

Call for Family Support: How Working Mothers Enhance Job Embeddedness through Family

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A paper accepted for presentation at the *British Academy of Management (BAM) 2025 Conference* to be held in Kent, UK, over September 1-5, 2025

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Abstract

This study investigates how family social support enhances working mothers' job embeddedness by examining the mediating role of psychological availability and the moderating role of family motivation. Drawing on the integrative view of role accumulation theory, conservation of resources theory, and social support resource theory, we propose that family support both generates and preserves personal resources, thereby boosting mothers' psychological availability. In turn, psychological availability facilitates job embeddedness. Moreover, high family motivation amplifies the direct link between psychological availability and embeddedness, although it does not condition the entire mediation. These insights contribute to the existing literature on dual-role sustainability and inform supportive organizational practices.

(5954 words)

INTRODUCTION

Working mothers are commonly defined “as a woman with the ability to combine a career with the added responsibility of raising a child” (Poduval & Poduval, 2009, p. 64). While these mothers often continue contributing to organizations after childbirth, taking on the additional working role intensifies demands arising from multiple familial roles (Hall, 1987). Specifically, responsibilities as a mother, spouse, or caregiver, compounded by employee obligations, create complex circumstances that can be both challenging and conflicting (Weaver & Ussher, 1997). Women frequently find themselves overwhelmed once they return to the workplace if role requirements at home and at work collide (Mitchelson, 2009). Indeed, research has shown that such heightened role pressures increase the likelihood of turnover intentions (Ribeiro et al., 2023; Choi et al., 2005). These findings illustrate the importance of building environments in which working mothers receive effective support to sustain their organizational contributions despite complex role demands.

Researchers and practitioners alike have thus intensified attention on working mothers and the social support mechanisms enabling them to handle multiple roles. Three notable characteristics emerge within this literature. First, many studies position work–family conflict as a central construct for understanding working mothers’ experiences. Although this focus on conflict has illuminated how multiple roles lead to negative outcomes such as poor health (Allen et al., 2000; Frone, 2000) or lower commitment (Allen et al., 2000; Netemeyer et al., 1996), a growing consensus holds that a “positive psychological” lens is also needed (McClellan et al., 2021; Lin et al., 2020; Siu et al., 2010; Tang et al., 2017). Specifically, scholars have called for understanding how certain resources or states—rather than merely the absence of conflict—help working mothers thrive. This resource-focused perspective may elucidate mechanisms of resilience and engagement that are otherwise overlooked by a conflict-based framework.

Second, while existing research highlights the importance of social support for working mothers, much of this work predominantly addresses support from the workplace domain—such as supportive supervisors, coworkers, or organizational policies (Allen & Shanock, 2012; Dechawatanapaisal, 2022; Casper et al., 2002). Undoubtedly, workplace support is crucial. However, support from family members can also be pivotal in sustaining well-being (Hong et al., 2013; Malik et al., 2010; Rao et al., 2003). Guided by social support resource theory (Hobfoll et al., 1990)—an extension of conservation of resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll, 1989)—the involvement of spouses, parents, siblings, or extended kin can provide essential emotional, instrumental, and informational resources for mothers balancing dual (or multiple) roles. Hobfoll et al. (1990, p. 467) argue that “social support functions as a primary mechanism for conserving personal resources by providing individuals with tangible and intangible assistance in times of need.” In the context of working mothers, strong family support can buffer stress by reducing or preventing the loss of valued resources, such as time and psychological energy, which might otherwise be consumed by overwhelming domestic tasks.

Third, research on working mothers' social support often examines relatively distal or macro-level outcomes (e.g., career development, job performance) (Hong et al., 2013; Malik et al., 2010). These outcomes are undeniably important, yet they sometimes overlook more immediate or "proximal" indicators that anchor individuals in organizations. Job embeddedness (Mitchell et al., 2001) is especially pertinent here. It captures the depth of attachment an individual feels toward a job, reflecting the degree to which leaving would be personally or professionally costly (Swider et al., 2011). As working mothers frequently face significant pressure to quit (Mitchelson, 2009; Ribeiro et al., 2023), understanding social support's influence on embeddedness is essential for designing interventions that not only reduce turnover intentions but also proactively boost a mother's commitment and sense of belonging.

Building on these observations, the present study adopts a positive psychology perspective (McClean et al., 2021; Siu et al., 2010) to investigate how family social support (hereafter, family support) enhances working mothers' job embeddedness. Drawing particularly on role accumulation theory (Sieber, 1974), COR theory (Hobfoll, 1989), and social support resource theory (Hobfoll, 1990), we argue that family support serves dual functions: it generates new resources (e.g., emotional resilience, broadened social networks) and preserves existing resources (by reducing role overload and stress) that mothers need to remain embedded in their organizations. This viewpoint suggests that social support from family can counteract the conflicts arising from home and work, reinforcing a mother's ability to stay mentally and emotionally present at work (Barnett & Hyde, 2001).

