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How Social Stressors at Work Influence Marital Behaviors at Home: An Interpersonal Model of Work–Family Spillover

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Drawing on conservation of resources and related theories, this study develops and tests an interpersonal model of work–family spillover. Our model specifies how social stressors at work (i.e., workplace incivility, abusive supervision, interpersonal conflict) result in the experience of a social-based form of work–family conflict, ultimately influencing marital behaviors at home, on a daily basis. The mediating role of burnout and the moderating role of trust were also examined. A 2-week experience-sampling study with daily employee surveys at work and at home and with spousal ratings for employees' marital behaviors in the evening provided general support for the proposed relationships. Within individuals, social stressors at work were associated with burnout symptoms, which mediated the effect of workplace social stressors on social-based work–family conflict. In line with congruence response models, we found that those who are more trusting were more negatively affected by social stressors at work. Finally, on evenings when employees experienced social-based work–family conflict, their spouses reported more withdrawn and angry behaviors and less supportive behaviors shown toward them. Overall, the present research explicates a specific form of work–family conflict, one in which social stressors in one domain result in negative behaviors in the other domain via burnout experiences.

Keywords: social stressors, depersonalization, emotional exhaustion, work–family conflict, daily spillover

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Social stressors are omnipresent in the workplace, not just for those occupational groups involved in "people work." The organizational literature is replete with studies on workplace incivility (e.g., Schilpzand et al., 2014; Yao et al., 2021), workplace bullying (see Nielsen & Einarsen, 2012), ostracism (e.g., van Beest & Williams, 2006), abusive supervision (see Tepper, 2007), interactional injustice (e.g., Burton et al., 2005), interpersonal and group conflicts (e.g., De Dreu et al., 2004), and emotional labor (e.g., Scott & Barnes, 2011), just to name a few common workplace social stressors. These studies highlight that it is imperative to examine the impact of the social work environment on employees' performance and well-being "among individuals who work with other people in some capacity" (Maslach et al., 1996, p. 192). Yet, this is by no means limited to service jobs that entail stressful employee–customer interactions (which have often been the focus of studies on burnout; e.g., Dormann & Zapf, 2004). In fact, we posit that in general any employee in any type of job can suffer from social stressors at work (see also Halbesleben & Buckley, 2004).

Previous research has shown that social stressors are related to a wide variety of outcomes, both job related and personal. For instance, surface acting has been related to job dissatisfaction (Wen et al., 2019); abusive supervision has been associated with turnover intentions (Tepper, 2000); ostracism has been found to threaten psychological needs such as belonging (Williams & Nida, 2011); conflict and animosities have an indirect effect on depressive symptoms (Dormann & Zapf, 2002); interactional injustice has been linked to retaliation and sabotage in the workplace (Ambrose et al., 2002); and workplace mistreatment even predicts suicidal ideation across time for employees with mood disorders (Follmer & Follmer, 2021). Studies have also revealed that workplace social stressors can lead to burnout (e.g., Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002; Rahim & Cosby, 2016; Shaukat et al., 2017) and work–family conflict (e.g., for abusive supervision, see Carlson et al., 2011; for bullying, see Raja et al., 2018; for workplace aggression, see Demsky et al., 2014; for ostracism, see Liu et al., 2013; for workplace incivility, see Lim & Lee, 2011).

It follows that stress elicited by the social environment in which people work has consequences that are not only related to the job but also that may extend beyond work and influence employees' private lives. The present paper reports on a daily work–family study that aims to build on recent research investigating what happens on days when people's social interactions at work are demanding and stressful. While this stream of research has found that the daily effects of social stressors spill over to life outside of work (Martinez-Corts et al., 2015; Volmer et al., 2012; Wagner et al., 2014), it

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remains largely unknown which aspects of family life are affected. That is, most studies have relied on general measures of work–family conflict rather than examining actual behaviors in the family domain. The limited research that does focus on behavioral outcomes at home has been inconclusive. For instance, whereas one study hinted at prosocial stress reactions and showed that couple interactions did not become less agreeable or more burdening as a consequence of social stress-related strain (Klumb et al., 2017), another study found that workplace incivility resulted in increased angry and withdrawn behaviors at home (Lim et al., 2018). To further our understanding of how social stressors at work influence marital behaviors at home on a daily basis, the present paper sets out to develop and test an interpersonal model of work–family spillover. Our study aims to illuminate how family life is affected in terms of withdrawn, angry, and supportive marital behaviors. These interpersonal behaviors at home are by themselves important outcomes to study because they refer to an individual's functioning at home and are related to personal and couple well-being (Story & Repetti, 2006; Wang & Repetti, 2014). We assess these behavioral outcomes through spousal reports, providing for an empirically rigorous test of a specifically interpersonal model of work and family.

In building our interpersonal model of work–family spillover, we draw on conservation of resources theory (Hobfoll, 1989) and view negative spillover as a process whereby workplace social stressors deplete personal resources (see Ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012). Such resource loss may manifest itself in daily burnout experiences, with the risk of a downward cycle of further resource loss (Hobfoll & Freedy, 1993). In line with this resource perspective, we propose daily burnout experiences to mediate the work–family spillover process. Specifically, we identify depersonalization and emotional exhaustion as indicators of resource loss resulting from social stressors at work (see Maslach et al., 2001). Depersonalization and emotional exhaustion fit the respectively interpersonal and emotionally laden nature of socially stressful interactions. While previous studies have predominantly focused on emotional mechanisms linking workplace social stressors to family life (e.g., Klumb et al., 2017; Lim et al., 2018), we adopt a resource perspective to examine how these aspects of burnout impact the family domain and influence both withdrawn and angry marital behaviors as well as supportive marital behaviors. Hence, we contribute to theory on work and family by providing a resource-based explanation as to why social stressors at work influence family life (i.e., marital behaviors).

This paper also examines the role of personality in employees' daily responses to workplace social stressors, contributing to our understanding of the interaction between personal and situational factors in the burnout process. Specifically, we propose that those who are more trusting are more vulnerable to resource loss induced by stressful social interactions at work and will therefore be more likely to develop burnout symptoms. Integrating personality in the model and proposing and testing how trait and state variables interact constitutes a theoretical contribution, as it represents a step toward building a multilevel model of work–family spillover that relates interpersonal aspects of employees' work experiences to their behaviors as part of family life.

In essence, we are studying an interpersonal or social-based form of work–family conflict and have the following four aims: (1) to examine how workplace incivility, interpersonal conflict, and abusive supervision spill over to employees' family lives, (2) to examine state burnout as a mediator in the work–family spillover process, (3) to examine how individual differences in trust propensity influence daily responses to workplace social stressors, and (4) to examine marital behaviors at home as outcomes of the newly proposed construct, social-based work–family conflict. Ultimately, our model builds new theory by proposing a novel specific form of work–family conflict and showing that it plays an important role in connecting resource losses induced by social stressors at work to family life.

