

# How Family Supportive Supervisor Behaviors Enhance Employees' Work-Family Enrichment? Thriving at Work as Mediator and Intrinsic Motivation as Moderator

Chuangang Shen<sup>1</sup>, Rui Liu<sup>1</sup>, Jing Yang<sup>2</sup>, Sanman Hu<sup>1</sup>, Peixu He<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Business School, Huaqiao University, Quanzhou City, Fujian Province, 362021, People's Republic of China; <sup>2</sup>College of Tourism, Huaqiao University, Quanzhou City, Fujian Province, 362021, People's Republic of China

Correspondence: Jing Yang, College of Tourism, Huaqiao University, Quanzhou, 362021, People's Republic of China, Tel +86 186-4995-3896, Email [jingpsy@hqu.edu.cn](mailto:jingpsy@hqu.edu.cn); Rui Liu, Business School, Huaqiao University, Quanzhou, 362021, People's Republic of China, Tel +86 175-5418-6578, Email [lrecho@foxmail.com](mailto:lrecho@foxmail.com)

**Purpose:** From the perspective of the work-home resource model, the present research aims to investigate the effect mechanism of family supportive supervisor behaviors (FSSB) on work-family enrichment.

**Sample and Method:** Based on 316 Chinese employees' samples, this study takes the multiple linear regression technique to test our hypothesis model.

**Results:** Our study reveals that FSSB is positively related to work-family enrichment. In addition, thriving at work can mediate the positive relationship between family-supportive supervisor behaviors and work-family enrichment. Furthermore, the moderating role of intrinsic motivation is also found in this study. Specifically, intrinsic motivation strengthens the positive relationship between FSSB and thriving at work. Facing FSSB, individuals who score high in intrinsic motivation are prone to experience stronger thriving at work, while individuals who score low will hardly experience thriving at work.

**Conclusion:** The current study comprehensively explores how informal organizational support (in our case, family supportive supervisor behaviors) leads to a better family outcome, thus contributing to the work-family interface literature. At the same time, our study also has some guiding significance for practitioners to build a family-friendly environment.

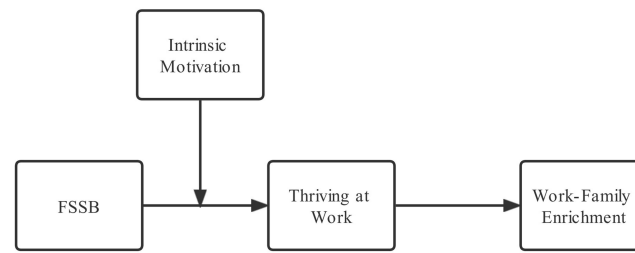
**Keywords:** family supportive supervisor behaviors, thriving at work, work-family enrichment, work-home resource model

## Introduction

Work and family currently constitute two indispensable fields in adulthood. Thus, there is a substantial number of studies on the work-family interface.<sup>1</sup> Work-family enrichment (Abbreviate as WFE) describes the extent to which an individual's resources acquired at work can help to enhance the quality of his or her family life.<sup>2</sup> Meta analyzes have consistently indicated that work-family enrichment is positively related to employee performance, positive emotions and well-being.<sup>3,4</sup> Facing increasingly challenging work demands, work-family enrichment theory offers more proactive ideas on how organizations can help to improve their employees' work-family interface. Therefore, how to effectively enhance the level of employees' work-family enrichment has raised increased concern from both scholars and practitioners. Previous studies tended to focus on the role of formal family-friendly policies.<sup>5-7</sup> However, scholars also discovered that the effectiveness of formal family-friendly policies depends on whether the supervisor enacts formal policies.<sup>8</sup> At the same time, due to the normalization of telecommuting and flexible work schedule, formal family-friendly policies appear increasingly rigid. Hence scholars are placing increasing emphasis on informal family-friendly support.<sup>8,9</sup> Family supportive supervisor behaviors (FSSB) is an informal family-friendly support, which refers to supervisors' enacted supportive behaviors aiming to facilitate employees' work and family balance.<sup>10</sup>

In recent years, scholars have explored the relationship between FSSB and work-family enrichment. Some studies have concluded that FSSB can directly enhance the level of employees' work-family enrichment.<sup>8,11,12</sup> Besides, some scholars have further explored the internal mechanism of the above influencing process, mainly from the perspective of individual cognition, such as cognitive resources<sup>2</sup> psychological availability<sup>8</sup> and social evaluation of supervisors and so on.<sup>13</sup> However, considering the single cognitive dimension paints an incomplete picture of the impact mechanism of affective support from FSSB.<sup>9</sup> FSSB contains supervisors' emotional care and respect for employees' family role.<sup>10,14</sup> Accordingly, this paper argues that, when facing supervisors' support, individuals' combined positive cognitive-affective state should be fully investigated. Hence, we propose that thriving at work can mediate the relationship between FSSB and work-family enrichment. Thriving at work refers to the extent to which an individual experiences a positive state in both the cognitive (learning) and affective (vitality) dimensions.<sup>15</sup> The mediating role of thriving at work has raised increasing concern from scholars. Zhai et al explored the mediating role of thriving at work between workplace support and life satisfaction.<sup>16</sup> In addition, Yang et al found that thriving at work can be regarded as a mediator in the process of paradoxical leader behaviors impacting employee creativity.<sup>17</sup> Russo et al proposed work-family enrichment as a mediator between FSSB and thriving at work.<sup>8</sup> In this paper, according to the perspective of the Work-home resource model, we propose that thriving at work can be regarded as a personal resource, and thus can mediate the relationship between FSSB and work-family enrichment. Russo et al suggested a positive relationship between work-family enrichment and thriving at work in the direction of family to work.<sup>8</sup> However, by considering thriving at work as a personal resource, our paper explores the impact of thriving at work on work-family enrichment in another direction from work to family. Thus, together with the research of Russo et al, a more complete influencing chain is formed, which further reveals the role of thriving at work as a bridge between the field of work and family.<sup>8</sup>