To further elucidate this process, the paper introduces psychological availability as a key intervening factor that connects family support to job embeddedness. Psychological availability is defined as "the sense of having the physical, emotional or psychological resources to personally engage at a particular moment" (Kahn, 1990, p. 714). Li et al. (2022) extend this by noting that psychological availability is "a key positive psychological state at work that elicit[s] work engagement, job performance, creativity, and trait gratitude" (Li et al., p. 819). Role accumulation theory (Sieber, 1974) implies that family support can enhance psychological availability by preventing the depletion of cognitive and emotional energy, while COR theory highlights how this support preserves resources that would otherwise be lost to role strain (Hobfoll, 1989, 2001). If working mothers are less preoccupied with childrearing or domestic responsibilities due to robust family assistance, they can focus on day-to-day challenges and opportunities at work, thereby experiencing greater psychological availability.

Beyond this mediating role, the study also examines how family motivation moderates the path from psychological availability to job embeddedness. Family motivation, conceptualized as an intrinsic drive to work primarily for the sake of one's family (Menges et al., 2017), represents a family-oriented personal resource that can amplify the payoff from job-facing personal resources. In line with the resource-based framework, mothers with higher family motivation are more likely to leverage the mental space granted by psychological availability into deeper organizational ties, because they view workplace success as fundamental to fulfilling their family responsibilities (Zhang

et al., 2019). In other words, the more a working mother is motivated by family considerations, the more effectively that mother can convert any additional resource (e.g., availability) into a stronger sense of embeddedness.

Accordingly, this paper attempts to fill existing gaps by analyzing how family support shapes working mothers' job embeddedness through the mediating role of psychological availability and the moderating role of family motivation. A quantitative study was undertaken to examine (a) whether psychological availability mediates that relationship; and (b) whether family motivation amplifies the effect of psychological availability on job embeddedness, thus conditioning the mediation pathway. This research design offers insight into how family-based resources facilitate deeper organizational integration among working mothers—insight particularly relevant to addressing persistent turnover rates and career discontinuities often observed in this population (Choi et al., 2005; Ribeiro et al., 2023).

Our study contributes to the literature on social support for working mothers in three key ways. First, it goes beyond traditional work–family conflict perspectives by highlighting how family-based resources do more than mitigate demands—they actively generate and preserve essential resources, enabling working mothers to thrive across multiple domains. Second, it presents an integrated model rooted in role accumulation theory, COR theory, and social support resource theory, with psychological availability as the central pathway linking family support to job embeddedness. Third, it demonstrates that family motivation moderates this pathway, revealing how high motivation amplifies the impact of family support on embeddedness. This insight informs targeted strategies for employers and policymakers, showing that even strong support can vary in effectiveness depending on individual motivations. Figure 1 depicts the analytical framework of the current study.

FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE

THEORY AND HYPOTHESES

Theoretical Foundation on the Relationship between Working Mothers' Family Support and Job Embeddedness

Working mothers typically juggle significant professional and domestic responsibilities, encountering unique demands that can affect well-being and organizational outcomes (Barnett & Hyde, 2001; Poduval & Poduval, 2009). One such outcome is job embeddedness, referring to how connected individuals feel to their work roles and how difficult they perceive it would be to leave (Mitchell et al., 2001). To explain why family support enhances job embeddedness among working mothers, the current study integrates role accumulation theory (Sieber, 1974), COR theory (Hobfoll, 1989), and social support resource theory (Hobfoll et al., 1990). All three perspectives underscore the central importance of resources—including time, energy, coping capacity, and social support—and illuminate how these resources can be generated, preserved, or depleted.

Role accumulation theory provides a foundation for understanding that multiple roles need

not only create strain; they can also yield net benefits if properly supported (Sieber, 1974). According to this perspective, working mothers can experience growth and enrichment in their professional roles when they receive adequate family support. This support acts as a resource-generating mechanism (Barnett & Hyde, 2001) by equipping mothers with emotional backing and practical assistance, thereby enabling them to capitalize on the advantages of having multiple roles (e.g., broader social networks, increased resilience).

COR theory (Hobfoll, 1989) complements this view by explaining that individuals strive to conserve and acquire valued resources—ranging from physical and financial assets to psychological and social supports. Under COR theory, stress manifests when individuals perceive a threat of resource loss or fail to gain sufficient resources to offset ongoing demands (Hobfoll, 2001). For working mothers, family support can preserve emotional, cognitive, and temporal resources, safeguarding against the burnout or depletion that would otherwise result from excessive role demands (Frone, 2000).

Finally, social support resource theory (Hobfoll et al., 1990) highlights that social support—particularly from close family members—serves as a primary mechanism for conserving personal resources. Hobfoll et al. (1990) note, “Social support functions as a primary mechanism for conserving personal resources by providing individuals with tangible and intangible assistance in times of need” (Hobfoll et al., p. 467). When family members share household tasks or offer emotional reassurance, working mothers can retain greater mental bandwidth for professional obligations (Allen & Shanock, 2012). This synergy of resource generation (via role accumulation theory) and resource preservation (via COR theory) suggests that family support enables a more sustainable balance between work and family roles, fostering an enhanced connection to the workplace.