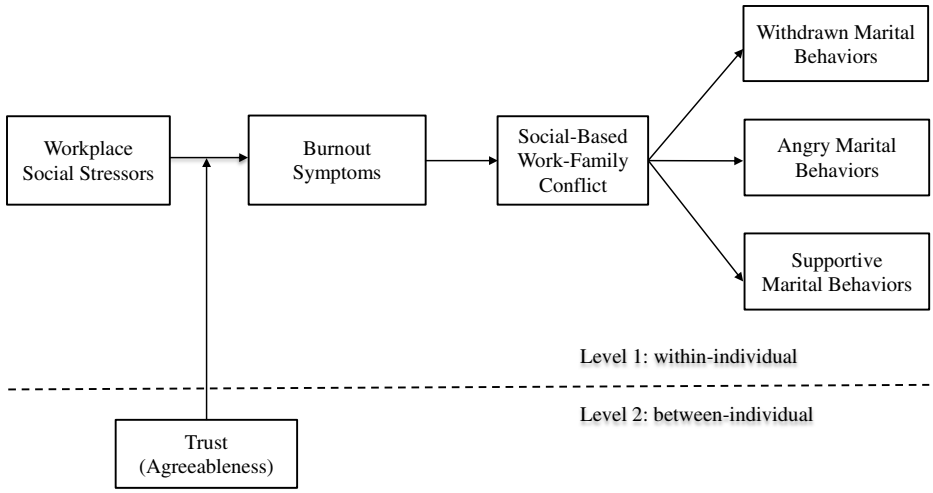
Theory and Hypotheses

We take an intraindividual perspective on work–family spillover and build a conceptual model (see Figure 1) that specifies how daily social stressors at work drain resources and interfere with marital life. We draw on work–family spillover theory (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000; Zedeck & Mosier, 1990) and conservation of resources (COR) theory (Halbesleben et al., 2014; Hobfoll, 1989) as the overarching theoretical frameworks for our paper. Zedeck and Mosier defined spillover as "a similarity between what occurs in the work environment and what occurs in the family environment" (Zedeck & Mosier, 1990, p. 241). This similarity can manifest itself in an association between what an employee experiences at work and what he or she does at home. Conceptually, spillover can also occur daily whereby what an employee feels and does at work can influence what he or she feels and does later at home (Ilies et al., 2007).

One of the linking mechanisms underlying negative work–family spillover put forward by Edwards and Rothbard (2000) is resource drain. At the broadest level, COR theory stipulates that when faced with resource depletion or with the threat of resource loss, stress ensues and people will adopt resource conservation strategies (Halbesleben et al., 2014). At a more specific level, the work–home resources model—which is a resource conservation model that links work and family—provides a process view on negative work–family spillover in which contextual demands from one domain deplete personal resources that ultimately impede performance in the other domain (Ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012). In our interpersonal model of work–family spillover, the contextual demands are workplace social stressors that form the starting point for a conflicting work–family process through the loss of personal resources. Particularly relevant to the context of social stressors are regulatory resources (Finkel et al., 2006), which are also said to be finite and, when depleted, may impede behavioral outcomes in the family domain (Buck & Neff, 2012). A state of low self-regulatory capacity in which individuals feel they lack adaptive resources is closely related to burnout (Halbesleben & Buckley, 2004; Rivkin et al., 2015; Roczniewska & Bakker, 2021). In this paper, we examine the spillover effects of social stressors at work onto the family domain and focus on burnout symptoms as an indicator of resource depletion.

Burnout refers to a psychological syndrome in response to interpersonal stressors on the job that is characterized by high levels of exhaustion and depersonalization and reduced efficacy (Maslach et al., 2001). Scholars tend to place primacy on exhaustion and depersonalization (see Halbesleben & Buckley, 2004), which are considered "the two primary measures of burnout" (Maslach & Leiter, 2008, p. 501), and there is meta-analytic evidence for the

Figure 1
Conceptual Model of Interpersonal Work-Family Spillover



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notion that efficacy is a distinct factor (Worley et al., 2008). Moreover, Maslach et al. (2001) noted that "lack of efficacy seems to arise more clearly from a lack of relevant resources, whereas exhaustion and cynicism [depersonalization] emerge from the presence of work overload and *social conflict* [emphasis added]" (p. 403). Indeed, emotional exhaustion and depersonalization provide a conceptual fit to the notion that social stressors are emotionally laden (Barclay et al., 2005; Chow et al., 2008) and interpersonal experiences, respectively. Furthermore, de Beer and Bianchi (2019) suggest that emotional exhaustion and depersonalization "can be combined to yield a global burnout index" (p. 222). In line with the present trend of focusing on emotional exhaustion and depersonalization (but not on inefficacy) when assessing burnout (King & DeLongis, 2014), and following de Beer and Bianchi (2019), we therefore assessed burnout by combining daily symptoms of depersonalization and emotional experiences (see King & DeLongis, 2014, for a similar approach).

Depersonalization refers to a cynical and distant attitude toward others and can even involve a dehumanized perception of others where one treats others as objects or numbers rather than human beings (Maslach et al., 1996). Depersonalization can also be regarded as a coping and resource conservation strategy; through psychological withdrawal from relationships, the individual attempts to deal with overwhelming demands (Sonnentag, 2005). While depersonalization represents the interpersonal context dimension of burnout, exhaustion reflects the stress dimension of burnout (Maslach et al., 2001). Emotional exhaustion is characterized by a lack of energy and a feeling that one's emotional resources are depleted (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993) and it prompts actions to distance oneself emotionally and cognitively from the demanding aspects of work (Maslach et al., 2001). Both of these burnout symptoms seem particularly likely in response to social stressors. That is, we believe that depersonalization and emotional exhaustion are the components of burnout that are most closely linked to the regulatory demands of stressful social interactions. Previous research found that both components are associated with abusive supervision (Yagil, 2006), interpersonal conflicts (Fujiwara et al., 2003; Shaukat et al., 2017), and workplace incivility (Liu et al., 2019).

Many forms of social stressors in the workplace are mild and subtle (Bowling & Beehr, 2006; Follmer & Follmer, 2021). While they are common, minor instances of social stressors do not necessarily occur in a fixed and persistent manner in everyday working life (cf., Lim & Lee, 2011). Considering fluctuations in perceptions of workplace social stressors allows us to examine processes triggered by social stressors that are inherently manifested at the intraindividual level (Ilies et al., 2015). We expect that daily experiences of incivility by coworkers, abusive behaviors by supervisors, or social animosities at work more generally constitute substantial regulatory demands that deplete personal resources. Employees may become exhausted as a consequence of such stressful behaviors by others in the work environment and may show depersonalization as a way of disengaging from workplace relationships on days when these are demanding and stressful.

Hypothesis 1: Social stressors at work are positively related to burnout (i.e., depersonalization and emotional exhaustion).