By using the Work-home resource model, the current study explored the role of thriving at work as a mediator between FSSB and work-family enrichment as well as the moderating role of intrinsic motivation.<sup>18</sup> Located in the work context, FSSB aims to balance employees' work and family life, providing several supportive resources such as instrumental support, and emotional support. Ten Brummelhuis et al believed that social support is a contextual work resource.<sup>18</sup> Therefore, we propose that FSSB is a sort of contextual work resource, thus can enhance employees' work-family enrichment.<sup>10,14</sup> In addition, Ten Brummelhuis et al noted that contextual work resources or demands can have an impact on the family outcome by increasing or decreasing one's personal resources, which implies that personal resources can play an important role in connecting the work and family roles.<sup>18</sup> Thriving at work is a positive mental state describing employees' sense of "vitality" and "learning" at work, which can be easily affected by the environment in which it is embedded.<sup>15,19</sup> A meta-analysis study reveals that thriving at work can have a significant impact on employees' positive affect, work performance and subjective health.<sup>20</sup> Scholars also suggest that thriving at work can be regarded as a personal resource. In line with conservation of resource theory, Hildenbrand et al revealed that thriving at work is a personal resource and it can mediate the relationship between transformational leadership and burnout.<sup>21</sup> Okros et al hold the same view that thriving at work is a personal resource.<sup>22</sup> We thus propose that thriving at work can be regarded as a personal resource.<sup>15,18,21</sup> According to the work-home resource model, FSSB, as a contextual work resource, can positively predict one's perception of thriving at work. At the same time, thriving at work can be regarded as a personal resource, thus contributing to a higher level of work-family enrichment. We hence propose that thriving at work can mediate the relationship between FSSB and work-family enrichment. Moreover, Ten Brummelhuis et al also addressed the moderating role of key resources, as they enable employees to acquire contextual work resources more efficiently.<sup>18</sup> Intrinsic motivation is a motivation resource. It refers to the extent to which individuals engage in work for their own sake because the work itself is rather satisfying and interesting.<sup>23,24</sup> Intrinsic motivation can enable employees to work in a more initiative and creative way and reduce resource depletion, thus contributing to a more efficient working style.<sup>19,25</sup> According to the work-home resource model, intrinsic motivation is a vital key resource, enabling individuals to acquire more personal resources.<sup>18,26</sup> Therefore, we propose that intrinsic motivation can be regarded as a key resource, and thus strengthen the positive relationship between FSSB and thriving at work. We propose a model with the intent to delve more deeply into the process of FSSB influencing work-family enrichment as well as its boundary conditions. The theoretical model is shown in [Figure 1](#).



**Figure 1** Research model.

**Abbreviation:** FSSB, family supportive supervisor behaviors.

This study contributes to the current literature in several ways. First, this study can help to explore how informal organization support influences employees' work-family interface by investigating the mediating role of thriving at work in the relationship between FSSB and work-family enrichment. In the past, scholars mostly explored the effect mechanism between FSSB and work-family enrichment by investigating the mediating role of skills resources, perspective resources, psychological availability and social evaluations of supervisors, which is mostly limited to cognitive resources.<sup>2,8,13,27</sup> But informal FSSB often include affective support, such as verbal caring for subordinates, empathy, respectful emotional expressions and so on.<sup>9,11</sup> Hence we believe that thriving at work can more comprehensively explicate how FSSB influences work-family enrichment because it captures employees' positive state of vitality (affective dimension) and learning (cognitive dimension) at the same time.

Second, this study also contributes to thriving at work theory. The construct of thriving at work can be understood from the perspective of resources, which provides new paths for scholars to further explore the psychological mechanism of thriving at work. Previous studies mostly explored the relationship between thriving at work and an individual's behaviors based on self-determination theory and believe that agentic behaviors are the driving engine of the state-like thriving at work.<sup>15,19</sup> In our study, from the new perspective of the work-home resource model, thriving at work can be regarded as a volatile personal resource. Consequently, thriving at work can be easily affected by the context in which it is embedded.<sup>18,21</sup> In addition, employees who are thriving at work will have better family outcomes due to their increased personal resources. This also echoes the research of Russo et al, family factors can also further affect the individual's work status by affecting the individual's thriving.<sup>8</sup>

Third, this study also explored the boundary conditions in the process of FSSB influencing employees' work-family enrichment. Intrinsic motivation helps to strengthen the positive relationship between FSSB and work-family enrichment.<sup>18,23,28</sup>

## Theory and Hypotheses

### Work-Home Resource Model

From the perspective of the work-home resources model, this research aims to explore the effect mechanism between FSSB and work-family enrichment. First, according to the origin of resources, the work-home resource model categorized contextual resources and personal resources that exist in the work and family fields.<sup>18</sup> Contextual resources are located in the social contexts in which the individuals are embedded. Personal resources are more proximate to the individual, referring to the state-like resources reflecting one's cognitive and affective aspects of personality, such as knowledge, skills, and self-efficacy.<sup>18,29,30</sup> In line with the work-home resource model, contextual resources can influence personal resources. In the workplace, the acquisition of contextual work resources is conducive to promoting the accumulation of personal resources, thereby enhancing the performance of individuals in another field.<sup>18</sup> In other words, personal resource plays a mediating role between contextual work resource and individuals' family outcome. Secondly, the work-home resource model further proposes the role of key resources. Key resources are referring to some personal resources that can facilitate an individual's selection, alternation and application of other resources, such as emotion regulation, dispositional optimism and openness to experience.<sup>28</sup> Key resources can affect one's coping style in the workplace, thus having an impact on the generation and development of personal resources.<sup>30</sup> In line with the work-home resource model, key resources can play a moderating role in the process of contextual work resources influencing personal resources.