Moreover, research points to the distinction between job-related personal resources (e.g., psychological availability) and family-related personal resources (e.g., family motivation). Psychological availability is a job-facing resource, reflecting the degree to which an individual can be fully engaged mentally and emotionally in work tasks (Kahn, 1990; May et al., 2004). Family motivation, in contrast, is a family-facing resource, describing an intrinsic drive to work in service of family well-being (Menges et al., 2017). Role accumulation theory, COR theory, and social support resource theory jointly clarify how these resources are gained and safeguarded. Specifically, family support enhances job-related resources by preventing depletion and promoting the accumulation of new capacities (e.g., stress coping skills). At the same time, high family motivation intensifies the impact of job-related resources on crucial work outcomes (Zhang et al., 2019).

Family Support and Psychological Availability

Family support can be understood as emotional, instrumental, and informational assistance that helps working mothers address demands in the home domain (Michel et al., 2010; Hong et al., 2013; Zimet et al., 1988). From a role accumulation standpoint, having family members who offer

practical assistance (e.g., sharing childcare, household tasks) or emotional support (e.g., empathy, validation) represents a resource-generating mechanism (Sieber, 1974). This mechanism can lead to increased resilience and a broader social safety net, thereby enhancing the mother's capacity to perform effectively at work (Barnett & Hyde, 2001). Simultaneously, from a COR perspective (Hobfoll, 1989), such support preserves personal resources by preventing the excessive drain of time, energy, and mental focus that would be required if the mother had to handle all domestic responsibilities unassisted (Frone, 2000).

When these resources are effectively generated and preserved, psychological availability—defined as the ability to remain mentally and emotionally present at work (Kahn, 1990)—becomes more attainable. Mothers encountering fewer role-related conflicts at home can channel greater cognitive bandwidth into workplace tasks (May et al., 2004). Empirical studies reinforce this point. Makola et al. (2020) found that first-time mothers who reported strong family support were better able to concentrate on their jobs, partly because stressors related to caregiving were mitigated. Moreover, Allen (2001) concluded that when employees perceive family-supportive environments, they are less distracted by unresolved personal demands, resulting in improved psychological states at work.

Therefore, this resource-based rationale indicates that family support not only generates additional coping capacity (role accumulation theory) but also preserves existing emotional and cognitive assets (COR theory), culminating in enhanced psychological availability. Formally:

Hypothesis 1: Family support is positively related to psychological availability among working mothers.

Psychological Availability and Job Embeddedness

Job embeddedness represents the extent to which employees feel anchored to their roles due to (a) fit with organizational/community values, (b) links with colleagues and community members, and (c) perceived sacrifice if they depart (Mitchell et al., 2001). Drawing on the integrated theoretical perspective from the three theoretical tenets as described above, psychological availability is a key job-related personal resource that influences embeddedness in several ways.

From a role accumulation viewpoint, psychological availability can magnify the potential gains derived from holding multiple roles, as it fosters a sense of efficacy and stability at work (Sieber, 1974). Rather than feeling fragmented by competing demands, individuals who retain mental clarity on the job are more likely to find a rewarding “fit” (Barnett & Hyde, 2001). This alignment arises because psychological availability heightens attention to workplace culture, values, and interpersonal norms, leading to stronger identification with the organization.

Through a COR theory lens, employees who maintain high psychological availability benefit from preserving mental and emotional resources that might otherwise be depleted by stressors (Hobfoll, 1989). Being mentally present allows them to invest in building links—namely,

relationships with supervisors, peers, and clients—without feeling overextended. These links serve as relational resources that protect against resource loss (Hobfoll, 2001), further embedding employees in the organization. Additionally, the more psychologically invested individuals become in their roles, the higher their perceived sacrifice in leaving, since they stand to lose both social capital and the intangible rewards of meaningful engagement.

Supporting these arguments, research shows that employees with greater attention and emotional availability form deeper interpersonal bonds, exhibit heightened work engagement, and experience more robust embeddedness (Binyamin & Carmeli, 2010; Ghosh & Gurunathan, 2015). Kahn (1990) posits that “people who make themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally available during role performances tend to personalize and own the work experiences” (Kahn, 1990, p. 705), which translates into a stronger sense of belonging. Because working mothers typically risk more distractions from the home domain, preserving a sufficient level of psychological availability can be particularly impactful for securing a sense of embeddedness.

Hence, considering the resource-based perspective that psychological availability is both supported by resource accumulation and resource conservation, it follows that higher psychological availability promotes connections and investment in the workplace:

Hypothesis 2: Psychological availability is positively related to job embeddedness among working mothers.

Mediating Role of Psychological Availability in the Family Support–Job Embeddedness Relationship

Based on Hypothesis 1 and Hypothesis 2, it is reasonable to propose a mediating process in which family support promotes job embeddedness through psychological availability. Specifically, the integration of role accumulation theory and COR theory (augmented by social support resource theory) clarifies how resource generation and preservation form a causal chain linking family support to embeddedness.

When working mothers receive high levels of family support, the resource gains (Sieber, 1974) might include time saved from domestic chores, emotional buoyancy from knowing that loved ones are behind them, and a broader sense of role efficacy (Barnett & Hyde, 2001). Concurrently, resource preservation (Hobfoll, 1989) materializes as fewer stressors intruding on mental bandwidth, preventing the erosion of psychological reserves. This surplus of resources allows mothers to sustain psychological availability—the mental and emotional presence at work that fosters deeper engagement (May et al., 2004).

