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ISN'T "996" A GOOD REASON TO QUIT?

**A CROSS-CULTURAL STUDY ABOUT THE INFLUENCE OF
WORK-LIFE BALANCE ON TURNOVER INTENTION**

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Introduction

“If you join Alibaba, you should get ready to work 12 hours a day. Otherwise why did you come to Alibaba? We don’t need those who comfortably work eight hours.” This comment is posted on the company’s Wechat account by Jack Ma, the founder of the e-commerce titan Alibaba in China, expressing his opinion about the criticisms against the “996” working schedule (working from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. and six days a week). According to him, the long working hours is considered as a “huge blessing.” It’s insane, but unfortunately, the experience of such working schedule is not rare in China, especially in the tech sector. A survey conducted by the Institute for Economic and Social Research of Jinan University reported that 85% respondents worked over 160 hours a month and 14.6% worked “996” (over 300 hours a month). Controlling for factors like industry, occupation and province, “996” workers only earned 6.8% more than non “996” workers. Even though the “996” practice obviously violates the Chinese law, many employees are still experiencing “voluntarily”. The "996.ICU" protest was launched via GitHub in March 2019 and 138 IT companies had been exposed due to their implement of such schedule from the second half of 2018 to July 2019. This protest evoked great public attention and soon became a hot topic.

It’s true that such workaholic-like working schedule impairs individual personal life and may lead to physical and psychological health issues. In some companies, the overtime is unpaid. While in other cases, companies offer prestigious compensation packages and there are always employees who are willing to work “996” without complaint. The truly dangerous part of the story is not merely the long working hours, but the vicious competition and constrained choices implied. Decision to participate or not in “996” schedule should be up to individual own choice (some may prefer high income, achievement and enjoy hard-working spirit). However, as mentioned above, many employees are forced to obey because they are afraid of losing chances of promotion and left behind. “You work around the clock, and you get very, very tired, but if you complain, they say you can just go and find another job.”, said by a 25 years old Chinese employees who resigned after 20 days on his last job to reject such long

working hours culture. Others, always more people, decided to endure such unhealthy working schedule and stayed in the organizations. Given such mixed reactions by employees, it's doubtful whether the "996" schedule is considered as a good reason to quit? if it's, then why didn't many of those who complained just quit? Keeping this question in mind, this study seeks to research on the influence of work-life balance on employees' turnover decision.

The world is changing and the new generation values more on quality of life and personal life than the older generation. Alongside with the progress in globalization and the pervasive 24/7 economy, the higher competition between companies translated into a more intensive and demanding workplace for contemporary employees. Additionally, caring responsibilities are heavier as household became smaller, divorce rate increased and aging population. Therefore, it's can be foreseen a more challenging future for employees to reconcile the work and life domain. In order to explore deeper what factors might explain the reluctance of leaving for those with poor work-life balance, this study will also seek to explore potential mediating and moderating effects surrounding the relationship interest.

This paper is structured into four parts. In chapter one, the concept, origin and current situation of work-life balance around the world will be presented. In chapter two, literature about employee voluntary turnover will be reviewed. Then a conceptual model and corresponding hypotheses will be proposed in chapter 3. Chapter 4 introduces the research design, presents the results and discusses the results with implications.

Chapter One - The Work-Life Balance

To get start with the investigation of the research question presented in the introduction, it will be significant to first understand the concept of Work-Life Balance and its origin. Then it's necessary to get a clear insight of its current situation and answer the question "is work-life balance considered important for contemporary employees and how well have employees been able to reconcile their work and life outside work?". Then, several challenges closely related to individual ability to balance work/life will also be discussed in this chapter.

1.1 Breaking down the term 'Work-Life Balance'

The term 'Work-Life Balance' has been a hot and long-debated topic in many western developed countries like the USA and UK, while increasing attention had also been paid in many developing countries, for example, the "996" debate in China recently. The OECD Better Life Index has also taken Work-Life Balance into its evaluation system, thus it's itself an indicator of quality of life. In addition, it's not only a major mission for the European Commission to promote a sustainable working life and improve the work quality for workers (Ahrendt et al. 2017; Aleksynska et al. 2019; Parent-Thirion et al. 2017), but also one of the ten strategic elements of the 'Decent Work' agenda launched by the International Labor Organization (Aleksynska et al. 2019).

Before getting into a more detailed and deep discussion about this topic, it's important and helpful to gain a basic understanding of its origin and definition. Only after looking backward, can we move forward and better embedded our study in practice. Therefore, the historic development of the Work-Life Balance (hereafter WLB) debate and its academic definition will be briefly presented and discussed respectively in section 1.1.1 and 1.1.2.

1.1.1 The origin and historic development of the WLB debate

The term 'work-life balance' was coined in 1986 (Lockwood 2003) and the discourse around it dates back to the 1990s (Eurofound 2012; Lewis, Gambles, and Rapoport 2007). Originally, the so called WLB debate concentrated on the challenge of reconciling work and

family responsibilities and the policies made were mostly to protect employed women with children (Hobson and Fahlén 2009; Lewis et al. 2007). According to scholars Richenda Gambles, Suzan Lewis and Rhona Rapoport, ever since the pre-industrial society, men had already been associated more to the role of ‘breadwinner’ while women to the bearer of domestic work. This assumption and pattern has been strengthened after the industrial revolution, because the boundary between work and other aspects of life has become more clear (Clark 2000; Gambles, Lewis, and Rapoport 2006). The growing number of women in employment since 1960s alongside with the increasing number of single-mothers or dual-earner households all contributed to the more intensive conflicts between work and family responsibilities for those women with double burdens. These individual concerns upgraded to public discourses and numerous policies have been made to protect those women in employment and to mitigate the work-family conflicts, such as maternity leave, working-time adjustments, unemployment benefits and so on. Later in the 1980s and the 1990s, with the growing awareness of more demanding work and of the ‘long work hours culture’, which had led to more reports of feelings of pressure, busyness or even burnout in workplace, the debate shifted to a less gender-specific direction and started to focus on mitigating the negative influence of the more intensified work on workers’ family lives and wellbeing. The related policies proposed were mainly about reducing the working time and introducing flexible working practices. More recently, the WLB debate keeps shifting toward a broader and more inclusive direction, engaging both gender with and without family responsibilities.

As illustrated above, the content of the WLB debate is not unchanged, rather, it actively reflects and shifts in response to the new social, economic and workplace trends (Gambles et al. 2006). Another feature can be identified is that, the WLB debate (which is ultimately public concern) originated in the western contexts like the UK, the USA and many European countries, was mainly pushed by the progress of globalization and development of the Information Technology. It has been exported directly (international outsourcing, foreign investment) or indirectly (inter-country trade, culture communication and internet etc.) to the rest of the world, especially many developing countries like India. Moreover, it’s experienced differently in different countries at different times based on their local contemporary social, economic issues and challenges (Gambles et al. 2006; Lewis et al. 2007).

1.1.2 Defining ‘Work-Life Balance’

Despite the fact that this term has gained great popularity in areas like public discourses, policies making and human resource management etc., in the word of academic researches, even though studied for many years, great amount of scholars have continuing criticized its vagueness and lack of consensus on how it should be defined and measured, specially the meaning of being ‘balanced’. Although numerous researches has been dedicated in developing more inclusive but flexible definitions which can cope with the great complexity of the work-life interactions, the issue is still unsolved (Clark 2000; Frone 2003; Greenhaus, Collins, and Shaw 2003; Grzywacz and Carlson 2007; Guest 2002; Rantanen et al. 2011).

(1) What Work and what Life?

Ever since the industrialization, the work and life domains became more and more clearly separated where the term ‘work’ was initially linked closely to one’s paid employment, unless for those who are self-employed, farmers and hoteliers etc.(Guest 2002). Today, driven by the fast development of the Informational Technology (remote work, internet, telecommunication etc.) and the many policies and practices implemented to improve the flexibility in working schedule, the boundary between the two domains again started to turn more blur. As a result, in order to better understand and study the mutual influence between the two domains, one must include the extra unpaid hours, the time taken to commute and the time spent thinking about work outside work when defining the “work” domain (Guest 2002).

As researchers Michael R. Frone once summarized, people play multiple social roles that make up their lives. Though it’s not possible to make an exhaustive list, one can broadly summarize several subdomains within the nonwork domain. There are family roles (spouse, parent, offspring), religious roles, community roles, leisure roles and student roles etc. (Frone 2003). Historically, consistent with the development of the WLB debate, the early academic researches of WLB has concentrated on reconciling one’s work and family responsibilities, and Life outside work has been narrowly equated to family roles (Ruth Eikhof, Warhurst, and Haunschild 2007). Despite its popularity and importance, the work-family balance is only a piece of puzzle or entry point of figuring out the whole WLB issue. Indeed, many researches have moved beyond work-family balance to the real WLB. However, as (Frone 2003) argued

that these researches normally adopted measures that confound all nonwork roles instead of focusing on one specific role (like leisure, community, friend etc.) at a time and such general measures bear the risk of undermining a complete understanding of the interaction between work and life outside work (Frone 2003).

It's necessary to point out that, most of the time, work is experienced as negative, with long working time, high working demand and rigid schedule being the worst (Ruth Eikhof et al. 2007). When studying on WLB, it's nature to consider more life outside work and less work is better for wellbeing and overall quality of life. However, many have ignored the bright sides of working. Working is not only the main way for most of the people to gain their basic or desired standards of livings but can also be the very source of satisfaction, connection, identity and self-fulfillment (Gambles et al. 2006; Volk and Hadler 2018). Moreover, the work centrality varies across individuals and life course (Eurofound 2012). Additionally, it depends on contextual factors like family responsibilities, workplace practices and country-level factors etc.(Parent-Thirion et al. 2017; Russell and McGinnity 2015).

(2) What balance?

At the very beginning, work and family are treated as two independent systems, represented by the *segmentation* model (Clark, 2000; Guest, 2002). Later by the 1970s, researches shifted to an open-system approach, pointing out that these two domains are in fact mutually dependent and closely related (Fagan et al. 2012). But the studies about Work-Family interface initially concentrated on the conflicts or negative spillovers (Chung 2017; McGinnity and Whelan 2009; Volk and Hadler 2018). Even though some researches dedicated in the facilitation or enrichment effects between the two domains, the amount of works was not comparable with the former (Carlson, Grzywacz, and Zivnuska 2009; McNall, Masuda, and Nicklin 2010; Tomaszewska and Pawlicka 2019). While researches of the interactions between work and life has been gradually developed, many works have started on studying the essence of the balance between them. Overall speaking, there exist two main ways to interpret "balance".

On one hand, instead of adopting the self-evident assumption that it's itself a desirable outcome and goal. Many treated "balance" as an input and defined it as equality. As such, balance means equal high or equal low level of input (time, involvement, attention etc.) into all roles without inclining to one side. For example, (Marks and MacDermid 1996) defined positive

role balance as “the tendency to become fully engaged in the performance of every role in one’s total role system, ...with an attitude of attentiveness and care.” On the contrary, negative balance means the tendency to engage with apathy, low effort and low attentiveness. Following this logic, (Greenhaus et al. 2003) broke down work-family balance into three components: equal time devoted to, equal involvement in and equal satisfaction with both domains, such definition was categorized as a component approach by (Rantanen et al. 2011).

On the other hand, when WLB is viewed as an outcome, it does not necessarily mean equality in terms of outcomes in different domains, rather, it becomes closer to ‘Integration’ and ‘Harmonization’. (Clark 2000) defines balance as “satisfaction and good functioning at work and at home, with minimum of role conflict” and highlighted the active role one can play in creating a desired balance by shaping the nature of domains and borders between them. Other researchers took also the facilitation between the two domains into account and defined balance as “low levels of inter-role conflict and high levels of inter-role facilitation” (Frone 2003). That is, the bright side of the interface out-weights the negative side and as a result, one will in general feel harmonious and satisfactory. Later, criticizing that the previous definitions were too psychological, (Grzywacz and Carlson 2007) proposed a social perspective of work-family balance and defined it as “accomplishment of role-related expectations that are negotiated and shared between and individual and his or her role-related partners in the work and family domains.”.

For the purpose of this study, it’s intuitive and more appropriate to adopt the outcome-perspective and perception-centered definition. Different from many previous studies which focused on positive or negative spillovers, WLB in this study is holistic and includes both sides of interaction. Also, as WLB is increasing relevant for all employees (both genders, single and married etc.), it does not concentrate on work-family balance but include also other aspects of life outside work. Besides, it’s worthy to highlight that individual experience of WLB depends on individual values, priorities and goals (Haar, Russo, Sunyer Torrents, et al. 2014). To conclude, WLB is defined as one’s overall perception of how well his or her work-life has been reconciliated based on expectations. A satisfactory WLB indicates that one perceives his or her current level of WLB is better than he or she expected, while an unsatisfactory WLB means one is disappointed at the current level of balance achieved.

1.2 Current situation of WLB in a global perspective

In this section, the current situation of WLB around the world will be explored by answering the following three questions: (1) is WLB considered important? (2) did people be able to balance their work and life outside work? (3) to what extent the work and life domains interference with each other?

1.2.1 The perceived importance of WLB

Along with the increasing awareness of the WLB concerns and presence in public discourses, more and more policies have been made to mitigate work-life conflicts and improve the quality of life. For modern employers, fostering WLB for their employees by implementing various facilitative practices and supports has become a major strategy to attract and retain talents. Many forward-thinking human resource professionals have already foreseen the significance and necessity of using work-life friendly initiatives to gain competitive advantages in the contemporary marketplace. More importantly, to offer a win-win situation (Lockwood 2003). Indeed, the increasingly attention attached to WLB is not groundless.

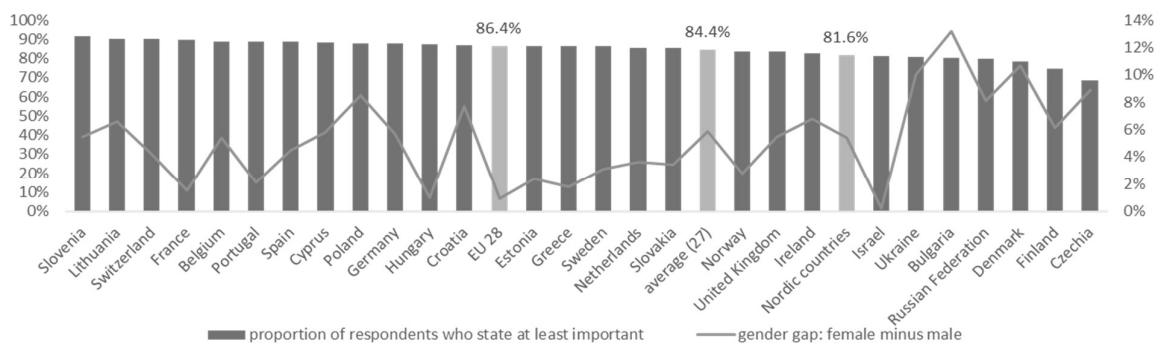
(1) WLB is perceived great important when choosing jobs

The fifth wave of the European Social Survey (ESS) is conducted in 2010 and contains a special module ‘family, work and wellbeing’ about WLB. This survey asked the question “For you personally, how important do you think each of the following (secure job, high income, ability of combining work/family etc.) would be if you were choosing a job?” to 52,458 employed respondents who were above 15 years old and below retirement age across 27 European countries. As shown in figure 1.2.1, in general, 84.4% of respondents stated that the ability of combining work-family was important or very important when choosing a job. Only 5.2% of respondents stated that WLB was not important or not important at all. In addition, comparing with the other two aspects of job, the perceived importance of WLB was higher than having a high-income job (83.5%) and lower than secure job (91.9%).

Ranging from the lowest in Czechia (68.4%) to the highest in Slovenia (91.2%), the cross-country differences were rather large. For the EU 28 countries, the proportion of respondents who considered WLB at least important was up to 86.4%, but for the Nordic countries, the

figure decreased to 81.6%. This result might be a little surprise as the Nordic countries are always associated with a more WLB-supportive culture. It may be explained that in countries where WLB is less a concern (reliable family-friendly policies, strong social protection, high gender equity etc.), because employees feel more secure and less worried, they tend to view the issues of WLB less urgent and pay more attention on other aspects of jobs.

Figure 1.1 Proportion of respondents who stated that the ability to combine work and family is important or very important when choosing a job
(source: ESS 2010)



*data weighted by the combination of post-stratification and population provided by ESS

Considering all the 27 countries, female respondents in general perceived substantially higher importance on WLB as up to 87.3% of female respondents stated at least important while only 81.2% for men. Across countries, gender differences varied considerably, with the gender gap ranged from the smallest in Israel (0.2%) to the biggest in Bulgaria (13.2%).

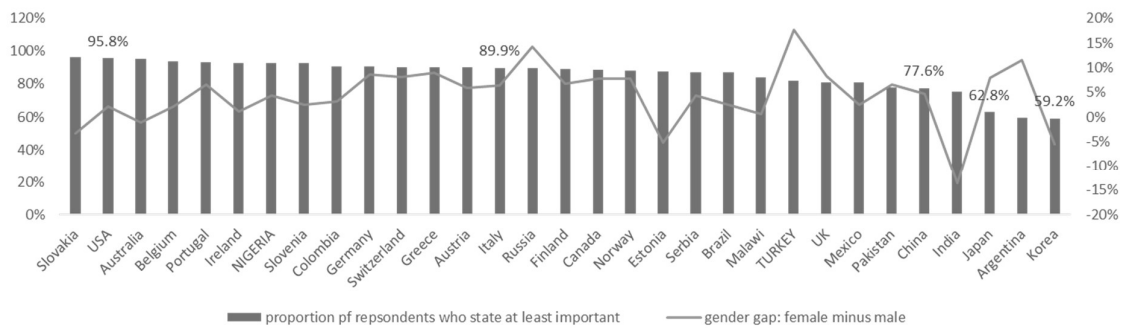
(2) WLB is a significant aspect of career success

Fostering WLB is not only a strategic to attract talents, but also to retain them and improve job satisfaction, as it's itself a main indicator of career success (Mayrhofer et al. 2016a). The data collected in 2015 by The Cross-Cultural Collaboration on Contemporary Careers (5C) Group from 31 countries covering 19,470 respondents can provide support to this argument. Respondents were asked to select from 'not at all important' (point 1) to 'very important' (point 5) for the question of how important did they consider work-family balance, having time for non-work interests and achieving balance between work/non-work activities respectively regarding to their career success. The average of these 3 items can then serves as an indicator of individual perceived importance of WLB in career success. As figure 1.2.2 shows, the proportion of respondents who stated that they considered it somewhat important or very

important is over 80% in most of the countries. Among them, Slovakia (96.2%) has the highest percentage followed by the USA (95.8%). Only 6 out of 31 countries (from Pakistan to Korea) had percentage lower than 80%. The 3 Confucian countries (China, Japan and Korea) were all found in the bottom, which is not very surprising, since many young employees in this culture group consider ‘hard working’ and ‘long working hours’ as praiseworthy behaviors and spirits. Besides, they usually prefer high income and good prospect in jobs over many other aspects of jobs. For others who don’t accept such mentality, the fierce competition and concern of being left behind will always force them to follow the unwanted practices. Nevertheless, even the lowest percentage (59.2% in Korea) was very close to 60%. Therefore, it can be concluded that the perceived importance of WLB when choosing jobs was very affirmative.

Figure 1.2 Proportion of respondents who stated that WLB is somewhat important or very important regarding career success

Source: 5C group 2014-2016



The perceived importance of WLB in career success is not unchanged, rather, it varies across one’s life course and depends on many factors such as career stage, family responsibilities, institutional support and so on (Mayrhofer et al. 2016a). As shown in the figure above, the gender gap in 26 out of 31 countries was generally positive, which means that women in general perceived higher importance in WLB regarding career success. This finding corresponds to the widely assumed gendered labor division. Because women generally bear most domestic work than men do, they will naturally face greater challenges in balancing work and life outside work, thus emphasis more on the WLB when evaluating career success.

In conclusion, WLB is widely perceived significant important in individual working life around today’s world and valued differently across countries and individuals.

1.2.2 The self-assessed achievement in WLB

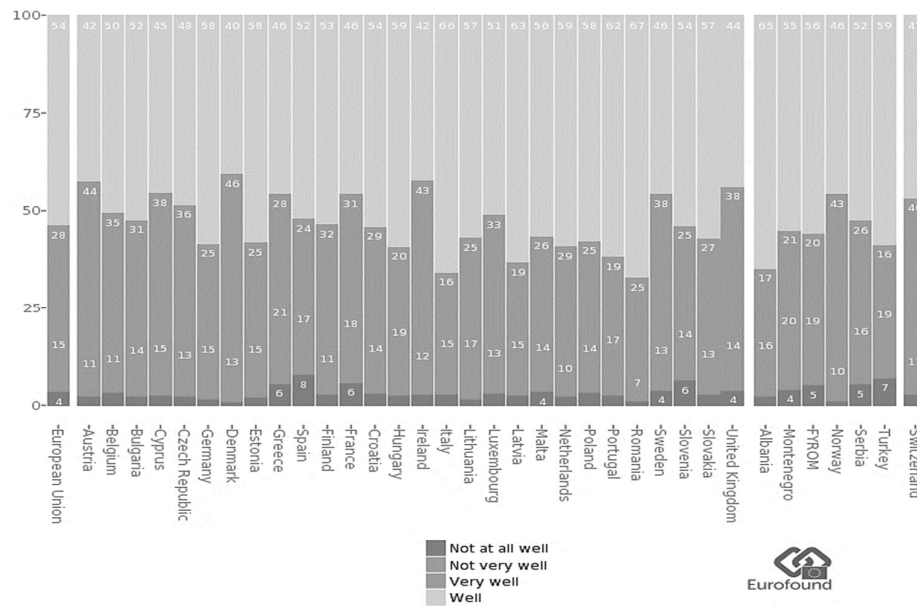
One of the most intuitive way to gain an overall insight about the current WLB situation across countries is to directly ask people how well or successfully they have balanced their work and life outside work.

(1) The fit between paid work and commitments outside work in EU is affirmative

According to the sixth European Working Condition Survey (thereafter EWCS) conducted in the same year (2015), as figure 1.2.3 shows, a vast majority (82%) of workers in the EU 28 reported a well or very well fit between their working hours and their family or social commitments outside work (Parent-Thirion et al. 2017; Wilkens et al. 2018). According to (Wilkens et al. 2018), this figure remained relatively stable from 2000 (when the question was first asked) to 2015 (the latest round).

Figure 1.3 Fit between working hours and family or social commitments outside work

Source: EWCS 2015 online data visualization



Not surprising, the work/life fit, as shown in figure 1.2.4, does vary considerably across individuals based on their gender, age and household composition.

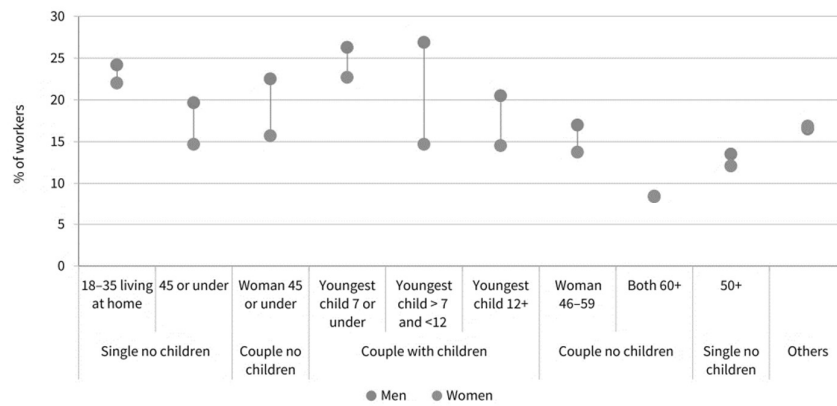
Firstly, the proportion of respondents in the EU who claimed a good fit was 80% of men and 84% of women. Thus women were in general more likely to report a good fit than men (Parent-Thirion et al. 2017; Wilkens et al. 2018). This finding is considered quite unexpected.

Because women generally carry heavier domestic work (both as a common practice and assumption), it's intuitive to assume a poorer fit for them. According to (Parent-Thirion et al. 2017), in order to cope with such heavier domestic work, women will actively choose a working life which can better enable them to fit well work and commitments outside work. Men, on the contrary, as the main breadwinner in household, tend to choose full-time and long-term jobs, which may weaken the capability of balancing work and commitments outside work (greater demand and pressure). (Wilkens et al. 2018) also pointed out this unexpected direction of gender gap and argued that it's largely attributed to the longer hours worked by men.

Figure 1.4 Poor work-life fit by stage and sex, 2015 (%)

Source: (Parent-Thirion et al. 2017)

Figure 2: Poor work-life fit by life stage and sex, 2015 (%)



Source: EWCS 2015

Secondly, it's found that the work-life fit for both men and women was poorer with the presence of children. For women, the fit was the poorest when they were in a couple with child under age 7 (the period when children need most care) and was highest when they were in a couple with no children and aged over 60. For men, the fit was the poorest when they were in a couple with child age 7-12 (also the stage where the biggest gap lies on) and was the highest when they were single without children. Further, the report also pointed out that single mothers and fathers with children had the poorest fit among all household composition types (Wilkens et al. 2018).

Beside differences across gender, age and family demands, there were also considerably differences across countries, ranging from 92% in Romania to 74% in Greece. A report from ESS provided a great insight about why such gaps appeared in EU, especially the reason why the Nordics had much higher satisfaction with WLB comparing to others EU countries.

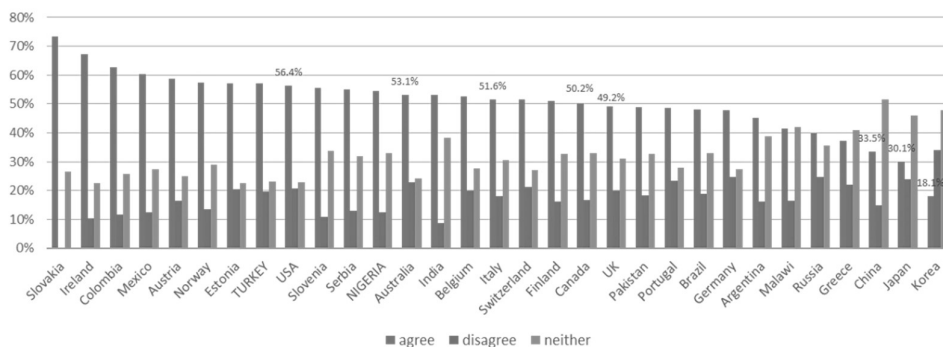
(European Social Survey 2015) used data of employees aged from 20 to 64 years old living with partner and explored the differences in self-assessed WLB across EU countries. After clustering all countries into 4 groups (Nordic, Continental, Liberal and Southern) based on national type of employment regime, it's found that what could explain mostly the gap was not family demands (which is also important), but working hours and working conditions (autonomy, flexibility). Therefore, it concluded that more predictable working hours that were not too long, high employee autonomy, the ability to decide start/finish times and working during the standard working week, were all related to a good work/life fit. This positive relationship was confirmed in many studies (Anttila et al. 2015; Russell and McGinnity 2015).

(2) Achievement of WLB as an aspect of career success is not quite well-pleasing

The 5C group asked respondents to what degree did they agree with the following statement “In regard to WLB, I have achieved a level I am happy with.”. As figure 1.2.5 presents, the proportion of respondents who stated that they agreed or strongly agreed varied substantially across countries, with the lowest in Korea (18.1%) and the highest in Slovakia (73.4%). There were 12 out of 31 countries (39%) where less than half of respondents reported satisfactory achievement in WLB. Among them, the 3 Confucian Asia countries were in the bottom. Among the other 19 countries where there were at least 50% of satisfied respondents, the percentage ranged widely from 50.2% in Canada to 73.4% in Slovakia.

Overall speaking, it can be concluded that employees in most of the countries are satisfied with their achievement in WLB as an aspect of career success. However specially in Confucian Asia countries, people are more reluctant to state they are satisfied with the level they have achieved, not necessarily unsatisfied but ‘stay in the middle’.

Figure 1.5 Distribution of the self-assessed achievement of WLB in career success
Source: 5C group 2014-2016



1.2.3 The work-life interference

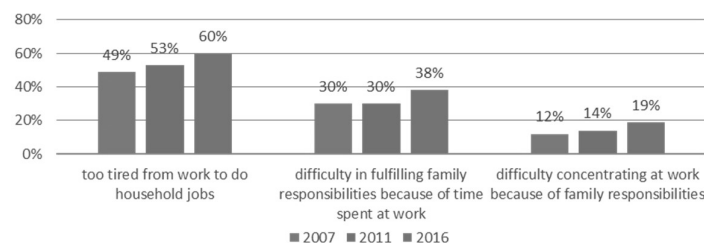
As discussed in section 1.2, work and life outside work interact with each other. When one domain can interfere with the other in form of conflicts, they can also facilitate each other (Carlson et al. 2009; Parent-Thirion et al. 2017). According to many researches, imbalance of work-life happens when the interference out-weights the enrichment (Johanna et al. 2011). As such, a deeper understanding of the current situation of WLB can be also gained by exploring the detailed interactions between work and other aspects of life.