However, not all employees will respond similarly to social stressors in their work environment. We now turn our attention to the personality differences that make it more or less likely that daily social stressors will result in burnout symptoms among employees. Personality traits that are most relevant to study in the context of stressful social interactions are those that are closely related to behavior in interpersonal settings. The most widely used personality framework is probably the Big Five Personality Model, consisting of extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism (or emotional stability), and openness to experience (see Goldberg, 1990). Of these five traits, agreeableness seems to be the most relevant for our study given its focus on social relationships.

Agreeableness reflects a general concern with cooperation and social harmony (Costa & McCrae, 1992). Meta-analytic evidence shows that agreeableness has negative relationships with depersonalization and emotional exhaustion, perhaps because agreeable

people have a positive view of their jobs and do not need a buffer between themselves and others at work (Swider & Zimmerman, 2010). In a study among health care professionals, agreeableness was found to be inversely related to depersonalization beyond the effects of role stressors (Zellars et al., 2000). It therefore seems that agreeableness is a stable personality trait that can protect individuals from burnout. However, a within-individual study found that the immediate affective implications of interpersonal conflict were larger for those who score high on agreeableness compared with those who are less agreeable (Ilies et al., 2011). Thus, it is imperative to examine how employees' personality traits affect their reactions to interpersonal features at work. Congruence response models of interactionism (e.g., Emmons et al., 1986) may help us better understand how personality traits influence the extent to which employees develop burnout symptoms in response to their work environment.

Numerous personality inventories tap into lower level personality facets within the higher level Big Five traits (e.g., IPIP-NEO-120; Johnson, 2014), which allows for identifying specific personality facets that are relevant to employees' reactions to workplace social stressors. Here, we focus on individual differences in trust as a key facet of agreeableness.

According to the situational congruence model, when people are in situations that are congruent with their personalities, they will respond by experiencing more positive affect and less negative affect (Emmons et al., 1986). From a conservation of resources perspective, when faced with incongruent demands, people experience more resource loss (as indicated by, for example, higher negative affect). Agreeable people in general value getting along with others, and those individuals who are trusting assume that most people are fair, honest, and have good intentions. It follows that trust represents an interpersonal orientation that disposes individuals toward stronger reactions to social interactions characterized by incivility, conflict, or abusive behavior. Work situations that entail negative social interactions are not congruent with a trusting disposition. Those who have an optimistic view of human nature and believe that most people are benign and trustworthy (i.e., a trusting personality) may react more negatively when confronted with coworkers who are rude or condescending, compared with those who are low on trust. Similarly, in organizations characterized by a culture of trust, employees do not expect to be confronted with coworkers who are rude or supervisors who are condescending. In other words, negative social interactions pose more regulatory demands and are, therefore, more emotionally exhausting for individuals who are trusting. Because they are more likely to be disappointed, upset, and hurt by negative social interactions at work, they are also more likely to respond to daily social stressors with a cynical and callous attitude toward others. Thus, consistent with the tenets of COR theory, we expect that individual differences in trust can explain why some employees are more vulnerable to resource loss and hence show higher or lower exhaustion and depersonalization than others on days when they experience workplace social stressors.

Hypothesis 2: Dispositional trust moderates the positive association between social stressors and burnout, such that this association is stronger for trusting than for distrusting personalities.

Work–family conflict is defined as "a form of interrole conflict in which the role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect" (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985, p. 77). Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) distinguished between time-based, strain-based, and behavior-based conflicts. Whereas behavior-based conflicts signify behavioral spillover, time-based and strain-based work–family conflict refer to situations in which work consumes time and energy, respectively, that cannot be spent at home. Thus, these forms of work–family conflict occur due to resource drain (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000; see also Ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012). In this paper, we focus specifically on workplace social stressors and how they drain (regulatory) resources and interfere with interpersonal behaviors as part of family life. Hence, we propose that social stressors are the starting point for interpersonal work–family spillover processes, ultimately reflecting a social-based form of work–family conflict.

Previous research confirms the notion that social stressors can affect employees outside of the workplace and hence also employees' family members (Carlson et al., 2011; Ferguson, 2012; Martinez-Corts et al., 2015; Meier & Cho, 2019; Volmer et al., 2012; Wagner et al., 2014; Zhou et al., 2019). To identify the exact consequences of workplace social stressors for family members, we focus on *behavioral* outcomes in the home domain (see Ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012). One likely response to a stressful workday is social withdrawal at home. After stressful days, employees may have the desire to avoid social interactions to conserve resources and shield them from potential stressors that may arise during interactions with family members (Sears et al., 2016). We believe this is particularly likely on days when the stress is caused by negative social encounters. In fact, Story and Repetti (2006) found that husbands and wives showed more withdrawn behaviors to each other on days when they experienced more negative social interactions at work. In the same diary study, they found that husbands and wives also showed more angry marital behaviors after socially more stressful days. Similarly, Lim et al. (2018) found that employees who are targets of workplace incivility display increased withdrawn and angry marital behaviors later that day. Whereas withdrawal as a behavior can be considered an attempt to conserve remaining resources after socially demanding interactions at work, angry marital behaviors are most likely a consequence of regulatory resources being depleted, leading people to behave more impulsively and immorally toward others (Lee et al., 2016).

Withdrawn and angry behaviors are two key dimensions of marital behavior that have received much research attention (Schulz et al., 2004). We believe that supportive marital behaviors are also relevant to study in this context because this positive antipode of angry and withdrawn marital behaviors is key to the functioning of relationships and marriages. Importantly, providing social support is emotionally and cognitively demanding (Hobfoll et al., 1990) and requires adequate self-regulatory resources (Feeney & Collins, 2015). Hence, from a conservation of resources perspective, employees may be less likely to devote their remaining resources to supporting their spouse. In line with the resource perspective from the work–home resources model (Ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012), then, we expect that on socially more stressful days, employees' self-regulatory resources are depleted and they will be less able and willing to provide their significant other with support at home.

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In essence, we propose that on workdays with social stressors, employees' regulatory resources are more likely to be drained, and this state of self-regulatory depletion is reflected in depersonalization and exhaustion as burnout symptoms. Having exerted high levels of willpower during the workday leaves employees with fewer resources in the family domain, which may lead to experiences of (a social-based form of) work–family conflict (Ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012). Relationship-promoting behaviors are difficult to enact and navigating marital interactions requires efforts that draw on an individual's self-regulatory resources (Buck & Neff, 2012). A state of self-regulatory depletion may cause irritability and therefore undermining or even aggressive behaviors at home (Liu et al., 2015). It can also be expected that depleted employees engage in withdrawal-based resource conservation strategies as a means to shield themselves from additional social stressors, which is consistent with the notion of COR theory that individuals try to prevent further resource loss; they would rather want to be left alone and do not feel like interacting with other people, not even significant others. Hence, it is also unlikely that depleted employees are able to be supportive spouses. In sum, we hypothesize that on days characterized by stressful social interactions, employees are more likely to experience social-based work–family conflict due to burnout symptoms, which should be reflected in spouses reporting increased angry and withdrawn marital behaviors and decreased supportive marital behaviors toward them.

Hypothesis 3: Burnout mediates the positive association between social stressors and social-based work–family conflict.