## FSSB and Work-Family Enrichment

Family Supportive Supervisor Behaviors (FSSB) refer to supervisors' enacted supportive behaviors aiming to facilitate employees' work and family balance.<sup>10</sup> FSSB is informal supervisor support, including emotional support, instrumental support, role modeling behaviors and creative work-family management. Emotional support is a perception that employees feel comfortable communicating with their supervisors on family issues, and that employees are being respected, understood and concerned. Instrumental support refers to the supervisor's support for employees' work-family needs in daily management transactions. Role modeling behaviors refer to the extent supervisor to which supervisors demonstrate the behaviors that will lead to better work-family outcomes.<sup>14</sup> Creative work-family management is defined as supervisors' behaviors to restructure work for a "win-win" situation of work and family roles.<sup>10,14</sup>

As a supportive contextual work resource, FSSB can enhance the level of work-family enrichment via instrumental paths and affective paths. On the one hand, instrumental support and creative work-family management bring more flexibility to the workplace, contributing to a family-friendly working environment. At the same time, the supervisor's role modeling behaviors provide employees with experience and strategies in handling work-family problems, which bring employees skills and perspective resources. These resources can directly enhance the level of work-family enrichment through an instrumental path. On the other hand, the supervisor's respect, understanding and concern toward employees' family responsibilities can bring positive affective resources, enhancing work-family enrichment indirectly through the affective path.<sup>2,10,14</sup> Previous studies also indicated a positive relationship between FSSB and work-family enrichment. Clark et al believed that informal organizational support can enhance employees' family outcomes.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, Zhang and Tu (2018) revealed the potential positive relationship between FSSB and work-family enrichment.<sup>31</sup> We thus propose that there is a positive relationship between FSSB and employees' work-family enrichment.

H1: FSSB is positively related to work-family enrichment.

## The Mediating Role of Thriving at Work

Thriving at work refers to the extent to which an individual experiences a positive state in both the cognitive (learning) and affective (vitality) dimensions.<sup>15</sup> "Vitality" describes an individual's positive perception that he or she owns enough energy and has a feeling of aliveness, and "learning" refers to a state of feeling able to acquire and apply knowledge and skills at work.<sup>15,19</sup> Individuals who are thriving at work tend to have a feeling of vitality, and they would actively pursue their self-development.<sup>15,19</sup> Based on the work-home resource model's classification of resources, personal resources are volatile resources that can be easily affected by the context. Personal resources can reflect the affective and cognitive aspects of the personality as well as a positive feeling toward one's development.<sup>18,29,30</sup> We thus argue that thriving at work is a personal resource. Consequently, on the one hand, thriving at work will be affected by the work context in which it is embedded.<sup>15,21</sup> On the other hand, it may spill over to the family field, thus influencing the family outcome.<sup>32</sup> In line with the work-home resource model, we propose that employees' thriving at work plays an important mediating role between FSSB and work-family enrichment. In other words, FSSB can improve employees' sense of thriving at work, thus contributing to the enhancement of work-family enrichment.

For employees, one of the most important resources in the organization is the supervisor, especially the supervisor's support. Previous studies indicated that supervisors' support can contribute to a stronger sense of thriving at work.<sup>8,21</sup> We propose that FSSB, as a supervisor's support toward specific fields, also can positively predict a stronger feeling of thriving at work. On the one hand, FSSB should be positively related to the vitality component of thriving at work, as FSSB offers flexibility and other resources. Instrumental support and creative work-family management from FSSB should alleviate the depletion of employees' energy on family roles by providing more flexibility and other resources at work, leading to a feeling of aliveness.<sup>18,21</sup> In addition, the supervisor's emotional support can facilitate a higher-quality relationship between the supervisor and subordinates, which would energize the subordinates to deal with work matters more efficiently.<sup>33</sup> On the other hand, FSSB should be positively related to the learning component of thriving at work. Role modeling behaviors can enable subordinates to imitate and learn the supervisor's strategies, which should lead to better work-family outcomes.<sup>34</sup>

We also propose that thriving at work is positively related to work-family enrichment, in line with the work-home resource model. As we have demonstrated, thriving at work is a personal resource. According to the work-home resource

model, the accumulation of the personal resource pool should help subordinates to better address stressors and lead to a better family outcome.<sup>18</sup> On the one hand, resources gathered during the thriving at work process can spill over to the family instrumentally. The subordinate who is thriving at work should feel alive and energetic.<sup>15</sup> Abundant energy guarantees employees to fulfil their family roles in high quality. In other words, employees with a higher level of thriving at work are more likely to have enough resources to perform their family responsibilities.<sup>2</sup> At the same time, a subordinate who is thriving at work will keep consistently learning. High-level active learning can enable employees to acquire more corresponding skills in the workplace, such as interpersonal skills, coping skills and multitasking skills.<sup>2</sup> These skills may spill over to employees' family field, which leads to a better coping style toward the family issue and enhances the performance as a family member. On the other hand, resources gathered from thriving at work can spill over indirectly from the affective path. Subordinates who are thriving at work are more energetic and hold a positive outlook toward their future development.<sup>32</sup> At the same time, employees' positive affect will spill over into their family field, and result in a better family outcome.

