engagement. In terms of flexible policies, organizations can provide new generation employees with flexible work schedules or spatial arrangements, enabling them to have more time for childcare and eldercare. In terms of dependent care, organizations can establish cooperative relationships with communities to provide convenient services for new generation employees' families with infants, young children, or elderly members in need of care, alleviating the

conflict between work and family for dual-career couples. In terms of employee assistance, organizations can provide health services or various subsidies to new generation employees, reducing the burden of their personal lives and conserving resources for family care.

Second, organizations should understand employees' family motivation and establish a comprehensive family-friendly policy system. The "post-90s" new generation employees are at different life stages—some are married, while others remain unmarried—resulting in differences in their family responsibilities and, consequently, their family motivation. As family circumstances or personal mindsets change, new generation employees' family motivation may also change. Therefore, organizations should monitor changes in employees' family motivation and establish a family-friendly policy system that spans different life stages of employees. Organizations should design and implement tiered and categorized policies based on the needs of new generation employees, providing targeted support to help them alleviate work-family pressure and enhance work-family balance.

Finally, multiple stakeholders should be encouraged to participate jointly in creating a family-friendly social environment. As a unit of production, reproduction, and socialization, the family is crucial to the sustainable development and stability of society [26]. Utilizing family-friendly policies to enhance employees' work-family balance has significant social implications. However, a considerable number of Chinese enterprises, constrained by cost considerations, lack a sufficiently supportive organizational culture, and the implementation of family-friendly policies in Chinese enterprises has not been optimistic. Therefore, it is necessary to mobilize efforts from all sectors of society to build a multi-stakeholder, multi-service family-friendly policy system and create a social environment that values and supports family development needs. First, the government should fully consider family needs in the formulation and implementation of economic and social policies, enhancing the accessibility of family-friendly policies through supportive measures such as tax reductions or financial subsidies, and building a Chinese family-friendly policy system. Second, enterprises and other employing institutions should play a leading role in optimizing the design and structure of family-friendly policies and fostering a family-friendly corporate culture. Finally, communities and social organizations should be encouraged to develop social services such as childcare and eldercare, and to build relevant infrastructure and service systems, gradually advancing the socialization of family services.

5.3. Limitations and Future Directions

First, the questionnaire used in this study contained a relatively large number of items, which may have led to respondent fatigue or impatience during completion. Moreover, most of the questionnaire data were collected through online surveys without effective supervision. Although screening questions were embedded in the questionnaire to identify and exclude some careless responses, certain measurement errors in the collected data may still exist. Future research could increase the sample size to reduce data errors.

Second, this study employed cross-sectional data collected at a single time point. However, new generation employees' family motivation may change over time, thereby influencing the effectiveness of family-friendly policies. Future research could adopt longitudinal designs to more accurately explain the mechanisms through which family-friendly policies affect employees.

Finally, the questionnaires in this study were largely self-reported by new generation employees based on their own circumstances, which may not have truly and accurately reflected their work-family balance and work engagement. Future research could survey multiple stakeholders: for example, surveying employees' family members to gain insights into their work-family balance, and surveying employees' supervisors to obtain assessments of their work engagement. Such approaches would enhance the authenticity and scientific rigor of the research.

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