Once psychological availability is elevated, employees are positioned to develop stronger fit with the organization, build more links through collegial interactions, and perceive a greater sacrifice in leaving (Mitchell et al., 2001). In other words, psychological availability becomes the proximate determinant that shapes how well an individual can harness and invest resources in the workplace.

Empirical work suggests that such investment stabilizes employment relationships.

Dechawatanapaisal (2022), for instance, demonstrates how supportive environments lead to greater empowerment, which in turn increases embeddedness. Extending that logic, one can argue that support from the family domain—via resource mechanisms—triggers a similar pattern.

Hence, the resource-based view predicts that psychological availability is the key conduit through which family support ultimately enhances job embeddedness:

Hypothesis 3: Psychological availability mediates the positive relationship between family support and job embeddedness among working mothers.

Moderating Role of Family Motivation

Although psychological availability generally fosters higher job embeddedness, the strength of this effect can differ depending on an individual's family motivation—an intrinsic drive to work in order to benefit the family (Menges et al., 2017). Family motivation is conceptualized here as a family-related personal resource, complementing the job-related personal resource of psychological availability (ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012).

Role accumulation theory provides insight into why some individuals capitalize more than others on their job-related resources. Holding multiple roles can yield especially positive outcomes if the interplay between roles is aligned with personal motivations (Barnett & Hyde, 2001). When family motivation is high, the mother perceives a direct link between workplace success and family well-being (Menges et al., 2017). Under these conditions, psychological availability—characterized by focused energy and presence at work—becomes particularly valuable, as it translates more effectively into actions that promote job success, financial security, or career progression (Sieber, 1974).

Meanwhile, COR theory contends that resources gain salience based on individual priorities (Hobfoll, 1989). If working mothers attribute high importance to providing for family members, the resource of psychological availability is leveraged more intensively toward forging stronger workplace bonds (links), clarifying personal and organizational alignment (fit), and recognizing the potential losses (sacrifice) associated with leaving (Mitchell et al., 2001). Karatepe (2013) found that employees who value external support and have a strong sense of duty to others tend to embed themselves more deeply in organizations, precisely because the perceived cost of turnover is amplified.

Thus, high family motivation amplifies the effect of psychological availability on embeddedness: with greater psychological availability, mothers dedicate themselves more fully to the organization, forming robust connections and seeing greater reasons to stay. Conversely, when family motivation is low, psychological availability—while beneficial—may not translate into as strong a driver of embeddedness, because the underlying impetus to remain deeply engaged for family reasons is weaker (Zhang et al., 2019).

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In line with this resource-based rationale, the synergy between job-related resources (psychological availability) and family-related resources (family motivation) is essential for maximizing embeddedness:

Hypothesis 4: Family motivation moderates the positive relationship between psychological availability and job embeddedness among working mothers, such that the relationship is stronger when family motivation is high.

Moderated Mediation of Family Motivation on the Indirect Effect

Bringing together Hypothesis 3 (mediation) and Hypothesis 4 (moderation) leads to the proposition that family motivation conditions the indirect effect of family support on job embeddedness through psychological availability. This is a moderated mediation structure (Hayes, 2018), wherein the mediating role of psychological availability is stronger for those with higher family motivation.

A resource-based perspective clarifies why family support provides resource generation (via additional coping tools, shared domestic tasks) and resource preservation (by preventing depletion), thereby enhancing psychological availability. If the working mother possesses high family motivation, the additional psychological availability is more thoroughly directed toward forging stronger organizational ties, because the mother sees a direct connection between thriving at work and fulfilling family obligations (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006). In other words, the perceived benefits of high psychological availability—improved performance, deeper relationships at work—directly feed into family welfare, thus intensifying embeddedness.

On the other hand, if family motivation is low, the mediating effect of psychological availability is weaker. Even if family support has bolstered psychological availability, the impetus to stay deeply engaged for the sake of family members may be lacking. As a result, job embeddedness may not significantly increase, since the personal stake in translating that availability into embeddedness is less pronounced (Zhang et al., 2019). By combining role accumulation theory and COR theory, one sees that cross-domain resources (family support) only fully materialize into robust organizational attachment when personal motivations align with them (Barnett & Hyde, 2001; Hobfoll, 1989). Hence, the final hypothesis captures this conditional interplay:

Hypothesis 5: Family motivation moderates the indirect effect of family support on job embeddedness via psychological availability, such that the mediated relationship is stronger when family motivation is high.

METHOD

Sample and Procedures

The respondents in this study were working mothers, defined as “a woman with the ability to combine a career with the added responsibility of raising a child” (Poduval & Poduval, 2009, p. 64).

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The primary criterion for participation was that individuals be employed and responsible for raising at least one child.

The recruitment strategy consisted of convenience sampling (Marshall, 1996) supplemented by a snowball procedure (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981). Given that working mothers frequently have limited availability for on-site data collection, an online survey was deemed more practical. Acquaintances who fit the criteria of being actively employed and raising at least one child were initially invited to participate. Subsequently, participants were asked to share the survey link with other potential respondents, which facilitated broader reach within a relatively hard-to-access population. This combined approach enabled the collection of a sufficiently large sample to examine the study's focal constructs.