H2 The relationship between FSSB and work-family enrichment is mediated by thriving at work.

## The Moderating Role of Intrinsic Motivation

Intrinsic motivation means that individuals' motivation lies in their behavior itself.<sup>24</sup> In this paper, we focus on intrinsic motivation in the workplace, which refers to employees' motivation to engage in work just for the interest and enjoyment felt in the work process.<sup>25,35</sup> Substantial research has demonstrated that intrinsic motivation can affect an individual's coping styles and work outcomes, such as improving performance,<sup>24,36</sup> enhancing creativity<sup>37</sup> and reducing resource depletion.<sup>19</sup>

In this study, we propose that intrinsic motivation is a key resource. In line with the work-home resource model, key resources are referring to the resources that can facilitate other resource selection, alteration and application. In addition, key resources can enable employees to adopt a more efficient coping style.<sup>18,30</sup> When driven by intrinsic motivation, individuals tend to regulate themselves in an autonomous way rather than in a controlled way.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, Spreitzer and Porath (2014) argue that intrinsically motivated individuals deplete energy at a slower rate due to their autonomous regulation.<sup>19</sup> In other words, intrinsic motivation can help individuals acquire and accumulate personal resources more effectively by adopting active coping styles. Hence we argue that intrinsic motivation can be regarded as a key resource.

In line with the work-home resource model, Ten Brummelhuis (2012) emphasized the moderating role played by key resources in the process of contextual work resources influencing personal resources.<sup>18</sup> Accordingly, we propose that intrinsic motivation, as a key resource, can positively moderate the influence of FSSB on thriving at work. On the one hand, individuals who are high in their level of intrinsic motivation will continuously be motivated by their interests and satisfaction toward work, thus ensuring a sufficient energy supply for the individual.<sup>24</sup> At the same time, intrinsically motivated individuals will act more autonomously,<sup>24</sup> thus reducing their resource depletion during work.<sup>19</sup> Therefore, when facing FSSB, individuals with a high level of intrinsic motivation deplete less energy when acquiring contextual work resources, and thus have a higher level of vitality in the workplace. On the other hand, intrinsic motivation can enable individuals to show a higher level of creativity and engage in work in a more proactive way.<sup>37</sup> As a result, intrinsically motivated individuals will continually learn to search for a new way to better deal with work and family issues. In other words, when facing FSSB, individuals who score high in intrinsic motivation will have a stronger sense of thriving at work. However, individuals who score low in intrinsic motivation can hardly feel thriving at work facing FSSB, since their working behaviors require much effort and thus delete more energy.<sup>19</sup> At the same time, their purpose to engage in work does not lie in the work itself, but for other reasons.<sup>38</sup> As a consequence, they will not pay much attention to their work development, and thus they will invest fewer resources to acquire work-related knowledge and skills. Even when facing FSSB, individuals scoring low in intrinsic motivation find it hard to have a feeling of thriving at work. We thus propose that thriving at work can act as a key resource, strengthening the positive relationship between FSSB and thriving at work.

H3 The relationship between FSSB and thriving at work is moderated by intrinsic motivation, such that the positive relationship will be stronger for subordinates with a higher level of intrinsic motivation.

## Method

### Samples and Procedures

This paper uses the convenience sampling method to distribute our questionnaires. A Chinese online questionnaire platform “[www.wenjuanxing.com](http://www.wenjuanxing.com)” was used to help us randomly distribute our questionnaires. This paper is a general theoretical study which covers several industries. Hence, a total of 400 questionnaires were distributed in Fujian, Guangdong, Hunan, Shandong and Henan provinces in China, covering industries such as the internet industry, service industry and manufacturing industry and so on. The research sample in this paper is employees in the enterprises. Because non-enterprise employees such as farmers, their work-life boundaries are often not clear, and they also lack leadership situations. This paper thus excludes non-enterprise workers, such as farmers, and students. At the same time, this paper also removes invalid samples whose answers are the same. A total of 316 valid questionnaires were finally retrieved (79.00%) Regarding the demographic information of this study, the average age was 35.37 years (SD=10.57). In addition, there were 135 male participants, which took a percentage of 42.86%. And there were 180 females, accounting for 57.14% of the participants. Moreover, the participants who own a bachelor’s degree represented the highest proportion, accounting for 45.71% of the total sample. In this study, the average working tenure of the employees was 12.77 years (SD=10.91). There were 215 married samples (68.25%) and 100 unmarried samples (31.75%). Moreover, the average family population was 4.18 (SD=1.84).

### Measures

All the English scales were translated into Chinese according to the back-translation method proposed by Brislin (1986).<sup>39</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all the items in this study included a 5-point Likert response format, ranging from 1 (“strongly disagree”) to 5 (“strongly agree”).

**Work-family enrichment:** We used a simplified 4-item scale adapted to assess work-family enrichment.<sup>40</sup> Sample questions included: “The things you do at work help you deal with personal and practical issues at home.” In this study, Cronbach’s alpha for the work-family enrichment scale was 0.81, which reflects good reliability.

**Family supportive supervisor behaviors (FSSB):** Using the 4-item scale adapted by Hammer et al we assessed the FSSB accordingly.<sup>14</sup> For example, the question was “Your supervisor makes you feel comfortable talking to him/her about your conflicts between work and non-work.” Cronbach’s alpha for the FSSB scale in this study was 0.82.