Hypothesis 4: Social-based work–family conflict is positively related to angry and withdrawn marital behaviors but negatively related to marital behaviors.

Method

Sample and Procedure

This study was approved by the research ethics committee of the National Natural Science Foundation of China. We recruited participants through the network of a local university in eastern China. A total of 113 couples (i.e., full-time employees and their spouses) registered for this study. Data were collected via online surveys hosted by www.wjx.cn[1]. Participants received links that directed them to online questionnaires. Before the start of the daily survey period, both members of each couple responded to a general one-time survey that asked them to report demographic information. One week after completing this general survey, each couple responded to daily surveys for ten consecutive working days (i.e., two work weeks; Reis & Wheeler, 1991). Employees completed two daily surveys, namely a work survey administered in the midafternoon and a home survey administered late in the evening. Spouses completed one survey each day in the evening at home. Each couple received 400 yuan after they completed the surveys. We excluded 21 couples who responded to our surveys on only 2 days or less. We further excluded 11 couples because they did not follow the procedures (e.g., they responded to daily surveys in a wrong sequence). A total of 70 couples provided data on the study variables (see Figure 1), with very small differences between employees and spouses in the number of data points provided. We obtained 593 daily matched records that we used for analyses. Forty-four per cent of the participating employees were women. The vast majority (91 .4%) was married and 64.3% of participants had at least one child at home. Participants indicated their age using six ranges, namely under 25 years, 26–30 years, 31–35 years, 36–40 years, 41–45 years, and above 46 years (these age ranges were coded into 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6, respectively). Most respondents were in the age category of 26–30 years, followed by 31–35 years. The mean of the age variable was 2.69 (SD = 1.02) for employees and 2.64 (SD = .95) for spouses.

Measures

We have chosen scales that have been used in China and other Asian countries with high reliability, yet we relied on our own translations for this study. All survey measures were first translated from English into Chinese and then independently back-translated into English for consistency checks (Brislin, 1980).

Personality

As part of the general survey administrated at the start of data collection, we measured respondents' personality traits. We used the 20-item Mini IPIP developed by Donnellan et al. (2006) to measure the Big Five factors, each with four items. Respondents were asked to indicate on a 5-point scale the extent to which the statements were an accurate description of them (1 = *very inaccurate*, 5 = *very accurate*). An example item for agreeableness is "sympathize with others' feelings." Moreover, we measured trust as a facet of agreeableness using the four items from Johnson's (2014) IPIP-NEO-120. An example item is "believe that others have good intentions." There was no overlap between the items for agreeableness and trust. The Cronbach's α for agreeableness was .64, and .86 for trust.

Social Stressors at Work

We assessed three workplace social stressors in the employee survey administered at work. First, workplace incivility was measured using the scale developed by Cortina et al. (2001). The original Workplace Incivility Scale consists of seven items. To keep the survey short and avoid participant fatigue, we selected five items from the original scale that have high face validity in a daily context and had the highest factor loadings in Cortina et al.'s (2001) original study. Employees indicated on a 5-point scale the extent to which any of their supervisors or coworkers engaged in certain behaviors on that workday, for instance "put you down or was condescending to you" and "made demeaning or derogatory remarks about you." Second, abusive supervision was measured with Mitchell and Ambrose's (2007) shortened, five-item scale for active abuse based on the original 15-item scale developed by Tepper (2000). Employees indicated on a 5-point scale whether certain supervisor behaviors applied for that day, such as "ridiculed me" and "told me I'm incompetent." Third, interpersonal conflict was measured using the Interpersonal Conflict at Work Scale (ICAWS) developed by Spector and Jex (1998). The scale consists of four items, adjusted to reflect the daily nature of the construct, for

[1] This platform is equivalent to Qualtrics.com but is more popular among a Chinese audience.

instance "Today, how often did you get into arguments with others at work?" All answers were recorded on scales ranging from 1 = *very slightly or not at all* to 5 = *very much*. The average reliability across 10 days was .83 for workplace incivility, .85 for abusive supervision, and .82 for interpersonal conflict.

Multilevel confirmatory factor analyses (CFAs) of the 14 items measuring social stressors showed that a three-factor model (Comparative Fit Index; CFI = .92; Root Mean Squared Error of Approximation; RMSEA = .044) provided a better fit to the data than the various two-factor models, $\Delta\chi^2(4)$ ranged between 256.7 and 1641.0, all *p*s < .001. Of all the models tested, the unidimensional model provided the second least satisfactory fit (CFI = .60, RMSEA = .094). Yet due to high multicollinearities (i.e., incivility–abusive supervision: $r = .48$, $p < .01$; incivility–conflict: $r = .39$, $p < .01$; abusive supervision–conflict: $r = .38$, $p < .01$), we nevertheless created a composite measure of workplace incivility, abusive supervision, and interpersonal conflict to represent employees' social stressors at work. The average Cronbach's α of this measure was .90 across days. We believe that merging these three social stressors can be justified from a theoretical point of view because of their common social nature, and aggregation also adds to the parsimony of our model by showing that social stress from work influences a specific social-based form of work–family conflict, with actual behavioral outcomes in the family domain. Importantly, prior research on work stress (e.g., Billings & Moss, 1982; Hobfoll et al., 2012) has also relied on composites of related yet distinct forms of social stressors, including those examined in this study. Furthermore, in their meta-analytic work on workplace harassment (which overlaps substantially with the social stressors construct that we study), in moderator analyses, Bowling and Beehr (2006) found essentially no practical differences across type of measure used [they compared meta-analytic correlations obtained from studies that used the ICAWS (Spector & Jex, 1998) with those from studies that used some other measure of workplace harassment].

State Burnout

We assessed employees' depersonalization and emotional exhaustion in the work survey using the respective Maslach Burnout Inventory subscales (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). We used five items to measure each burnout symptom and respondents were asked to indicate their agreement with the given statements as to how they felt at that moment. Example items are "I feel I treat some people as if they were impersonal 'objects'" (depersonalization) and "I feel emotionally drained from my work" (emotional exhaustion). Answers were recorded on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*. The average Cronbach's α across 10 days was .92.

Social-Based Work–Family Conflict

In the home survey administrated in the evening, we asked respondents about the extent to which their work had interfered with family life that day. We started from existing measures of work–family conflict (e.g., Carlson et al., 2000; Netemeyer et al., 1996) to develop items that specifically assess an interpersonal or social form of work–family conflict. Respondents indicated their agreement with the following three items: "I was too tired to be sociable at home because of interpersonal interactions at work," "The social demands of my job prevented me from being a socially active family member when I got home," and "The social side of my work life took up energy that I would have liked to spend on family activities." Answers were recorded on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*. The average Cronbach's α across 10 days was .88.