This study adopted a two-wave survey design to reduce common method bias and capture any temporal variations in responses (Podsakoff et al., 2003; Podsakoff et al., 2012). The survey began with instructions for working mothers to complete only. At Time 1, participants completed a questionnaire assessing their demographic information, family support, psychological availability, and job embeddedness. After a few months, the same participants were invited to complete a Time 2 survey focusing on family motivation. Separating the measurement of family motivation from other constructs helped ensure that respondents were less likely to answer all questions in a uniform manner and reduced the risk of inflated correlations.

A total of 352 invitations were initially distributed, and 304 valid responses were received in the first wave. During the second wave, the same 304 respondents were contacted, and 240 questionnaires were returned, reflecting a decrease in response rate. After removing invalid data (e.g., identical answers for all items, failed attention checks), 201 complete and valid responses were retained for final analysis.

Of the working mothers in the final sample, 73 (36.3%) are from municipality or provincial capitals, 78 (38.8%) are from prefecture-level cities, 50 (24.9%) are from county-level cities, towns or villages, all working mothers are Chinese. 124 (61.7%) are ordinary staff and 77 (38.6%) are managers or directors.

Measures

All constructs were assessed on a six-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = slightly disagree, 4 = slightly agree, 5 = agree, 6 = strongly agree). For measures without an existing Chinese version, a translation and back-translation procedure was used (Schaffer & Riordan, 2003).

Family Support. Family support was measured using items from Jiang's (2001) perceived social support scale, which was adapted from Zimet et al.'s (1988) scale. To ensure applicability, this study employed a revised 20-item scale to measure family support, covering support from spouses, parents, and other relatives. A sample item is "My parents really try to help me." The Cronbach's

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reliability coefficient for this measure was sufficiently high ($\alpha = .90$).

Job Embeddedness. Job embeddedness was measured using a 23-item scale developed by Yang et al. (2011). The original scale by Mitchell et al. (2001) was revised for better suitability in the Chinese context. A sample item is “My values are compatible with the organization’s values.” The reliability coefficient for this measurement scale showed $\alpha = .93$.

Psychological Availability. Psychological availability was measured using a 5-item scale developed by May et al. (2004). A sample item is “I am confident in my ability to deal with the problems that come up in my work.” The reliability coefficient for this measurement scale showed $\alpha = .90$.

Family Motivation. Family motivation was assessed using a 5-item scale created by Menges et al. (2017). A sample item is “It is important for me to do good for my family.” The reliability coefficient for this measurement scale showed $\alpha = .91$.

Control Variables. Following prior research, this study controlled for participants’ age, education level (1 = graduate or postgraduate; 0 = others), living location (1 = municipality or provincial capital; 0 = others), position rank (1 = managers; 0 = non-managers), and type of employing company (1 = stated-owned, government, public institution; 0 = others), as these factors could potentially influence the focal relationships.

Analytical Procedure

Data were analyzed using regression models to assess the relationships among family support, psychological availability, family motivation, and job embeddedness. Specifically, regression analysis tested the direct effects of family support on psychological availability and psychological availability on job embeddedness, and the moderating influence of family motivation on the psychological availability–job embeddedness relationship. A bootstrapping procedure was employed to examine the mediating role of psychological availability in the family support–job embeddedness relationship. Finally, to test the moderated mediation hypothesis, the interaction term (psychological availability $\times$ family motivation) was included, and results were estimated with 5,000 bootstrapped resamples.

RESULTS

Measurement Model Analyses

To test a predefined factor structure, Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was more suitable and performed to evaluate the distinctiveness of the four-factor model (family support, psychological availability, family motivation, and job embeddedness) relative to alternative models. As shown in Table 1, the four-factor model achieved a good fit ($\chi^2=2131.33$; CFI = .90; TLI = .89; RMSEA = .05; SRMR = .08). In contrast, the three-factor, two-factor, and one-factor models exhibited significantly poorer fit than the a priori four-factor model. These results suggest that family support, psychological

availability, family motivation, and job embeddedness are distinct constructs, minimizing concerns about common method bias.

TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

Descriptive statistics and correlations are presented in Table 2. Family support correlated positively with both psychological availability ($r = .51, p < .01$) and job embeddedness ($r = .55, p < .01$), in line with the hypothesized relationships.

TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE

Hypothesis Testing

Table 3 presents the regression results. Model 1 examines the effect of family support on psychological availability. Consistent with Hypothesis 1, family support had a significant positive effect on psychological availability ($\beta = .54, p < .001$). Model 2 includes family support and psychological availability as predictors of job embeddedness, revealing that psychological availability positively predicts job embeddedness ($\beta = .35, p < .001$), supporting Hypothesis 2.

To test Hypothesis 3, which posits that PA mediates the relationship between family support and job embeddedness, a bootstrapping procedure (5,000 resamples) was used. The mediating effect of psychological availability was significant ($\beta = .19$ [95% BCLL = .09; 95% BCUL = .30]). The direct effect ($\beta = .30$ [95% BCLL = .18; 95% BCUL = .43]) and total effect ($\beta = .49$ [95% BCLL = .38; 95% BCUL = .60]) were also significant, indicating a partial mediation. Thus, psychological availability mediates the link between family support and job embeddedness, confirming Hypothesis 3.

TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE

To examine the moderating effect of family motivation, the interaction term (psychological availability (PA) $\times$ family motivation (FM)) was introduced in Model 4. Results showed a significant interaction for job embeddedness ($\beta = .11, p < .05$), indicating that the positive relationship between psychological availability and job embeddedness is stronger when family motivation is high, thus supporting Hypothesis 4. The plot of this interaction term in Figure 2 further illustrates that as family motivation increases, the slope of psychological availability on job embeddedness becomes steeper.

Finally, we used PROCESS Macro Model 14 (Hayes, 2018) to test Hypothesis 5 (moderated mediation). With 5,000 bootstrapped resamples and control variables included, the index of moderated mediation was not significant ($\beta = .05$ [95% BCLL = -.01; 95% BCUL = .11]), suggesting that family motivation does not significantly moderate the indirect effect of family support $\rightarrow$ psychological availability $\rightarrow$ job embeddedness. Thus, Hypothesis 5 was not supported.

FIGURE 2 ABOUT HERE

DISCUSSION

This study investigated how family support helps working mothers remain committed to their organizations by enhancing job embeddedness. Drawing on role accumulation theory (Sieber, 1974), COR theory (Hobfoll, 1989, 2001), and social support resource theory (Hobfoll et al., 1990), we found that when working mothers perceive strong family support, they experience heightened psychological availability, which in turn increases their job embeddedness. Moreover, family motivation positively moderated the direct relationship between psychological availability and job embeddedness, while failing to produce the anticipated moderated mediation effect. These findings illuminate the multidimensional nature of how cross-domain resources—particularly those located in the family realm—shape mothers' engagement and retention in the workforce.

Theoretical Contributions

First, by integrating role accumulation theory, COR theory, and social support resource theory, the study offers a resource-centric explanation of how family support can enhance working mothers' job embeddedness. Whereas many previous investigations focus on work–family conflict (Allen et al., 2000; Frone, 2000), this study emphasizes positive resource pathways, showing that family support generates new coping capacities and preserves existing psychological resources (Hobfoll et al., 1990). This approach aligns with the principles of positive psychology, which underscore the importance of identifying and fostering strengths rather than merely mitigating weaknesses (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). By centering on supportive processes rather than conflict, the research responds to calls for expanding beyond deficit-based perspectives (McClellan et al., 2021; Siu et al., 2010).

Second, our evidence for the mediating role of psychological availability highlights a critical mechanism by which family-based resources facilitate favorable work outcomes. Although prior studies have discussed psychological availability as a predictor of engagement (Kahn, 1990; May et al., 2004), few have connected it explicitly to the role of non-work support systems, especially within a population that contends with heightened domestic responsibilities. By showing that family support preserves and generates resources needed for mental and emotional focus, we deepen the understanding of how psychologically available employees can form stronger attachments to the workplace. This finding extends the role accumulation idea (Sieber, 1974) by clarifying that the presence of supportive conditions at home is what transforms multiple roles from a drain on resources into a source of resilience and grounded presence at work.

Third, by examining family motivation as a family-oriented personal resource, we reveal a boundary condition for the psychological availability–job embeddedness connection. Although family motivation magnifies this direct relationship—indicating that employees who strongly identify with the well-being of their households convert mental presence at work into deeper organizational bonds—its lack of influence on the overall mediation pathway offers a nuanced picture of cross-domain processes. On the one hand, high family motivation makes psychological availability more potent for fostering embeddedness; on the other hand, this motivation does not significantly

alter how family support leads to psychological availability in the first place. This partial finding implies that domain specificity may be at work: mothers' sense of motivation directed toward family needs intensifies the *usage* of their job-facing resource (i.e., psychological availability) without necessarily reshaping the *acquisition* of that resource from family support. In theoretical terms, we see how job-related personal resources (psychological availability) and family-related personal resources (family motivation) align more strongly at certain junctures—particularly the deployment phase of resources at work—while leaving the resource-generation processes (family support → psychological availability) largely unaffected. Such insights not only expand role accumulation theory by clarifying where and how family-oriented drives intersect with job demands but also underscore the complexity of COR theory in cross-domain contexts, illustrating how family- and work-related motivations may each operate with differing degrees of salience.

Practical Implications

The findings have several implications for organizations, managers, and policymakers aiming to support and retain working mothers. First, organizational leaders can recognize and facilitate family support by offering flexible work arrangements, childcare assistance, and opportunities for family involvement in corporate events. While these policies lie partially outside the immediate sphere of standard HR practices, they may prove pivotal for sustaining mothers' psychological availability.

Second, psychological availability can be fostered through stress-management resources, wellness programs, and leadership that demonstrates empathy. Managers who help mothers cope with non-work demands or validate family commitments enable them to remain mentally engaged at work.

Finally, family motivation appears to amplify the benefits of psychological availability, so framing one's work tasks in ways that highlight family benefits can further enhance job embeddedness. By linking professional achievements to improved family well-being, organizations can harness these motivational drives. Ultimately, these practices underscore a shared responsibility between workplaces, families, and broader societal structures in ensuring that mothers' multiple roles enrich rather than undercut one another.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

This study carries several limitations. First, it relies predominantly on self-reported, online data, which can inflate the risk of biases such as common method variance (Podsakoff et al., 2003). And snowballing method has the potential for a selection bias. Although steps were taken to mitigate these effects—such as a time-lagged design—future work might adopt mixed methods (e.g., diary studies, interviews) to capture real-time fluctuations in resources across home and work settings.