**Thriving at work:** Using a 10-item scale adapted from Porath et al (2012), thriving at work was assessed accordingly.<sup>32</sup> The example question was “I find myself learning often.” Cronbach’s alpha for the thriving at work scale in this study was 0.84, reflecting good reliability.

**Intrinsic motivation:** We measured intrinsic motivation using the 4-item scale developed by Grant (2008), which has been testified by Zhang et al in the Chinese context.<sup>38</sup> In this study, Cronbach’s alpha of the intrinsic motivation scale was 0.90, reflecting good reliability.

Empirical work has largely supported this view that there is a positive relationship between tenure and work-family enrichment. Because individuals with longer tenure will have more experience in work-family boundary management, which might enhance the level of work-family enrichment.<sup>41</sup> At the same time, based on the social role theory, the gender of men and women will also affect work-family enrichment.<sup>11</sup> Individuals’ marital status will affect work-family enrichment by influencing family structure. Given this, this study selected demographic variables such as gender, tenure, and individual marital status as control variables.

## Results

### Common Method Variance

Common method variance is the variance that can be caused by the same measurement or the same source of samples.<sup>42</sup> In addition, our variables are only measured by self-report, which may indicate the problem of common method variance.<sup>43</sup> Hence to address potential common method bias in our model, we conducted Harman’s single-factor technique and confirmatory factor analysis. First, we take the method of Harman’s single-factor technique.<sup>44</sup> We loaded all the items of our 4 variables on a single variable and restricted them onto one factor with the method of principal-axis

factor analysis and constrained the analysis with no rotation. The result shows the variance of the first principal component was 35.48%, less than 50%.<sup>45</sup> Therefore, we can know that CMV was not a serious problem in this survey. Next, this paper also takes the confirmatory factor analysis to check the common method deviation.<sup>46</sup> We loaded all the items we used in this survey into one factor, and then compared the index of model fit between the one-factor model with the original four-factor model. In our result, there is a significant difference in the model fits between the one-factor model ( $\chi^2=1374$ ,  $df=209$ ,  $CFI=0.67$ ,  $TFI=0.61$ ,  $RMSEA=0.13$ ) and four-factor model ( $\chi^2=581$ ,  $df=203$ ,  $CFI=0.89$ ,  $TFI=0.87$ ,  $RMSEA=0.08$ ). And the model fit of the one-factor model is much worse ( $\Delta\chi^2=793$ ,  $\Delta df=7$ ,  $P<0.01$ ). In conclusion, there is no serious common method variance in our study.

## Confirmatory Factor Analysis

In this part, AMOS 26.0 was used to conduct the confirmatory factor analysis to test the validity of the four-factor model, which contains FSSB, intrinsic motivation, thriving at work and work-family enrichment. As shown in Table 1, we compare the four-factor model used in this study with the alternative three-factor model, two-factor model, and one-factor model, and find that there is a significant difference between these models. The results show that the four-factor model fits the best ( $RMSEA \leq 0.08$ ,  $CFI \geq 0.80$ ,  $TLI \geq 0.80$ ).

## Descriptive Statistical Analysis and Correlation Analysis

The mean, standard deviation (SD) and correlation matrix of the control variables and main variables are shown in Table 2. The results show that there is a positive relationship between FSSB and thriving at work ( $r = 0.37$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), work-family enrichment ( $r = 0.32$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), and intrinsic motivation ( $r = 0.27$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Thriving at work is positively correlated with work-family enrichment ( $r = 0.48$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). In addition, there is a positive relation between intrinsic

**Table 1** Confirmatory Factor Analysis

	$\chi^2$	df	RMSEA	CFI	TLI
Four-factor Model	581	203	0.08	0.89	0.87
Three-factor Model	781	206	0.09	0.83	0.80
Two-factor Model	1121	208	0.12	0.72	0.69
One-factor Model	1374	209	0.13	0.65	0.61

**Notes:** The four-factor model is "Work-family Enrichment, FSSB, Intrinsic Motivation and Thriving at Work". The three-factor model is "Work-family enrichment, FSSB, intrinsic motivation + Thriving at Work". The two-factor model is "Work-family enrichment + FSSB, intrinsic motivation + Thriving at Work". The single factor model is "Work-family Enrichment + Intrinsic motivation + FSSB + Thriving at Work".

**Table 2** Means, Standard Deviations and Intercorrelations Between Variables

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Gender	1.57	0.50	1						
2. Working Tenure	12.78	10.91	-0.13*	1					
3. Marital Status	0.68	0.47	-0.05	0.60**	1				
4. FSSB	2.80	0.85	0.13*	-0.14*	-0.08	1			
5. Intrinsic Motivation	3.18	0.91	0.01	0.02	-0.01	0.27**	1		
6. Thriving at Work	3.31	0.63	0.02	0.02	-0.04	0.37**	0.68**	1	
7. Work-family Enrichment	3.24	0.90	-0.07	0.09	0.11	0.32**	0.45**	0.48**	1

**Notes:** \* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ ; Please note that: "FSSB" is the abbreviation of "Family Supportive Supervisor Behaviors".

motivation and thriving at work ( $r = 0.68, p < 0.01$ ), and work-family enrichment ( $r = 0.45, p < 0.01$ ). The results of the correlation analysis primarily support the hypothesis we propose.