The 2017 report of the EQLS (Ahrendt et al. 2017) asked respondents the frequency when they (1) were too tired from work to do household jobs (2) experienced difficulty fulfilling family responsibilities because of time spent at work and (3) had difficulty concentrating at work because of family responsibilities. The first two questions were related to the work to family interference while the last one was about family to work interference. As presented in figure 1.2.6, at least 30% (38% in 2016) of respondents had experienced at least several times a month work-to-family conflicts while at least 12% of them had experienced family-to-work conflicts at least several times a month. The problem of being too tired from paid work to do domestic work was always the most frequently experienced (up to 60% in 2016), while the family-to-work interference always had the lowest frequency of happening. That is, the interference from the work side was significantly stronger than from the life side.

Over time, the frequency of occurring of all three conflicts had significantly increased (from 2007 to 2016). This means there existed a trend of increasing work-life conflicts in the EU countries. Therefore, it can be concluded that the work-family interference was experienced rather frequently by considerable number of EU workers and such concern was becoming more and more serious.

Figure 1.6 Proportion of respondents in employment claiming that WLB issues occur at least several times a month

Source: (Ahrendt et al. 2017)



Breaking down to the differences in gender, women were found to experience more frequently the tiredness due to work than men. In addition, the toughest life stage for women was age under 34 and for men was age 35-49. Number of children again matters a lot, respondents who had at least one child under 18 had experienced 4-9% more issues of tiredness from work and couldn't concentrate on work due to family, 8-10% more issues of fulfilling family responsibilities due to time spent at work. Moreover, as hours worked per week increased, the frequency of having work/life conflicts in all 3 dimensions increased substantially. Especially for the work-to-family interference, from 40-49 hours to more than 50 hours, the variation could be as large as 13-19%. At last, it's also worthy to point out that, in general, 64% of blue collars had experienced tiredness from work at least several times a month, which was 5-7% higher than managers/professionals and white collars.

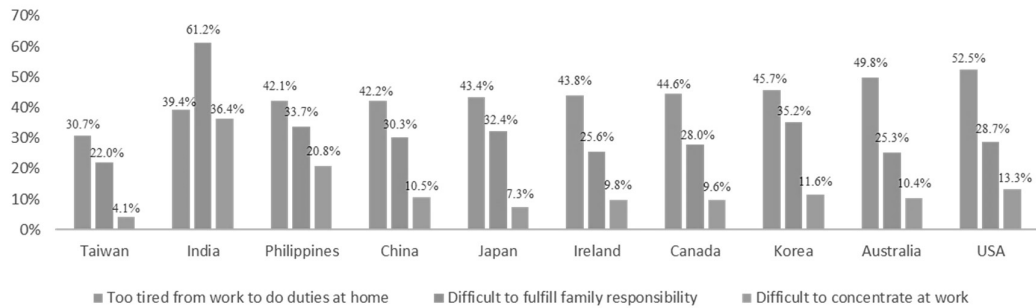
Besides the EU countries, a general insight about the work/life interference in countries outside EU can be gained by looking at the ISSP (International Social Survey Programme) survey. The work-orientation module (2012) asked if respondents had experienced the previous three issues in the past 3 months. Figure 1.2.7 shows the proportion of respondents who had experienced the three issues at least several times a month. Not all countries are presented, three Confucian Asia countries (and Taiwan), three Anglo countries and two Southern Asia countries were selected. Generally, the proportion of respondents who had experienced tiredness due to work ranged widely from 30.7% in Taiwan to 52.5% in the USA. The figures of most of them were around 45%, which was almost half. The proportion of respondents reporting difficulty in fulfilling family responsibilities was much lower and most of the time around 30%. An exception was India where the figure was extremely high and probably due to their strong sense of obligations and desires to care for families in combination with fewer resources (Gambles et al. 2006). Despite the fact that work to family conflict always happens much more frequently than family to work conflict, the two Southern Asia countries had the figures that were significantly higher (36.4% in India and 20.8% in Philippines), which was probably due to their culture which was highly family, group-oriented and humane. Figures of other countries, except for Taiwan, were around 10% with 7.3% in Japan and 13.3% in the USA.

To sum up, the issue of interference between work and family responsibilities was a common concern for many countries and occurred significantly frequently, with around 45% of

respondents claiming too tired from work to do household work and 30% respondents claiming difficulty in fulfilling family responsibilities due to work at least several times a month in the past 3 months. The family-to-work conflict was much less usual but still happened at a level that can't be neglected.

Figure 1.7 Proportion of respondents who have experienced work-life interference at least several times a month during the past three months

Source: ISSP 2012



In conclusion, this section has demonstrated that the ability to reconcile one's work and life outside work was widely perceived as an important factor for people to choose jobs and evaluate their career success. While the overall work-life fit reported was confirmative, the satisfaction in career success was not quite well-pleasing and the frequency of people encountering work-life conflicts was not ignorable.

1.3 The foreseeable challenges

In the last section, the concern of deteriorating WLB in the contemporary world has been illustrated. To gain a deeper insight about the reasons behind and have an outlook for the future, it's necessary to look inside the changes happened in the workplace and in life outside work. Further, two specific groups of employees will be discussed to demonstrate the consequences of being sandwiched between stresses from work and pressures from life outside work.

1.3.1 The invasiveness of work

1.3.1.1 The fundamental changes in contemporary workplace

As the KOF globalization index grows 48.4% from 1970 to 2017 (Gygli et al. 2019), countries in the contemporary world are facing with much greater competition than ever in the

world economy and many are under rapidly economic changes with unignorable social and cultural implications. According to the world bank data, from 2012 to 2017, the GDP of the United States has grown 37%, China 124% and India 63%. The '24/7 economy' has become a pervasive phenomenon in numerous countries, originated in the USA and spread around the world. While it's common for shops in the USA and China to operate 24/7, even in EU, many supermarkets started to open on Sunday. While the non-standard work schedules have been heavily studied in the USA, recently, the topic of '996' has earned great currency in China. India, as a hub for outsourcing for ITES, has also taken up a lot pressures due to the different time zones and concerns of losing competitive advantages. That is, globalization has resulted in increasing pressures for companies around the world to operate more efficiently and retain competitive advantage which in turn translated into a more demanding and intensive workplace for contemporary employees.

Additionally, many scholars have argued that the dominant model of capitalism which values profit over people has encouraged vicious competitions among both companies and peer colleagues as well as reinforced the assumption of 'ideal worker' which implicitly requires workers to show their commitment by putting work in their primary priority and work hard for long hours. For instance, the '996ICU' topic in China mirrors exactly how young employees today fight for high income and career prospect at the cost of their life outside work. Sadly, besides many people who criticize such pattern, many accept it and praise it as positive behaviors to express their hard working, great energy and commitment. Others who are afraid of being left behind and lost opportunities for promotion, will stay silent and endure it. Such common mindsets of many employers is significantly detrimental for the effectiveness and sustainability of the wellbeing and also performance of employees in the long-run (Gambles et al. 2006). Moreover, as it will be discussed more below this section, this mentality will punish those who challenge it, such as female workers, single parent, old workers etc. and act as a big barrier for the workplace to function in a fair, healthy and sustainable way.

The advance of Information Technology like globalization is double-edged. On one hand, it improves the efficiency of commuting, enables remote work and increases the flexibility of work as a whole. But on the other hand, it puts employees (especially those in the service sector) 24 hours available online (cellphone, email, video call etc.) and facilitates the pervasive

requirement of instant response to customers. As a result, it contributes heavily to the increasing blurred border between work and life outside work. According to (Aleksynska et al. 2019), T/ICTM work is associated with more work/home interference, intensification of work and longer working hours.

Another significant change happened in the workplace around today's world is the increasing proportion of female labor participation. The gender gap in the participation-to-population ratio has reduced to only 0.6% in 2018 since 1995, with 45.6% for women and 71.2% for men, however, female workers are still often characterized with lower pay than men, part-time work, poor working conditions and low-status jobs (Laura Addati, Umberto Cattaneo 2018). In EU, the ratio increased from 56% in 2005 to 60% in 2015 with female workers mostly employed as clerks or service and sales workers (Aleksynska et al. 2019). In some other countries (mainly the East Asia and Pacific region), however, the trend is reverse. Such as in China, the female labor participation rate decreases from 70.7% in 2008 to 68.7% in 2019, and the female-male ratio even though remains high, has decreased from 0.863 in 1990 to 0.804 this year (world bank data). It's explained by the ILO report that as the household income increases, many women decide to leave labor market and dedicate their time to household work. Indeed, as women have traditionally taken on almost all the housework and children caring work, the increase in female labor participation will certainly change the dominant male breadwinner family model and how couple divide the housework and care duties. Consequently, it's not just a challenge for women to balance work/life with double burden, but also for men to reorganize their work to accommodate better with their family lives.

1.3.1.2 Global evidence of the changes in nature of work and related attitude

As discussed above, globalization, development of IT, dominant model of capitalism and pervasive 'ideal worker' mindset as well as increased female labor participation all contributed to the more demanding and intensive workplace for contemporary employees. Work is invading more into employees' private life and thus increases the probability of having work/life conflicts. According to EWCS 2015, 14.1% of respondents in EU 28 countries report always or most of the time worry about work when not at work. Also, around three out of ten workers (31%) report working in their free time to meet work demands at least several times a month (Chung 2017).

There are 2% workers who work in free time daily to meet work demands and this happens more common on managers, agricultural workers and professionals (Parent-Thirion et al. 2017). In addition, this figure increases with income and much higher after one's 40s. Another aspect to observe the blur work/life boundaries is to ask whether workers have been requested to come into work a short notice, based on the EWCS 2015, almost 40% respondents state that they have experienced it in the past 12 months.

(1) Long working hours and preference of change

To gain a more detailed insights into today's workplace, the most mentioned dimension to study on is the length of working hours. Compared with the standard weekly working hours of 40 (8 hours a day and 5 days a week), 48 hours and more a week is defined as long working hours. There are many evidences pointing out that the long working hours is experienced by workers around the world quite frequently, and very common in countries like Turkey, Korea, and China. According to (Aleksynska et al. 2019) and the OECD better life index evaluation, 15% of workers (around 10% employees) in the European countries report working 48 or more hours a week. Outside EU, 19% workers (11.1% employees) in the USA, 41% workers in six surveyed metropolitan areas of China (35% employees) and 45% workers (25.2% employees) in Korea, 17.9% employees in Japan work long hours. Also, it's reported that around the world, without exception, men are much more likely to work long hours than women and this common phenomenon reflects the disparities in division of domestic work between gender.

When asked by the ISSP about how they would like to adjust their current working hours alongside with earning, in general over half of workers (58%) report that they are satisfied with the current time and earning, whereas 36% state that they prefer to work more and earn more; only 7% of respondents want to work less and earn less (Volk and Hadler 2018). There are substantial differences across countries. It can be observed that the proportion of respondents who prefer to work more and earn more is much higher in developing countries, that is 42% in China, 46% in India, 50% in Philippines, 60% in Russia and 59% in South Africa compared with 38% in the USA, 33% in Japan, 26% in the UK, 22% in Germany, 15% in Sweden and so on. This result partly mirrors the positive side of paid work, especially that in many economic under-developed countries, working is very important for household to make ends meet and achieve the desired living standard. As for EU 28, the EWCS asks if respondents want to change

their current working hours and reveals that over half respondents (57%) like to stay as present and only 13% want more (Parent-Thirion et al., 2017).

To sum up, long working hours (48 hours a week or more) is not rare at all and common in many countries like India, China, Korea and Turkey. Also, there do exist lot of people who prefer to work more and earn more, especially in many developing countries due to the necessity to make ends meet or achieved a desired living standard. Besides, some also bring up that the excessive consumption and often competitive consumption contribute to overwork even in developed countries (Ruth Eikhof et al. 2007).

(2) Unsocial working hours and working schedule

While it's intuitive to consider long duration as the main fact that 'eat up' time and energy to accomplish commitment outside work, the organization of work including atypical working hours (at night, weekends and work shifts), working schedules (autonomy and predictability, flexibility and regularity) have also great impact on one's ability to reconcile work/life.

Working at weekends is common in today's workplace among all occupational groups, especially for farmers, service and sales workers and managers (Aleksynska et al. 2019). According to (Parent-Thirion et al. 2017), 52% of EU28 respondents work at least one Saturday a month and 24% at least 3 Saturdays a month. The proportion of workers who work at least one Sunday a month is 30% and 10% at least three Sundays a month. Based on data from ISSP (Volk and Hadler 2018), 56% workers in China report always or often work at weekends. This figure is also high in Philippines (50%) and India (41%). Most developed countries have figures considerably lower around 24-36% while 40% for the USA.

Night work (work 2 or more hours between 22:00 and 05:00) and work shifts are also not uncommon in today's 24/7 economy. According to (Aleksynska et al. 2019), the proportion of workers who carry out night work is 19% in EU, 13% in Korea and 30% in the USA. As for work shifts, the proportion is 21% in EU, 9% in Korea and 38% in the USA. These night work and work shifts which are practiced more frequently by women who always bear more commitments outside work can make it hard for women to balance work/life because of their very different work schedules from other family members.

Autonomy and flexibility of working schedules can both facilitate workers' ability to accommodate their work to needs outside work. On average, for 56% of workers in EU,

working schedules are set by company and don't have flexibility to change them (Parent-Thirion et al. 2017). Outside EU, this figure is the same in China (56%), higher in Japan (64%) and lower in India (50%), US (48%), Australia (45%) and much lower (28%) in Philippines (Volk and Hadler 2018). Flexibility can be observed also by asking respondents how difficult it's for them to take an hour or two off during working hours. According to (Parent-Thirion et al. 2017), 65% of EU28 workers state it's fairly or very easy. Outside EU, the figure is higher in China (74%), the US (74%) and Australia (73%). In Japan (49%), India (60%) and Philippines (58%) however, the flexibility in terms of taking time off is considerably lower.

The regularity of working schedule is positively associated with one's work/life fit. In EU, it's reported that 56% of workers work the same number of hours every day (Parent-Thirion et al. 2017). According to (Volk and Hadler 2018), some countries like the US (76%) and Japan (88%) have a much higher proportion of workers working on regular schedule or shift, while others have relatively low regularity, such as China (65%), India (62%) and Philippines (50%).

(3) work intensity

Work intensity as one of the seven factors to evaluate job quality. It evaluates the load and content workers face with and is measured through quantitative demands, emotional demands and pace determinants and interdependency.

In terms of quantitative demands, the proportion of workers who report working to tight deadlines three-quarters of the time or more is 48% in the US and 37% in the EU. In Korea, this figure is much lower(14%); Working at very high speed three-quarters of the time or more is experienced in the EU by 33% of workers, 46% in the US but only 14% in Korea; As for having enough time to get job done, 9% of workers in the US claim never or rarely, while this figure is slightly higher in the EU (10%) and much higher in Korea (19%).

Demands of work can also be emotional. Workers in service sector who need to interact directly with customers are required to manage their emotions so that customers they serve would be satisfied with their work. The hiding and suppressing of emotions takes great energy and effort and bears with higher risk of mental health problems, fatigue and burnout (Aleksynska et al. 2019). However, in the EU, it's reported that 31% worker always or most of time must hide their emotions (25% in Korea and 39% in Turkey), 16% need to handle angry clients 3/4 of the time or more, 10% have experienced emotionally disturbing situations 3/4 of

the time or more. Overall, emotional demands are more frequent for service and sales workers and white collars (particularly managers, professionals and technicians).

The pace at which workers carry out their work is also critical in assessing work intensity. The pace can come from client, performance target, machine, supervisor and colleague. The more determinants and stronger their interdependency, the harder for workers to coordinate them and thus more intensive the work. According to (Aleksynska et al. 2019), 33% of workers report being exposed to at least three determinants in the EU and this figure is higher in China (40%) and the US (51%) but much lower in Korea (14%).

(4) work centrality and perceived job insecurity

According to (Volk and Hadler 2018), the ISSP 2015 asks respondents to what extent do they agree with the statement “a job is just a way of earning money—no more”. From strongly disagree (point 1) to strongly agree (point 5), the higher the score, the more respondents support the statement. The average score of 37 countries is 2.99, which is very neutral. However, it's found that developed countries are substantially more likely to disagree with such statement (Japan stays in the middle with a score of 3) while most developing countries have scores higher than the average. The India (3.93) has the highest score followed by Philippines (3.82) and China (3.47) ranked fifth. Further, the ISSP also asks respondents how important certain job characteristics (secure job, high income, interesting job etc.) are respectively. It's again shown that those countries which are undergoing great economic growth (China, India) more likely to emphasis on high income than those developed countries. Not surprising, having a secure job after all is ranked first among all the job characteristics with an average score of 4.51. In fact, the perceived job insecurity is a significant cause of stress and a widespread concern shared by many countries (Aleksynska et al. 2019; Anon 2013). It's reported that 16% of EU28 workers claim afraid of losing their job in the next six months, this figure is only 9% in the US, 4% in Korea.

1.3.2 The diverse challenges from life outside work

As work becomes more demanding and intensive for contemporary employees, activities outside work are considered burdensome and are undervalued by more and more employees (especially young employees). However, there are increasing signs showing that these non-

work activities (particularly care responsibilities) are no longer affordable for people to put behind in the very near future. It's time for us to rethink the real efficient and sustainable way to manage our WLB.

1.3.2.1 Care responsibilities

While children caring has always been the focus in the WLB debate, especially for women in employment who still carry vast majority of domestic work on their shoulder in many countries, elders caring is gaining increasing attention as the aging issue progresses.

The 'care dependency ratio' reported by the ILO is calculated as follow: first sum up the total number of children aged 0-14 and elders who aged at or above their healthy life expectancy (differ based on country specific demographic situation), then divide by the population aged 15 to healthy life expectancy minus six years of age (adult who are potential care providers in the household). From 2000 to 2015, in the world level (183 countries included), the care dependency ratio decreases from 52.1% to 44.3%, which means that there were 44.3 care recipients for every 100 potential care providers in 2015 (this figure is predicted to be 40.2% by 2030 with 4.8% for elders care). The overall reduction is caused by the reduction of the proportion of children under age 15 (from 48.3% to 40.1%) which can be largely explained by the reduction of children recipients in the Arab States and in Africa. But for elder recipients, the ratio increases from 3.8% to 4.1%. Compared to low-income and middle-income countries, the ratio of high-income countries is much lower as it's shown in figure 1.3.1, however, the problem of elder care is much of a concern (up to 6.9% in 2015 which mirrors the aging trend). On the contrary, the ratio of low-income countries is the highest (up to 82.6% in 2015) and predominated by children (44.3% for children aged 6-14 and 35.7% for those aged 0-5). For Asia and the Pacific, the care dependency ratio decreases considerably from 49.6% in 2000 to 38.7% in 2015, even though it was explained by the 11.4% reduction for children under age 15, the elder recipients increased 0.5%. In China, although the ratio was only 26.8% in 2015, 3.9% was due to elder care which it's predicted to be 6.4% by 2030 due to aging problem and reduced fertility rate. As for Europe and Central Asia, the problem of aging is much serious, despite the overall ratio decreased 3.1%, the already high proportion of elder recipients still increased from 6.9% in 2000 to 7.6% in 2015.

Across the world, therefore, combining employment with care responsibilities has become a prevalent phenomenon. Globally, there were 1.4 billion employed carers, 59.7% for women and 61.4% for men. Compared to low-income countries, high income countries have significantly less employed carers. Consistent with this result, less than half of employed people with care responsibilities (46.8% for women and 48.2% for men) in Europe and Central Asia. For Asia and the Pacific, there were 57.8% employed women and 61.8% employed men with care responsibilities. In China, 48.5% employed women live with care recipients (only 0.1% higher for men). Moreover, the rise of the sandwich generation, which refers to those who care for elder parents and children concurrently has gained great attention in many countries. For the US, it was reported that in 2010 there were nearly half (47%) of adults who aged 40-59 and had care or financial support responsibilities from both parents and children (Parker and Patten 2013). According to a 2010 report from the Economist Intelligence Unit, the Sandwich Generation represented 37% (largest in Asia) of Chinese working age (21-70) population. The size was 26% in Singapore, 18% in Korea and only 6% in Japan (EIU 2010).

Besides the heavy care responsibilities, there are substantial differences in the quality of childcare and eldercare services and care-related social protection across countries. Public support from the care services and policies is vital for employed carers, especially women, to make employment and fertility decisions. It's revealed from comparison of 41 countries that EU 28 countries have considerably higher public expenditure on pre-primary education services, long-term care services and benefits as well as maternity, disability, sickness and employment injury benefits (this category is preferred by most countries). However, there are substantially lower expenditure as percentage of GDP in Korea, China, India, Southern Africa, Indonesia etc. Particularly, there are almost no investment on pre-primary education services and long-term care services and benefits in China. In fact, as a result of the low investment and lack of attention on child and elder services by government, as well as the high costs of those provided by private institutions, many Chinese young couples are reluctant to have children (which in turn exacerbates the elder care issue) and the practice that grandparents take up the child care responsibilities has become a norm. In terms of attitude, according to the ILO calculations, only 22% of respondents in the Northern, Southern and Western Europe preferred help from family for elder care (financially or others). Instead, 65% of them preferred help from the State, non-

profit organization or private providers. On the contrary, 53% respondents in the Eastern Asia preferred help from family and much fewer 42% of them preferred help from outside family.

1.3.2.2 Changes in household structure

Some changes associated to the contemporary household structure have taken place. Firstly, households have become smaller and traditional extended family' role has been undermined. Secondly, single-headed households have increased a lot, especially single-mothers (Addati et al. 2018; Gambles et al. 2006). These changes in household structure, accompanies with the increase in female labor participation and lack of fully developed and affordable care services in many countries, will result in bigger challenge for contemporary employees to reconcile their paid work and care responsibilities.

Provided by the ILO report, around the world (90 countries) in 2018, 43.5% of the working age population lived in nuclear family (couple with children). Across all regions and income groups, as shown in Appendix 1.1, nuclear family has become the most common kind of household type.

The second most common kind of household type was the extended household which represented 24.3% of the working age population in the world. This type of household is more appealing in low-income countries (accounted for 26.8% while only 4.5% in high-income countries) because it's considered as a strategy to share care responsibilities, assets and expenses. In Asia and Pacific, extended household is also quite prevalent (31.2%). However, this is less associated with income level, instead, the culture and attitude towards elder care play the main role. As discussed above, people in Eastern Asia prefer help from family and in many Confucian Asia countries, leaving elder parents live alone or in nursing homes is considered unfilial.

Single-headed household represented 5.3% of the global working age population, among which 78.4% were female single-headed. Breaking down into regions, the lone parenthood is more common in Americas (9.3%) and Europe and Central Asia (8.3%). In Asia and the Pacific, however, it accounted for only 3.2% of working age population. In China, the figure was only 1.7%. In addition, these single-head households were dominated by single mothers (78.4%). The figure was 84.2% in Americas and 85.4% in Europe and Central Asia. In Asia and the

Pacific, driven by the considerably low percentage in China (64%), the proportion of single mothers in all the single-headed households was the lowest in all regions (74.2%).

1.3.3 The consequences and more burdensome future for some employees

Numerous studies have been devoted to alarm the many unfavorable consequences associated with imbalance in WLB and particularly the work-family conflicts (Allen et al. 2000). Firstly, bad WLB can damage family relationship (Gornick and Meyers 2005) and life satisfaction (Bari and Róbert 2016; Greenhaus et al. 2003). Secondly, work/life conflicts (especially from the work side) are also associated with negative health implications, especially mental issues like depression, burnout and exhaustion (Christiaens and Bracke 2014; Greenhaus et al. 2003; Parent-Thirion et al. 2017). Thirdly, regarding the work-related outcomes, it also has great impact on individual job satisfaction (Haar, Russo, Sunyer, et al. 2014), engagement and commitment which further explains workers' absenteeism and turnover (Esson 2004; Eurofound 2012; Lockwood 2003).

With such great implications and perceived importance (as discussed in section 1.2.1), it's intuitive to assume that WLB can be a great indicator for employees to choose, evaluate and change jobs and that unsatisfied employees are up to themselves to choose how hard they work and when to quit. However, many have ignored the fact that employees' choices are constrained by individual financial situation, social and cultural norms and workplace assumptions of 'ideal worker'. The concern of losing promotion opportunities or even jobs if not perform as the 'ideal worker' should do, exacerbated by the lack of fully developed care services and the social norm of gendered labor division, can create work/life dilemma to employees and even 'force' them to compromise on unreasonable practices in workplace. There are two specific groups of employees who are in great disadvantage in terms of WLB and can be set as examples.

(1) female employees

On one hand, women today are more capable of deciding their own career development with higher education, better income and bigger aspiration. Alongside with the increasing female-male ratio of the labor force participation rate in most countries around the world (the world bank data), attitude of female employment is also positive, with 70% women and 66% men preferring women in employment (Laura Addati, Umberto Cattaneo 2018). In addition, as

the gender egalitarianism spreads, the number of single-mother and dual-earners family have also increased. Consequently, women are more financially independent and both genders are required to rethink a more efficient way to combine their paid work and commitments outside work (especially care responsibilities).

On the other hand, according to the ILO report, women still perform a great majority (76.2%) of the total amount of unpaid care work (3.2 times more time spent) which includes 81.8% housework, 13% personal care and 5.2% volunteer work. Around the world, even in countries which are famous for gender equity, there exists no equal share of total unpaid care work, with a gender gap of 5.3% in Sweden, 6.1% in Norway and 6.6% in Denmark. In China, the gap is 21.6% and India 40.5%. From 1997 to 2012, despite the 0.2% reduction in time spent in unpaid care work and 2.9% increase in paid work for women compared to men, in terms of time spent, men still carry the majority of paid work 67.5% while women continue to be the main unpaid care work carriers (62.8%). Moreover, there is a “motherhood employment penalty” which is consistent across the world. That is, as Appendix 1.2 shows, with the presence of children, mothers suffer on average 40.3% lower employment rate compared with fathers and 6.8% lower compared with women with no children (Laura Addati, Umberto Cattaneo 2018). In fact, as reported by the ILO, among 84 countries around the world, 41.6% of women claimed that unpaid care work is their reason for being outside the labor force (only 5.8% for men).

As discussed in section 1.2.1, the assumption of the gendered labor division (that men are default breadwinner and women carry the domestic work) is ingrained. According to a 2016 research from ISSP about the preferred work-family arrangement, a great majority (71%) of respondents prefer father full-time with mother at home (37%) or part-time (34%), only 11% prefer both parent full-time and 1% mother full-time while father at home or part-time. This gendered labor division assumption which implies that women are inherently less talented in the workplace is strongly biased and impedes the development of a truly productive workforce.

The combination of the deeply embedded gendered labor division and the “ideal worker” assumption, exacerbated by the more intensive and demanding workplace, made female employees less ‘committed’ in the eyes of many employers, thus in great disadvantage in the workplace. As a result, in many countries, women tend to postpone marriage and bears fewer children (in turn acerbates aging problem). In some cases, they choose to return to family or

take up the part-time job (usually less pay and worse conditions), this will eventually reinforce the biased assumption and destroy the progress made in gender equity. Thus, a better WLB for women will only be truly attained with men shoulder equitable domestic responsibilities (Gambles et al. 2006).

(2) middle-age employees

In combination of the rising life expectancy and the declining birth rates, the aging problem has been more intensified. As revealed by (Anon 2018), the average age of the labor force at the global level was projected to be 40 in 2017 and slightly over 41 in 2030. For Asian and the Pacific, this number is expected to be 42.3 in 2030 (42.6 for Europe and Central Asia). As a consequence, not only there will be more pressure on the pension system, but also for the labor market, more challenges will arise regarding how to help old employees (especially blue collars) keeping up with the pace of technology innovation and coping with the increasing competitive workplace.

Again, under the “ideal worker” assumption (work first), because middle-age employees with more family responsibilities and less physically efficient condition are always unable to contribute as much time (mostly overtime) and energy to work as young employees (who has no care responsibilities and always over-confident about their health) can do, they are considered less “committed” and “efficient” in the eyes of many employers, particularly in workplace where “efficiency” and “profit” are valued above people as discussed in section 1.3.1. As a result, many middle-age employees (especially workers in manufacturing industry) become the loser inside the vicious competition (like “996” issue in China). This common practice is not only unfair for middle-age employees, but also encourages the vicious competition which pushes employees to work overtime “voluntarily” at the expense of WLB and individual health. At the end, there will be no winner, even for the employers, this unsustainable way of developing and biased mindset against employees who challenge it will backfire on all of us (Gambles et al. 2006).