Second, the sample was drawn from China, where collectivist norms may make family members more willing to offer tangible support than in individualist cultures. Researchers could replicate the model in diverse cultural contexts (e.g., North America, Europe) to test whether the

relative impact of family support and family motivation generalizes internationally.

Third, we only tested family motivation as the moderator. Other factors, such as role identity or perceived organizational support, might similarly shape whether psychological availability leads to greater embeddedness.

Finally, the non-significant moderated mediation hints at a need for a more fine-grained conceptualization of how resources flow from the family domain to job-related outcomes. Perhaps examining different time frames or additional intervening variables (e.g., work–family enrichment, meaningfulness at work) could clarify why some family-related motives do not always reshape the indirect path from family support to embeddedness.

CONCLUSION

Overall, this study demonstrates that family support, acting through psychological availability, promotes job embeddedness among working mothers. By adopting a positive psychology lens (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000) and emphasizing resource generation and conservation across home and work domains, we highlight how mothers can thrive, not just survive, in their multiple roles. The finding that family motivation amplifies the psychological availability–embeddedness link but does not alter the overall mediating pathway underscores the nuanced ways job-facing and family-facing personal resources can converge. Future research that more deeply probes such cross-domain synergies can illuminate additional strategies for supporting mothers, thus enabling organizations and societies to capitalize on the robust potential of this critical workforce segment.

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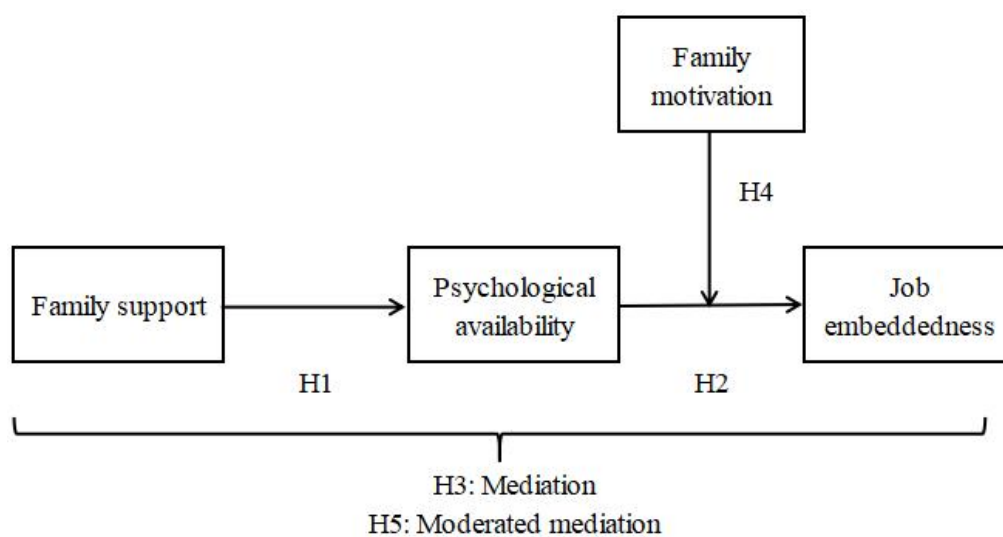


Figure 1. Analytical framework of the present study

Table 1. Confirmatory factor analyses

Model	χ^2	df	χ^2/df	CFI	TLI	RMSEA	SRMR	$\Delta\chi^2$	Δdf	p
Baseline model:										
Four-factor model	2131.33	1303	1.63	.90	.89	.05	.08			
Alternative models:										
Three-factor model	2662.39	1310	2.03	.83	.82	.07	.10	531.06	7 *	
Two-factor model	2852.23	1313	2.17	.80	.79	.07	.10	720.90	10 *	
One-factor model	6845.27	1325	5.16	.30	.27	.14	.14	4713.94	22 *	

Note. N = 201. Four-factor model: Family support, job embeddedness, psychological availability, and family motivation. Three-factor model: Family support, job embeddedness, and psychological availability + family motivation. Two-factor model: Family support + job Embeddedness and psychological availability + family motivation.

* $p < .001$.

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Table 2. Means, standard deviations, and correlation matrix of all variables used in the study

	Mean	(SD)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1 Age	35.29	(4.59)	-							
2 Education level	.36	(.48)	.05	-						
3 Location	.25	(.43)	-.04	.31 ***	-					
4 Position rank	.38	(.48)	.06	.09	.02	-				
5 Company type	.50	(.50)	.03	-.12	-.22 **	.03	-			
6 Family support	4.09	(.84)	-.07	-.18 *	-.15 *	.04	.09	-		
7 Psychological availability	4.92	(.83)	.10	-.03	-.04	-.02	-.02	.51 ***	-	
8 Family motivation	4.73	(1.12)	.13	.04	-.04	.13	.07	.06	.07	-
9 Job embeddedness	4.54	(.82)	-.02	-.22 ***	-.28 ***	.03	.27 ***	.55 ***	.51 ***	.06