## Hypothesis Testing

Using SPSS 26.0, we conducted a regression analysis of the variables. After considering control variables, it can be seen from Table 3 that FSSB positively predicts work-family enrichment (model 3:  $\beta=0.35, p<0.01$ ). Thus, our H1 can be proved. There is a positive relationship between FSSB and work-family enrichment. FSSB also positively predicts thriving at work (model 1:  $\beta=0.38, p<0.01$ ). Thriving at work positively predicts work-family enrichment (model 4:  $\beta=0.42, p<0.01$ ). After considering thriving at work in the model, FSSB still positively predicts work-family enrichment (model 4:  $\beta=0.19, p<0.01$ ). Therefore, the relationship between FSSB and work-family enrichment can be mediated by thriving at work. In addition, we used the bootstrapping technique in the PROCESS macro procedures to test the mediation effect.<sup>47</sup> As shown in Table 4, the indirect effect of FSSB on work-family enrichment via thriving at work was significant (Effect Size = 0.17, [LL95% CI, UL95% CI] = [0.11, 0.24]). At the same time, the direct effect of FSSB on work-family enrichment was also significant (Effect Size = 0.21, [LL95% CI, UL95% CI] = [0.10, 0.32]). Therefore, we

**Table 3** Regression Analytic Results

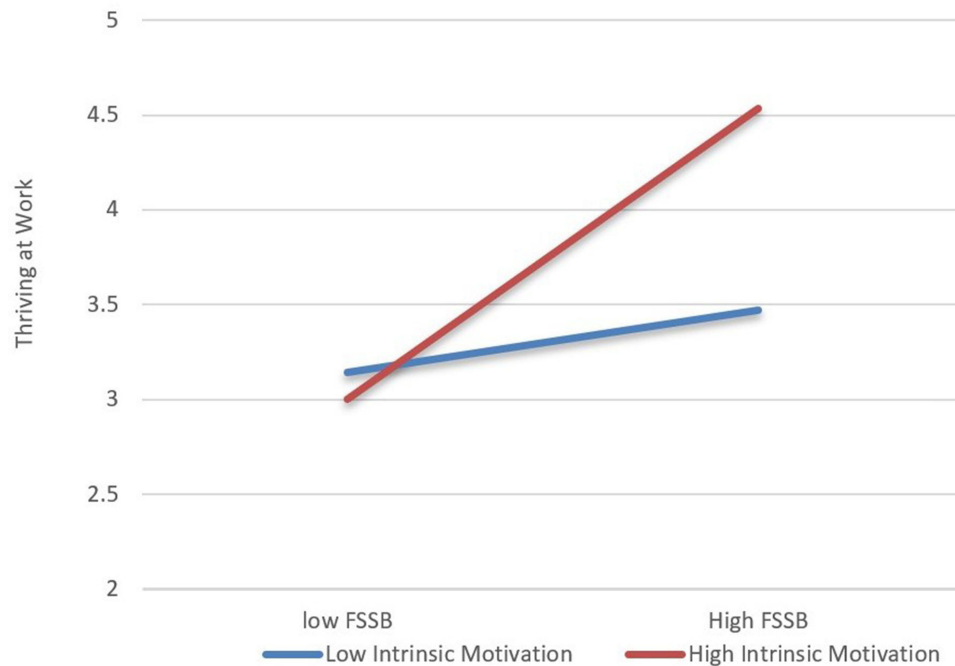
	Thriving At Work		Work-Family Enrichment	
	MODEL1	MODEL2	MODEL3	MODEL4
Control Variables				
Gender	-0.02	-0.01	-0.10	-0.09
Working Tenure	0.12	0.01	0.07	0.03
Marital Status	-0.08	-0.08	0.08	0.12*
Independent Variable				
FSSB	0.38**	0.16**	0.35**	0.19**
Mediator				
Thriving at Work				0.42**
Moderator				
Intrinsic Motivation		0.46**		
Interactions				
INT1		0.06*		
R <sup>2</sup>	0.15	0.72	0.14	0.28
$\Delta R^2$	0.14	0.51	0.12	0.27

**Notes:** \* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ ; INT1 = FSSB\* Intrinsic Motivation; Please note that: "FSSB" is the abbreviation of "Family Supportive Supervisor Behaviors"; INT1 means the interaction of centred FSSB and Intrinsic Motivation.

**Table 4** Bootstrap Analysis of Mediation

	Effect Size	Effect Size Ratio	Boot SE	LL 95% CI	UL 95% CI
Direct Effect	0.21	55.26%	0.06	0.10	0.32
Indirect Effect	0.17	44.74%	0.03	0.11	0.24
Total Effect	0.38	100.00%	0.06	0.26	0.49





**Figure 2** Simple slope analysis.

can further ensure that thriving at work plays a mediating role in the relationship between FSSB and work-family enrichment. Thus, H2 is supported.

To explore the moderating effect, we first mean-centred the score FSSB and thriving at work, and then constructed the interaction term (named INT1) between FSSB and intrinsic motivation. According to Table 3, the interaction between FSSB and intrinsic motivation is positively related to thriving at work (model 2:  $\beta=0.06$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). Therefore, intrinsic motivation can strengthen the positive relationship between FSSB and thriving at work, which primarily supports H3.

We adopt the simple slope test to further analyse the moderating effect of intrinsic motivation. The simple slope test compares two conditional slopes estimated for employees with a high level of intrinsic motivation (the mean of intrinsic motivation plus 1 SD) and employees with a low level of intrinsic motivation (the mean of intrinsic motivation minus 1 SD), aiming to test whether there is a significant difference between the two levels. From Figure 2, we can conclude that FSSB will have a weaker impact on thriving at work for those who have a lower level of intrinsic motivation ( $\beta=0.11$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). And FSSB will have a stronger impact on thriving at work for those with a higher level of intrinsic motivation ( $\beta=0.22$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). Therefore, our H3 was supported.