In conclusion, while numerous researches have been contributed to demonstrate many unfavorable outcomes of work/life imbalance, conflicts or overwork, employees today who work in a more demanding and intensive workplace and face great challenges outside work at the same time, are judged or even discriminated by the “ideal worker” assumption and thus in

many cases are too weak to make real choices (such as quit the current job or refuse to overwork).

1.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, WLB has been demonstrated to be widely perceived important by contemporary employees and serve as an indispensable factor for them to choose and evaluate their careers. At the same time, despite the overall positive work-life fit reported, the bi-directional work-life interference was experienced quite frequently and commonly. Alongside with the increasingly demanding workplace, many changes have also taken place in household structure (more dual-earners and single parents, smaller households), increased female labor participation and high care dependence ratio (especially eldercare), thus it can be foreseen a much challenging future for employees to balance their work and life outside work.

Chapter Two - Literature Review

While quitting can be a healthy reaction to imbalance and unsupportive organizational practices, it has also been argued that employee's choices are in fact constrained, particularly for those who might challenge the 'ideal worker' assumption. Therefore, while many employers ask "why my employees choose to voluntarily quit and how can I mitigate costs associated to the high turnover rate", which is always the starting point for many employee turnover researches, it's more interesting for the purpose of this study to answer "to what extent does WLB serve as a factor for employees to evaluate their job and make their turnover decisions?". In addition to such main question, it's also important to know if such relationship differs across contexts.

In this chapter, theories and models developed to explain voluntary employee turnover will be introduced before getting into more detailed review of several antecedents and particularly the relationship between WLB and turnover.

2.1 Theories and models of employee turnover

2.1.1 Classical models: since 1958

(1) March and Simon: organizational equilibrium theory

The topic of "why employees voluntarily quit" have been started over a century ago (Hom et al. 2017), but the first formal model published with the attempt to explain voluntary turnover was brought up in 1958 when March and Simon proposed their "theory of organizational equilibrium" in their book "organization". They argued that employees (participants in their word) will only continue to make contributions when they perceive that their contributions are compensated with enough inducements, thus the contribution-inducement equilibrium holds. They also brought up two primary factors that influence employees' turnover, which are perceived "desirability of movement" and perceived "ease of movement". The former one (desire to move) can be understood as one's satisfaction with the job and environment, for instance, low job satisfaction will lead to higher desire to leave the organization. The latter one

(ease to move) indicates the perceived employability determined by both individual and macro level factors, for instance, more job opportunities outside will lead to higher ease of leaving the organization. These two concepts have later been adopted and defined more specific as job satisfaction and perceived job opportunities respectively, and the model has become the cornerstone for many more complex turnover models (Hom et al. 2017; Joseph et al. 2007).

(2) Porter and Steers: met expectations

Ever since the concept of “desirability to move” has been defined as job satisfaction, numerous studies have devoted into studying and expanding determinants of this job attitude. Indeed, it has been long confirmed by great amount of researches that job satisfaction does significantly reduce turnover. However, (Porter and Steers 1973) argued that simply knowing job dissatisfaction will lead to turnover didn’t enable us to understand why employees were not satisfied and thus didn’t allow us to take actions in order to improve so. Based on their review of literatures, they proposed that employees will stay when their unique set of expectations are substantially met, thus employees will make their turnover decision based on a process of balancing their received or potential rewards with desired expectations. They argued that for different employees, the set of expectations vary considerably, while some may value a lot on high salary, others may prefer promotion or challenging job. Therefore, the same kind or level of reward will have different impacts on different employees. In order to reduce turnover, organization either need to increase the level of reward (so can cover more levels of expectations) or to clarify and create a consensus of a more realistic expectations level when employees enter.

This theory explained how various explanatory factors (wage, supervisor relations, job autonomy etc.) or combinations of them lead to different responses in terms of job satisfaction which can in turn affect turnover decision.

(3) Mobley: intermediate linkage model

Even though job satisfaction had been proved to be a consistent and significant predictor of employee turnover, the effect sizes estimated were always quite moderate (Porter and Steers 1973). Such fact had inspired (Mobley 1977) to acknowledge that job dissatisfaction not necessarily lead to act of leaving in a direct manner, instead, there might exist other variables that mediates the relationship between job satisfaction and the act of turnover. Based on (Porter

and Steers 1973) suggestion of putting “intention to leave” after experience of job dissatisfaction as the next logical step, Mobley proposed a *process model* which filled several intermediate steps into the satisfaction-turnover relationship. According to him, after employees evaluate their current job, they may feel dissatisfied (which can be explained by the two theories presented above), then this job dissatisfaction will stimulate thought of quitting. But before the real act of quitting, dissatisfied employees may first evaluate the expected utility of search for alternatives (which implies macro-economic condition matters) and cost of quitting (give up current benefits, seniority etc.), this step reflects the concept of “ease of movement” discussed above. If the ease of movement is high, an intent of alternatives search will be evoked (non-job related factors can also evoke such intent) and followed by the act of searching. If alternatives are available (unsolicited offers can also evoke alternatives evaluation), employees will start to evaluate them and compare with their current jobs. If they find alternatives preferable, the intention to quit will be stimulated and followed by actual act of quitting.

Even though Mobley also recognized that sometimes act of quitting can be impulsive and employees don't necessarily follow all the steps presented above (which is gradual and rational), this model played an important role in explaining the psychological decision process of how dissatisfied employees eventually choose to quit. In addition, it's worthy to mention that if employees find ease of movement is high, alternatives are not available or the comparison favors the current job etc., they will re-evaluate the current job, if the new result is still unsatisfied, they may keep searching alternatives but before an alternative is promised, they will accept the current state and reduce thought of quitting. However, these “trapped” employees may engage in other forms of withdrawal behavior like absenteeism and passive job behavior, a result unfavorable for both employees and employers.

(4) Mobley: conceptual model

Besides his *process model*, (Mobley et al. 1979) later proposed a conceptual model of the individual-level employee turnover process as shown in Appendix 2.1, which updated numerous new researches after the last review of (Porter and Steers 1973). This *content model* explained *why* employees quit instead of *how* they make the decision of leaving. Similar with his *process model*, Mobley treated intention to search and to quit as the two immediate precursors of the behavior of quitting. He also recognized that impulsive quitting could explain

some more variance in quitting behavior and attenuate the intention-behavior relationship. To predict such intentions (research and quit), Mobley then proposed three primary determinants, which are (a) satisfaction, (b) attraction expected utility of present job, and (c) attraction expected utility of alternative jobs or roles, where the latter two were the most central and innovative concepts in this model. While satisfaction indicated the present affective response to evaluation of the current job, attraction expected utility was future-oriented. For instance, some employees may be unsatisfied with the current workload (thus low job satisfaction) but have great confidence in future promotion due to their hard work, thus are still attracted because they hold expectations that it will facilitate the future attainment of valued outcomes. Therefore, it's crucial to take the attraction expected utility into consideration alongside with satisfaction when explaining individual intention to search and/or quit.

Inspiring and importantly, Mobley suggested some potential moderators which were expected to attenuate the relationship between the three primary determinants and intentions. They were (a) low centrality of nonwork values and interests, (b) low nonwork consequences with quitting and (c) high contractual constraints (professional sports, military). To put an example, young employees who put work in their primary priority and associate with little care responsibilities are less sensitive to low satisfaction and attraction, and thus less likely to quit.

At last but not at least, Mobley's conceptual model also explained that different categories (organizational, occupational, personal and economic-labor market) of distal determinants (those antecedents have less direct impact on turnover) can influence individual perceptions, expectations regarding their current jobs and alternatives as well as their individual values, which in turn affect the three proximal determinants (those antecedents have more direct impact on turnover, notice that intentions were considered the most proximal). The path described above highlighted the individual differences and suggested that factors like national culture might play some roles in explaining employee turnover.

2.1.2 More recent: 1994 to 21st century

(1) the unfolding model

The classical models and theories always assumed that employees make their turnover decision depending on a rational and gradual benefit-cost analysis and compare their

accumulated job satisfactions with alternatives. However, Mobley himself had also recognized that existence of impulsive quitting, besides, some employees leave organization without searching alternatives (Hom et al. 1992) while some even choose to exit the labor market (Mobley 1977). The fact that quitting sometimes precedes a rational analysis of current job or alternatives was captured by (Lee and Mitchell 1994). Drawn on the *image theory*, they proposed an *unfolding model* which suggested that there are four distinct paths employees may follow to make their quitting decisions. They introduced the concept “shock” which indicates a jarring event (very distinguishable from ongoing system) that prompts deliberations of quitting. Shock can be negative (injury, asked to falsify documents), positive (unsolicited job offers, pregnancy) and neutral (merger, spouse’s job transfer).

According to this model, when employees encounter a shock, the first path they may follow is script-driven, where employees just simply leave the organization based on a pre-planned response to specific shock. For example, some workers have already decided that they will stop working once they pay up their mortgage, or some female employees have planned to quit once they get pregnant. In this first path, the decision is straightforward without valuation of job and other deliberations.

When there exists neither pre-determined plan for the shock nor alternative job, employees will follow the second path and start to re-valuate their current job based on their value, trajectory and strategic images. That is, they will assess if their job is compatible for their values, goals and preset strategies. They will leave without alternatives when they find their job is no longer compatible with the three images (or change the standard of images). For instance, after the 911 attack, some American employees may start to put family first and thus find that the previous too intensive work will not suit their value (family first), goal (more time at home) and strategy (have free weekends) and therefore quit.

The third path involves alternatives, that is employees will screen alternatives based on the three images and further compare the subjective expected utilities of the compatible alternatives with their current jobs, they will quit when they find one of the alternatives is more attractive. For example, when an employee receives an unsolicited job offer, he will first assess if the offer fit in with his three images. If the offer is compatible, he will further compare it with the expected benefits of his current job. He will stay in case that he prefers the current job.

The last (fourth) path is similar with the decision-making process in Mobley's *process model*. This path is "affect initiated", thus there exist no shock and employees make decision based on on-going job evaluation. They re-assess their jobs routinely, casually, or even randomly. As the job dissatisfaction accumulates, intention to quit will be evoked and followed by searching, evaluating and comparing alternatives. Sometimes, employees will skip the step of searching alternatives and simply quit.

As discussed above, the four decision paths covered more situations than traditional models and thus had a great explanatory power (Lee and Mitchell 1994). It provided a whole new direction for turnover research and enable individual "habits, scripts, and schemas" and external (expected or unexpected) events enter the turnover process.

(2) the embeddedness theory

While many traditional models and the *unfolding model* explained why employees leave, (Mitchell et al. 2001) proposed a new construct "embeddedness" to explain why employees stay even with negative attitudes towards jobs (low job satisfaction and commitment) and/or lack of alternatives. They argued that even though the traditional affect-driven turnover has been proved significant, work attitudes combined with perceived ease of movement could after all explain only small variance in employee turnover (Griffeth, Hom, and Gaertner 2000). Drawing on the *embedded figures* and *field theory*, they described embeddedness as "like a net or a web in which an individual can become stuck" and further introduced three aspects of this overall level of embeddedness: (a) "links" were defined as "formal or informal connections between a person and institutions or other people". People can have links both job-related (team, co-workers, supervisors) and job-irrelated (partner, community, friends). Once people change their jobs, people may need to rebuild or arrangement these links; (b) "fit" indicated "employee's perceived compatibility or comfort with an organization and with his or her environment". This was an overall perception of fit between employees' values, goals and plans and those of their companies, jobs, communities and surrounding environments. As such, changing job will require a recalibration of fit, for instance, adjust schedule, get used to new culture and working pattern etc.; (c) "sacrifice" means "perceived cost of material or psychological benefits that may be forfeited by leaving a job". Unlike the traditional construct "perceived alternatives", it captured specific things (pensions, perks, projects, relationships etc.)

employees must give up once leaving the current job without considering alternatives and searching. The more links, better fit and greater sacrifices foster higher level of embeddedness and thus less ease of movement. In addition, all these three aspects can both associated with organization (on-the-job) and with community (off-the-job), thus there were in total six dimensions can be used to explain employee turnover.

The inclusion of embeddedness in explaining employee turnover provided us new angles (why stay instead of affect-driven quit) and explained extra variance beyond those traditional major variables had done. A low embeddedness doesn't push employees to leave, rather, it makes employees more sensitive to shocks and job dissatisfaction and more likely to search for alternatives and/or leave. On the contrary, high embeddedness explained why some dissatisfied employees with alternatives still stay with the organization.

2.2 Antecedents of employee turnover

2.2.1 Turnover Intention as the best and immediate precursor

As (Mobley 1977) proposed in his *process model*, turnover intention was the most immediate precursor of (the last step before) the actual turnover. It indicates how hard employees are willing to try, how much of an effort they are planning to exert, in order to leave the organization (Ajzen 1991). Specifically, it was defined as “behavioral intentions to quit the current job within the next year” (Jackofsky and Slocum 1987), which is much stronger and enduring than merely thought of quitting. In fact, considerable turnover researches adopted the intention perspective of turnover as their outcome variable instead of the actual act of quitting. There are many reasons to support its frequent usage.

On one hand, the turnover intention has been proofed to be a consistent and positive predictor of actual turnover (Barak, Nissly, and Levin 2001). In their updated meta-analysis, (Griffeth et al. 2000) confirmed again that quit intention remained the best predictor of actual turnover with an effect size of 0.38. Such effect is found always stronger than other most studied proximal predictors, such as job satisfaction, commitment, comparison of alternatives and so on. Additionally, (Mobley et al. 1979) argued that the intention-turnover relationship should be stronger with more specific statement of the intention and with shorter time gap between the

measurement of the intention and the actual behavior. In addition, based on the planned behavior theory, intention is the immediate predictor of actual behavior (Ajzen 1991). Additionally, when intention (based on assessment and evaluation) is the focus, only the rational decision process is considered, thus it excludes the impulsive and script-driven leaving.

On the other hand, the measurement of actual turnover is complex and time consuming. With the purpose of reducing retention costs and understanding why employees voluntarily quit, the usage of actual turnover as instrument is always too inclusive (cover both rational, impulsive and script-driven leaving). As (Dalton, Krackhardt, and Porter 1981) argued, the inclusion of unavoidable turnover (leave for education, family commitment, health issue etc.) which was not under control of organization would mislead the result and thus need to exclude them in research. Also, many scholars have pointed out the issue of separating voluntary and involuntary turnover. Even though data with clear separation is not impossible and can be collected from company records (Mitchell et al. 2001), it's complex for studies which focus on large and diverse samples. Besides its inconvenience, the reliability is also a problem as it has been reported there was significant differences in administrative and self-reported reasons for termination (Hom et al. 2012; Mobley et al. 1979). Also, it's not cross-sectional study friendly, in order to avoid hindsight biases in retrospective study, one need to conduct a longitudinal study and track the same respondents to know if they really quit after a certain period (how long should be such period is also problematic).

Consequently, turnover intention has become the most frequently adopted construct for studying employee turnover. It's nevertheless encouraged to include the actual turnover in studies but using intention can in many cases serve the purpose and provide adequate knowledge since intention is strongly associated with the behavior.

2.2.2 Proximal antecedents

Proximal antecedents are those predictors more directly affect turnover behavior or intention to quit. Traditionally, job satisfaction and organizational commitment have been predominated in turnover researches as two attitudinal constructs which represented the “desirability of movement” proposed by March and Simon. The “ease of movement” side of story was frequently measured by perceived alternatives at individual level and unemployment

rate at macro level. Those common proximal antecedents have been studied frequently as mediators linking diverse distal antecedents with turnover and/or intention. The constructs burnout/exhaustion and engagement have also been included under proximal antecedents because it's found to mediate the effects of numerous distal antecedents on turnover intention.

(1) desirability of movement: job satisfaction and organizational commitment

Based on March and Simon's theory, early turnover researches had concentrated on these two “desirability to move” constructs. It's generally agreed that the higher satisfaction employees perceived and more committed they are, the less turnover intention and turnover behavior they would have. In several meta-analysis, job satisfaction and organizational commitment have been proofed to be consistently and negatively associated with actual turnover and/or turnover intention (Barak et al. 2001; Cotton and Tuttle 1986; Griffeth et al. 2000; Joseph et al. 2007; Porter and Steers 1973). More recently, these two constructs were always studied with many distal predictors and served as mediators. When bivariate relationships were the focus, a most recent study (Li and Sawhney 2019) employed structural equation modeling (SEM) to test how job satisfaction, organizational commitment and several other job-related constructs affect the turnover intentions of manufacturing workers in Tennessee. They found the effects of these two constructs were both negative and significant with job satisfaction had bigger effect (-0.415 , $p = .023$) size but less significant than organizational commitment (-0.315 , $p = .000$).

It's important to point out that, according to the three-component model of commitment (affective, continuance, and normative) proposed by (Allen and Meyer 1990), the continuance commitment refers to employees' commitment based on costs associated with leaving the organization. This dimension was tested as moderator in several turnover researches and tended to suppress effects of many antecedents on turnover. For instance, (Fayyazi and Aslani 2015) found that continuance commitment negatively moderated (-0.39) the relation between job satisfaction and turnover intention.

(2) ease of movement: perceived alternatives and unemployment rate

The ease of movement part of story had also been tested and found consistently and positively affect turnover intention and/or turnover behavior. It exerted impact on turnover both directly and indirectly through influencing individual perceptions (like job attitudes). At

individual level, the updated meta-analysis of (Griffeth et al. 2000) had again confirmed the significant and positive effect of perceived alternatives on actual turnover (.11) which was .12 in their 1995 version. (Barak et al. 2001) found that perceived employment alternatives significantly and positively predicts both turnover intention (.20) and behavior (.19) among child welfare, social welfare, and human service workers as the second strongest single predictor. A more recent meta-analysis among information technology professionals reported a much bigger effect size (.30) of perceived job alternatives (Joseph et al. 2007). The effects had been consistent and positive while the size varied a lot. These differences may be attributed to different measure methods and differences in contexts and samples. Besides testing as predictor, (Dansereau, Cashman, and Graen 1974) found that work perceived expectancy of finding a comparable job weakened the correlation between job attitude (intrinsic value and interpersonal relations respectively) and turnover in both samples of office workers and managers.

At aggregate level, it's argued that the national economic data like unemployment rate are reliably correlated with aggregate turnover, but not or only indirectly correlated with individual level turnover (Cotton and Tuttle 1986; Hulin, Roznowski, and Hachiya 1985). Nevertheless, there were strong evidences that those aggregate level of ease of movement constructs will indirectly affect individual turnover decisions by shaping their evaluation and perception of employability. Therefore, such constructs had always been tested as moderators. For instance, (Carsten and Spector 1987) found that the job satisfaction-turnover relationship was stronger when unemployment rates were low ((economic prosperity), and vice versa.

(3) burnout, exhaustion and engagement

Burnout (or exhaustion) and engagement had been studied much later than the other common proximal predictors discussed above and always fielded in occupational groups where intention rates are high and burnout related issues happen more frequently, such as nurses, IT professionals and human service professions etc. The term “burnout” was defined as “a psychological syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment” and was always measured by the Maslach-Burnout Inventory (MBI) survey. However, this version of definition and measurement was aimed at employees who work with people (human services). In order to cover all employees, the MBI-General Survey (MBI-GS) was introduced (Schaufeli et al. 2002), which operationalized burnout into three dimensions

exhaustion, cynicism and professional efficacy.

Both researches on burnout and exhaustion had provided solid empirical support of consistent positive effect on turnover intention and behavior. (Moore 2000) examined 270 IT professionals and managers in various industries across the US and found the work exhaustion was significantly and positively (.27) associated with turnover intention. Moreover, work exhaustion was shown partially mediated the effect of five job-related factors (workload, fairness of rewards, job autonomy etc.) on turnover intention, and together explained 45% of total variance. (Barak et al. 2001) conducted a meta-analysis on 25 studies among child welfare, social work, and other human service employees and confirmed that burnout positively affected both turnover intention (.42) and behavior (.19). Focused on frontline employees in 3-5 star hotels in Northern Cyprus of Turkey, emotional exhaustion was shown to be positively (0.65) associated with intention to leave (Karatepe and Uludag 2007).

Engagement was considered the positive side of burnout, though initially was suggested to be measured by the reverse score of MBI survey, it was later argued and operationalized as two independent but moderately negative associated constructs (Schaufeli and Bakker 2004) and widely measured by the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (Schaufeli and Bakker 2003), which includes three dimensions (vigor, dedication and absorption) with the first two dimensions be the opposite to the MBI-GS. Engaged employees are energetic even in face of difficulties, they are highly involved in and deeply concentrated on their work. Therefore, it's expected that high engagement is associated with low intention to quit.

Empirical researches had showed a reliable negative engagement-turnover relationship. (Koyuncu, Burke, and Fiksenbaum 2006) employed a hierarchical regression analysis among 286 women managers in a large Turkish bank and found that engagement accounted for a significant increment in explained variance in turnover intention beyond personal, work situation and work experience factors, in particular dedication significantly and negatively predicted (-.36) intention to quite. (Schaufeli and Bakker 2004) collected and analyzed four samples respectively from four Dutch companies using SEM. They found that burnout was significantly and positively associated with turnover intention and mediated the relationship between job demands (work overload and emotional demanding) and health problems. On the engagement side of story, they found that engagement was positively associated with job

resources (performance feedback, support from colleagues and supervisor coaching) and in turn significantly reduced turnover intention, thus could also serve as a mediator. Similarly, (Shahpouri, Namdari, and Abedi 2016) examined data from 208 female nurses at Isfahan Alzahra Hospital and confirmed that personal resources (hope, resilience, optimism, and self-efficacy) positively (.70) affected engagement and engagement negatively (-.42) affected the turnover intention. Moreover, both personal and job resources (contingent rewards, social support, and organizational justice) indirectly affected turnover intention through engagement.

2.2.3 Distal antecedents

Countless distal antecedents have been studied in the past century ever since the birth of the first formal turnover model. Because it's not practical and meaningful to present them in an exhaustive manner, only some selected predictors will be discussed below. Those predictors were selected either because they are useful for understanding better the research question of this paper or they are common control variables or moderators that need to be carefully treated. Beside their direct effect on turnover intention, their indirect effects and the corresponding mediators will also be focused and introduced. Literature about WLB-turnover relationship will be discussed in the next section.

(1) organizational and job-related factors

Job stress is considered harmful and is a reliable positive predictor of voluntarily turnover (Barak et al. 2001; Joseph et al. 2007). Besides, it always served as mediator. (Firth et al. 2004) identified four stressors (role ambiguity, role conflict, work overload and work-family conflict) and found them indirectly affected intention to quit through the feelings of stress, job satisfaction, job commitment and perceived support from supervisors. Some stressors can be functional. (Qasim, Javed, and Shafi 2014) found challenge stressors (job overload, time pressure and job responsibility) exerted negative (-.251) direct impact on turnover intention while hindrance stressors (role ambiguity, role conflict, organizational politics, red tape and job insecurity) exerted positive (.6) impact on turnover intention. In addition, job satisfaction fully mediated the effect of challenge stressors but partially mediated the effect of hindrance stressors.

Compensation and promotion are consistent and negative predictors of turnover intention and/or behavior (Finegold, Mohrman, and Spreitzer 2002; Wai Chi Tai, Bame, and Robinson

1998). Based on a meta-analysis among IT professionals, both pay (-.61) and promotability (-.63) had considerable negative effect on turnover intention. It's argued that the effect of pay on turnover depends on the employees studied (Cotton and Tuttle 1986).

Tenure was quite consistently found to be inversely related to turnover (Barak et al. 2001; Moore 2000; Wai Chi Tai et al. 1998). It's probably because that employees who have longer tenure have made more investments in the organization and thus less likely to voluntarily leave. However, one should notice the risk of selection bias in cross-sectional study since those who stay longer with the organization are exactly those who are more satisfied and have low turnover intention.

Job level was found to be a consistent negative predictor of turnover (Barak et al. 2001; Joseph et al. 2007; Wai Chi Tai et al. 1998). Employees at higher job level especially managers, are less likely to voluntarily leave. It's probably because they always have higher rewards, autonomy, organizational commitment, job satisfaction and so on.

(2) demographical and personal factors

Age has a rather consistent inverse relationship with turnover intention and/or behavior (Barak et al. 2001; Wai Chi Tai et al. 1998). It's important to note that as individual career needs and life priority vary across life course, relationships between different factors with turnover should vary as a result. (Finegold et al. 2002) found great age moderating effect on the relationship between several factors (satisfaction with skill development, job security and pay for performance) with individual willingness to change organizations among technical professionals in the US.

Gender is generally not associated with turnover intention and/or behavior (Griffeth et al. 2000; Wai Chi Tai et al. 1998). (Joseph et al. 2007) found men significantly reported higher turnover intention among IT professionals (women more satisfied with job). In contrast, some early studies found that women had significantly higher turnover rate, it was however argued by (Mobley et al. 1979) that it was contributed to the inclusion of pregnancy inside the construct of voluntary turnover. Moreover, it could also be contributed to higher part-time jobs participation, more family responsibilities and more script-driven turnover among women (Emiroğlu, Akova, and Tanrıverdi 2015).

Marital status had no direct relationship with turnover (Joseph et al. 2007; Wai Chi Tai et

al. 1998). However, some scholars found that it could indirectly affect turnover intention through support from family members, which can increase job satisfaction and lower stress (Barak et al. 2001; Wai Chi Tai et al. 1998).

Education in many cases found no significant relationship with turnover intention with some exceptions (Barak et al. 2001; Griffeth et al. 2000; Wai Chi Tai et al. 1998). However, it's generally assumed that higher education makes employees more marketable thus associates with higher ease of movement. As (Joseph et al. 2007) found education positively (.57) affected turnover intention among IT professionals, but due to the nature of such profession, education was also found negatively (-.18) affected perceived alternatives (professional obsolescence theory). Education was often tested as moderator. (Todd and Deery-Schmitt 1996) found training indirectly affected turnover through reducing job stress but this effect was only for less educated family childcare providers.

family responsibilities was found to be a reliable negative predictors of turnover. (Price and Mueller 1981) found that kinship responsibility (based on marital, presence of children and importance placed on being good wife and mother) was significantly and inversely associated with turnover (although effect size was small) through limiting ease of movement. However, (Barak et al. 2001) examined among child welfare, social work, and other human service employees and found that the presence of children significantly increased turnover intention, especially for women. This result mirrored the instable nature of female labor participation since they are still the main domestic carers and having children often prompts them to quit (script-driven), though such effect will diminish as children grow up or they get older (Griffeth et al. 2000).

2.3 WLB and turnover intention

2.3.1 Work-Family Conflict and turnover intention

As discussed in section 1.1.2, the concept “work-family conflict” is bi-directional, thus there are work-to-family conflict (WFC thereafter) and family-to-work conflict (FWC thereafter). Besides, the concept had been classified into three forms, they were time-based, train-based and behavior-based early by (Greenhaus and Beutell 1985). That is, there are in total

six dimensions of work-family conflict that can be and deserve to be studied. In fact, previous researches had found different dimensions or even the two directions of conflict can result in different effects on the same outcome (Allen et al. 2000; Greenhaus et al. 2003). However, it's pointed that WFC gained substantially more attention than FWC and the behavior-based conflict was often ignored. Besides such differences in studied objects, the researches about work-family conflict always carried the issue of inconsistent measurements as observed and discussed by (Allen et al. 2000). Many early researches of work-family conflict had adopted single-item measurement like the 1977 Quality of Employee Survey, which measured work-family conflict by asking respondents to what extent their work and family interfered with each other". Such single-item measurement was argued to be associated with great issues of unknown reliability and validity. Others when measured by multi-items scale, had diverse foci. While some researches focused on work-family conflicts, others adopted a more global construct that included also other aspects of life outside work. Even when the focus was work-family, some studied on work-spouse conflict while others studied on work-homemaker conflict. This inconsistency in operationalizing and measuring resulted in considerably mixed results and made interpretation and generalization more complex.

Bearing these facts in mind, after conducting a meta-analysis, (Allen et al. 2000) did confirm the consistent and positive correlation between WFC and turnover intention, with a weighted coefficient of .29 from 10 sample groups and total 2,863 observations. In her paper, outcomes of WFC were categorized into three groups, work-related, non-work related and stress related (not mutually exclusive). It's found that the strongest related outcomes were work-related (within which turnover intention was the most related) and burnout (stress-related), which underscored the same-domain stress phenomenon (the source of conflict creates stress in the same domain, for example, when WFC occurs, one might be more likely to report job stress than family stress).