Note. N = 201. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

Table 3. Results of hierarchical multiple regression analyses

	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3			Model 4		
	Psychological availability			Job embeddedness			Job embeddedness			Job embeddedness		
	Beta	(SE)	<i>p</i>	Beta	(SE)	<i>p</i>	Beta	(SE)	<i>p</i>	Beta	(SE)	<i>p</i>
<i>Control variables</i>												
Age	.14	(.01)	*	-.04	(.01)		-.04	(.01)		-.03	(.01)	
Education level	.04	(.12)		-.09	(.11)		-.09	(.11)		-.09	(.11)	
Location	.02	(.11)		-.15	(.10)	**	-.15	(.10)	**	-.15	(.10)	**
Position rank	-.06	(.10)		.03	(.09)		.03	(.09)		.04	(.09)	
Company type	-.06	(.10)		.21	(.09)	***	.21	(.09)	***	.20	(.09)	***
R^2_1	.01			.14		***	.14		***	.14		***
<i>Independent variable</i>												
Family support	.54	(.06)	***	.31	(.06)	***	.31	(.06)	***	.32	(.06)	***
R^2_2	.28		***	.38		***	.38		***	.38		***
$\Delta R^2_{(1-2)}$	.27		***	.24		***	.24		***	.24		***
<i>Mediator</i>												
Psychological availability (PA)				.35	(.06)	***	.35	(.06)	***	.33	(.06)	***
R^2_3				.47		***	.47		***	.45		***
$\Delta R^2_{(2-3)}$				.09		***	.09		***	.09		***
<i>Moderator</i>												
Family motivation (FM)							.00	(.04)		.00	(.04)	
R^2_4							.47		***	.45		***
$\Delta R^2_{(3-4)}$							.00			.00		
<i>Interaction</i>												
PA x FM										.11	(.05)	*
R^2_5										.46		***
$\Delta R^2_{(4-5)}$										.01		*

Note. N = 201. Standardized regression coefficients (betas) are presented. R^2_1 , R^2_2 , R^2_3 and R^2_4 denote the adjusted R squares generated by the first-, second-, third- and forth-step regressions, respectively. $\Delta R^2_{(1-2)} = R^2_2 - R^2_1$, $\Delta R^2_{(2-3)} = R^2_3 - R^2_2$, $\Delta R^2_{(3-4)} = R^2_4 - R^2_3$, $\Delta R^2_{(4-5)} = R^2_5 - R^2_4$.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

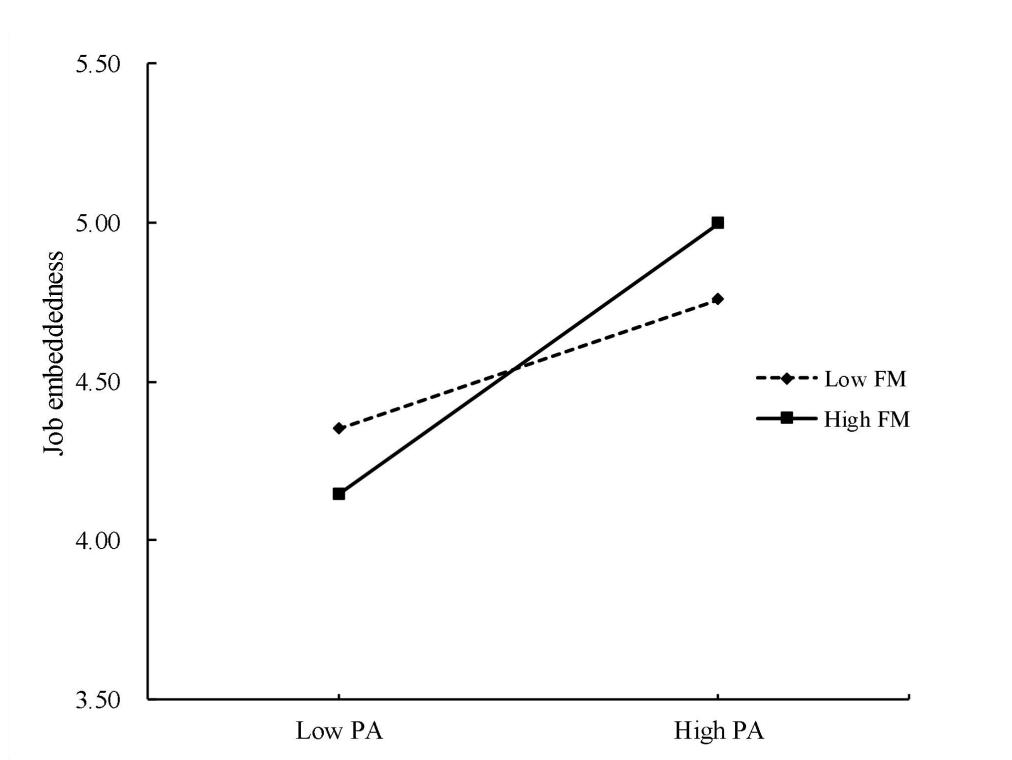


Figure 2. Interactive effect of family motivation (FM) and psychological availability (PA) on job embeddedness