## Discussion and Conclusion

This study explores the mechanism of the effect of FSSB on work-family enrichment from the perspective of the work-home resource model. The results show that there is a positive relationship between FSSB and thriving at work. In addition, thriving at work mediates the positive relationship between FSSB and work-family enrichment. Finally, intrinsic motivation positively moderates the relationship between FSSB and thriving at work.

## Theoretical Implications

This study extends prior works on FSSB, thriving at work and key resources in several ways. The first contribution is that it offers a deeper understanding of the effect mechanism of FSSB theory. By exploring the mediating role of thriving at work in the relationship between FSSB and work-family enrichment, this study thus extends our knowledge of the mechanism of the effect of informal organizational support on employees' work-family interface. Earlier studies mostly focused on the cognitive mechanism of FSSB on work-family enrichment. Greenhaus and Powell (2006) indicated that

a supportive work context can influence employees' level of work-family enrichment by increasing their skills resources and perspective resources.<sup>2</sup> However, FSSB has a richer connotation, including instrumental support (such as skills, and resources), and affective support (such as verbal care, sympathetic and respectful expressions and so on.<sup>9</sup> Therefore, we believe that thriving at work, an individual's combined positive cognitive-affective state can more comprehensively reflect the influencing process of FSSB.<sup>48</sup> According to Spreitzer and Porath (2014), both the cognitive and affective paths should be considered when exploring the psychological mechanism of human growth.<sup>19</sup> Thriving at work describes employees' feelings of "learning" and "vitality" in the workplace, reflecting a positive mental state both in employees' recognition and affect. Thus, we believe that thriving at work as the mediating role can more comprehensively capture employees' psychological mechanisms when facing FSSB. At the same time, this paper also responds to previous research on FSSB,<sup>49,50</sup> indicating that the flexibility of informal organizational support may come from the affective support and practical skills provided by the organization.

Our second contribution is the development of thriving at work theory. This study regards thriving at work as a sort of resource, which enriches the connotation of thriving at work and thus expands the study of thriving at work to the family field. Previous studies tended to explore the relationship between contextual work resources and employees' thriving at work from the perspective of self-determination theory.<sup>15,19</sup> For example, Spreitzer and Porath (2014) indicated that a supportive work context can nurture employees' agentic behaviors.<sup>19</sup> In addition, agentic behaviors can be regarded as the engine of thriving at work. In our study, we view the above process from the perspective of resources. Therefore, the generation of thriving at work can be understood as a process of contextual work resources enriching personal resources. Since resources can be loosely defined as anything perceived as valued under a certain context,<sup>51,52</sup> we thus call for more explorations on how thriving at work influences employees' behaviors, states or other aspects from the new perspective. On the other hand, we answered the call from Porath et al and expanded the study of thriving at work to the family field by regarding thriving at work as a personal resource. In line with the work-home resource model, contextual work resources provided by an organization can enhance employees' accumulation of personal resources.<sup>32</sup> Then, personal resources will spill over to family fields, thus enabling a better family performance.<sup>18</sup> Regarding thriving at work as a personal resource responds to Russo et al research.<sup>8</sup> Contextual family resources can contribute to the enhancement of personal resources by accumulating personal resources such as thriving at work. In other words, as a personal resource, thriving at work can connect employees' work and family fields. Therefore, our study contributes to the combination of the thriving at work literature and work-family interface literature.

The third contribution of this study is the exploration of the moderating role of intrinsic motivation between FSSB and thriving at work, which expands the boundary condition of the effect mechanism of FSSB. Previous studies explored the boundary condition of FSSB, such as the need for caring, and family identity salience.<sup>2,8</sup> Past researches are rather disparate and disconnected, mainly concerning individuals' attitudes and states while ignoring individuals' motivations. Motivation answers the reasons for individuals' behavior and can significantly affect individual's behavior and mental state.<sup>24,25</sup> In line with the work-home resource model, key resources can facilitate the selection, transformation, and application of other resources more consistently and stably.<sup>18</sup> This study chose intrinsic motivation as the key resource. Therefore, employees with a high level of intrinsic motivation should have a stronger feeling of thriving at work.<sup>23</sup>

## Practical Implications

The current results have several implications for practice. First, the results show that there is a positive relationship between FSSB and thriving at work. In addition, the resources generated from the process of thriving at work can spill over to the field of family, facilitating a better family outcome. From an organizational perspective, our results have certain guiding significance for building a family-friendly organization. FSSB is a sort of leadership behavior that can be copied and learned. Therefore, relevant training on FSSB can be conducted by the organization to increase informal support for employees' families. At the same time, the organization can improve formal family-friendly policies, facilitating a family-friendly atmosphere in the organization. From the supervisor's perspective, in line with FSSB theory, there are multiple mechanisms by which supervisors provide support for the fulfilment of employees' family responsibilities.<sup>14</sup> Taking emotional support as an example, supervisors can talk to employees about family issues regularly, and show respect and care toward the employees' family needs. Another example is instrumental support,

supervisors can enact supportive behaviors in daily management practices to meet the family needs of employees. Specifically, the supervisor can allow employees who have urgent matters at home to leave work earlier. Likewise, supervisors also can hold meetings for experience sharing regularly, aiming to share and communicate with employees the experience and strategies for a better family outcome.