Drawing on the conservation of resources theory (COR), (Grandey and Cropanzano 1999) examined 132 full-time professors in a time-lagged (5 months between) research design. They found both work role stress (role conflict and ambiguity) and WFC were significantly and positively related to job stress (dissatisfaction and tension) which in turn positively (.51) related to turnover intention. They explained that when there were high work stress and WFC,

employees experience higher job stress and take turnover as a coping behavior to eliminate resources drained in work. However, WFC were not found to directly affect turnover intention. Moreover, family role stress and FWC though significantly increased family stress, had no influence on turnover intention. This research provided support for the COR theory and confirmed the same-domain stress phenomenon. A most recent research (Li and Sawhney 2019) studied on the manufacturing workers in the US and replicated the significant positive effect (.304) of WFC on turnover intention.

Outside the western context, the rather robust positive impact of work-life conflict on turnover intention seems to generally hold. (Karatepe and Baddar 2006) conducted their research among 189 frontline employees of international 5-star hotels in Jordan (an Arab country). They found significant but modest impact (.14) of WFC on turnover intention and strong impact (.46) on job stress which in turn affected modestly (.18) turnover intention. Surprising, FWC was estimated to strongly (.49) affect turnover intention and modestly life satisfaction (WFC didn't affect life satisfaction). They further revealed that female employees experienced significantly higher FWC while there was no difference in WFC between gender. They explained that tribal tradition still existed in Jordanian society, which was associated with masculinity and gender inequality. As a result, female employees who took on the doubled burden from work and home would experience much higher FWC. In addition, as employees (both gender) in the research location appeared to value family responsibilities over those of job, they would display higher turnover intention once FWC occurred to a level that they can't solve (than when WFC occurred). (Karatepe and Uludag 2007) studied on frontline employees of Northern Cyprus Hostels (Turkish) and found strong significant effect (.38) of WFC on emotional exhaustion which in turn prompted (.65) intention to leave. However, no significant relationship was found between WFC with intention to leave, a result probably mirrored the fact that over half of the respondents was not married (59.8%) and had no children (65%). (Yunita and Kismono 2014) confirmed the significant positive effect (.233) of WFC on turnover intention among 210 junior and middle level managers of 4-to-5 stars hotels in Indonesia. Besides, they found that social support can significantly weaken such relationship. However, they failed to find a significant FWC-turnover intention relationship. They explained that as those respondents had decent income which supported a family's welfare, this fact made them

think twice to quit their jobs even when FWC occurred.

While a great amount of researches had confirmed the fair consistent effect of work-life interference on turnover, some explicitly tested and found such effect was mediated by other more proximal variables, like exhaustion, burnout, job satisfaction and organizational commitment. (Ahuja et al. 2007) studied 171 employees of an American company in the computer and software services industry who spent most of their workweek at client site. They found WFC was a key source of stress as it significantly increased (.26) work exhaustion which in turn increased (.14) turnover intention. The researches further revealed that work exhaustion and organizational commitment fully mediated the effect of four stressors (WFC, work overload, autonomy, fairness of rewards) on turnover intention. Similarly, (Boamah and Laschinger 2015) also found WFC significantly increased (.30) burnout which in turn prompted (.77) turnover intention among new graduate nurses (90% female) in Ontario (a Canadian province), the indirect effect of WFC on turnover intention through burnout was estimated to be .23. Besides exhaustion and burnout, job satisfaction was also found to be potential mediator. (Kumara and Fasana 2018) estimated a strong significant effect (.786) of global work-family conflict (included both directions) on turnover intention among 100 operational level workers in the apparel industry of Sri Lanka. They further revealed job satisfaction partially mediated the relationship and the indirect effect was estimated to be .473. In Guangdong (a Chinese province), 3563 physicians were studied with the aim of understanding the reasons behind the high turnover rate given insufficient supply. (Lu et al. 2017) estimated a direct (.109) effect of WFC on turnover intention which was much smaller than the indirect effect (.430) through work stress and job satisfaction. Work stress, similarly, directly affected (.303) turnover intention as well as indirectly (.06) through job satisfaction. This research highlighted the role of WFC as stressors whose effect on turnover was mediated by both work stress and job satisfaction.

As presented above, most of the researches focused within one country or specific industry (especially tourism, health care, hotels and IT professionals), there were few cross-nation studies, which were expected to be valuable since many had noticed the cross-country differences in the work-life interference-turnover relationship (mostly size and sometimes direction). (Spector et al. 2007) studied on 20 countries in 4 culture clusters (Anglo, Asia, Latin America and East Europe) and found that across clusters, both time-based (.03) and strain-based

(.16) WFC could significantly increase turnover intention, with the later relationship much stronger. In addition, they tested some moderators and confirmed their prediction that individualist countries (Anglo) had stronger relationship between strain-based WFC and turnover intention (not significant on time-based). Domestic support with childcare and housework (both paid and unpaid), however, was shown to exert no influence on perceptions and responses to WFC. Similarly, (Wang et al. 2004) studied on the relationship of work-family conflict with job withdrawal intention respectively on a Chinese and American sample. WFC was found to be significantly and positively (.20) associated with higher withdrawal intention in the American sample but insignificant in the Chinese sample; In contrast, FWC was found to significantly increase withdrawal intention in the Chinese sample but insignificant in the American sample. When combined the two samples individual-level trait “idiocentrism” which mirrored the spirit of “individualism” at cultural level was found to positively (.14) moderate the WFC- withdrawal intention relationship and negatively (-.23) moderate the FWC- withdrawal intention relationship. To sum up, because of the underdeveloped nature of cross-nation (or cross-culture) work-life researches (especially for the holistic concept “WLB”), there are numerous calls for conducting more cross-nation study and exploring more country-level factors regarding this topic (Ollier-Malaterre et al. 2013; Spector et al. 2007).

2.3.2 Work-Family Enrichment and turnover intention

Compared with the negative spillover, this stream of researches has received substantially less attention. Among the 27 recently reviewed literature about relationship between work-family interference or balance with turnover intention, only 5 mentioned positive spillover while 16 focused on negative spillover and 11 on the holistic concept WLB. Nevertheless, it has been widely noticed and agreed that multiple roles can be beneficial (Grandey and Cropanzano 1999; Sieber 1974). The work-family enrichment was defined by (Greenhaus and Powell 2006) as “the extent to which experiences in one role improve the quality of life in the other role”. They proposed that there were two paths through which resources (skills, perspectives, material resources etc.) could transfer from one domain to the other. The first path was the *instrumental path* through which resources directly transferred from one domain to the other and increased the performance in the other domain (employees use salary earned at work

to provide better education for their children); the second path was the *affective path* through which positive affects generated by resources in one domain increased performance and further produced positive affects in the other domain (people have an enjoyable personal life will engage more in work and be more productive which will generate good mood at work). Like work-family conflict, work-family enrichment is also bi-directional, thus not only work role can facilitate family role (WFE), family role can also benefit work role (FEW). Although researches on this positive side of work-life interface had been understudied, the negative relationship between work-life enrichment and turnover intention had also been supported by empirical researches.

(Wayne, Randel, and Stevens 2006) studied both antecedents and outcomes of work-family enrichment among 167 employees in an American major insurance company. Interesting, although WFE was confirmed to significantly increase (.32) affective commitment, it didn't seem to affect turnover intention as prediction. They explained that experience of WFE may lead to positive job attitudes as employees might attribute it to their job, but it couldn't translate into lower turnover intention. FEW, however, exerted significant influence on both affective commitment (.25) and turnover intention (-.32). They reasoned that when family enriched work, employees would experience enhanced behavioral outcomes in the work role, thus led to more positive job attitudes and lower turnover intention. Besides, as the research also revealed the significant role of family emotional support on the experience of FEW, employees whose work role were understood and supported by their family would be more productive, energetic and resilient at work. It's worthy to mention that this research also underscored the importance of a family-supportive culture like managerial support and appropriate time demand. Such informal practices exerted greater effect on improving work-family enrichment and reducing turnover intention, whereas merely usage of formal family-friendly practices didn't seem to exert any sound influence, at least in this case.

(McNall et al. 2010) focused on two specific flexible working arrangements (flexi-time and compressed workweek) and found that they could significantly increase (.36) work-family enrichment (WFE thereafter) which in turn would strongly decrease (-.44) turnover intention (beyond all demographical controls and hours worked) among 220 employed adults. Further, they highlighted and confirmed the mediating role of WFE.

(Russo and Buonocore 2012) studied on 146 nurses in public hospitals and private clinics in Campania region of Italy and found WFE would strongly increase (.535) professional commitment and in turn reduce (.617) professional turnover intention (notice that in this case, this variable means leaving the nursing profession). There was no significant direct effect of WFE on professional turnover intention, they related only through professional commitment. The authors explained that WFE enhanced the external image for nurses themselves as well as people surround them. Such better external image would increase their sense of professional identity and thus could also reduce their intention of leaving the nursing profession.

2.3.3 WLB and turnover intention

As discussed in section 1.1.2, WLB is a rather new concept and is currently understudied. The vagueness and lack of consensus on how it should be defined and measured, especially the meaning of being ‘balanced’ is still an unsolved issue. In the input perspective, some scholars defined balance as equality in time, psychological involvement, satisfaction among different domains (Greenhaus et al. 2003). That is, the term “balance” itself doesn’t represent a positive and/or favorable state, it’s objective and only refers to equal inputs (Marks and MacDermid 1996). In the outcome perspective, some considered WLB as overall perception and satisfaction of the level of balance achieved, while others define balance as work-life enrichment outweighs work-life conflicts. The latter outcome-perspective of definition was more widely adopted in the WLB-turnover studies. Indeed, the concept WLB is in its nature more inclusive than either work-family conflict or work-family enrichment. Firstly, it not only involves family lives but also other aspects of life like community, personal interest, friendship, learning etc. Secondly, WLB is a global and summative concept which describes individual ability to engage in and meet responsibilities (include self-fulfillment and development) in different domains. Both work-life conflict and enrichment will influence such perception of accomplishment but not exhaustive. Thirdly, while work-life conflict and enrichment are rather objective, WLB depends on individual and/or even social expectations. For instance, with the same level of work-life conflict, some people may perceive a higher WLB if they have higher tolerance of conflicts (which is always shaped by individual value and social norms and culture) and/or confidence in solving them (influenced by ability, personality and also past experience). In fact,

adopting hierarchical regression analyses, (Carlson et al. 2009) had demonstrated that work-family balance significantly explained additional variance in several common outcomes (job satisfaction, commitment, family satisfaction etc.) beyond work-family conflict and work-family enrichment. This research supported the argument that work-family balance is a distinct construct.

The researches about relationship between work-family conflict and enrichment with turnover implicitly suggested a negative WLB-turnover relationship. Generally, this relationship appeared to hold in numerous empirical researches.

(Finegold et al. 2002) adopted a single-item measurement asking respondents if they were satisfied with their WLB and found a significant but small negative effect (-.05) on willingness to change companies, age did seem to play a role in moderating such relationship.

Drawing on the role theory and the COR theory, (Fisher-McAuley et al. 2003) tested two models to test the effect of WLB on turnover using two independent samples (fitness trainers and managers) respectively. In their first model among fitness trainers, they measured WLB by single-item and found that imbalance of work-life significantly increased perceived job strain (both pressure and threat dimensions) and reduced job satisfaction. Also, there was a modest (-.12) direct impact of WLB on non-work reason (related to one's spouse or family) for leaving. However, there was no significant relationship between WLB and work-related reasons for leaving. In their second model among managers, WLB was measured by 19-item scale which included work-to-personal life interference, personal life-to-work interference and work-personal life enrichment. It's estimated to moderately and directly (-.14) reduced turnover intention and considerably reduced job strained (-.61 and -.70). Taking all together, they concluded that a lack of WLB could be an occupational source of job stress which would lead to feelings of overall work strain, job dissatisfaction, and ultimately turnover intentions.

(Suriyenthy et al. 2013) conducted their research on 121 accounting professionals from the four large accounting firms in three of the biggest cities in Malaysia and found that high WLB (low WFC, reasonable overtime and workload) was significantly associated (-.443) with turnover intention.

In order to gain insights of how to retain police officers in their current department, (Gächter, Savage, and Torgler 2013) conducted an ordered probit model and confirmed the

significant negative relationship between WLB (no time for chores at home) and turnover intention among 1,104 American police officers. One unit increase in WLB was associated with 1.7% less likely to report positive intention of looking for alternatives and 4% more likely to be disagree with such intention. The result was proofed robust by further tests using logit and OLS model.

Some researches explicitly studied whether the effect of WLB on turnover was mediated by other variables. Examining on 265 employees in an Iranian industrial company (91.2% male and 77.7% single), (Fayyazi and Aslani 2015) found WLB significantly increased (.42) job satisfaction which could in turn reduce (-.48) turnover intention. They further proofed the effect of WLB on turnover intention was fully mediated by job satisfaction. In addition, continuance commitment was found to negatively moderated the job satisfaction-turnover intention relationship. That is, employees who suffered from work-life imbalance and low job satisfaction were not necessary more likely to have high intention to quit, unless they also perceived low level of continuance commitment. (Jaharuddin and Zainol 2019) examined 213 employees at executive and higher level in two places where had the highest density of industry in Malaysia and confirmed that work-life imbalance will significantly decrease (-.08) job engagement and strongly increase (.54) turnover intention. Job engagement was also negatively associated (-.52) with turnover intention but failed the test as mediator.

Although it's widely proofed and acknowledged that high workload will decrease WLB (it takes up time, energy and involvement that employees can devote into personal lives) and the unsatisfied WLB will further lead to job and life dissatisfaction (Virick, Lilly, and Casper 2007). Some researches failed to find work-life imbalance have a significant influence on turnover. (Pradana and Salehudin 2013) confirmed that high workload will strongly decrease (.75) satisfaction of WLB, however, they failed to support that unsatisfied WLB will lead to higher turnover intention. In contrast, workload could affect both job satisfaction and work stress which in turn influence turnover intention. The authors explained that the insignificant WLB-turnover relationship could be attributed to the fact that majority of respondents (newly hired public accountants) was unmarried. Besides, it can be argued and indirectly proofed that for newly graduates and employees at their early career stages, turnover intention is less sensitive to the feeling of work-life imbalance (Finegold et al. 2002; Sturges and Guest 2004). Firstly,

they are mostly unmarried and with least family responsibilities, thus less likely to be troubled by work-family conflicts and the only conflict can occur should be their personal interests, leisure, community etc. Secondly, there is a pervasive belief that one should devote long working hours and great effort at his/her work in order to pave the way towards career success (especially at early stage), thus many employees will be willing to sacrifice their personal lives for the expectancy of future prospects. Thirdly, as the research of (Sturges and Guest 2004) underscored, despite many newly graduated employees reported high importance of achieving WLB, their behaviors were not consistent (increasing long hours worked beyond standard and workload). They believed that such work pattern will last only a period and they will get rewards (career success) after the short-term tolerance. However, as time passed, they realized that they can't take such pattern forever and started to blame the organization for not keeping the psychological contract, till then, many started to be more sensitive to the work-life imbalance.

It's worthy to notice that although the above discussed mindset of young employees at early career stage seems up to their own choices (tolerant for success), it should cause us to re-evaluate the contemporary workplace environment. As demonstrated in section 1.3.3, individual choices are constrained. The assumption of "ideal worker" and "gendered labor division" force employees to put work beyond personal lives and endure the norms of long and unsocial working hours. Vicious competition is nurtured under such background, marginalizing those challengers (elder workers, female workers and those who have high family identity etc.). In order to gain insights of how fulfillment of WLB can retain talent, some studies focused on the availability of WLB-supportive practices/policies and culture (managerial support, perceived negative consequences of using work-family benefit measures and organizational time expectations that require employees to sacrifice their family lives) within organization. (Egarra-Leiva, Vidal, and Cegarra 2012) found a rather strong significant (.388) relationship between WLB-supportive culture with job satisfaction which in turn significantly reduced (-.554) turnover intention among 149 managers of 110 SMEs in Spain (a country of disadvantage in terms of national WLB-supportive compared to other EU countries). In contrast, WLB-supportive practices didn't exert significant effect on higher job satisfaction. This result was consistent with many previous similar researches as they all underscored that merely existence of work-life friendly practices and/or policies were not effective to improve

employees' job attitudes and thus reduced turnover. If the usage of these measures was not encouraged by the organization and/or supervisors, and in many cases would even be penalized (be undervalued, lost promotion or current status due to violation of the "ideal worker" assumption), these policies and initiatives would become a stack of dead letters.

2.3.4 Conclusion

While the work-family conflict had remained the foci and been proofed to be consistently and positively related to turnover intention, work-family enrichment was also shown to be effective in reducing turnover intention. It's therefore suggested that the distinct but more inclusive and holistic concept of WLB can also exert influence on individual intent to quit. Indeed, it had been supported by empirical researches that work-life imbalance will lead to low desirability to stay (low job satisfaction, engagement) and increase turnover intention. Besides, continuance commitment is found to moderate such relationship (also job satisfaction-turnover relationship in section 2.2.2). It's therefore suggested that the ease of movement will hinder the translation from individual perception of imbalance and dissatisfaction to stronger turnover intent. Unfortunately, some issues and concerns showed up and need to be noticed.

Firstly, the ambiguous definition and inconsistent operationalizations of WLB remain a key issue. The absence of a strong theoretical understanding of WLB and reliable measurements can lead to possible inflation of results. That is, because the results of work-family interface were fair robust, when some researches broadly equaled work-family conflict to WLB in measurement, they will conclude that WLB exert significant effect while such results didn't reflect the true and whole picture. It's therefore critical to clearly define the concept and adopt consistent measurement.

Secondly, it can be observed that whether turnover intention is sensitive to low WLB or not is closely related to the nature of the sample being studied. Most of the researches initiated with the aim of reducing turnover rate in some specific industries (nursing, IT professionals, accounting, managers, hotels, manufacturing workers etc.) where exist concerns of high turnover rate (mostly due to demanding and intensive work environment) or the cost of low retention is expensive (training, valuable human capital). Positively, the predictions were always supported by empirical results in these contexts probably because WLB is more of an

issue to worry about. Moreover, when the respondents were young employees (especially at early career stage) and work within a highly competitive industry, the results were in many cases not supported (not significant relationship). As discussed in section 2.3.3, it can be attributed to the mindset of tolerance for future career success and/or low perceived of movement. Nevertheless, all those observations suggested the need to look beyond the bivariate relationship of WLB-turnover and pay attention to the individual and contextual differences (industry, culture, economic). That is, to discover potential moderators which can alter individual perception and evaluation of WLB and thus the sensitivity of its relationship with intent to quit.

At last but not at least, the literature had underscored the existence of mediation effect of proximal antecedents, namely, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, burnout and engagement. Particularly, it's consistently proofed that exhaustion and burnout always served as the mediator in the WFC-turnover intention relationship. Additionally, as introduced in section 2.1 and section 1.3.3, many scholars had acknowledged that even when WLB becomes a concern to employees, they are not necessarily able or willing to quit. Instead, they can hold negative job attitudes and conduct other unfavorable withdrawal behaviors (absenteeism, low performance, passive attitude etc.). As a result, it's also worthy to test if the WLB-turnover relationship is through other proximal variables and if intent to quit is sensitive to these proximal variables.

Chapter three - The proposed model

In order to investigate into the research questions presented in the introduction, a model subject to empirical test and the corresponding hypotheses will be reasoned and proposed in this chapter.

As discussed in section 2.2.1, it's argued that the adoption of actual behavior as dependent variable is associated with the risk of being too inclusive and inaccurate. The turnover intention, however, though is not without limitation, is widely acknowledged as the best and immediate precursor of the actual behavior. Therefore, in this study, turnover intention will be adopted as the dependent variable instead of the actual behavior of quitting.

3.1 WLB, engagement and turnover intention

3.1.1 The effect of WLB on turnover intention

As discussed in chapter one, globally, WLB is widely perceived as a critical factor for employees to choose jobs and evaluate their career success. Despite the overall positive work-life fit reported, work-life conflicts is shown to be a pervasive issue across countries. With the progress of globalization, advance in information technology and dominance of the model of capitalism, the contemporary workplace is increasing demanding and intensive. Many employees, particularly those of dual-earners or single-parent households, are facing and will be facing much greater challenges in balancing their work-life as they prefer and expect.

In addition of becoming a common and significant public concern, it' confirmed by tones of researches that there are various unfavorable consequences associated with work-life imbalance, such as impaired family relationship, mental and physical health issues, lower job performance and satisfaction etc. It's therefore intuitive to expect that employees who have troubles in reconciling their work-life, especially when work is the source of troubles, will tend to leave their organization and fulfill their needs elsewhere.

Employees with high WLB are defined as those who are able to accomplish both commitments at work and in other aspects of life (paid and unpaid care work, self-development,

own hobbies, leisure activities, serve community etc.) to the desired level. This desired level associated with different commitments varies across individuals and situations. Based on the basic turnover theory proposed by March and Simon, high WLB as a facet of the overall evaluation of current job can reduce turnover intention because it lowers the “desirability to move”. In contrast, when employees are not able to accomplish different commitments across roles as they expected, they will feel disappointed and unsatisfied, which will further shape a negative job attitude and prompt intent to quit.

In section 2.3, numerous empirical researches had demonstrated that work-family conflicts can significantly increase emotional exhaustion (and burnout), decrease job satisfaction and prompt turnover intention. Moreover, work-family enrichment is also proved to be consistently and inversely associated with turnover intention. These results suggested that WLB as a holistic concept that cover both conflicts and enrichments will exert effect of reducing turnover intention. In addition, among the limited researches focused on the WLB-turnover intention relationship, this suggestion had already been tested and confirmed. Although it’s arguable that the operationalizations of WLB among these similar researches were rather inconsistent, at least, they indicated that the relationship of interest is not groundless.

In conclusion, WLB serves as a critical factor for employees to evaluate their jobs and companies. Employees with high level of WLB are less likely to have turnover intention. As a result, for organizations, providing WLB-friendly measures and fostering supportive culture should be effective in terms of attracting and retaining talents. That is, the first proposed hypothesis is as follow:

H1: WLB has significant inverse relationship with turnover intention

3.1.2 The mediating role of engagement

As demonstrated in section 2.3.1, work-family conflicts was found to play an important role as stressor in generating work and life stress which can lead to negative job attitudes and prompt intent to quit. Based on the combination of the role theory and the conservation of resources (COR) theory, when fulfilling commitments of one domain (work for example) interferes those in another domain (childcaring), conflict occurs, as both activities require the same resources (time, energy, psychological involvement etc.). With such conflict, employees

are required to reconcile demands in both domains, but within a competitive workplace environment, there are strong potential losses of resources like job status, high income, promotion opportunities if they continue to be distracted by commitments in the other domain. The concern of such potential loss of resources will lead to negative “state of being” such as dissatisfaction, depression, anxiety and so on. If such state goes on and behaviors like negotiate flexible schedule or changing job are not performed (maybe due to high cost of leaving or absence of alternatives) to replace or protect the threatened resources, as resources depleted, burnout also ensues. These theories were supported by numerous empirical researches which underscored that when there is high work-life conflict, employees will experience higher job stress and quitting serves as a coping behavior to eliminate the resources (especially energy and positive affects) drained. Empirically, burnout (or exhaustion) had been confirmed being able to mediate the relationship between work-family conflict and turnover intention.

Unfortunately, quitting is always associated with great costs, particularly when the overall economic condition is not active and/or there are strong links and sacrifice (as described in the job embeddedness theory). Whether employees quit or not, the state of burnout and high stress (from work or life) are serious concerns for both employees themselves and the organizations. Not to mention the contagious feature of these negative affect, those who are burnt out but still choose to stay are very likely not able to perform well both at work and at home. As (Mobley 1977) highlighted, quitting is just one of the many potential responses to dissatisfaction, other passive withdrawal behaviors like absenteeism, passive job behaviors, avoid contribution, poor performance (especially critical for human services business) were also possible.

All these potential consequences discussed above reminded us not to ignore the so called “reluctant stayers” and the potential mechanism between the WLB-turnover intention relationship. It’s nature to expect similar pattern in the researches on WLB (given the close link between WLB and work-family conflict), that is, the effect of WLB on turnover intention is probably mediated through other proximal antecedents. Burnout can be a potential “candidate” but it’s more relevant in the work-family conflict researches and can be grounded in the COR theory. As discussed in section 2.2.2, engagement is the positive side of burnout and they are two independent and moderately negative associated constructs. Engaged employees are defined as those who are energetic even in face of difficulties, highly involved in and deeply

concentrated on their work. Because it's a favorable state preferred by both employees and employers and inversely correlates with burnout, it's intuitive and meaningful to test whether engagement can serve as a mediator between WLB and turnover intention.

Several empirical researches had supported the positive relationship between WLB and engagement (Alvi, Cheema, and Haneef 2014; Jaharuddin and Zainol 2019). Besides, as presented in section 2.2.2, engagement is also a critical proximal antecedent of turnover intention. In conclusion, the following three hypotheses are proposed:

H2a: WLB has significant positive relationship with work engagement

H2b: work engagement has significant inverse relationship with turnover intention

H2c: work engagement mediates the effect of WLB on turnover intention

3.1.3 The conceptual model

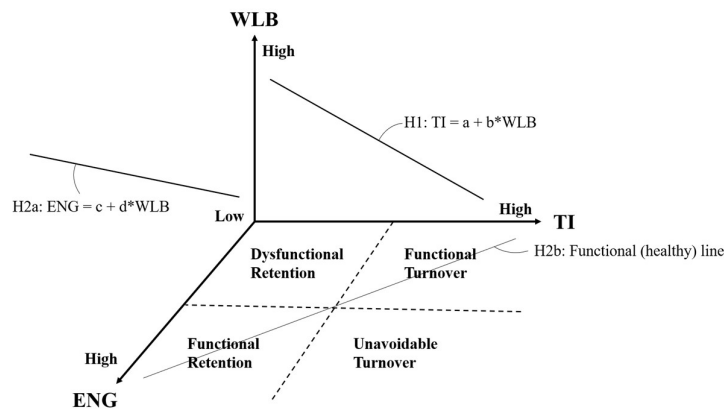
Based on the basic hypotheses proposed above, as shown in figure 3.1, it can be predicted that as WLB increases, engagement will increase (Hypothesis 2a) and turnover intention will decrease (Hypothesis 1). The functional (healthy) line represents the relationship predicted by the hypothesis 2b.

The combination of the two dimensions (turnover intention and engagement) with their two extreme values (low and high) generates four groups that can be discerned. The first group is the "Functional Retention" where with high WLB, employees are highly engaged as well as have low intent to quit. This is the most desirable and productive scenario for both employees and employers. The second group is the "Functional Turnover" where with low WLB, the unengaged employees have strong intent to quit. In this scenario, unsatisfied employees response to negative affect by considering turnover and are likely to find a better workplace elsewhere. As for the organization, since those employees can't fulfill their WLB need and have low engagement (always associated with lower job performance and negative attitudes), their leaving is also considered functional. The third group is the "Unavoidable Turnover" where even employees have high WLB and engagement, they still have strong intent to quit. Such scenario might occur when other aspects of job (compensation, supervisor relation etc.) other than WLB be the main source of dissatisfaction and reason to quit. Also, it can due to the script-driven and shock-driven quitting. No matter which is the reason, it's not within the control of

the organization and/or not the foci in this study. The last group and also the most problematic group is the “Dysfunctional Retention” where employees with low WLB and low engagement still have low intent to quit. Compared to the “Functional Turnover” group, this group is considered dysfunctional (unhealthy). Under this scenario, employees are not able to reconcile their WLB as they expected and as a consequence less engaged in their work (probably also under high stress or even burnout state). But due to some reasons (absence of comparable alternatives, loss of seniority and high income, strong links with co-workers etc.), they end up with weak intention to quit. In the middle to long run, if no other coping behaviors are performed, this state of being can cause great damage to their life satisfaction, job performance, family relationship and physical health condition.

In conclusion, the functional (healthy) line is preferred and also the predicted one based on the hypotheses proposed above. As mentioned before this chapter, in some cases, this prediction doesn’t hold and suggested us to seek and test potential moderating effects. These “out-of-line” situations will be explored in the next section.

Figure 3.1 The basic conceptual model



3.2 Individual level moderators: the source of pressures

In chapter one, changes and challenges from contemporary workplaces and household structure had been demonstrated. Two specific groups of employees are set as examples to elucidate the claim of constrained choices. According to the planned behavior theory (Ajzen 1991), as shown in figure 3.2, the intention to perform one behavior is shaped simultaneously by attitude, normative norms and perceived behavioral control. Thus, even with high WLB and engagement, if employees have very limited control over the behavior of quitting, the intention

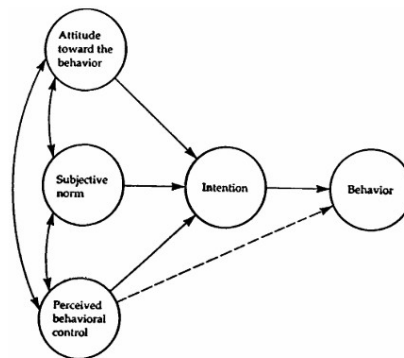
will be weakened.