Angry and Withdrawn Marital Behaviors

We used the scales developed by Schulz et al. (2004) to measure the employees' angry and withdrawn behaviors directed at the spouse in the evening. We followed these authors in using both self-reports and spouse-reports. Although in the analyses we use only spouse-reports in order to eliminate common rater bias, the self-reported measure provides validation for the spousal-reported measure. The original scales consist of nine and 12 items to assess withdrawn and angry marital behaviors, respectively. Based on face validity (as the original study does not provide factor loadings), we selected five items for each set of behaviors to keep the survey manageable and avoid participant fatigue. Sample items in the home survey administered to employees are "I wanted to be alone" (withdrawal) and "I yelled at my partner" (angry). For the spouse survey, we adapted the items to change the reference, for instance "My partner was mean to me." Respondents indicated their agreement with the statements (1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*) as they applied for that day after work. The average Cronbach's α was .91 for angry behaviors and .90 for withdrawn behaviors across ten employee surveys, and .89 and .88 for angry and withdrawn marital behaviors, respectively, across ten spouse surveys.

Supportive Marital Behaviors

Similar to withdrawn and angry behaviors, we asked both employees and their spouses about supportive behaviors enacted at home. We used the social support scale developed by Vinokur et al. (1996); we selected six of the original ten items to represent the emotional and instrumental functions of social support (House, 1981). In the home survey, employees evaluated their support provision to the spouse by indicating the extent to which they had shown such behaviors as "listen to your partner when he/she needed to talk" after work. Similarly, spouses were asked to assess the support receipt in the evening. They indicated the extent to which the focal employee for instance "provided you with direct help." All answers were recorded on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 = *very slightly or not at all* to 5 = *very much*. The average reliability across 10 days was .92 and .95 for the employee and spouse surveys, respectively. As with angry and withdrawn marital behaviors, we used spousal reports of supportive behaviors as the outcome in the analyses to eliminate common rater bias.

Positive and Negative Affect

We controlled for the effects of momentary positive and negative affect at work on burnout and the other endogenous variables. These controls are essential because, both theoretically and empirically, affect has been consistently related to stressors (Meier & Cho, 2019; Scott & Barnes, 2011; Watson, 2000) and has also been shown to be related to both burnout (e.g., Thoresen et al., 2003) and family outcomes such as behaviors at home (e.g., Ilies et al., 2007). Previous research suggests that affective states could represent

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another explanatory pathway for the effects of social work stressors on family life (see Meier & Cho, 2019), and we wanted to make sure that our proposed mechanism is not confounded with the purely affective pathway. Affective states were measured as part of the work survey with 10 positive (e.g., "interested") and 10 negative (e.g., "upset") adjectives from the extended form of the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS-X; Watson & Clark, 1994). Positive affect and negative affect had an average Cronbach's α of .92 and .87 across days, respectively.

Analytic Strategy

The use of repeated measurements resulted in a nested data structure, where daily observations (Level 1; $n = 593$) are nested within individuals (Level 2; $n = 70$). For each variable, we estimated a two-level null model (i.e., no predictors are specified) that partitions the total variance into between-individual and within-individual components, the results of which are presented in Table 1. The percentage of variance due to within-individual variation in construct scores varied between 22.7% (social-based work–family conflict) and 70.4% (withdrawn marital behaviors), indicating that experiences varied considerably from day to day. Hence, we used multilevel modeling and conducted within-individual analyses.

To conduct a simultaneous test of our hypotheses, we conducted multilevel path analyses in Mplus 7.4, in which we specified paths among the study variables in a holistic model in line with Figure 1 (see e.g., Ilies et al., 2017). As our model involves mediated relationships, we adopted a listwise deletion approach. To test the mediation hypothesis (Hypothesis 3), we followed Bauer et al. (2006) and calculated indirect effects in lower level or 1–1–1 mediation models. We used a Monte Carlo simulation with 20,000 replications to conduct parametric bootstrapping (Preacher et al., 2010) and computed bias-corrected confidence intervals (95% CIs) for the (conditional) indirect effects. The cross-level moderation involving dispositional trust was tested alongside agreeableness. This allowed for testing the independent effect of trust while controlling for the effect of agreeableness.

Table 1
Within-Individual Variance and Between-Individual Variance of Study Variables

Variable	Within-individual variance	Between-individual variance	Within-individual variance %
Workplace incivility	.23	.14	63.1
Abusive supervision	.10	.07	60.4
Interpersonal conflict	.18	.10	65.6
Burnout symptoms	.17	.54	23.9
Social-based work–family conflict	.18	.64	22.7
Angry marital behaviors[a]	.41	.24	62.4
Withdrawn marital behaviors[a]	.57	.24	70.4
Supportive marital behaviors[a]	.45	.52	46.5

[a] Behaviors are spouse-rated.

In the multilevel path analyses, we specified random intercepts and random slopes across individuals (Raudenbush & Bryk, 2002). As such, the analyses take into account that aggregated values of within-individual variables (e.g., average burnout across 10 days) as well as the slopes of within-individual relationships (e.g., the relationship between social stressors and burnout) might vary across individuals. All predictors (i.e., workplace social stressors, burnout, and social-based work–family conflict) were centered relative to each individual's mean. This group-mean centering approach eliminates between-individual variance so that our analyses capture within-individual relationships not confounded by level-2 variables. In the analyses, we relied on spouse ratings of the marital behaviors to eliminate common rater variance, and we consider this a strength of our design. We allowed these end outcomes (i.e., angry, withdrawn, and supportive marital behaviors) in the path models to covary because of their conceptual overlap.

Results

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics and the correlations among the study variables. A multilevel CFA was conducted to confirm the hypothesized six-factor model structure for the main study variables. When loading all 52 items onto their corresponding latent constructs, the multilevel CFA model failed to converge. Following Landis et al.'s (2000) and Little et al.'s (2002) recommendations, we then employed the item parceling technique. Specifically, for all variables except social stressors and burnout, we created two to three empirically balanced parcels for each latent construct by pairing the highest loading items with the lowest loading items. For social stressors and burnout, to account for their multidimensionality, we followed Little et al.'s (2002) domain-representative approach by joining items from each facet into the same parcels. Results showed that our six-factor multilevel CFA model fit the data well ($\chi^2 = 781.404$; CFI = .91; $SRMR_{within} = .052$; $SRMR_{between} = .057$; RMSEA = .056). The six-factor model fit the data better than the various five-factor models, $\Delta\chi^2(10)$ ranged between 551.365 and 1044.476, all ps $< .001$, and a four-factor model combining withdrawn, angry, and supportive marital behaviors, $\Delta\chi^2(18) = 1950.371$, $p < .001$.

The results of the multilevel path analysis can be found in Table 3. Hypothesis 1 proposed that daily workplace social stressors would be positively associated with burnout symptoms. In support of this hypothesis, we found that on days when employees experienced social stressors, they reported higher levels of burnout ($B = 0.51$, $p < .001$). Results showed that this within-individual association was moderated by dispositional trust ($B = 0.19$, $p = .04$) while controlling for the effect of agreeableness, which was not a significant moderator ($B = -0.12$, $p = .40$). Employees with a more trusting personality showed higher levels of burnout symptoms in response to daily stressors than employees with a less trusting personality. This cross-level interaction effect lends support to Hypothesis 2 and is shown in Figure 2, plotted using the simple slopes procedure described by Preacher et al. (2006).