Second, the result implies that intrinsic motivation can enable employees to acquire contextual work resources more efficiently. In other words, intrinsic motivation can positively moderate the relationship between FSSB and thriving at work. These results can offer significant implications for employees' selection and placement in the process of human resource management. Intrinsic motivation is the extent to which employees engage in work for the work itself. Employees with a high level of intrinsic motivation will experience consistent enjoyment when engaging in work.<sup>24</sup> Accordingly, the organization should select and place staff based on the principle of "person-job fit". At the same time, employees should actively communicate with the organization and choose positions based on their abilities and interests.

## Limitations and Future Research

Our study is not without limitations. First, cross-sectional data were collected in this research, which limits the inference of causality between FSSB and thriving at work. However, the complexity of the relationship between thriving at work and work-family enrichment also should be considered. On the one hand, in line with our conclusions in this study, employees' thriving at work will lead to a higher level of work-family enrichment. On the other hand, Russo et al indicated that employees' work-family enrichment may spill over to the field of work, contributing to the perception of thriving at work.<sup>8</sup> For that reason, we call for a longitudinal design in future studies to test the causal relationships and dynamic processes among FSSB, thriving at work and work-family enrichment more rigorously. In addition, our variables are only measured by self-report, which may indicate the problem of common method bias. To address potential common method bias in our model, we conducted Harman's single-factor technique and confirmatory factor analysis.<sup>44,46</sup> The results show that there is no serious common method bias in our research. Future researchers can design their research to avoid common method research. For example, they might use multi-resource evaluation methods such as spouse's evaluation of work-family enrichment, or collect data at different time points. This paper is a general theoretical study which does not cover a specific industry. Although there are some commonalities in the cross-industry situation, future study still needs to pay more attention to the difference across industries. Currently, scholars have conducted work-family research in different fields. For example, Beckman et al explored the work-family outcome between navy couples in the context of a mix of segmentation and integration behaviors.<sup>53</sup> Hence, future studies can focus on a specific industry to enhance the rigour of the study and to further explore the cross-industry work-family outcome.

Second, we consider only the positive impact of thriving at work on the family outcome, while ignoring the potential negative impact. In line with the work-home resource model, in the supportive context, thriving at work can spill over to the family field as a personal resource, thus enhancing the family outcome.<sup>18</sup> However, Porath et al indicated that employees may choose not to invest the resources generated from the process of thriving at work to their families while continuing to invest in their work field for future thriving.<sup>32</sup> Therefore, the ignorance of the family field will finally lead to the detriment of the family. We propose that this adverse direction was moderated by certain characteristics of employees. Taking family motivation as an example, employees with a low level of family motivation will not make much effort to benefit their family, and thus, they will tend to invest fewer personal resources in the family field.<sup>38,54,55</sup> Therefore, we call for future studies to explore under which boundary conditions thriving at work will harm employees' family outcomes.

Third, in this study, we explored the positive moderating role of intrinsic motivation on the generation process of thriving at work. Furthermore, we call for a more precise study on how situational level intrinsic motivation influences the generation process of thriving at work. In our study, intrinsic motivation in the workplace is referring to one's effort to engage in work due to the interest and satisfaction perceived in the work process. From the perspective of the work-home resource model, we propose that, as a key resource, intrinsic motivation can enable employees to adopt a more efficient working style.<sup>18</sup> However, Shin and Grant (2018) found that situational level intrinsic motivation, referring to the extent to which employees are driven to work on specific tasks due to interest and enjoyment, has a more complex effect.<sup>35</sup> In the workplace, a job consists of different tasks, but not every task is interesting and enjoyable. Consequently, different tasks are perceived with different levels of intrinsic motivation. When an employee is over

immersed in a certain task, it may harm the performance of another task, thereby affecting the overall work performance. We propose that different levels of situational level intrinsic motivation may finally reduce work efficiency, thus hindering the generation of employees' thriving at work. Therefore, future studies can adopt a multilevel analysis to further explore the moderating role that situational level intrinsic motivation plays in the generation process of thriving at work.

## Conclusion

The conclusions of this study are as follows. First, FSSB is positively related to work-family enrichment. Second, thriving at work can mediate the positive relationship between FSSB and work-family enrichment. Third, intrinsic motivation can positively moderate the relationship between FSSB and thriving at work. Facing FSSB, individuals who are high in intrinsic motivation will sense a stronger feeling of thriving at work. However, individuals who are low in intrinsic motivation will hardly experience the feeling of thriving at work.

## Data Sharing Statement

The datasets are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

## Ethics Approval and Informed Consent

(1) Because our study is non-interventional (the survey), the ethical committee of Huaqiao University has granted us the exemption of ethical approval.

(2) Before the survey, we informed all the participants why the research is being conducted. The participants were investigated whether they were willing to attend this research and whether they are willing to let data be published as well. In addition, they can quit the research anytime if they wish. We also promised that the data will be anonymous. The identifiable information was eliminated as well.

(3) The research reported in the manuscript respects strictly the Declaration of Helsinki Ethical Principles.

## Consent for Publication

We promise that the article has not been published in any language before; it is not being considered concurrently for publication elsewhere; and all authors have worked on the manuscript and approved the submission to your journal.

## Author Contributions

We promise that (1) all the authors made an equally significant contribution to this paper in the process of conception, study design, execution, acquisition of data, analysis and interpretation. (2) All the authors have drafted or written, substantially revised or critically reviewed the article. (3) All the authors have agreed on the journal to which the article will be submitted, and reviewed and agreed on all versions of the article before submission including the revision, as well as all agree to be accountable for all aspects of the work.

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