As introduced in section 2.1, based on the basic turnover theory proposed by March and Simon, decrease in “ease of movement” can hinder turnover and even offset the stimulating effect of “desirability to move”. Even though “ease of movement” was always narrowly seen as perceived alternatives, its coverage is much broader. As summarized by (Hom et al. 2012) and shown in Appendix 3.1, there are many forces that can weaken individual intent to quit by making the behavior of leaving costly and difficult to perform.

Combining the contemporary working and social environment discussed in section 1.3 with the empirical review conducted in section 2.2.3, there are at least two main sources of pressure (from family and workplace) that are expected to prompt a low perception of behavioral control (or ease of movement) and weaken the relationship between WLB (and engagement) and turnover intention.

Figure 3.2 The conceptual model of the planned behavior theory

Source: (Ajzen 1991)



3.2.1 Pressures from family

Along with the increasing number of single-parents and dual-earners household, exacerbated by the aging issue, contemporary employees are facing more pressures from family. Especially for the so called “sandwich generation”, heavy burden of caring both children and parents combines with the job responsibilities on shoulder (mostly middle-age employees, so many of them have a certain seniority at work) can create great mental and physical health issue.

On one hand, compared with the newly graduated employees who are still at their early stage of career, employees with family responsibilities are expected to be more sensitive to WLB. That is, a high WLB should worth more because of the greater challenges for them in

reconciling work/life. As discussed in section 2.3.3, employees at early career stage tend to endure more unfavorable WLB condition in order to pursue the future success.

On the other hand, because of heavier family responsibilities, the perceived behavioral (quitting in this case) control will be limited and so is the “ease of movement”. Not like single and young employees, employees with heavy family responsibilities are not able to make quitting decision up to their own interest, often, they need to consider also many other potential consequences on their family members. For instance, a middle-age male employee with a spouse employed in full-time job when have low WLB and engagement, will initially evaluate the possibility of leaving for a less demanding job. However, there are some concerns come to his mind, (1) his children are still at school age, how the job changing will influence on their education (potential location change, lower income, loss of good school etc.); (2) how his job changing will influence the employment of his wife (potential conflict caused by new schedule and income); (3) potential failure in finding a comparable alternative (he probably has achieved a certain seniority in current organization and potential perks that are difficult to give up); (4) how the potential lower income can affect the living standard of the family. Besides the above family related concerns, the loss of the established links at work (relationship with co-workers, clients, teams etc.) can also make him think twice. Empirically, as discussed in section 2.2.3, family responsibilities have rather robust inverse relationship with turnover intention.

There are few points that are worth mentioning. Firstly, although it’s generally expected that heavy family responsibilities can attenuate the relationship between WLB (engagement) and turnover intention relationship (less likely to have strong intent to quit even with low WLB and engagement). It’s important to point out that family can serve as a critical source of resources (mutual support of housework and unpaid care work, sharing of costs, buffering temporary unemployment etc.). Secondly, because the solid assumption of gendered labor division is still predominant and pervasive, under economic crisis and in face of heavy family responsibilities, female employees are much more likely to be the one within the family who need to quit their job and perform the domestic works. At best, involved in part-time jobs which are often with less quality. Thirdly, the coverage of the term “family” is broader than the immediate family members, it includes also the extended family members and other relatives (and/or care recipients) who require regular support.

To include, two hypotheses can be proposed as follow,

H3a: family responsibility attenuates the WLB-turnover intention relationship

H3b: family responsibility attenuates the engagement-turnover intention relationship

3.2.2 Pressures from workplace

Along with the progress in globalization and advance in informational technology, the workplace is getting much more intensive and demanding. As argued in section 1.3.1, long working hours and mindset of “presenteeism” have become pervasive and even accepted as norm in many countries. Contemporary employees, regardless of gender, age, household composition, are all subjective to the overall increasing competitive working environment. It’s beneficial to have competition which forces companies to improve efficiency over time and employees to perform life-long learning. However, in many cases, the competition is vicious. Companies tend to pursue profit by downsizing, cutting wages and promoting the “ideal worker” assumption which require employees to put work at their primary priority to show commitment and penalize employees who challenge it. Such practice not only hinders the real improvement of efficiency (neat process, highly engaged and motivated employees etc.) but also fosters the presence of “Dysfunctional Retention”. However, even when employees don’t want to handle the excessive demands from work anymore, it’s intuitive to expect that the lower they perceive employability (which was a self-assessed result after combining the external market information and self-evaluated competency), the less likely they will have strong intent to quit because they will face more difficulty in finding comparable alternatives and face higher job insecurity being relatively easy to be replaced.

In terms of theoretical support, low perceived employability indicates low perceived behavioral control as well as low “ease of movement”, which consequently undermines the intent to quit. In terms of empirical support, as presented in section 2.2.2, perceived alternatives was confirmed to have consistent positive relationship with turnover intention. Also, it’s found that the job satisfaction-turnover relationship was strengthened as unemployment rates decreased. To include, a hypothesis can be proposed as follow,

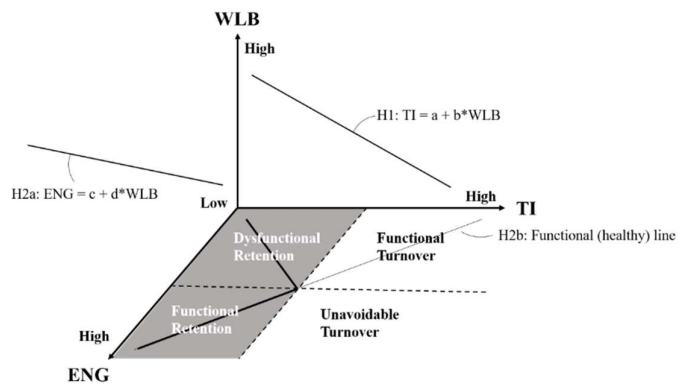
H4a: perceived employability attenuates the WLB-turnover intention relationship

H4b: perceived employability attenuates the work engagement-turnover intention relationship

3.2.3 Implication for the conceptual model

As shown in figure 3.3, with the influences of heavy family responsibilities and low perceived employability, the WLB-engagement relationship remains unchanged (H2a). However, the functional (healthy) line has changed and restricted within the dark area. That is, as the level of WLB moves from low to high, the corresponding result will change from “Functional Turnover” to “Dysfunctional Retention”. With high WLB and high engagement, employees have also low intent to quit as before. But even with low WLB and consequently low engagement, the intent to quit remains low due to lower “ease of movement” and perceived behavioral control.

Figure 3.3 The conceptual model with individual-level moderating effects



3.3 Country level moderators: the contextual effects

3.3.1 Cultural dimensions

The term “culture” refers to the shared values, beliefs and behaviors which are enough discernible to differentiate different collectives, which can be nations, organizations, ethnic groups and so on. (Hofstede 2011) defined it as “the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from others”. And the global leadership and organizational behavior effectiveness (thereafter GLOBE) project adopts a more detailed definition “Shared motives, values, beliefs, identities, and interpretations or meanings of significant events that result from common experiences of members of collectives that are transmitted across generations.” As (Hofstede 2011) underlined that comparing to occupational

cultures, societal, national and gender cultures are deeply rooted in the our mind because they are acquired by us since child. They often unconsciously reside in values as a broad sense of tendencies to prefer certain states over others. Members within a certain collective are embedded inside a web of norms and pressures which guides and sometimes forces them to think, evaluate and behave in certain ways. Employees around the world, even work in multinational firms, when facing the same level of WLB (satisfied or not), their responses (job satisfaction, commitment and quitting etc.) and the process of how they make their decisions are largely and imperceptibly influenced by the deeply rooted set of values and principles shaped by their culture background. Therefore, it's important and necessary to take the cultural factors into account when investigating into the WLB-turnover intention relationship.

There are two ways, based on the basic concepts proposed by March and Simon, through which national culture is expected to exert its influence on the relationship of interest.

The first way is when employees from a culture background which collectively doesn't emphasis great importance on reconciliating a balance between work and life domains (or value work over other aspects of life), they might value more other properties like career success, material richness and social status etc. (many times driven by social comparison) so that employees who work long hours and intensively will interpret such pattern as a norm and a behavior worth praising (hardworking is what a young employee or man need to do in order to earn future success). In this case, leisure will be undervalued as a kind of wasting time that one should use free time to study (develop skills and knowledge). For those who are not intrinsically motivated, following the common preferred practices is also necessary for them to keep their position in firms when others are all highly involved (case like mindset of presenteeism and vicious competition). In this scenario, the WLB-turnover intention relationship tends to be small or even flat since employees under the culture don't value WLB as one of the important criteria for them to evaluate jobs (doesn't affect the "desirability to move") and make turnover decisions.

The second way is when the culture does value a lot WLB (especially family lives) over the work-related aspects and emphasis on a high quality of life and interpersonal relationship. Employees in this culture tend to establish close links with both people from work (co-workers, supervisors, clients) and life (friends, family, communities). Also, they always hold great sense of responsibility towards these people and make decisions taking them into account (whether

there will be potential influence on them). In this scenario, when in face of work-life imbalance, employees will not necessary just decide to quit as expected (like FWC). In contrast, because of the greater on-the-job and off-the-job embeddedness they have established, the cost of leaving will also be higher. Besides, because of their high sense of responsibilities towards others (especially family), their turnover decisions should depend also on whether there will be some consequences associated with those they care. For instance, discontinuity financial support for the household and education demands of the children. In this scenario, the WLB-turnover intention relationship is expected to be attenuated due to the lower “ease of movement”.

Empirically, as discussed in section 2.3.1, some culture dimension (like individualism-collectivism and gender egalitarianism) had been studied in numerous researches and found (explicitly or implicitly) to exert a consistent and significant effect on individual work-life experience (Spector et al. 2007; Wang et al. 2004; Yang et al. 2012). However, most of the theories and findings were based on the western contexts, followed by some Asian countries. In addition, the related researches (about turnover) were mainly focused on the work-family conflict, the influence of national culture on the relationship of WLB-turnover intention is underdeveloped. There are, therefore numerous calls for conducting more cross-cultural study and exploring more country-level factors regarding this topic (Ollier-Malaterre et al. 2013; Spector et al. 2007).

There are many culture dimensions developed among which the Hofstede’s six traditional dimensions and the nine dimensions by the Globe project are the two most widely adopted. (Powell, Francesco, and Ling 2009) proposed four dimensions (individualism/collectivism, gender egalitarianism, humane orientation and specificity/diffusion) to illustrate their influence on individual experience of WFC and FWC. Based on the review and comparison of the Hofstede’s and GLOBE’s models, four dimensions of the GLOBE’s model (theory driven project and international data base) were chosen. They are speculated to be highly related to the relationship of interest and many of them had not been studied yet (to my best acknowledge).

(1) In-group collectivism

The dimension “In-Group Collectivism” was proposed together with the “institutional collectivism” as two separated constructs. Adopting a convergent validity test, it’s found that the “In-Group Collectivism” social practice (as is) construct is significantly and negatively (-

0.82) related to the Hofstede original “Individualism” dimension (Hadwick 2011). According to the GLOBE, In-Group Collectivism is defined as “the degree to which individuals express (and should express) pride, loyalty, and cohesiveness in their organizations or families.”. Countries with high In-Group Collectivism, people make a strong distinction between in-group individuals and out-of-group individuals. Towards those who are in the same group (family, organizations), they hold strong sense of responsibilities and loyalty, they share the honor and disgrace and are willing to sacrifice their own interest and goal for the benefit of the members in the group. In-Group Collectivism is speculated to attenuate the relationship of interest and such speculation can be explained by the two paths discussed above based on the two critical concepts proposed by March and Simon.

On one hand, employees from culture background with high In-Group Collectivism tend to have lower “desirability to move” when facing low WLB. That is, they are more likely to evaluate their jobs mainly based on other aspects than the accomplishment in WLB. This can be attributed to the mindset that career development paths and decisions are closely associated with the needs and expectations of the other group members. As a result, one can sacrifice their own interest, personal time in order to provide members in the group with material supports, honors (“face”). The behaviors of overtime and unsocial working, excessive involvement in work are more likely to be supported and resulting higher income and enhanced “face” will be shared and appreciated by the members in group. In contrast, employees in countries with low In-Group Collectivism tend to clearly separate their work and personal life and their career developments are totally up to their own interest and benefit. The regular overtime working will not be supported by other group members (spouse and children might compliant) and resulted in great conflicts which leads to more negative job attitudes and higher turnover intention.

On the other hand, employees from culture background with high In-Group Collectivism tend to have lower “ease of movement” even when they value accomplishment in WLB but have failed to achieve a satisfactory level of WLB. This can be attributed to the mindset that one should consider the potential consequences for the larger collective when they make their careers decisions. People tend to prioritize common goals over personal needs, otherwise, they will be criticized to be selfish. Therefore, the process of turnover decision will be hindered by many factors other than own evaluation of current jobs and in order to pertain a good position

which provides good “face” and financial support to other members, one should endure the imbalance of work-life even when they value its accomplishment.

To sum up, the first hypothesis about cultural influence is proposed as follow:

H5a. high In-Group Collectivism attenuates the WLB-turnover intention relationship

(2) Performance orientation

The “performance orientation” dimension is defined as “The degree to which a collective encourages and rewards (and should encourage and reward) group members for performance improvement and excellence.” (GLOBE website). Under such culture background, employees are expected to value materialism (wealth), competitiveness and career success (job position, excellent job performance, social status) over quality of life and interpersonal relationship. As a result, low WLB will be considered as a critical factor for employees to make their turnover decisions, instead, they are more likely to change jobs based on compensation, reputation of the organization and associated appealing characteristics of jobs (challenging, higher autonomy, excellent co-workers). Since child, employees in countries with high performance orientation were taught to keep improving, set high standard and were rewarded only by performance (much less on consequences of interpersonal relations and fairness), as a result, invasiveness of work and long working hours are more likely to be appreciated and encouraged in order to achieve better performance. Low WLB in this culture is less important and thus more endurable. That is, “desirability to move” is less influenced by the level of WLB, as such, the second hypothesis is proposed as follow:

H5b. high performance orientation attenuates the WLB-turnover intention relationship

(3) Humane orientation

The dimension “humane orientation” is defined as “the degree to which a collective encourages and rewards (and should encourage and reward) individuals for being fair, altruistic, generous, caring, and kind to others.” (GLOBE website). People in countries with high humane orientation, in contrast of those with high performance orientation, emphasis and promote the quality of life, fairness and they care about wellbeing of others. They have a strong sense of affiliation, not like those with high in-group collectivism, they not only concern about people that are closely related to them, they also care for generally other people such that their motivation of caring is not to protect and satisfy for those they love but because that they

intrinsically value people's wellbeing and respect others' feelings. As a result, it's speculated that employees in countries with high humane orientation tend to consider WLB as a critical factor to evaluate their career success and total quality of life, that is, low WLB will strongly leads to less job satisfaction and commitment (especially affective, not in line with personal values). These higher "desirability to move" will in turn increase turnover intention.

It's acknowledged that under culture with high humane orientation, people also tend to have higher on-the-job embeddedness (with co-workers, supervisors, teams) and off-the-job embeddedness (friends, community) which will decrease the "ease of movement" since they value affiliation, however, low WLB will also undermine the wellbeing of their colleague within the same organization (they also work intensively and long hours) and impair relationship with family members, friends, communities (less time and involvement), because the damage is over the sacrifice of links established (besides, they can still contact after changing jobs) and not in line with their general goals, it's argued that high humane orientation will still facilitate the relationship of interest. As such, the third hypothesis is as follow:

H5c. high humane orientation strengthens the WLB-turnover intention relationship

(4) Future orientation

The dimension "future orientation" is defined as "the extent to which individuals engage (and should engage) in future-oriented behaviors such as planning, investing in the future, and delaying gratification." (GLOBE website). People in countries with high future orientation view materialistic success and spiritual fulfillment as an integrated whole and have a propensity to save for the future while low future orientation view material and spiritual gaining as tradeoff and place more priorities on instant rewards (House et al. 2004). Therefore, it's speculated that employees in countries scored high in future orientation will focus more on the work-life integration (both material and spiritual gains) and consider also their long-term wellbeing (health, family relationship) when making turnover decision. That is, they might be more sensitive to the WLB accomplishment and value more a sustainable way of working. Therefore, the fourth hypothesis is as follow:

H5d. high future orientation strengthens the WLB-turnover intention relationship

3.3.2 Economic dimensions

As discussed in section 1.3.1, the progress in globalization and the predominant model of capitalism leads to a more demanding and intensive workplace where the 24/7 economy becomes pervasive, competition is increasingly fierce and work-first mindset is fostered. With the fast pace of changes and economic growth, employees face more challenges in reconciling their work-life while pursuing their career success. In many cases, the level of challenge lost its functional effect and engendered great work stress for employees. Besides, the fast pace of changes also influences individual lives outside work, since costs of living can increase alongside with economic growth (especially with the process of urbanization) and materialism can be stimulated. On the contrary, when the economy is stagnant, WLB will become a luxury. Employers are reluctant to provide work-family supports during an economic recession and employees tend to sacrifice WLB for higher job security.

It's therefore meaningful to take the national economic conditions into account when study the relationship of interest. On one hand, prosperous and fast economic growth will lead to higher competition among firms which will translate more demanding workplace to employees. This might exacerbate work-life conflicts (probably more work-to-family conflicts) which can lead to poor work-life fit and great job stress and increases the "desirability to move". Besides, such active economy environment always associates with more opportunities and high availability of alternative jobs, thus this higher "ease of movement" can further support decision of leaving due to poor WLB (higher perceived behavior control). On the other hand, low economy activeness will make WLB become less important (at least not the primary need) comparing with job security and financial needs, thus the relationship of interest should be weakened. In sum, three hypotheses are proposed as follow:

H6a. fast economic growth strengthens the WLB-turnover intention relationship

H6a. high employment opportunity strengthens the WLB-turnover intention relationship

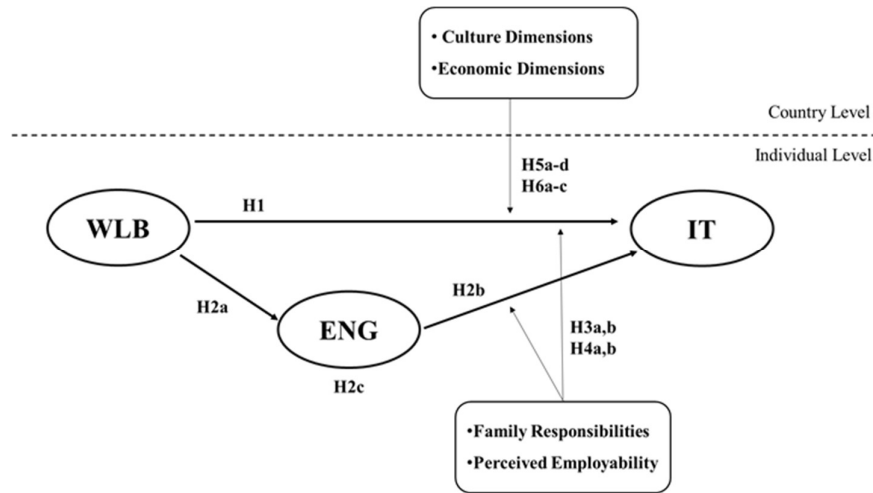
H6a. highly competitive market strengthens the WLB-turnover intention relationship

3.4 The summative empirical model

A summative empirical model is presented in the figure 3.4 below. To conclude, there are

two separated empirical tests that need be conducted at two levels: individual and country levels.

Figure 3.4 The summative empirical model



At individual level involves testing hypotheses from H1 to H4b. The results need to answer: (a) does WLB influences turnover intention? This is the main research question of interest; (b) does engagement serves as a mediator between the main relationship? (c) do family responsibilities and perceived employability moderate (a) and (b)?

At the country level, the results are expected to answer (a) can the proposed culture dimensions moderate the main relationship as predicted? and (b) what about economic dimensions?

In the next chapter, the measures, samples and methods adopted to test these hypotheses will be introduced firstly and then the results and implications will be discussed after.

Chapter four – Empirical Analysis

In order to test the hypotheses proposed in the previous chapter, two studies were conducted separately. The first study (study one thereafter) tests a single-level model by ordinary least square (OLS) estimation method in four selected countries. It involves the individual-level part of the proposed empirical model (hypotheses H1 to H4b) about the mediating role of work engagement and the moderating effects of perceived employability and family responsibility. The second study (study two thereafter) involves testing the cross-level moderating effects of the five culture and 3 economic dimensions (hypotheses H5a to H6c). Multi-level modeling is adopted to accommodate the nested nature of the data collected in the later study.

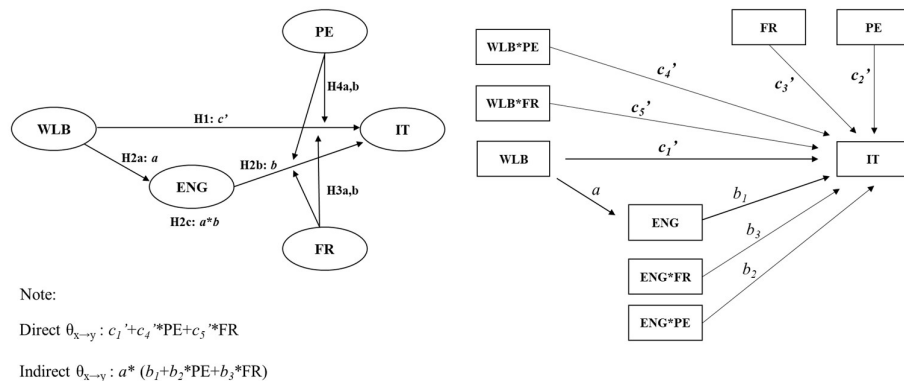
4.1 Methodology and research design

4.1.1 Study one: single-level cross-national comparison

4.1.1.1 Methodology

The individual part of the proposed empirical model is tested involves answering three main questions required to be answer: (a) does high WLB reduce turnover intention? (b) does work engagement explain this relationship? and (c) do the level of perceived employability and family responsibility moderate these relationships? In order to provide answers to these questions, the corresponding statistic model on the right-hand side in figure 4.1 below is estimated.

Figure 4.1 Conceptual and corresponding statistic model



In the language of mathematics, there are two equations (1 and 2) linked to the model presented above. Equation 1 is about testing whether WLB significantly influences work engagement. Only when this relationship holds, can work engagement serve as a mediator. That is, it's necessary to test first whether parameter a in equation 1 is statistically different from zero. Moreover, as proposed, it should be positive.

$$ENG = i_{ENG} + aWLB + \beta'X' + e_{ENG} \quad (1)$$

$$TI = i_{TI} + c_1'WLB + c_2'PE + c_3'FR + c_4'Int1 + c_5'Int2 + b_1ENG + b_2Int3 + b_3Int4 + \beta'X' + e_{TI} \quad (2)$$

Work engagement denoted by ENG, PE indicates perceived employment and FR indicates family responsibility. The i_{ENG} and i_{TI} are the two intercepts when the main predictors and control variables (X') equal to zero (or to their mean value while centered or standardized). The e_{ENG} and e_{TI} are the two error terms which are assumed to be mean zero, not correlated with predictors, independent and normally distributed.

The parameter a is the partial effect of WLB on work engagement and the mediation role of work engagement is tested by checking whether the indirect effect of WLB on turnover intention ($a*b_1$) when both PE and FR are at their mean value is significantly different from zero. The interaction terms in equation 2 are respectively: Int1(WLB*PE), Int2(WLB*FR), Int3(ENG*PE) and Int4 (ENG*FR). The parameter c_1' represents the effect of WLB on TI when all other predictors and controls are zero (or at mean value). The parameters c_4' and c_5' before interaction terms Int 1 and Int 2 represent the corresponding influence on the WLB-turnover intention relationship holding the ENG, controls and the other moderator (PE or FR) equal to zero (or mean value). The parameters b_2 and b_3 before interaction terms Int 3 and Int 4 represent the corresponding influence on the ENG-turnover intention relationship holding WLB, controls and the other moderator (PE or FR) equal to zero (or mean value).

The estimation of parameters adopted the ordinary least square (OLS) method and the significance will depend on the t-statistic against the normal distribution. The indirect effects are tested using bootstrap method with 5,000 samples. All variables are standardized before estimation in order to gain a better interpretation of parameters and to make comparison. In addition, because heteroscedasticity is detected in all samples, the heteroscedasticity-robust standard errors are adopted.

4.1.1.2 Countries selection

It's acknowledged that the same relationship might be different under different contexts (economy, political, culture etc.) and empirically similar researches did sometimes yield different even opposite results when conducted in different industries, countries and occupational groups. Therefore, it's interesting and meaningful to test the same model under different contexts, especially with the chance of accessing a globally collected dataset provided by the 5C group. In this study, the model discussed above will be tested and compared under 4 culturally and institutionally dissimilar countries (the USA, China, Norway and Greece). The selection of these four countries was based on comprehensive evaluation of several aspects of a country, (a) how hard it's to balance work-life; (b) how strong is the social protection and labor market flexibility; (c) how dynamic is the economy and ease of finding jobs; and (d) work mentality and culture. Extreme cases were chosen to reflect the effect of each these aspects.

It's intuitive to compare contexts where employees are used to work long working hours with those generally work less time and more regularly. Since the longer working hours and more unsocial schedule are always associated with intensive workplace and poor work-life fit, the influence of WLB accomplishment on intent to quit is expected to be more sensitive in such context (more of an issue). As discussed in section 1.2, the proportion of employees work over 48 hours a week is substantially higher in China (35%) than in the other three countries (11.1% in the USA, 6.4% in Greece and 2.9% in Norway). In terms of unsocial working schedule, 56% of employees reported involving weekend work in China, 40% in the USA and around 30% in the European countries. As a result, the USA and China are two countries that have considerably higher work-family conflicts reported, 52.5% in USA and 42.2% in China claimed to be too tired from work to fulfill duties at home. Strangely, the overall perceived importance of WLB is the second highest (96.8%) in the USA among all 31 countries but falls at the bottom in China (77.6%). As for WLB achievement is the highest in Norway (57.4%), followed by the USA (56.4%) and the lowest in China (37.1%).

In terms of social support, Norway (3.0%) has very high public expenditure of family benefits as percentage of GDP among the EU28 while Greece is near the bottom (1.1%). On one hand, even though with high reported work-family conflicts, the USA is short in social

public expenditure (only 0.64% of GDP). The similar situation occurs in China that the social support in terms of family and children benefits is weak, but employees work long hours and reported great work-life interference. On the other hand, Norway is characterized to be highly gender equality and with high quality of social support. As a part of Nordics group, the better overall work-life fit is shown to be mainly attributed to the shorter working hours and greater working conditions. As for the regulation of individual dismissals, the USA is characterized to be highly flexible and ease of moving (lower costs, risks and shorter time), its index of strictness employment protection is the lowest (0.26) among 43 countries provided with data. China has the third highest score (3.26) while Greece (2.80) and Norway (2.33) falls in between. The unemployment benefits as percentage of GDP is also the lowest in the USA (0.18) while Greece (0.43) and Norway (0.35) have substantially higher expenditure.

Considering the economic situation, both the USA and China have competitive market and prosperous economy, the GDP annual growth (average 2014-2016) is 2.3% in the USA and 6.98% in China while it's much lower in Norway (1.67%) and extremely low in Greece (0.0037). The unemployment rate is extremely high and abnormal in Greece (24.9%) which is the highest among the 31 countries. Also, in terms of the percentage of involuntary part-time workers on total employment (can't find full-time jobs) is significantly higher in Greece (6.5%) than in Norway (1.2%) and the USA (1.5).

Besides the institutional factors, differences in culture and work mentality also matter. Such difference will influence how employees in different countries evaluate and react to low WLB. The 4 countries selected cover 4 distinct cultural groups defined by the GLOBE (Anglo, Confucian Asia, Nordics and Eastern Europe). In terms of in-group collectivism dimension, the USA is characterized to be highly in-group individualist (rank 5th among the 31 countries), while China is a great representative of high in-group collectivist (rank 3rd after Turkey and India). In terms of performance orientation, the USA and China have the highest score while Greece is at the bottom. Regarding humane orientation, the USA and China are largely different from and on the opposite side of Greece (lower side). Also, USA has very high future orientation while China and Greece both scored lower than average. Even with long working hours, 42% employees in China reported that they prefer to work more and earn more (38% in the USA) while only 16% in Norway (probably due to better social protection). The great different in

work value partially explains the difference. The 2015 ISSP work-orientation data reveals that Chinese worker reported much higher interest in high income jobs and significantly lower attention to interesting jobs, they also much more likely to agree the statement that work is merely a way to earn money. On the other side, employees in Norway value considerably more interesting jobs and less high income, they reported significantly low agreement with the same statement. It's can be seen that the value regarding work/life centrality can vary considerably across countries, country values more life than work is expected to be more sensitive to the accomplishment in WLB, thus have stronger WLB-TI relationship.