We further hypothesized that social stressors would be indirectly associated with social-based work–family conflict through burnout symptoms (Hypothesis 3). Indeed, there was a positive relationship between social stressors and burnout ($B = 0.51$, $p < .001$) and burnout was a significant predictor of social-based work–family conflict ($B = 0.20$, $p = .003$). Moreover, we found an indirect effect

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Table 2
Descriptive Statistics and Correlations Among Variables

Variable	*M*	SD_W	SD_B	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Level 1													
1. Social stressors	4.73	.32	.30		.68**	.56**	.13**	.21**	.03	.09*	.58**		
2. Burnout symptoms	4.21	.42	.73	.39**	(.92)	.69**	.18**	.33**	−.02	−.13**	.73**		
3. Social-based work-family conflict	4.21	.42	.79	.14**	.23**	(.88)	.27**	.08*	−.06	.21**	.65**		
4. Withdrawn marital behaviors[a]	4.25	.75	.49	.08	.07	.19**	(.88)	.52**	−.38**	.02	.20**		
5. Angry marital behaviors[a]	4.50	.63	.48	−.02	.04	.17**	.50**	(.89)	−.36**	−.14**	.14**		
6. Supportive marital behaviors[a]	2.11	.68	.69	.07	.03	−.13**	−.25**	−.32**	(.95)	.10**	.06		
7. Positive affect	3.41	.49	.73	.02	−.10*	−.01	.08	−.01	.12**	(.92)	.01		
8. Negative affect	4.46	.35	.50	.35**	.41**	.21**	.11**	.02	.05	.08	(.87)		
Level 2													
9. Trust	2.35		.73	−.06	−.14**	.001	−.20*	−.18**	.09*	.13**	−.15**	(.86)	
10. Agreeableness	2.29		.59	−.12**	−.13*	−.01	−.18**	−.11*	−.03	.34**	−.15**	.41**	(.64)

Note. Means are between-person descriptive statistics and SD_W and SD_B are standard deviations at the within-person and between-person level, respectively. Between-person correlations (based on aggregated scores for experience-sampled variables) appear below the diagonal and within-person correlations are shown above the diagonal. The between-person statistics and correlations are based on $n = 70$. The within-person statistics and correlations are based on $n = 593$. Cronbach's alphas for the experience-sampled variables were averaged across the days of data collection; they appear in parentheses on the diagonal.
[a] Behaviors are spouse-rated.
* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

of 0.10 of social stressors on social-based work–family conflict via burnout, 95% CI [0.03, 0.17]. This 95% confidence interval excludes zero and thus indicates a significant indirect effect, providing support for Hypothesis 3. Although not formally hypothesized, we also tested whether this indirect effect was moderated by dispositional trust. Tests of moderated mediation indicated that the indirect effect of social stressors on social-based work–family conflict via burnout was conditional on dispositional trust, 95% CI [0.002, 0.09].

We examined the relative importance of workplace incivility, abusive supervision, and interpersonal conflict to uncover whether some social stressors are more draining than others. We relied on Liu et al.'s (2014) relative weights analysis approach that can be applied to multilevel models. Results showed that the explained variance of burnout is accounted for predominantly by incivility (49.2%) and interpersonal conflict (33.2%) and to a lesser extent by abusive supervision (17.4%). Although social-based work–family conflict was a more distal outcome variable in our model, also here we examined the relative variance explained by each of the social stressors. Results indicated that interpersonal conflict accounted for most variance in work–family conflict (37.1%), closely followed by incivility (35.7%), whereas abusive supervision appeared a somewhat less important factor (27.1%).

Table 3
Path Analysis Results

	Burnout symptoms		Social-based work-family conflict		Withdrawn marital behaviors		Angry marital behaviors		Supportive marital behaviors	
Independent variable	γ	*SE*	γ	*SE*	γ	*SE*	γ	*SE*	γ	*SE*
Level 1										
Social stressors	.51**	.09	.02	.06	.07	.10	−.11	.15	.13	.12
Burnout symptoms			.20**	.07	−.02	.11	.04	.09	.08	.10
Social-based work-family conflict					.32**	.12	.27**	.10	−.24*	.09
Positive affect	−.12*	.05	−.02	.04	.12	.06	.000	.06	.15**	.06
Negative affect	.30**	.07	.14	.07	.16	.12	.003	.09	.07	.12
Level 2										
Intercept					4.20**	1.00	4.00**	1.12	1.13	1.56
Trust	−.11	.15			−.09	.10	−.08	.09	.13	.12
Trust × Social stressors	.19*	.09								
Agreeableness	−.11	.16			−.13	.11	.004	.11	−.07	.13
Agreeableness × Social stressors	−.12	.15								
Pseudo R^2	.42		.24		.08		.07		.07	

Note. Unstandardized coefficients are reported. For the analysis involving two levels, $n = 70$. For the within-person level of analysis, $n = 593$. The coefficients for level-2 variables are based on a separate model in which burnout is uncentered so as to treat it as a dependent variable of the first-stage moderation. Pseudo R^2 indicates percentage of within-person variance in the dependent variable accounted for by all predictor variables (Snijders & Bosker, 1999).
[a] Behaviors are spouse-rated.
* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

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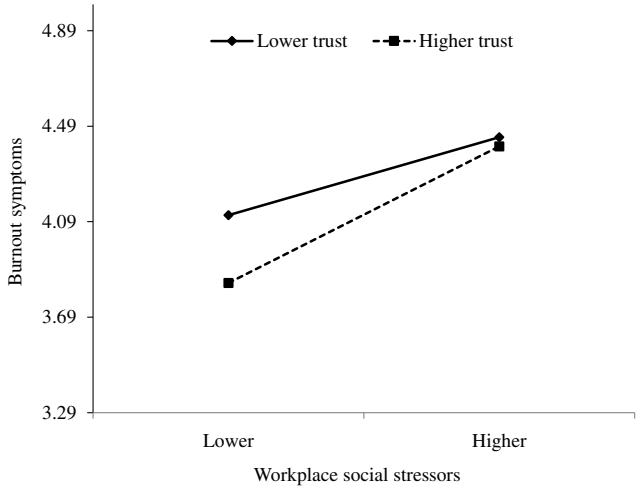
Figure 2

Cross-Level Moderating Effect of Dispositional Trust on the Within-Individual Relationship Between Workplace Social Stressors and Burnout Symptoms



Note. Simple slopes are presented for conditional values of the moderator at ±1 *SD*.

Finally, we tested the association between social-based work–family conflict and the three types of marital behavior. In line with Hypothesis 4, results indicated a significant association between employees' reports of social-based work–family conflict and spouses' reports of withdrawn behaviors ($B = 0.32$, $p = .008$), angry behaviors ($B = 0.27$, $p = .006$), and supportive behaviors ($B = -0.24$, $p = .01$). Thus, on days when employees reported higher levels of social-based work–family conflict, spouses reported more angry and withdrawn marital behaviors and less supportive behaviors by employees.