To sum up, USA and China are more similar regarding high work-life conflicts, long working hours and unsocial schedule, high economic propensity and weak social support, but in terms of in-group collectivism dimension, they are two extremes. Besides, as a country with substantially free market regulation regarding dismissal, the USA can also reflect the influence of high ease of movement. China on the other hand is good example to study the influence of long working hours culture. Norway stands out to be the great representative of country with high quality of family and children benefits and good working conditions, thus it serves to be compared with other countries to reflect the effect of a good working conditions and social protection. Greece is characterized to be a country with unsatisfactory economy development and high unemployment issue, with considerably low work-life fit reported, it's expected to reflect the influence of high job insecurity.

4.1.2 Study two: multi-level modeling of cross-level interactions

4.1.2.1 Methodology

As proposed in the last chapter, it's interesting to directly test whether there exists moderating effect of some country-level factors on the relationship of interest. Moreover, even though there are some extant cross-cultural researches about WLB topic, but many of them tested through indirect methods like comparing results from different samples and dummy coding cultural groups. Ver few have tested directly the influences of country-level factors. It's therefore meaningful both empirically and practically to directly study such effects. Moreover, given the nested nature of the dataset collected (individuals nested inside 31 countries), there

will be dependence among the data (individuals within the same country are similar and are not independent) which violated one of the important assumptions under the OLS estimation, ignoring such features can still gain unbiased estimations, but OLS estimation will tend to underestimate the standard errors and thus leads to inflated t-statistic and higher Type I error rate. To account for this nested feature and directly test the country-level variables, the multi-level modeling with the Maximum Likelihood estimation method are adopted to gain a more accurate estimation (unbiased estimates of the standard errors).

In the language of mathematics, the equation estimated can be decomposed into two levels, level 1 indicates individual level and level 2 indicates country level. At the individual level, an equation estimated is shown below (equation 3),

$$TI_{ij} = \beta_{0j} + \beta_{1j}WLB_{ij} + \beta'_{pj}X_{ij}' + e_{ij} \quad (3)$$

Where the turnover intention of the i^{th} employees within the j^{th} country is denoted as T_{ij} and the WLB of the i^{th} employees within the j^{th} country is denoted as WLB_{ij} . The β_{0j} is the intercept (average turnover intention) of the j^{th} country holding WLB_{ij} and all other control variables (X_{ij}') at zero (or mean value when centered or standardized). The e_{ij} is the individual level (within country) residual remains unexplained and its variance (the within-country variance) is denoted as (σ^2). The β_{1j} is the parameter of interest, it is the partial effect of WLB on TI.

At the country level, equation 4 as shown below specifies the content (determinants) of each parameter estimated at level 1.

$$\begin{cases} \beta_{0j} = \gamma_{00} + \gamma_{01}W_j + u_{0j} \\ \beta_{1j} = \gamma_{10} + \gamma_{11}W_j + u_{1j} \\ \beta_{pj} = \gamma_{p0} \end{cases} \quad (4)$$

Where W_j indicates the level 2 predictor. The intercepts across countries β_{0j} are structured as the sum of the grand-mean intercept (γ_{00}), the part explained by W_j (γ_{01} is the effect of W_j on β_{0j}) and the between-country residual (u_{0j}) which represents the variation of β_{0j} remains unexplained. The variance of intercepts across countries (the between-country variance) is denoted as τ_{00} . Similarly, the partial effect of WLB on TI (β_{1j}) varies across countries and it's the sum of the grand-mean slope (γ_{10}), influence of W_j (γ_{11}) and the unexplained residual (u_{1j}). The variance of slopes across countries (the between-country slope variance) is denoted as τ_{10} . The effect of the p^{th} control variable on TI is assumed to be fixed at γ_{p0} and is the same across

countries.

Substituting equation 4 into 3, a combined equation can be obtained as below,

$$TI_{ij} = \gamma_{00} + \gamma_{01}W_j + u_{0j} + \gamma_{10}WLB_{ij} + \gamma_{11}W_j * WLB_{ij} + u_{1j}WLB_{ij} + \gamma'_{p0} X_{ij}' + e_{ij} \quad (5)$$

As shown in equation 5, the parameter of interest is γ_{11} , the partial effect of the cross-level interaction term ($W_{ij} * WLB_{ij}$) on TI. The estimation method is the restricted maximum likelihood (RMEL) and the inference is drawn on Wald test (Z statistic). To check the goodness of fit and to test the significance of the variance components, the likelihood ratio test is conducted by comparing the -2 loglikelihood (deviance in the tables). The deviances are provided by the FIML (full information likelihood procedure), whose Maximum Likelihood function includes both the regression coefficients and the variance components. Because good models result in a high likelihood of obtaining the observed results, a smaller value of the -2 loglikelihood is expected comparing the successive nested models. The significance of the reduction of deviance between the two models is tested against the chi-square distribution with degree of freedom equals to the difference in the number of parameters under estimation between the two nested models. Like in the OLS estimation, all residual terms (in this case, e_{ij} , u_{0j} and u_{1j}) are assumed to be mean zero, not correlated with predictors and each other, independent and normally distributed.

In order to gain estimations with better interpretation (make the zero-value meaningful for all the explanatory variables), all the predictors are centered. Specially, the WLB is group-mean centered because group-mean centering removes all between-cluster variation from the predictors and provides the “pure” estimation of the slope β_{ij} which can be unambiguously interpreted (Aguinis, Gottfredson, and Culpepper 2013; Enders and Tofighi 2007). The level 2 predictors and all the control variables are grand-mean centered.

4.1.2.2 Steps and corresponding models

There are in total five steps to follow in order to gain better understanding of the results. A null model (intercept-only) model (Model 1) is estimated at the first step to gain insight about how much variation in individual turnover intention lies between countries. It can be measured by the Intraclass correlation (ICC thereafter) which is calculated as $ICC = \tau_{00} / (\tau_{00} + \sigma^2)$. Because it qualifies the degree to which differences in TI exist between countries, a high ICC can

confirm the concern of the nested feature of the dataset and justify the use of Multilevel modeling. Further, a significant between-country variance (τ_{00}) indicates that the intercepts across countries do vary significantly and there are variations in TI needed to be explained by level 2 factors.

The second step is to enter the level 1 control variables (Model 2). Their effects are fixed (same across countries). Both τ_{00} , σ^2 and the deviance are expected to be reduced because more variation is explained. The main predictors of interest is entered at the third step (Model 3), the parameter β_{1j} is assumed to be fixed at this step, that is, it's equal to the grand mean slope (γ_{10}) and is the same across countries. The next step involves entering all the level 2 predictors (Model 4) and to check whether the variation in individual TI can be explained directly by the country-level factors. Then, in the Model 5 (without level 2 predictors if change in deviances of Model 4 is not significant), the slope β_{1j} is set to be random, thus it's assumed to be different across countries. If the slope variance τ_{10} is significantly different from zero (it can't be negative), then it can be concluded that the effect of WLB on TI does vary across countries and need to be explain.

If the Model 5 reveals that there exist significant differences in the slope β_{1j} across countries, the test of the cross-level interaction as proposed can be continued. The in total 8 (5 cultural and 3 economic) level 2 predictors and the corresponding interaction terms are entered in this last step (Model 6-13). If the parameter of interest γ_{11} is significant different from zero, that means the corresponding country-level factor does moderate the WLB-turnover intention relationship. The last check is to see whether the reduction of deviance is significant comparing the Model 6-13 to the Model 5 against the chi-square distribution with degree of freedom equal to 1.

4.2 Sample and Measurements

4.2.1 The sample

The individual-level data about all variables in the two studies is collected by the 5C research team (5C group thereafter) from 2014 to 2016. The 5C group is a multi-country, cross-cultural research project started in 2004, which builds on its earlier global qualitative study

about how individuals in different countries and culture clusters view career success. As the project develops, the data recently covers 31 countries (Argentina, Austria, Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, China, Colombia, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Greece, India, Italy, Ireland, Japan, Malawi, Mexico, Nigeria, Norway, Pakistan, Portugal, Russia, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Korea, Switzerland, Turkey, the United States, the UK) representing all 10 cultural groups defined by the GLOBE. The data was collected by its national representatives using a questionnaire translated and back-translated to the local languages. The project planned to collect 400 respondents who have at least 2 years of post-educational work experience for each country and evenly cover (100 each) all occupational categories (managers, professionals, clerical/service workers and skilled workers). Besides, some predetermined screening criteria are used to achieve heterogeneous within-country samples in terms of demographic characteristics. That is, each national sample has tripartite age distribution (under 30, 30-50 and over 50) close to equal and is gender balanced (Mayrhofer et al. 2016b; Smale et al. 2019).

The country-level data are from the GLOBE project and the word bank dataset. The scores of the 5 culture dimensions under study is provided by the second phase study conducted by the GLOBE in 2004. The data are missed in eight countries (Belgium, Estonia, Malawi, Norway, Pakistan, Serbia, Slovakia, and the UK) and filled with the average of all the other scores (the GLOBE provides scores for England but it's considered inappropriate to represent the whole UK). The data of economic dimensions (GDP growth and unemployment rate) are provided by the word bank dataset and there is no missing value. Consistent with the individual-level data (collected from 2014 to 2016), the figures from 2015 is chosen. One exception is the GDP growth data, due to the unstable development of some countries, the average of 2014-2016 annual growth rates are used to mitigate the effect of abnormal "shock". The competitiveness intensity is chosen from the 2015-2016 Global Talent Competitiveness Index report (GTCI), respondents were asked "how would you assess the intensity of competition in the local markets in your country?" choosing from 1 (limited in most industries) to 7(intense in most industries).

Consistent with the purpose of this study, the final sample excludes all individuals who are self-employed and unemployed at the time of the survey. Only employees age from 15 to 64 are included in the sample. In addition, missing data is excluded by pairwise deletion method. Because there are two studies conducted and within study one, a comparison among 4 selected

countries will be conducted, there are in total 5 samples studied. The description of all the 5 samples is presented in table 4.1 below.

For study one, the final sample size is 327 in the USA, 440 in China, 375 in Norway and 362 in Greece. The average age is 37.91, 35.53, 48.98 and 38.21 respectively. The gender distribution is more alike in the USA and China (male dominated) while in Norway and Greece, female participants are much more than men. Also, people in the later two countries have much longer tenure. It's worth noticing that in Norway, 89.9% of participants are in relationship and all of them have at least one child. In general, less participants are single and more of them have children. The distribution of education is relatively alike with more people with a bachelor degree, except for Norway where more people are under bachelor degree.

For study two, the final sample comprises 13,506 employees from 31 countries. The average age of the sample is 39.40 where majority of the participants age over 30 (73.4%). In terms of gender, the proportion of female employees is slightly (2%) higher than male. The vast majority (89%) of them are employed in full-time jobs and over-half (56.7) have tenure longer than 5 years. 72.3% of them are not single (married, cohabiting or in relationship) and 69.4% have at least one child. Also, 55.6% of them have at least a bachelor (or equivalent) degree of education.

Table 4.1 Demographical composition of samples (frequency %)

		study one (single-level)				study two
		USA	China	Norway	Greece	(31 countries)
age	15-20	1.8	1.8	0.0	0.0	0.6
	21-30	30.9	32.1	2.1	34.5	26.0
	31-40	30.6	37.9	15.2	27.1	29.8
	41-50	18.0	21.6	36.3	18.0	23.5
	51-64	18.7	6.6	46.4	20.4	20.1
gender	male	59.6	57.5	32.5	45.0	49.0
	female	40.4	42.5	67.5	55.0	51.0
employment status	fulltime	89.6	97.5	81.6	90.6	89.0
	part-time	10.4	2.5	18.4	9.4	11.0
tenure	0-5	58.4	53.6	28.5	37.0	43.3
	6-10	24.8	23.0	21.9	28.7	27.7
	11-20	13.1	17.3	26.9	18.3	17.3
	over 20	3.7	6.1	22.7	16.0	11.7
marital status	single	24.8	15.5	10.1	29.3	27.7
	in relationship	75.2	84.5	89.9	70.7	72.3
presence of child	yes	42.8	35.7	100.0	41.7	69.4
	no	57.2	64.3	0.0	58.3	30.6
education	lower	31.5	34.3	45.6	32.6	44.4
	bachelor	48.6	35.0	25.1	35.9	29.1
	higher	19.9	30.7	29.3	31.5	26.5
sample size		327	440	375	362	13,506

4.2.2 Measurement

As the proposed in the empirical model in chapter 3 shows, there are five main variables of interest, turnover intention (TI), WLB, work engagement (ENG), perceived employability (PE) and family responsibility (FR). The first four variables are all measured using established scales while the variable FR is structured combining four separated demographical dimensions.

The turnover intention (TI) is studied in both studies as the outcome variable. It's measured by the Michigan Organizational Assessment Questionnaire, a 3-item scale with 7-point Likert format ranges from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The three items are respectively: (a) I often think about quitting this organization; (b) I will probably look for a new job in the next year; and (c) I intend to change employer in the next year. A higher score indicates stronger intention to quit. As shown in table 4.3, the Cronbach's Alpha coefficients which measure the internal reliability are very confirmative across samples, ranging from 0.868 to 0.923.

The WLB is measured by a newly developed and culturally invariant scale (5-point Likert format) about subjective career success, capturing both the achievement and importance aspects. In this study, achievement aspect is adopted. There are 3 items related to the WLB as a part of career success, they are (a) having time for non-work interests; (b) achieving balance between work and non-work activities; and (c) achieving a satisfying balance between work and family life. Respondents were asked to report their degree of agreement to the statement "I have achieved a level I am happy with" respectively, choosing from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). A higher score indicates higher degree of WLB achievement. As shown in table 4.3, the internal reliability of this variable across samples is generally very high (Cronbach's Alpha coefficients from 0,800 to 0.883), except for in the sample of China, where it is quite low 0.618 but still acceptable.

The work engagement (ENG) is measured by the Utrecht work engagement scale (9-item version) covering three dimensions (vigor, dedication and absorption). It has a 6-point Likert format and respondents were asked to report from 1 (never) to 6 (always), indicating their degree of agreement with the 9 statements. The higher value indicates the higher work engagement. As shown in table 4.3, the internal reliability of this variable across samples is very confirm as the Cronbach's Alpha coefficients range from 0.918 to 0.952. The statements

are shown as below:

Table 4.2 Composition of the variable work engagement

Dimension	Statement
Vigor	1. At my work, I feel bursting with energy
	2. At my job, I feel strong and vigorous
	3. When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work
Dedication	1. I am enthusiastic about my job
	2. My job inspires me
	3. I am proud of the work I do
Absorption	1. I feel happy when I am working intensely
	2. I am immersed in my work
	3. I get carried away when I am working

The perceived employability (PE) is measured by a 3-item scale with 7-point Likert format. The respondents were asked to indicate to what extent they agree with the following statements: (a) I am confident that I would find another job if I started searching; (b) It will be difficult for me to find new employment when leaving the organization; and (c) In case I'm dismissed (or my business failed), I'll immediately find a job of equal value. From 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree), a higher score indicates a higher self-perceived employability (the second statement is inverse thus has been recoded before averaging). As shown in table 4.3, the internal reliability is quite good with the Cronbach's Alpha coefficients ranging from 0.734 to 0.832.

Table 4.3 Internal reliability analysis

Cronbach's Alpha coefficients		study one (single-level)				study two
	N of items	USA	China	Norway	Greece	(31 countries)
TI	3	0.900	0.868	0.923	0.905	0.919
WLB	3	0.883	0.618	0.835	0.806	0.800
ENG	9	0.930	0.952	0.918	0.937	-
PE	3	0.760	0.734	0.752	0.832	-
sample size		327	440	375	362	13,506

The family responsibility (FR) construct comprises four dimensions: marital status, partner employment status, children status and presence of other caring responsibilities. As shown in table 4.4, combining all the four dimensions, the score of FR can range from 0 to 6. The higher score represents heavier family responsibilities. Employees with the lowest score (0) are those who are single (unmarried, not in any relationship, separated or widowed) with no children and other caring responsibilities (for elders, friends, relatives, neighbors etc.). On the other extreme, employees with the highest score (6) are those who are in relationship (no matter married/

cohabiting or not) with a full-time employed partner and have at least one child under age 6 as well as other caring responsibilities. This variable covers a relative wide range of household types. For instance, single-parents family will have a score ranges from 1 to 3 depending on age of children and presence of other caring responsibilities. It's worth mentioning that a young graduate who is in relationship with a full-time employed partner will have score higher than a single mother of a child under age 6 ($3 > 2$), holding others the same. Although it's more intuitive to associate the latter case with heavier family burden, the rationale under this construction is that those who are in relationship need to make decisions taking the potential influences on their partner (and their relationship) into account, thus it assumes that such responsibility from partner is comparable (close to equal) to the child caring and /or other caring responsibilities (all limit individual career decision and requires time, energy, involvement etc.). Also, it's hard to specify which responsibility "causes more trouble" and thus not necessary to assign distinct weights to them.

Table 4.4 Composition of variable family responsibility

dimension	categories	score
marital status	single	0
	in relationship	1
partner employment status	unemployed or no partner	0
	part-time	1
	full-time	2
children status	no children	0
	at least one child but over age 6	1
	at least one child under age 6	2
other caring responsibilities	yes	0
	no	1

The control variables used in this study includes age, gender, employment status, tenure, number of employers changed, promotions received, hierarchical level, education, if in private sector, occupation and industry (same in both study one and two). They are included based on the literature review as summarized in section 2.2.3. Gender is dummy coded into female=1 and male=0; employment status dummy coded into full-time =1 and part-time=0; education is recoded into 2 dummies (3 categories: under bachelor, bachelor and master/doctor) with under bachelor being the base group; occupation is dummy coded into 1 if employees are manager or professional; private sector is coded as 1 with others as 0; industry is recoded into 1 if it's information, finance and insurance, professional, scientific, and technical services,

management of companies and enterprises and health care and social assistance.

4.3 Analysis results

4.3.1 Study one

4.3.1.1 Descriptive and preliminary analysis

The table 4.5 below presents the descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations and bivariate correlations) of the variables studied among the 4 selected countries in study one.

Table 4.5 Descriptive statistics: means, standard deviation (SD) and bivariate correlations among variables (study one)

USA (N= 327)	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
1. TI	3.56	2.00	1															
2. WLB	3.62	1.01	-.414**	1														
3. ENG	3.98	1.02	-.443**	.274**	1													
4. PE	5.27	1.32	.062	.098	.205**	1												
5. FR	2.78	1.61	-.020	.054	.046	-.111*	1											
6. age	37.91	11.75	-.180**	.168**	.183**	-.219**	.287**	1										
7. female	0.40	0.49	-.033	.035	.017	-.133*	.072	.121*	1									
8. fulltime	0.90	0.31	-.046	.002	.015	.054	-.052	.057	-.230**	1								
9. tenure	6.28	6.55	-.115*	.174**	.100	-.113*	.135*	.498**	.065	-.019	1							
10. employers changed	4.34	2.84	.047	-.047	.147**	.054	.112*	.312**	-.016	.094	-.064	1						
11. promotions	3.53	2.84	-.048	.072	.145**	.058	.125*	.300**	-.107	.155**	.219**	.142**	1					
12. hierarchical level	5.80	2.21	.023	-.067	-.155**	-.161**	-.052	-.108	.078	-.104	-.068	.057	-.233**	1				
13. education	1.88	0.71	.185**	-.115*	-.025	.067	-.001	-.087	-.120*	.171**	-.130*	-.114*	.025	-.148**	1			
14. manager & professional	0.63	0.48	.078	-.010	.085	.124*	.033	-.038	-.177**	.317**	-.109*	-.079	.128*	-.285**	.633**	1		
15. private sector	0.49	0.50	-.066	.066	.000	.041	.025	.038	-.177**	.191**	-.057	-.053	.052	-.091	.151**	.232**	1	
16. Industry	0.39	0.49	-.142**	.034	.059	.102	.022	-.031	.086	.066	-.023	-.001	.108	-.052	.140*	.187**	.028	1

China (N= 440)	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
1. TI	3.03	1.38	1															
2. WLB	3.49	0.67	-.112*	1														
3. ENG	4.06	1.08	-.317**	.254**	1													
4. PE	4.90	1.13	.191**	.095*	.176**	1												
5. FR	3.43	1.73	-.072	.021	.019	.044	1											
6. age	35.53	8.79	-.212**	.192**	.120*	-.079	.308**	1										
7. female	0.43	0.49	-.032	.025	-.040	-.044	-.085	-.112*	1									
8. fulltime	0.98	0.16	.014	.046	.041	.033	-.036	-.062	.079	1								
9. tenure	7.30	6.89	-.164**	.092	.005	-.103*	.206**	.622**	-.071	.011	1							
10. employers changed	2.54	1.39	.105*	.005	.012	.140**	-.041	.065	.001	-.011	-.321**	1						
11. promotions	2.10	2.12	-.101*	.211**	.255**	.221**	.090	.277**	-.066	-.026	.084	.280**	1					
12. hierarchical level	6.82	2.23	.159**	-.214**	-.209**	-.088	-.126**	-.267**	.036	.019	-.150**	-.108*	-.419**	1				
13. education	1.96	0.81	-.010	.032	-.063	.104*	.135**	.029	-.041	-.043	-.030	-.145**	.114*	-.214**	1			
14. manager & professional	0.58	0.49	-.082	.040	.141**	.220**	.097*	.142**	-.027	.099*	.024	-.086	.251**	-.376**	.510**	1		
15. private sector	0.58	0.49	.074	.019	.070	.181**	-.139**	-.154**	.032	.039	-.375**	.405**	.155**	-.112*	-.182**	.009	1	
16. industry	0.19	0.40	.163**	-.011	-.078	.125**	-.061	-.110*	-.001	-.032	-.152**	.012	-.008	.015	.158**	.127**	-.010	1

Norway (N=375)	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
1. TI	2.59	1.78	1															
2. WLB	3.82	0.76	-.154**	1														
3. ENG	4.57	0.75	-.386**	.203**	1													
4. PE	5.02	1.24	.076	.010	.112*	1												
5. FR	3.84	1.15	.150**	.008	-.051	.097	1											
6. age	48.98	8.49	-.174**	.108*	.035	-.215**	-.374**	1										
7. female	0.67	0.47	-.078	.052	.007	-.140**	.030	.037	1									
8. fulltime	0.82	0.39	.028	-.057	.106*	.175**	.029	-.072	-.271**	1								
9. tenure	12.96	9.79	-.202**	.118*	.011	-.180**	-.214**	.548**	.126*	-.108*	1							
10. employers changed	4.30	2.58	.167**	-.027	.022	.105*	-.011	.035	.008	.055	-.333**	1						
11. promotions	3.15	2.97	-.006	.022	.101	.231**	-.081	.117*	-.257**	.195**	.021	.079	1					
12. hierarchical level	5.27	2.38	-.093	.093	-.090	-.148**	-.057	-.013	.025	-.236**	.053	-.087	-.170**	1				
13. education	1.84	0.85	.212**	-.121*	-.008	.174**	.158**	-.158**	-.160**	.257**	-.312**	.049	.216**	-.348**	1			
14. manager & professional	0.61	0.49	.153**	-.063	.065	.184**	.080	-.080	-.176**	.264**	-.180**	.049	.189**	-.412**	.648**	1		
15. private sector	0.29	0.45	.140**	-.073	-.001	.096	.084	-.159**	-.355**	.285**	-.225**	.032	.277**	-.140**	.364**	.293**	1	
16. industry	0.35	0.48	.041	-.063	-.049	.155**	-.072	-.133**	.099	-.160**	.004	-.139**	-.006	-.025	.021	.061	-.063	1

Greece (N=362)	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
1. TI	3.14	1.85	1															
2. WLB	3.40	0.92	-.124*	1														
3. ENG	4.07	1.09	-.341**	.052	1													
4. PE	4.01	1.59	.278**	.019	.235**	1												
5. FR	2.38	1.68	-.275**	.099	.178**	-.075	1											
6. age	38.21	10.94	-.350**	.055	.187**	-.127*	.428**	1										
7. female	0.55	0.50	-.038	.028	.025	-.047	.007	-.131*	1									
8. fulltime	0.91	0.29	-.199**	-.047	.111*	-.043	.202**	.262**	-.082	1								
9. tenure	9.76	8.75	-.326**	.127*	.138**	-.105*	.357**	.785**	-.133*	.206**	1							
10. employers changed	2.73	1.86	.003	-.059	-.011	-.077	.058	.246**	-.047	-.062	-.063	1						
11. promotions	1.68	1.90	-.107*	-.090	.221**	.142**	.212**	.451**	-.227**	.200**	.415**	.121*	1					
12. hierarchical level	5.90	2.25	.231**	.031	-.393**	-.125*	-.254**	-.376**	.070	-.213**	-.345**	.082	-.343**	1				
13. education	1.99	0.80	.066	-.088	.191**	.156**	-.022	-.088	.057	.138**	-.153**	-.035	.138**	-.208**	1			
14. manager & professional	0.49	0.50	-.071	-.085	.303**	.096	.127*	.171**	-.081	.163**	.113*	.013	.338**	-.411**	.428**	1		
15. private sector	0.76	0.43	.131*	-.061	-.020	.161**	-.084	-.257**	.108*	-.091	-.314**	.091	-.184**	.050	-.064	-.116*	1	
16. industry	0.28	0.45	.126*	-.034	-.081	.009	-.056	-.102	.086	-.114*	-.121*	-.015	-.126*	-.021	.001	-.023	.176**	1

Note. * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$ (two-tailed).

There are several pairs of relationship which are higher than 0.50. The education and whether employees are manager or professional is positively correlated and the sizes are among the highest across the four samples (0.65 in Norway, 0.63 in the USA, 0.51 in China and 0.43 in Greece). Tenure and age are also strongly correlated and more of a concern as the size is as high as 0.79 in Greece, 0.62 in China and 0.55 in Norway and 0.50 in the USA. In Norway, private sector and multinational organization are quite strongly correlated (0.58) while such relationship is much weaker. Another interesting finding is that the relationship between age and family responsibility (FR) is all positive but negative only in Norway. This might be because that employees within the sample of Norway have an average age (49) considerably higher than those in other countries (around 37). The variance inflation factor (VIF) is also checked and found to be no higher than 3 in the samples of the USA, China and Norway. In the sample of Greece (where the most concerned tenure-age relationship is found), the highest VIF value is 4 < 5. Therefore, it can be concluded that collinearity is not a concern in all four samples.

The table 4.5 also preliminarily confirms some of the proposed hypotheses. In all four samples, both WLB and ENG are significantly and negatively correlated with TI. Also, WLB and ENG are positively correlated, except for that this relationship is considerably smaller and

not significant in Greece.

4.3.1.2 Hypotheses testing

The effect of WLB on work engagement is tested firstly because it's the prerequisite of the other parts of the proposed model. As it's argued in section 3.1.2, high WLB indicates low work-life conflicts and stress and therefore such good fit and accomplishment in reconciling work and life removes obstacles for employees to engage and involve more in work. The parameter a in equation 1 is the partial effect of WLB on work engagement when other variables are at their mean value. Table 4.6 below shows all the results estimated in the four countries.

Table 4.6 Effect of WLB on work engagement

	USA	China	Norway	Greece
WLB (a)	0.248 (0.059)***	0.193 (0.046)***	0.204 (0.059)**	0.086 (0.048)+
sample size (N)	327	440	375	362
adjusted R ²	0.107	0.138	0.046	0.178
F	4.089***	6.807***	2.351**	8.017***

Note. Standardized coefficients are reported with heteroscedasticity-robust standard errors in parentheses; control variables are the same as described in section 4.2.2; + $p < 0.10$. * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$.

It shows that the effect is the strongest in the USA ($a=0.248$, $p<0.001$), followed by Norway ($a=0.204$, $p<0.01$) then China ($a=0.193$, $p<0.001$). For Greece, the effect is much weaker and merely reaches the significance level of 90% ($a=0.086$, $p<0.10$). Conclusion can be drawn on the direction that high WLB does increase work engagement of employees with a big effect size (except in Greece). Therefore, the hypothesis 2a is supported.

Since the H2a is supported, the next step is to test whether work engagement can exert influence on turnover intention. High work engagement is expected to reduce intent to quit as employees are more engaged and dedicated to their jobs. Table 4.7 below shows that in all countries, the partial effect of work engagement on turnover intention (b_1) is significant and negative as expected. The effect sizes are all quite big, ranging from -0.328 in China to -0.406 in the USA. Therefore, the hypothesis 2b is supported in all countries.

The direct effect of WLB on turnover intention is strong and significant in the USA ($c_1'=-0.285$, $p<0.001$) which means the high WLB accomplishment can directly reduce employee's intent to quit. The effect is only significant at 90% confidence level in Greece and the size is

much smaller ($c_1' = -0.074$, $p < 0.10$). In both China and Norway, the effects are negative directions as proposed but with very small sizes and not significant. Looking at the results of the indirect effect of WLB on turnover intention through work engagement (ab_1), it can be found that this effect is negative and significant (in Greece only at 90% significance level) in the four countries with moderate sizes. That is, in China and Norway where the direct effect is not significant but indirect effect significant, high WLB accomplishment can only help to retain employees through making them more engaged. In the USA and Greece, both high WLB and work engagement can directly exert favorable influence on employee's intent to quit, and work engagement also serves as a mediating role. Therefore, it can be concluded that WLB only directly impacts employees' turnover decisions in the USA and Greece and the hypothesis 1 and 2c are supported. But in China and Greece, only the hypothesis 2c is fully supported and hypothesis 1 is only true when the effect is through enhanced work engagement.

Table 4.7 Moderated mediation model predicting turnover intention

	USA	China	Norway	Greece
Predictors				
WLB (c_1')	-0.285 (0.047)***	-0.008 (0.046)	-0.055 (0.046)	-0.074 (0.044)+
ENG (b_1)	-0.406 (0.041)***	-0.328 (0.047)***	-0.372 (0.046)***	-0.347 (0.045)***
PE (c_2')	0.159 (0.049)**	0.237 (0.047)***	0.025 (0.049)	0.308 (0.044)***
FR (c_3')	0.021 (0.050)	-0.031 (0.046)	0.095 (0.048)*	-0.082 (0.046)+
Interactions				
WLB * PE (c_4')	0.039 (0.044)	-0.056 (0.044)	0.014 (0.047)	-0.084 (0.036)*
WLB * FR (c_5')	0.041 (0.046)	-0.091 (0.042)*	0.105 (0.044)*	0.076 (0.040)+
ENG * PE (b_2)	-0.076 (0.042)+	0.016 (0.048)	-0.015 (0.048)	-0.057 (0.034)+
ENG * FR (b_3)	-0.068 (0.047)	0.054 (0.047)	-0.104 (0.044)*	0.066 (0.041)
Indirect effect (ab_1)	-0.101**	-0.063**	-0.076**	-0.030+
sample size (N)	327	440	375	362
adjusted R ²	0.364	0.190	0.442	0.333
F	17.815***	8.371***	8.989***	15.748***

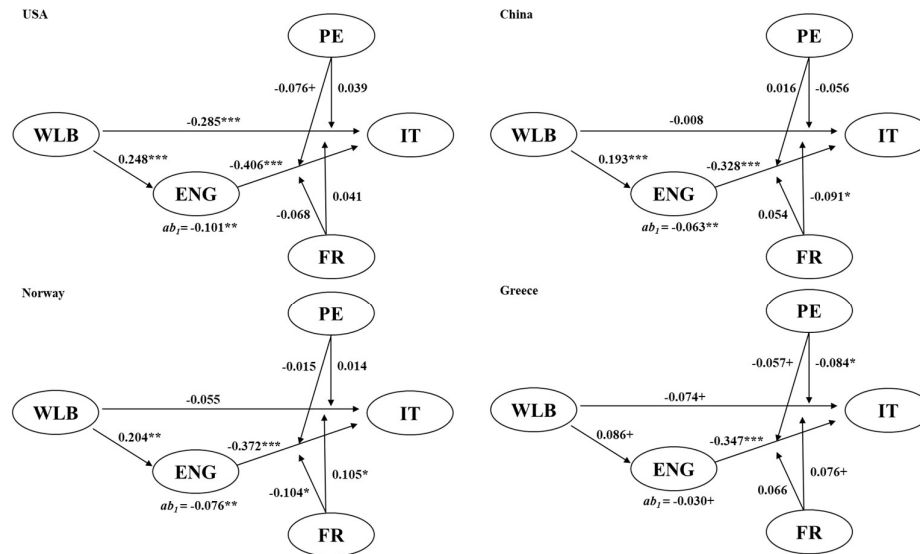
Note. Standardized coefficients are reported with heteroscedasticity-robust standard errors in parentheses; the significance of the indirect effect is tested with 5,000 bootstrap samples; control variables are the same as described in section 4.2.2; + $p < 0.10$. * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$.

As shown in table 4.7, the perceived employability (PE) is negatively and significantly affect turnover intention in all four countries with big effect sizes (except for Norway). That is, in the USA, China and Greece, employees are more likely to leave once not satisfied when they evaluated that the ease of movement is high, vice versa. High family responsibility (FR), however, directly associated with higher intent to quit in Norway ($c_3' = 0.095$, $p < 0.05$) but lower

intent to quit in Greece ($c_3' = -0.082, p < 0.10$). It doesn't exert significant direct influence on turnover intention in the USA (positive direction) and China (negative direction). The inconsistent directions might be due to the combined effect of the national differences in institutional (ease of movement) and cultural (ties to family) contexts.

To gain a better insight of the moderating effects under different contexts, figure 4.2 below provides a summative picture of all the results.

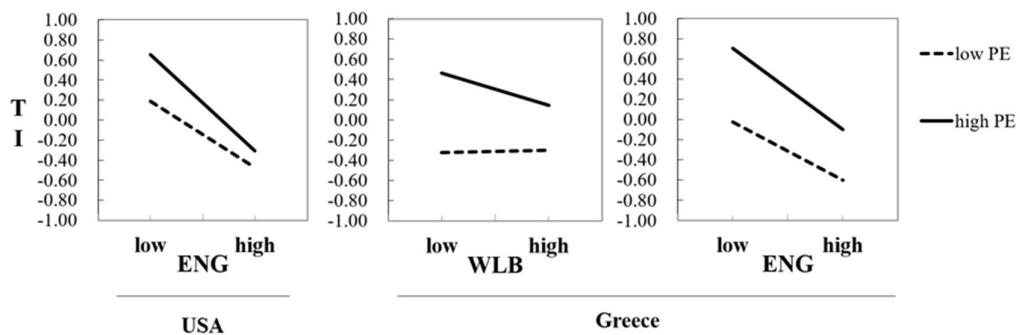
Figure 4.2 Summary of results among the four selected countries



The moderating effect of PE (perceived employability) on the WLB-TI relationship is negative and significant only in Greece ($c_4' = -0.084, p < 0.05$) so that employees who have higher perceived employability will be more sensitive towards low WLB accomplishment while those consider difficult to find alternatives job will more likely to stay despite of poor work-life fit. ENG-TI relationship is negative and significant ($b_2 = -0.076, p < 0.10$) and Greece ($b_2 = -0.057, p < 0.10$) so that employees who evaluate a high ability to find a comparable alternative job will be more sensitive to low work engagement. Figure 4.3 provides the visualization the significant moderating effects of PE. It can be found that high perceived employability is always associated with higher turnover intention which is reasonable as employees who think that they can easily find comparable jobs are more able to leave once unsatisfied. In addition, the slopes are always steeper when the PE is high, thus employees who believe that they have better employability are more sensitive to the achievement in WLB and level of work engagement. The figure 4.2 above also reveals that the moderating effect of PE really depends on the contexts. In China

and Norway, it doesn't exert any moderating effect as proposed. And in the USA, it does not significantly moderate the WLB-TI relationship. Therefore, it can be concluded that the hypothesis H4a is supported only in Greece and H4b in both USA and Greece. It's also found that only Greece fully demonstrate the depressing effect of the PE proposed in chapter 3. That is, poor work-life fit is ineffective (or much less) to trigger high intent to quit because employees are not confident of finding alternatives and therefore will tend to endure and work with low energy, involvement and probably perform other withdrawal behaviors. In the USA, the "story" is partially supported so that employees who are not engaged will be less likely to leave with low self-evaluated employability. But poor WLB will directly trigger higher intent to leave regardless of the self-evaluated employability, it will only be suppressed through indirect path by leading to low work engagement. Such suppressing effect of PE is not found in the sample of the China and Norway even at significance level of 90%, which might be attributed to the low unemployment rate and better benefits comparing with Greece and more strict regulation about dismissals comparing with the USA (less common to focus on PE).

Figure 4.3 Moderating effect of PE in the USA and Greece

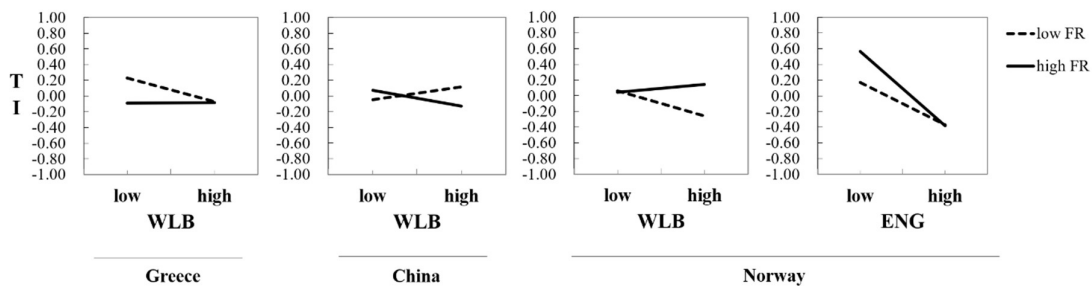


The moderating effect of FR (family responsibility) on the WLB-TI relationship is positive and significant in Norway ($c_5' = 0.105, p < 0.05$) and Greece ($c_5' = 0.076, p < 0.10$) so that employees who have heavier family responsibility will be less sensitive to poor work-life fit when making turnover decisions. Thus, there exists a suppressing effect of FR on the WLB-turnover intention relationship. In China, heavy FR strengthens the WLB-TI relationship ($c_5' = -0.091, p < 0.05$) so that employees with more family responsibility will be more sensitive to poor WLB accomplishment when making turnover decisions. As for the work engagement-turnover intention relationship, it's only significantly moderated by FR in Norway ($b_3 = -0.104, p < 0.05$) so that employees with heavier family responsibility will be more sensitive to low work

engagement. Figure 4.4 provides the visualization the significant moderating effects of FR.

It can be visually found that high FR is always associated with lower turnover intention in Greece but higher intent to quit in Norway. The suppressing effect of FR on the WLB-TI relationship is obvious in Greece and Norway while there is strengthening effect in China. The opposite direction might be due to the relative strength of the two paths through which FR can alter the relationship of interest: (a) highlights the importance of WLB; or (b) increases the cost of leaving (family embeddedness). The strengthening effect of FR on work engagement-TI relationship is also shown in Norway which is also of the opposite direction as proposed. For China, both WLB and FR doesn't have significant direct influence on turnover intention but there does exist significant interaction between those two variables so that employees with higher FR will be more sensitive to poor WLB when making turnover decision. Therefore, it can be concluded the hypothesis 3a is supported in Greece and Norway and hypothesis 3b is not supported in any country but at opposite direction in Norway.

Figure 4.4 Moderating effect of FR in China, Norway and Greece



4.3.2 Study two

4.3.2.1 Descriptive and preliminary analysis

The bivariate correlations among variables studied in study two are shown in table 4.8 below. At individual level, there is a much stronger relationship between age and tenure (0.598). Also the positive correlation between education whether have occupation of manager or professional is quite strong (0.493). At the country level, there are several bivariate relationships which have effect sizes bigger than 0.50. The future orientation is strongly correlated with both performance orientation (0.781) and in-group collectivism (-0.632). Besides, GDP growth is also strongly correlated with humane orientation (0.621). The

variance inflation factor (VIF) is also checked and it's found that the highest VIF value is 4.143 for future orientation and lower than 5. Therefore, it can be concluded that collinearity is not a concern in this study and the formal testing of the hypotheses can be continued.

Table 4.8 Descriptive statistics: means, standard deviation (SD) and bivariate correlations among variables (study two)

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Level 1															
1. TI	3.09	1.90	1												
2. WLB	3.64	0.87	-.194**	1											
3. age	39.40	10.87	-.199**	.078**	1										
4. female	0.51	0.50	-.003	.030**	-.024**	1									
5. fulltime	0.89	0.31	-.008	-.069**	-.021*	-.185**	1								
6. tenure	8.75	8.57	-.235**	.093**	.598**	-.048**	.018*	1							
7. employers changed	3.29	2.62	.053**	-.023**	.208**	.002	-.070**	-.145**	1						
8. promotions	2.24	2.35	-.057**	.018*	.287**	-.121**	.103**	.160**	.181**	1					
9. hierachical level	5.63	2.31	.090**	-.072**	-.128**	.053**	-.068**	-.102**	.002	-.214**	1				
10. education	1.82	0.82	.050**	-.048**	-.053**	-.003	.046**	-.104**	-.023**	.140**	-.257**	1			
11. manager & professional	0.59	0.49	-.014	-.034**	.096**	.001	.108**	.007	-.009	.234**	-.287**	.493**	1		
12. private sector	0.61	0.49	.124**	-.054**	-.150**	-.122**	.089**	-.174**	.000	.029**	-.039**	-.043**	-.037**	1	
13. industry	0.31	0.46	.040**	.000	-.043**	.057**	-.041**	-.043**	-.025**	.018*	-.007	.077**	.104**	.042**	1
Level 2															
1. Future orientation	3.94	0.41	1												
2. Humane orientation	3.94	0.35	.031**	1											
3. Performance orientation	4.08	0.37	.781**	.180**	1										
4. in-group collectivism	5.01	0.60	-.632**	.286**	-.384**	1									
5. GDP growth	2.50	2.65	.104**	.621**	.304**	.313**	1								
6. Unemployment rate	7.66	4.49	-.364**	-.192**	-.551**	.086**	-.193**	1							
7. Competitiveness intensity	72.57	9.46	.402**	-.128**	.451**	-.208**	.020*	-.402**	1						

Note. * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$ (two-tailed); level 1 (N=13,525), level 2(N=31).

4.3.2.2 Hypotheses testing

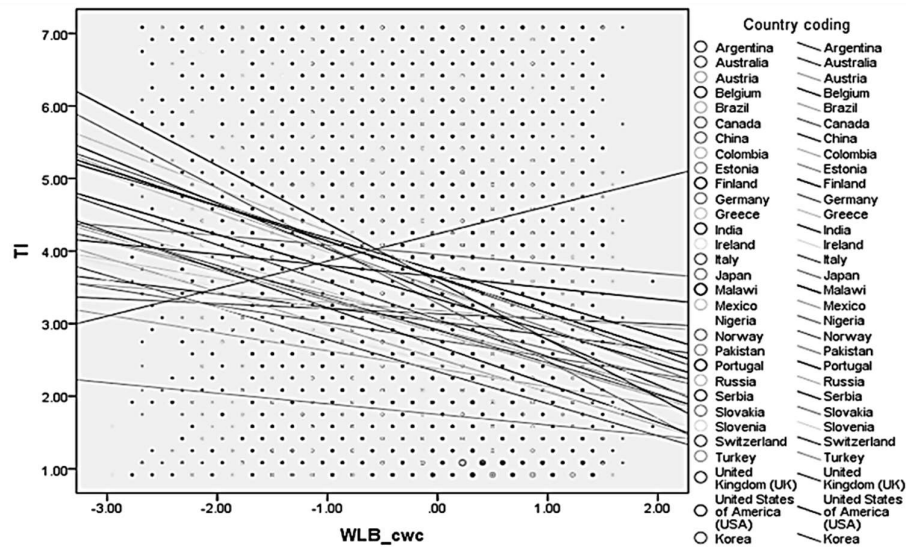
Figure 4.5 below shows how the intercepts and slopes vary considerably across the 31 countries. In general, WLB and TI seems to have consistent and inverse relationship, but there is one exception, the UK (positive line). The slope of Argentina is the flattest, followed by the one of Slovakia. The slope of USA is the steepest, followed by Canada. Since there is very likely great difference in the relationship between WLB and turnover intention, it's interesting to check directly to what extent are such differences determined by cultural and economic factors at the country level.

Following the steps introduced in section 4.2.2.2, table 4.7 below shows the results of the Model 1 through Model5. Under Model 1 (the intercept-only model), it can be found that the grand-mean turnover intention is 3.135 and the between-group intercept variance is significantly different from zero ($\tau_{00} = 0.267$, $p < 0.001$). This means that there is in fact significant difference in cross countries intercepts that needed to be explained. The intraclass correlation (ICC) can be calculated to be 7.3% which justifies the decision of conducting a multi-level modeling, because 7.3% of the variation in TI is due to the between-country

differences. In model 2, some level 1 control variables are entered to explain the between-country differences in intercept. The model fit has increased a lot (deviance decreases 951 after adding 12 new parameters). It's found that higher age, higher hierarchical level, longer tenure, more employers changed experienced and more promotions received are all associated with lower intent to quit. Employees who employed in part-time job, are manager or professional, work in private sector, and have education level higher than bachelor are all associated with higher intent to quit. Gender and industry are not found to have significant influence on TI.

WLB was entered in model 3 and the model fit improves substantially (deviance decreases 369 after adding 1 new parameter). It's found that WLB significantly and negatively affects TI ($\gamma_{10} = -0.345, p < 0.001$). That is, holding others constant, one unit increase in WLB achievement can reduce 0.345 unit in turnover intention. Therefore, the hypothesis 1 is supported in the sample containing data from 31 countries.

Figure 4.5 Scatter plot of the relationship between WLB and TI across 31 countries



The level 2 predictors are entered in model 4 in order to detect any cross-level direct effect. As shown in table 4.9, only future orientation shows to have significant positive effect on turnover intention ($\gamma_{01} = 0.711, p < 0.005$). However, since the model fit doesn't significantly improve, it's more appropriate to adopt the model 3 for further study and comparison. In model 5, the effect of WLB on turnover intention (β_{1j}) is allowed to vary across countries and it's found that the slope variance is significantly different from zero ($\tau_{11} = 0.040, p < 0.01$). That is, the relationship of interest does significantly vary across countries.

Table 4.9 Multilevel models predicting turnover intention

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
	intercept-only	level 1 controls	WLB	Level 2 predictors	random slope
Intercept (Y_{00})	3.135 (0.095)***	3.102 (0.089)***	3.105 (0.089)***	3.105 (0.088)***	3.105 (0.089)***
Level 1					
age	-	-0.021 (0.002)***	-0.021 (0.002)***	-0.021 (0.002)***	-0.020 (0.002)***
female	-	-0.052 (0.032)	-0.041 (0.032)	-0.042 (0.032)	-0.043 (0.032)
fulltime	-	-0.147 (0.054)**	-0.217 (0.053)***	-0.219 (0.053)***	-0.217 (0.053)***
hierarchical level	-	0.040 (0.007)***	0.031 (0.007)***	0.031 (0.007)***	0.033 (0.007)***
tenure	-	-0.024 (0.002)***	-0.022 (0.002)***	-0.022 (0.002)***	-0.022 (0.002)***
employers changed	-	0.031 (0.007)***	0.028 (0.007)***	0.028 (0.007)***	0.027 (0.007)***
promotions	-	-0.016 (0.007)*	-0.015 (0.007)*	-0.015 (0.007)*	-0.014 (0.007)*
Manager & professional	-	-0.081 (0.041)*	-0.108 (0.040)**	-0.110 (0.040)**	-0.108 (0.040)**
private sector	-	0.358 (0.034)***	0.337 (0.034)***	0.336 (0.034)***	0.338 (0.034)***
bachelor	-	0.166 (0.044)***	0.147 (0.044)**	0.148 (0.044)**	0.150 (0.043)**
master & doctor	-	0.344 (0.049)***	0.321 (0.048)***	0.323 (0.048)***	0.326 (0.048)***
Industry	-	0.038 (0.034)	0.048 (0.034)	0.048 (0.034)	0.047 (0.034)
WLB (Y_{10})	-	-	-0.345 (0.018)***	-0.345 (0.018)***	-0.336 (0.041)***
Level 2					
Future orientation	-	-	-	0.389 (0.404)	-
Humane orientation	-	-	-	0.711 (0.339)*	-
Performance orientation	-	-	-	-0.796 (0.469)	-
In-group collectivism	-	-	-	-0.124 (0.222)	-
GDP growth	-	-	-	-0.048 (0.46)	-
Unemployment rate	-	-	-	-0.025 (0.025)	-
Competitiveness intensity	-	-	-	0.011 (0.012)	-
Variance components					
Within-country variance (σ^2)	3.393 (0.041)***	3.166 (0.039)***	3.080 (0.038)***	3.080 (0.038)***	3.055 (0.037)***
Intercept variance (τ_{00})	0.267 (0.072)***	0.233 (0.064)***	0.237 (0.064)***	0.218 (0.069)**	0.236 (0.064)***
Slope variance (τ_{11})	-	-	-	-	0.040 (0.013)**
Deviance (FIML)					
	55011	54060	53691	53680	53625
Deviance change					
	-	951***	369***	11	66***

Note. Unstandardized coefficients are reported with standard errors in parentheses; the significance of the changes in deviances are determined by testing against the chi-square distribution with degree of freedom equals to the difference in the numbers of parameters estimated in the two nested models; N (level 1)=13,525; N (level2)=31; level 1 (N=13,525), level 2(N=31); + $p < 0.10$. * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$.

Since there exists significant slope differences, the next step is the test whether several level 2 moderators can explain such differences as proposed. Table 4.10 below shows the results of testing the cultural dimensions. It's found that only the in-group collectivism dimension significantly attenuates the relationship of interest ($Y_{in-group}=0.158$, $p < 0.05$). The hypothesis H5a is supported. Performance orientation doesn't exert significant moderating effect on the relationship of interest ($Y_{performance}= -0.092$, $p > 0.10$). Also, future orientation and humane orientation are not found to be significant moderator ($Y_{future}= -0.077$, $p > 0.10$; $Y_{humane}= -0.018$, $p > 0.10$). Therefore, hypotheses 5b, 5c and 5d are all not supported.

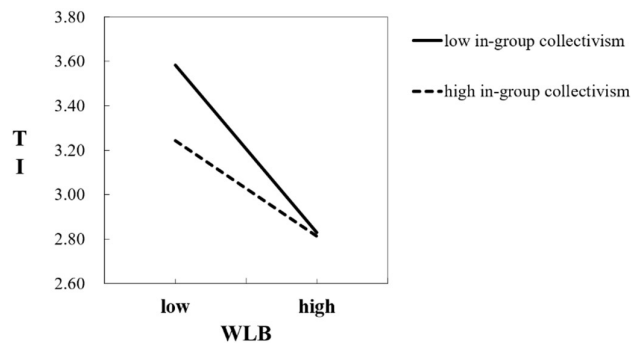
The visualization of the moderating effect of in-group collectivism is shown in figure 4.6 below. It demonstrates that low in-group collectivism (high in-group individualism) is always associated with higher turnover intention and steeper slope (stronger WLB-turnover intention relationship).

Table 4.10 Multilevel models with cross-level interactions (cultural dimensions)

	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8	Model 9
	In-group	performance	future	humane
Intercept (γ_{00})	3.117 (0.090)***	3.105 (0.091)***	3.117 (0.091)***	3.095 (0.088)***
Level 1				
age	-0.020 (0.002)***	-0.020 (0.002)***	-0.020 (0.002)***	-0.020 (0.002)***
female	-0.044 (0.032)	-0.043 (0.032)	-0.043 (0.032)	-0.043 (0.032)
fulltime	-0.217 (0.053)***	-0.217 (0.053)***	-0.216 (0.053)***	-0.217 (0.053)***
hierarchical level	0.033 (0.007)***	0.033 (0.007)***	0.033 (0.007)***	0.033 (0.007)***
tenure	-0.022 (0.002)***	-0.022 (0.002)***	-0.022 (0.002)***	-0.022 (0.002)***
employers changed	0.027 (0.007)***	0.027 (0.007)***	0.027 (0.007)***	0.027 (0.007)***
promotions	-0.015 (0.007)*	-0.014 (0.007)*	-0.014 (0.007)*	-0.015 (0.007)*
manager & professional	-0.109 (0.040)**	-0.108 (0.040)**	-0.108 (0.040)**	-0.108 (0.040)**
private sector	0.338 (0.034)***	0.338 (0.034)***	0.338 (0.034)***	0.338 (0.034)***
bachelor	0.150 (0.043)**	0.149 (0.043)**	0.150 (0.043)**	0.149 (0.043)**
master & doctor	0.325 (0.048)***	0.326 (0.048)***	0.326 (0.048)***	0.326 (0.048)***
Industry	0.047 (0.034)	0.047 (0.034)	0.047 (0.034)	0.047 (0.034)
WLB (γ_{10})	-0.345 (0.039)***	-0.338 (0.042)***	-0.340 (0.042)***	-0.337 (0.042)***
Level 2				
Culture dimension (γ_{01})	-0.149 (0.159)	0.013 (0.250)	0.195 (0.224)	0.341 (0.258)
Cross-level interaction				
WLB * cultural dimension (γ_{11})	0.158 (0.066)*	-0.092 (0.112)	-0.077 (0.102)	-0.018 (0.121)
Variance components				
Within-country variance (σ^2)	3.055 (0.037)***	3.055 (0.037)***	3.055 (0.037)***	3.055 (0.037)***
Intercept variance (τ_{00})	0.237 (0.066)***	0.245 (0.068)***	0.238 (0.066)**	0.230 (0.064)**
Slope variance (τ_{11})	0.033 (0.012)**	0.041 (0.014)**	0.041 (0.014)**	0.042 (0.014)**
Deviance (FIML)	53618	53624	53623	53623
Deviance change	7*	1	2	2

Note. Unstandardized coefficients are reported with standard errors in parentheses; the significance of the changes in deviances (comparing with model 5) are determined by testing against the chi-square distribution with degree of freedom equals to two; N (level 1)=13,525; N (level2)=31; + $p < 0.10$. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

Figure 4.6 Cross-level moderating effect of in-group collectivism



The moderation effects of country-level economic factors are also tested and the results are shown in table 4.11 below. It's found that GDP growth ($\gamma_{1GDPgrowth} = 0.021, p > 0.10$), unemployment rate ($\gamma_{1unemployment} = -0.001, p > 0.10$) and competitiveness intensity ($\gamma_{1comepetiveness} =$

-0.002, $p > 0.10$) don't exert significant moderating effect on the relationship of interest.

Therefore, hypotheses 6a, 6b and 6c are all not supported.

Table 4.11 Multi-level models with cross-level interactions (economic dimensions)

	Model 11	Model 12	Model 13
	GDP growth	Unemployment rate	competitiveness intensity
Intercept (Y_{00})	3.106 (0.090)***	3.106 (0.089)***	3.103 (0.089)***
Level 1			
age	-0.020 (0.002)***	-0.020 (0.002)***	-0.020 (0.002)***
female	-0.044 (0.032)	-0.043 (0.032)	-0.043 (0.032)
fulltime	-0.217 (0.053)***	-0.216 (0.053)***	-0.216 (0.053)***
hierarchical level	0.033 (0.007)***	0.033 (0.007)***	0.033 (0.007)***
tenure	-0.022 (0.002)***	-0.022 (0.002)***	-0.022 (0.002)***
employers changed	0.027 (0.007)***	0.027 (0.007)***	0.027 (0.007)***
promotions	-0.015 (0.007)*	-0.015 (0.007)*	-0.014 (0.007)*
manager & professional	-0.109 (0.040)**	-0.108 (0.040)**	-0.107 (0.040)**
private sector	0.337 (0.034)***	0.338 (0.034)***	0.338 (0.034)***
bachelor	0.150 (0.043)**	0.150 (0.043)**	0.149 (0.043)**
master & doctor	0.326 (0.048)***	0.326 (0.048)***	0.325 (0.048)***
Industry	0.047 (0.034)	0.047 (0.034)	0.047 (0.034)
WLB (Y_{10})	-0.337 (0.041)***	-0.336 (0.042)***	-0.336 (0.042)***
Level 2			
economic dimension (Y_{01})	-0.015 (0.033)	-0.020 (0.020)	0.010 (0.010)
Cross-level interaction			
WLB * economic dimension (Y_{11})	0.021 (0.015)	-0.001 (0.009)	-0.002 (0.005)
Variance components			
Within-country variance (σ^2)	3.055 (0.037)***	3.055 (0.037)***	3.054 (0.037)***
Intercept variance (τ_{00})	0.243 (0.067)***	0.236 (0.065)***	0.237 (0.066)***
Slope variance (τ_{11})	0.039 (0.013)**	0.042 (0.014)**	0.042 (0.014)**
Deviance (FIML)	53623	53624	53624
Deviance change	2	1	1

Note. Unstandardized coefficients are reported with standard errors in parentheses; the significance of the changes in deviances (comparing with model 5) are determined by testing against the chi-square distribution with degree of freedom equals to two; N (level 1)=13,525; N (level2)=31; + $p < 0.10$. * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$.