Discussion

It has long been established that employees can bring their work home and, in doing so, affect family members (Bakker et al., 2019; Ilies et al., 2017; Jackson & Maslach, 1982; Repetti et al., 2009; Wagner et al., 2014; Zhou et al., 2019; see also the spillover-crossover model, Bakker & Demerouti, 2013). Interestingly, individuals' work–family conflict experiences are likely to vary daily as a result of day-to-day fluctuations in job demands (Ilies et al., 2007; Pluut et al., 2018). In this paper, we have focused on employees' daily experiences of social stressors at work and how they drain regulatory resources and interfere with the social aspects of daily family life.

Our study of intraindividual work–family spillover showed that on days when employees suffered from social stressors during the workday, they were more likely to experience social-based work–family conflict. On evenings when employees experienced social-based work–family conflict, their spouses reported more withdrawn and angry behaviors and less supportive behaviors shown toward them. Moreover, we hypothesized—and intraindividual analyses confirmed—that daily burnout symptoms explained why social stressors at work resulted in social-based work–family conflict. Employees responded to socially more stressful workdays with burnout, which as a state mediated the daily work–family spillover process. However, it stands to reason that not all employees will respond similarly to workplace social stressors, and indeed we found that the intraindividual effect of social stressors on burnout was dependent on an individual's personality. Specifically, those who have a trusting disposition (as part of the agreeableness trait) are more negatively affected by social stressors at work in that they show more burnout symptoms (and hence higher social-based work–family conflict) on days they are the targets of workplace incivility and abusive supervision or experience interpersonal conflict. Our analyses of the relative importance of the various social stressors indicated that abusive supervision is not as impactful as workplace incivility and interpersonal conflict.

Contributions to Theory and Research

We applied COR theory (Hobfoll, 1989) in the context of spillover between work and family (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000; Ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012) to develop an interpersonal model of work–family conflict. We offer strong evidence for the basic tenets of work–family spillover theory and more specifically for the resource depletion pathway in the work–home resources model in that we showed that "stress may interfere with effective relationship functioning by draining spouses of the self-regulatory resources necessary to navigate relationship issues" (Buck & Neff, 2012, p. 6). Yet the more important contribution to theory on work and family lies in proposing and testing an interpersonal (social) form of work–family spillover. We aimed to focus on the social environments that people are part of on a daily basis and the interpersonal interactions they engage in both at work and at home. The present study is unique in its exclusive focus on interpersonal constructs and the conceptual alignment between all study variables. We examined workplace social stressors and the potential ripple effects on social interactions outside of work. Our mediator burnout as a state of self-regulatory resource depletion is conceptually aligned with workplace social stressors and marital behaviors because burnout (and in particular depersonalization and exhaustion) has both interpersonal antecedents and consequences (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993). Moreover, we focused on agreeableness in general and trust specifically as individual differences in personality that influence daily responses to social stressors, which are traits closely related to behavior in interpersonal settings.

Our novel theorizing on interpersonal work–family spillover suggests a form of work–family conflict that is social in nature. The conceptual model presented in this paper most closely resembles Greenhaus and Beutell's (1985) notion of strain-based work–family conflict, which occurs when strain induced by the work role makes it difficult to comply with the demands of the family. While these authors recognized that the quality of marital interactions might decrease as a result of strain, they did not specify why strain would make it difficult to meet demands and how spillover unfolds. Our model identifies social stressors as a specific source of conflict between work and family roles and shows that social stressors can induce resource loss in such a way that individuals feel emotionally drained (i.e., emotional exhaustion) and develop a cynical and dehumanized attitude toward others (i.e., depersonalization). COR theory helps us to understand how these burnout symptoms lead to dysfunctional marital behaviors, through the lens of

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(regulatory) resource depletion. In the evening, employees may feel they are too tired to be sociable at home because of their interpersonal interactions at work. Importantly, when employees in our study felt they could not be socially active family members due to the social demands of the job, their spouses confirmed by reporting that employees showed more negative (i.e., angry and withdrawn) and less positive (i.e., supportive) marital behaviors. Thus, the present research explicates a specific (and perhaps additional) form of work–family conflict, one in which social stressors in one domain result in negative behaviors in the other domain via a resource-based mechanism (i.e., burnout experiences). We have developed new items to assess specifically this form of work–family conflict.

This research used a two-factor model of burnout and can contribute to the conceptual understanding of daily burnout experiences (Xanthopoulou & Meier, 2014). Depersonalization has been relatively under researched as a dimension of burnout because emotional exhaustion is often selected to represent the concept of burnout, even in the context of social stressors (see e.g., Carlson et al., 2012). However, there are a few studies on social sources of stress that report stronger associations with depersonalization than with the other burnout symptoms (Dormann & Zapf, 2004; Dudenhöffer & Dormann, 2015). In the present research, when we modeled depersonalization and emotional exhaustion as independent mediators, the overall model worked yet the mediating effect of depersonalization disappeared, lending support to the notion that emotional exhaustion is in fact the core component of burnout. However, it should be noted that the symptoms are correlated and may also be sequentially related such that exhaustion leads to the development of depersonalization (Maslach et al., 2001). Conceptually, as the interpersonal dimension of burnout, depersonalization offers the best "social match" (see also Dudenhöffer & Dormann, 2015) to the other variables in our interpersonal model of work–family spillover.

Most prior research has examined burnout as an outcome of work–family conflict (e.g., Blanch & Aluja, 2012; Noor & Zainuddin, 2011), but there is also research suggesting a reciprocal relationship between the constructs (Innstrand et al., 2008). We believe that at the intraindividual level, dimensions of burnout reflect momentary states that function as mediators in the daily work–family spillover process (see also Pluut et al., 2018). To the best of our knowledge, this is the first experience-sampling study that conceptualizes and tests burnout as a state that results from daily workplace social stressors and is a precursor to daily work–family conflict experiences. To the extent that burnout reflects a loss of personal resources, this aligns also with the process view of the work–home resources model (Ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012). Importantly, our stressor items do not focus on customers (cf., Dudenhöffer & Dormann, 2015), and we therefore show that burnout as a response to daily social stressors is not specific to those working in service jobs. Similarly, the interpersonal work–family spillover process examined in this study does not apply to only those who do "people work."

We also offer novel insights into why burnout experiences are a more likely response to daily social stressors among certain employees. Our multilevel model of work–family spillover (Figure 1) considered both situational (i.e., social stressors) and dispositional (i.e., trust) factors, amounting to a cross-level moderation analysis as to why employees show more or less burnout symptoms. It follows from our results that trusting personalities are more sensitive to negative social interactions at work. When their supervisors are showing abusive behaviors or they get into fights with coworkers, they are more likely to suffer from resource loss and develop a cynical and callous attitude toward others. This is entirely consistent with situational congruence models (e.g., Emmons et al., 1986) because trusting personalities in socially stressful situations constitutes a mismatch, which should exacerbate resource loss and the associated feelings of exhaustion and the development of depersonalized attitudes toward others in the context of social stressors. On a more general level, we believe our results speak to the value of a multilevel approach of COR theory in order to illuminate why some individuals are more vulnerable to resource loss (cycles) than others. Interestingly, our findings highlight a potential downside of a socially desirable personality trait. Being agreeable is often regarded as a positive trait to have in everyday social life, as it promotes social harmony. However, according to our findings, being agreeable (specifically, possessing trust as a trait) can have a negative psychological impact on individuals when they experience stressful interpersonal encounters at work. Our results thus hint at the double-edged sword of agreeableness in interpersonal interactions at work.

Strengths and Limitations

This study has several strengths related to the theorizing and research design. First, we drew on the resource perspective of the work–home resources model (Ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012) to put forward an interpersonal model of conflict between work and family in which burnout experiences resulting from social stressors at work spill over to the family domain and negatively influence marital behaviors that are important for an individual's functioning at home and the couple's well-being. To test our conceptual model, we adopted experience-sampling methodology, which allowed us to focus on employees' daily experiences and examine spillover—inherently an intraindividual phenomenon—on a daily basis. Our data revealed considerable within-individual variation in all of the study variables (see Table 1). While social stressors were very common in our sample (see means in Table 2), the high within-individual variances suggest that social stressors are not structural characteristics of work environments. Instead, negative social interactions are incidents that occur more on some days than on other days and these day-to-day fluctuations can explain why marital behaviors also change across days. Second, our research design incorporated two measurements per day in different psychological domains (i.e., at work and at home) and involved data provided by two sources (i.e., employees and their significant others). This significantly reduced threats associated with common method (rater) variance (Podsakoff et al., 2003) against the validity of our findings regarding the ripple effects of workplace social stressors on marital interactions. Particularly the use of spouse-reports for the end outcomes is an important methodological strength. Self- and spouse-reports for the three end outcomes showed a degree of consistency, with correlations at the between-individual level of on average .43 ($p < .01$ for each). Importantly, the results were virtually identical when using self-reports instead, as nothing changed in terms of the statistical significance and directionality of the effects, including the cross-level moderation. Finally, the repeated-measures design allowed for analyses that focus on

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within-individual relationships among the study variables and control for between-individual differences that may confound the mediated relationships.

Despite these notable strengths, we see several limitations that need to be acknowledged and that may inform future research. Although we collected data from two sources, our data do not speak to the issue of causality, in particular regarding the association between social stressors and burnout, which were both measured as part of the work survey and based on self-reports. Despite the repeated-measures design, our data remain correlational and we cannot rule out that burnout symptoms lead to behaviors that cause negative social interactions. Future research should attempt to overcome this limitation by for instance asking coworkers to assess the focal employee's depersonalization exhibited toward them.

A second limitation relates to our measurements. We asked participants about their perceptions of workplace social stressors, which is consistent with Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) view that subjective differences exist in the experience of workplace stressors. Importantly, research has found similar relationships between subjectively versus objectively measured job characteristics and employees' well-being (Demerouti et al., 2001). Nevertheless, future research can further enhance our understanding of the relationship between workplace social stressors and employee well-being by using a more objective assessment of stressors (see Schaubroeck, 1999).

Another limitation of our measurements is that the present research did not capture the full gamut of social stressors that employees could face at work. We measured workplace incivility, abusive supervision, and interpersonal conflict and then merged the variables to represent social stressors at work. Although a merging approach is common (e.g., Dormann & Zapf, 2004; Follmer & Follmer, 2021) and supported by meta-analytic evidence (Bowling & Beehr, 2006), it does not allow for disentangling the effects of different social stressors. We have tried to overcome this limitation by conducting a relative weights analysis, but we acknowledge that more research is needed to uncover why some social stressors are more draining than others and to examine their interplay. However, it should be noted that, although distinct, the various social stressors identified in the literature are likely to show high intercorrelations, as was the case in our data. A fruitful research endeavor could therefore be to distinguish between social demands known to be stressors (such as the ones investigated in this study but also ostracism and emotional labor) and social behaviors that are considered desirable but may nonetheless be demanding for the person engaging in them (e.g., interpersonal organizational citizenship behaviors, see the notion of citizenship fatigue; Bolino et al., 2015) and test whether these represent distinct factors when it comes to social interactions at work.

A final concern related to the measurements is our measure of social-based work–family conflict. We used items that were newly developed to assess this specific form of conflict between work and family. In developing this measure, we stayed close to the item formulation and wording used in measures of other forms of work–family conflict, but we should note that our measure is new and had not been validated prior to this study. Finally, our daily diary design restricted the quantity of data that could be gathered at the person level, and we therefore relied on a rather small sample ($n = 70$) for testing cross-level interactions.

Practical Implications

Our study highlights the importance of workplace interactions for how employees feel and think about others at work. Considering that the social climate at work and interpersonal relationships between coworkers and between supervisors and subordinates are key contributors to an organization's effectiveness (Organ et al., 2006), depersonalization could well be considered "the most problematic manifestation of job burnout" (De Clercq et al., 2019, p. 2), as it may have consequences for how workplace relationships develop or, in this case, deteriorate (Sias & Perry, 2004). Organizations and their employees would be well served to know the factors that might contribute to this burnout symptom and are advised to prevent it as much as possible. Importantly, some individuals are more sensitive to workplace social stressors than others. Coworkers and supervisors should be more careful in their interactions with those who they know have a trusting personality.

Although we have assessed trust with a dispositional measure, it is well known that trust in the workplace can be facilitated by organizations and managers (Six & Sorge, 2008). Our findings suggest there might also be a detriment to creating a culture that facilitates trust because it could exacerbate feelings of exhaustion and the development of depersonalized attitudes in the context of social stressors. Priority should therefore be given to developing an organizational culture that promotes constructive forms of interpersonal relationships and outwardly rejects any form of workplace mistreatment, especially because many social stressors are subtle and difficult to identify for those who are not the instigator or target. However, as negative social interactions seem unavoidable at least sometimes, for those who generally believe that other people are decent and trustworthy, it is important to realize they may develop—perhaps rather unconsciously—burnout symptoms such as a depersonalized attitude to the people around them on socially stressful days, and they should try to restrain withdrawal-based reactions.

Workplace social stressors do not only result in emotional exhaustion and depersonalization exhibited toward others at work. We observed ripple effects reflected in higher levels of social-based work–family conflict. Social stressors at work spill over to the family domain and influence marital behaviors that are important for an individual's functioning at home and the couple's well-being. Jointly, then, the findings of the present study suggest that the targets of animosities are not the sole victims; when employees experience workplace social stressors, also organizational members and spouses are affected. Ultimately, this places the support system at work and at home in jeopardy, which may severely limit the ability of working individuals to juggle work and family roles (see Pluut et al., 2018).

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