4.4 Discussion

4.4.1 Results discussion and implications

Table 4.12 below summarizes all the results of the hypotheses testing. It can be found that some proposed relationships are confirmed while others are not supported by empirical analysis. There are some significant results that are even at the opposite direction as predicted. Before getting into more deep discussion about these findings, one fact that has been confirmed is that the effectiveness of WLB accomplishment on employees' turnover intention is more complex than expected and does depend considerably on contexts.

Table 4.12 Summary of all results

Hypothesis		Result			
		USA	China	Norway	Greece
study one					
H1	WLB has significant inverse relationship with turnover intention (direct effect)	supported	-	-	Supported+
H2a	WLB has significant positive relationship with work engagement	supported	supported	supported	supported+
H2b	work engagement has significant inverse relationship with turnover intention	supported	supported	supported	supported
H2c	work engagement mediates the effect of WLB on turnover intention	supported	supported	supported	supported+
H3a	high family responsibility attenuates the WLB-turnover intention relationship	-	opposite direction	supported	supported+
H3b	high family responsibility attenuates the work engagement-turnover intention relationship	-	-	opposite direction	-
H4a	low perceived employability attenuates the WLB-turnover intention relationship	-	-	-	supported
H4b	low perceived employability attenuates the work engagement-turnover intention relationship	supported+	-	-	supported+
study two					
H1	WLB has significant inverse relationship with turnover intention		supported		
H5a	high in-group collectivism attenuates the WLB-turnover intention relationship		supported		
H5b	high performance orientation attenuates the WLB-turnover intention relationship			-	
H5c	high humane orientation strengthens the WLB-turnover intention relationship			-	
H5d	high future orientation strengthens the WLB-turnover intention relationship			-	
H6a	fast economic growth strengthens the WLB-turnover intention relationship			-	
H6b	high employment opportunity strengthens the WLB-turnover intention relationship			-	
H6c	highly competitive market strengthens the WLB-turnover intention relationship			-	

Note. "+" indicates significant only at 90% significance level

The study one was conducted to test the main relationship of interest, explain it by adding work engagement between and further explore two critical moderators (perceived employability and family responsibility). As proposed in chapter 3, high level of WLB achievement signals good overall work-life fit that employees are capable of reconciling their job demands and commitments (activities, interests) outside work. There is not necessary zero conflict but it's weaker (acceptable) than the positive enrichment and/or employees are confident to deal with them. As result, employees will have more positive experience and job attitudes which lead to lower "desirability to move" and thus lower turnover intention. Moreover, the presence of high WLB might also due to good (comfortable) working conditions and organizational (supervisor, coworker, culture etc.) support which contributes to stronger job and community embeddedness and "ties" employees close with the organization through increased job satisfaction and decreased ease of movement (more links and better fit). It's therefore predicted that WLB accomplishment is reversely correlated with employee' intent to quit. The empirical analysis largely supports this hypothesis in study two with a sample containing data from 31 countries. Figure 4.5 also provides an overall visualization of the relationship of interest across countries. Considerable differences in both intercepts and slopes can be detected from the figure and the empirical analysis confirmed that the relationship of

interest (strength and even direction) really varies from contexts to contexts (significant slope variance). In study one, four countries (USA, China, Norway and Greece) are selected to compare specifically the proposed effects under different contexts. In terms of direct effect (controlling engagement), significant results are only found in the USA (the most studied western country) and Greece. The former is much stronger and more significant. This finding is consistent with many similar extant researches which were conducted in the developed western contexts. As for Greece, the result is only significant at the confidence level of 90%. In China and Norway, the sizes of direct effect are small and not significant. Looking at the descriptive analysis of how employees from these four samples view WLB, it's found that 95.8% of the American employees (rank 2nd among 31 countries) consider it important regarding evaluation of career success while the China is at the bottom (77.6% ranking 26th). Both the other two countries rank in the middle with employees in Greece associates higher importance to WLB. In terms of achievement, both China and Greece are at the bottom while Norway reported the highest achievement (rank 6th) followed by the USA (rank 9th). Even both Chinese and American employees have reported much more work-family conflicts and have more issues of long working hours (unsocial schedule), it seems that what matters more is the associated significance of WLB by employees. This provides a potential explanation on why the direct effect of WLB achievement on intent to quit is the strongest in the USA (critical factor) and Greece (important and poor fit) but not significant in China (not considered critical factor even with poor fit) and Norway (good working condition and fewer conflicts reported, thus not an issue).

Despite the inconsistent results in direct effect of WLB on turnover intention, the proposed positive effect of WLB on work engagement is supported in all countries with strong effect sizes. Based on the conservation of resources theory (COR), better work-life fit largely ensures resources in both work (good job performance, family-to-work enrichment, comfort working pattern etc.) and outside work (good family relationship, enough time for hobbies, positive moods etc.). As a result, the secured resources protect employees from experiencing negative job attitude, psychological state and high (family or work) stress and enables full engagement at work. It's therefore predicted that employees with good work-life fit will be more engaged which is a favorable state preferred by both employers and employees themselves. There are

numerous beneficial outcomes associated with highly engaged employees, one of these is the reduced turnover intention due to lower “desirability to move” and probably better fit (embeddedness). Therefore, it’s also predicted that WLB is reversely related to employee’s intent to quit. The empirical results support both the hypotheses argued above and the effect sizes are all very big. That is, supporting and helping employees to achieve better work-life integration can largely motivate employees and enable them to fully devoted into their jobs (more energy, less concerns and higher job satisfaction) which in turn contributes to higher employees retention (save costs and keep the talents). It’s worth noticing that even though significant, the positive effect of WLB on work engagement in Greece is much smaller comparing with sizes found in other countries. It might be explained by the higher job insecurity and inactive employment environment of Greece so that employees are less motivated by good work-life fit as what matters more is the job and financial security.

Similar with the consistent and robust finding of extant researches that work-family conflicts increase turnover through emotional exhaustion (or burnout). In this study, the mediating role of work engagement between the relationship of interest is proposed and tested. The results supported this argument in all four countries. That is, better work-life fit can reduce employee’s intent to quit (even not directly) through motivating and facilitating employees to be more engaged. The size of indirect effect is also the highest in the USA, followed by Norway and is the lowest in Greece, which depends on the effect size of the WLB-ENG and ENG-TI relationships.

Perceived employability is proposed to act as moderator. It’s expected that employees who believe that they can easily find a comparable alternative job have higher perceived behavior control and ease of movement, as a result, poor work-life fit will trigger stronger intent to quit for them comparing with those with low perceived employability (higher cost of leaving and risks). This argument is supported fully in Greece and partly in the USA. In Greece, employees who are not confident at finding comparable job once leaving the organization will still hold low turnover intention even though they have poor work-life fit and are not engaged. Such reaction fully demonstrates the conceptual model proposed in section 3.2.3. That is, when under high pressure from finding alternative jobs, employees will become reluctant to quit even when they suffer from poor work-life fit (probably due to long working hours, demanding tasks,

unsocial schedule) and work with low energy, dedication and passive moods. This reaction pattern deviates from the functional (healthy) line and therefore will lead to “Dysfunctional Retention”. In the USA, low perceived employability also limits employee’s intent to quit even when they are poorly engaged. However, it doesn’t exert the same effect on the WLB-TI relationship. Also, in both China and Norway, the moderating effects of perceived employability are not supported by the empirical results. One potential explanation is that perceived employability only exerts its effect when it’s more of an issue and/or it’s more commonly evaluated. In Greece where the unemployment rate is extremely high and involuntary part-time employment is more common (less opportunities in the market), the whole environment fosters the feeling of higher job insecurity (common concerns and higher costs of leaving) and the mentality of putting job and financial security before other needs. As a result, PE becomes strongly relevant to most of the employees and thus can limit employees’ desire to leave. In the USA, the economy is prosperous and the unemployment is not a critical issue, however, it has a remarkably low restriction in individual dismissals and overall high ease of moving (common and easy to practice). With such high flexibility, American employees are enabled to make turnover decision conveniently and more used to it (themselves and people around). In China and Norway, neither employment is a critical issue as in Greece nor does turnover happen as easily and frequently as in the USA, therefore, perceived employability will be less critical and focused in individual career decisions.

Family responsibility is proposed to attenuate both the WLB-TI and ENG-TI relationship as a source of pressure from the life side. People with heavier family responsibility need to take the potential consequences of leaving the current jobs on their family members into account when they make career decisions. That is, they can’t decide to quit only based on their own interest, even with poor work-life fit (especially work-to-family conflicts) and low engagement, they might choose to endure and secure the source of financial support for their family members. The empirical results are mixed. As shown in table 4.10 above, family responsibility weakens the WLB-TI relationship in Norway and Greece, but in China, the effect is strengthening. In both Norway and Greece, employees with heavier family responsibility are less likely to have high intent to quit even with poor work-life fit as predicted. This means that family responsibility can serve as a factor that triggers the “Dysfunctional Retention” situation.

In China, heavier responsibilities from family strengthens the relationship of interest. This is a direction opposite to the prediction. One possible explanation is that, besides lowering the ease of movement (perceived behavior control), family responsibility can also exert its influence through highlighting the importance of WLB. For the case of China, it's shown that Chinese employees normally don't pay much attention on WLB (low perceived importance reported and value highly on financial income), that is why WLB doesn't serve as critical factors to be evaluated when making turnover decisions. This mentality will change when employees possess heavy family responsibilities (presence of young children, elders caring, other commitments) such that balancing work and family lives become more relevant and important (conflicts start to happen). As a result, when facing high family responsibility, the WLB-TI relationship will be strengthened. In the USA, the effect is not significant, but the direction is as predicted. It might be explained that the American labor market is very flexible that it's frequent (common) practice to quit when not satisfied with current job and the consequences on family members once leaving is relative low (it's less difficult to find alternatives in the market). Therefore, career decision made by employees in the USA are less "tied" to family status (remind that USA is scored highly in in-group individualism). Moreover, changing jobs can also be considered a good strategy to cope with unsatisfactory working conditions and thus the pressure caused from family commitments can be mitigated by quitting itself (neither enhance nor weaken). The moderating effect of FR proposed on the ENG-TI relationship is not supported in any country. For the ENG-TI relationship, the predicted effect is not supported in any country and the only significant effect is at the opposite direction in Norway. One possible explanation is that work engagement is an antecedent more proximal and more determined (by WLB and other factors). That is, when employees are engaged, they will have less intent to quit and other not critical factors will not easily prompt them to quit. In contrast, when employees suffer from emotional exhaustion and really want to cope with it by leaving, they are already in a stage that the turnover desire is so strong and very hard to be influenced by other factors. Leaving the organization might be a better coping behavior to adjust in the latter case, family responsibility is less critical and influential comparing with perceived employability (it directly relates to the feasibility of the quitting decision). It's also noticed that in Norway, family responsibility enhances the ENG-WLB relationship. This finding is not so surprise given that FR is also found

to be directly and positively related to turnover intention in Norway (which is also strange). These two “strange” findings might both due to the high quality of unemployment and family and children benefits provided by the Norwegian government. With more secure and strong social protection (benefits), quitting might be better for employees who have low work engagement and heavy family responsibility than staying but enduring. Poor work-life fit, however, is less critical as an issue (WLB-TI relationship can be influenced by FR) and in many cases can be endured as long as it doesn’t become too serious and lead to issue like burnout.

The study two explored the moderating effects of the country-level factors on the relationship of interest. As predicted, employees are more sensitive to poor WLB in countries scored low in in-group collectivism (high in in-group individualism). This is because employees in such culture tend to make career decision based on their own interest and the work-family conflicts are more of an issue due to lower tolerance by family members. The empirical result supports this argument which is consistent with numerous similar researches which had focused on this cultural dimension. The cross-level moderating effects of performance, humane and future orientation are not supported by the empirical results even though theoretically they should be able to influence how people value WLB and thus the relationship of interest. These three dimensions have not been explored in similar researches (to my best acknowledge) and therefore no comparison can be made. As for the three economic factors (GDP growth, unemployment rate and competitiveness intensity), the empirical results also fail to support their moderating effects. One possible explanation is that these macro-economic factors are too “far away” from the reach and acknowledge of individual employees, thus they might be more relevant to the aggregate turnover decision and less able to influence individual career decision. They might exert their effects indirectly through changing some lower level factors (downsizing events, workloads and demanding clients) can be felt by individuals and thus enters inside individual decision-making information system (employees normally don’t take aggregate figures into consideration when they make career decisions).

4.4.2 Contributions and limitations

This study contributes to the extant literature about work-life interaction (conflict, enrichment and balance) in three main ways. Firstly, even though the work-family conflict-

burnout/stress-turnover intention relationship has been explored in numerous researches with consistent and robust results. The holistic concept of WLB is understudied. This study adopts this inclusive concept and provides empirical evidence of the positive side of the story, that is high WLB can reduce employee's turnover intention and work engagement mediates such relationship. Secondly, as most of the extant researches, theories and findings lie in the developed western context (especially the USA), by conducting multi-level modeling using a sample of 31 Western and non-Western countries as well as comparing the same model across four selected countries, this study underscores the importance of taking contexts into consideration and primarily provides insights about the similarity and differences across countries. Thirdly, by directly testing several country-level cultural and economic factors, this study supplements the current lack of knowledge about how national cultural and economy condition may exert influence on the relationship of interest.

Practically, this study confirms that organizations can motivate employees, retain talents and lower turnover costs by facilitating their work-life fit. Also, it's revealed that the motivating effect of work-life balance supporting practices can depend on individual perceived employability and family responsibility, which is further different from contexts to contexts. It depends, there is no one solution for all and it's useful to understand what individual employees prioritize and need. At last but not at least, this study highlights that retention is not always functional and individual should focus more on their long-term wellbeing and adjust to work in a more sustainable way.

Like all researches, this study is not without limitation. Firstly, the cross-sectional nature of this study limits the ability to make causal inferences. Secondly, 4 out of the 5 individual-level variables studied are self-reported perception which can be subjected to common method bias. Combination with objective measurements and information from people around the respondents (supervisor, co-worker, family) is preferred in future research. Thirdly, the turnover intention after all can't fully predict actual turnover behavior, thus, to fully understand why those employees who suffer from high work-life issues still stay, it's suggested to seek for real turnover data with destination after quitting. In addition, given the mixed results found, qualitative research is also recommended to increase the explanatory power and discover the critical factors that cause the differences.

Conclusion

Started with the doubt that why persistent long working hours and unsocial working schedules experienced by many Chinese IT employees not always prompts them to quit. This study seeks to research on the effect of work-life balance (WLB) on employees' turnover intention. Based on the survey and literature reviews, work engagement was found to be a potential mediator which can explain the WLB-TI relationship. Further, pressures from both work (perceived employability) and life (family responsibility) domain were speculated to moderate the relationship of interest (also the ENG-TI relationship) so that under high pressures, employees will be reluctant to quit due to low perceived behavior control (ease of movement). This pattern is not considered healthy, as employees with poor WLB and low work engagement are "stuck" in the organizations which is not beneficial for both employers and employees themselves. This situation is labeled as "Dysfunctional Retention". Additionally, because most of the similar researches were conducted within the developed western countries and there are inconsistent results revealed by several studies conducted in different contexts, it's interesting to explore also some country-level moderating effects. Four cultural dimensions defined by the GLOBE project and three economic dimensions were chosen to serve this purpose.

Two separated studies were conducted to test the conceptual model proposed. At individual level, a moderated mediation model is tested and compared across four selected countries (the USA, China, Norway and Greece). The results are mixed and reveal considerably differences between countries. High WLB is confirmed to be able to reduce individual turnover intention and the mediating effect of work engagement is robust across all four countries. Implication can be drawn that organizations can motivate employees, retain talents and lower turnover rate by facilitating employees' work-life reconciliation. The more complex part is the moderating effects, it's found that whether perceived employability and family responsibility exert their attenuating influences depends on contexts. Macro-environment of labor market flexibility and external job opportunities are used to explain the differences in the moderating effect of perceived employability. For the mixed results regarding family responsibility, all market flexibility, quality of social protection (family and unemployment benefits), culture and work mentality are used to provide explanations.

At the country-level, multilevel modeling is adopted with a sample containing 31 countries in order to directly test the cross-level interactions. It's found and justified that there are 7.3% of variation in turnover intention are due to between-country differences and the slope differences are significant. The relationship of interest was confirmed to be weaker in countries scored high in In-group collectivism because employees within such culture will pace less sensitive towards poor WLB accomplishment and more likely to endure bad balance for interests of family members (also more likely to get support from them). Other proposed cultural dimensions were not found to significantly moderate the relationship of interest which is very surprising. Further theoretical research may be needed to explain the results. The proposed moderating effects of the three economic dimensions are also not supported but more understandable as they are too "out-of-reach" and thus less likely to influence individual-level decision making, they might exert their impacts indirectly by changing factors at lower level where individuals can feel and process.

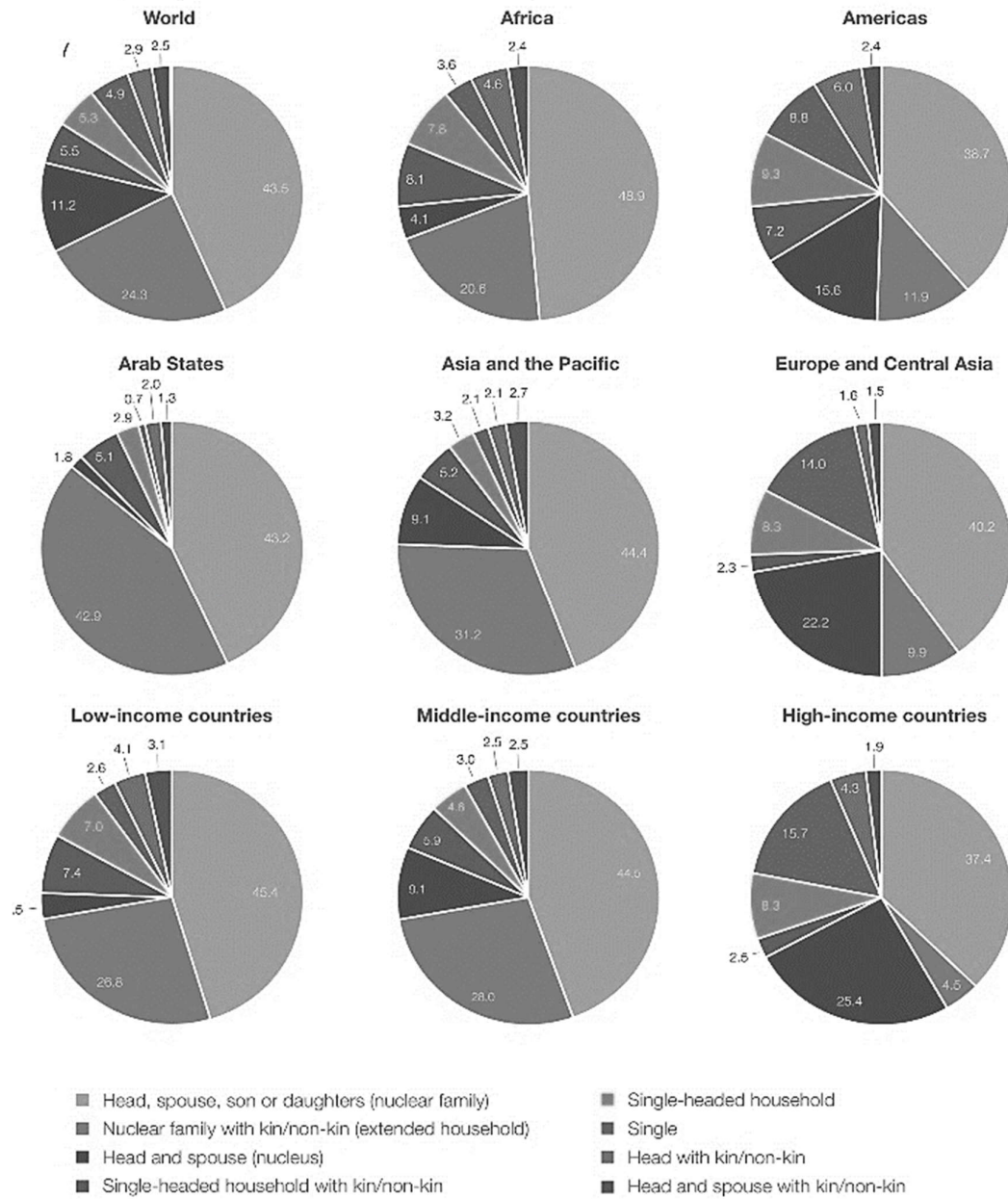
To sum up, the picture is more complex and dynamic as expected and one model can't fit all contexts. Nevertheless, this study provides an overall insight about the similarities and differences in the proposed effects across countries and underscores that there are dysfunctional side of retention and functional side of leaving (coping and adjusting). As the workplace is getting more demanding and intensive and care responsibilities (children, elders) are becoming more heavier, it can be foreseen a challenging future for contemporary employees in terms of reconciling their work and life. For individual employee, it's therefore important to pay more attention on the long-term wellbeing and starts to seek a more sustainable way of working.

So, isn't "996" a good reason to quit? Yes, but not sufficiently. Yes, because poor work-life fit (frequent conflicts, no time, energy for self-development and spiritual fulfillment) and low engagement (probably perform withdrawal behaviors even not leave or suffer from emotional exhaustion) is associated with numerous unfavorable consequences for both employers and employees. Not sufficiently because employees in many cases do not prioritize quality of life over material success and consider non-healthy working practices as normal (even proud of them). Some of them might be constrained by perceived employability and commitments towards family members. Only when the poor work-life fit leads to low work engagement (sometimes health issues), will they start to seek for changes.

Appendix

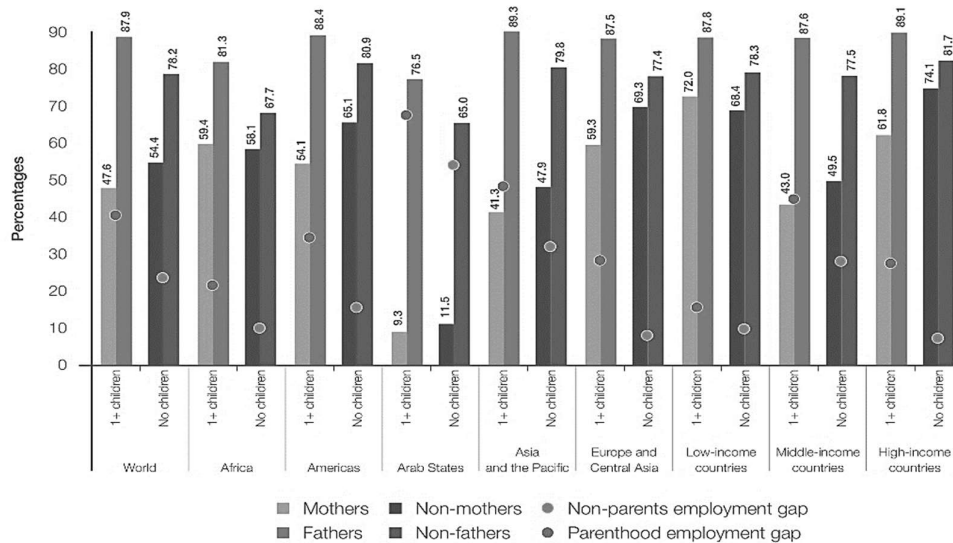
Appendix 1.1 Working age population by household type (percentage)

Source: (Addati et al. 2018)



Appendix 1.2 Employment-to-population ratios of mothers and fathers of children aged 0-5 and of non-mothers and non-fathers of children aged 0-5

Source: (Addati et al. 2018)



Appendix 2.1 The employee turnover decision process

Source: (Mobley 1977)

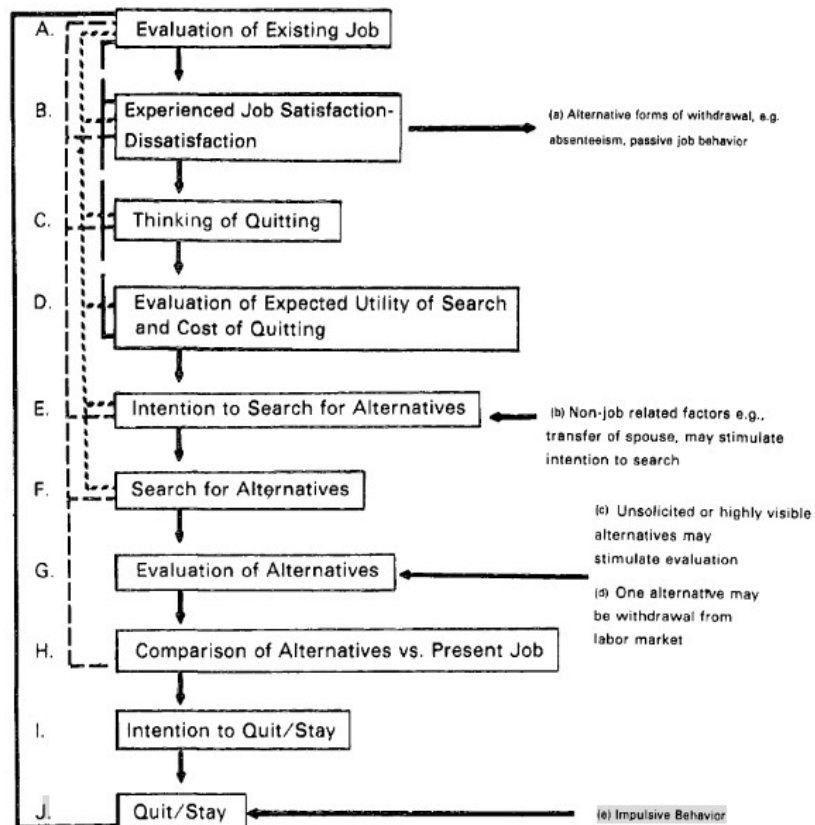


Figure 1. The employee turnover decision process.

Appendix 3.1 Antecedents and consequences of withdrawal states

Source: (Hom et al. 2012)

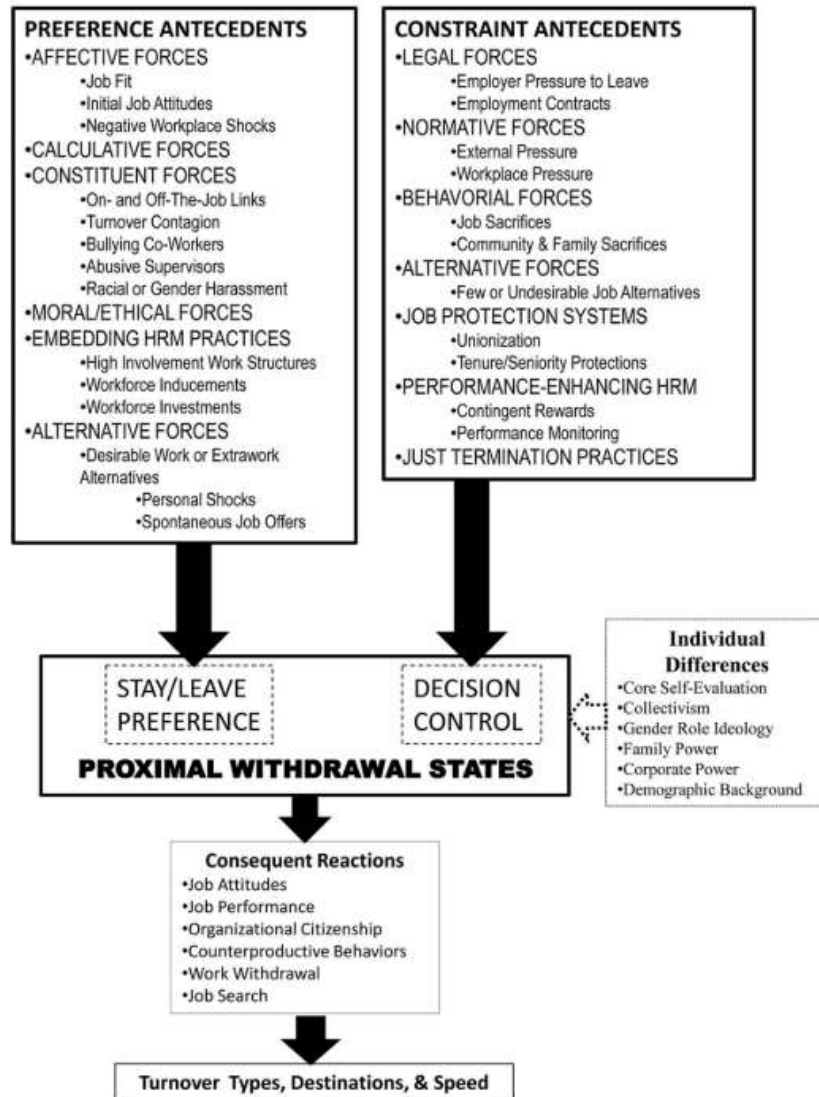


Figure 1. Antecedents and consequences of withdrawal states. HRM = human resources management.

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