

Rethinking the link between work-family conflict and turnover intentions in tourism and hospitality

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Abstract

Purpose – Ongoing debate surrounds the effects of the two dimensions of work–family conflict – Family Interference with Work (FIW) and Work Interference with Family (WIF) – on key work outcomes such as turnover intentions. According to the cross-domain perspective, FIW is expected to be the stronger predictor of turnover intentions, whereas the matching-domain perspective argues that WIF should have the greater influence. This review examines how tourism and hospitality research engages with this theoretical debate.

Design/methodology/approach – A systematic literature review was conducted using a multi-source search strategy, drawing on peer-reviewed studies identified in prior reviews, Scopus, and Google Scholar. The review process follows the PRISMA 2020 guidelines.

Findings – The review provides an up-to-date synthesis of empirical evidence, incorporating a substantial body of research published since the most recent reviews. The final dataset comprises 30 peer-reviewed studies published between 2006 and 2025 by 60 contributing authors.

Originality/value – The review highlights four key avenues for future research: (1) broaden empirical focus beyond frontline employees and beyond Middle Eastern and Asian contexts (contextual); (2) adopt a bidirectional conceptualisation of work–family conflict by examining both WIF and FIW (conceptual); (3) employ source attribution theory to better explain why WIF predicts turnover intentions while FIW often does not (theoretical); and (4) identify mechanisms that may mitigate the impact of work–family conflict on turnover intentions (practical).

Keywords Work–family conflict, Turnover intentions, Systematic literature review, Source attribution, PRISMA, Tourism and hospitality

Paper type Literature review

Introduction

Work–family conflict refers to the tension that arises when the demands of work and family roles are incompatible (Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985). Research grounded in role theory (Goode, 1960; Pleck, 1977) and later expanded through conservation of resources theory (Hobfoll, 1989) shows that individuals have limited time, energy, and cognitive capacity to meet expectations across both domains (Kappe *et al.*, 2025; Wu and Perrigino, 2025). Work–family conflict is typically viewed as bidirectional: work can interfere with family (WIF), and family can interfere with work (FIW). Although interrelated, these types are conceptually distinct (Kobayashi *et al.*, 2025).

A central debate concerns how WIF and FIW relate to different outcomes. Much existing research draws on the cross-domain perspective, which argues that conflict in one domain (e.g.



FIW) has its strongest effects in the other, such as increased turnover intentions (Shockley and Singla, 2011; Nohe *et al.*, 2015; Zhao *et al.*, 2019). In contrast, the matching-domain perspective proposes that conflict has its greatest impact within the same domain. Accordingly, WIF should affect work-related outcomes, while FIW should shape family-related outcomes. Despite the relevance of this debate, tourism and hospitality research has paid limited attention to how these theoretical perspectives apply within the sector.

Turnover intentions remain a critical concern in tourism and hospitality. Although the industry provides substantial employment opportunities, it continues to experience high workforce instability. In the United Kingdom, for example, 41% of employees changed jobs in 2022–2023, and 12% left the labour market entirely, producing a turnover rate of 53% (CIPD, 2024). High turnover leads to significant costs, including recruitment and training expenses, as well as losses related to employee morale and service quality (De Vos *et al.*, 2025). Even when employees do not leave, turnover intentions alone can reduce organisational effectiveness, as individuals who consider leaving often disengage or behave counterproductively (Ruiz-Palomino *et al.*, 2021). Thus, understanding the factors that drive turnover intentions – including the influence of work–family conflict – is essential for achieving long-term organisational sustainability.

From an academic standpoint, Figure 1 shows how previous reviews have examined the relationship between work–family conflict and turnover intentions. Although more than 200 peer-reviewed articles on work–family conflict have been published since 1993, only 19 empirical studies (published between 2006 and 2022) focus specifically on this relationship within the tourism and hospitality sector. We argue that this represents an important but underexplored body of literature. To address this gap, the present article provides an up-to-date systematic review with two aims: (1) to synthesise the most recent empirical evidence, and (2) to identify the contextual, conceptual, theoretical, and practical limitations that should inform future research and practice.

To accomplish this aim and the related objectives, the review is driven by the following questions:

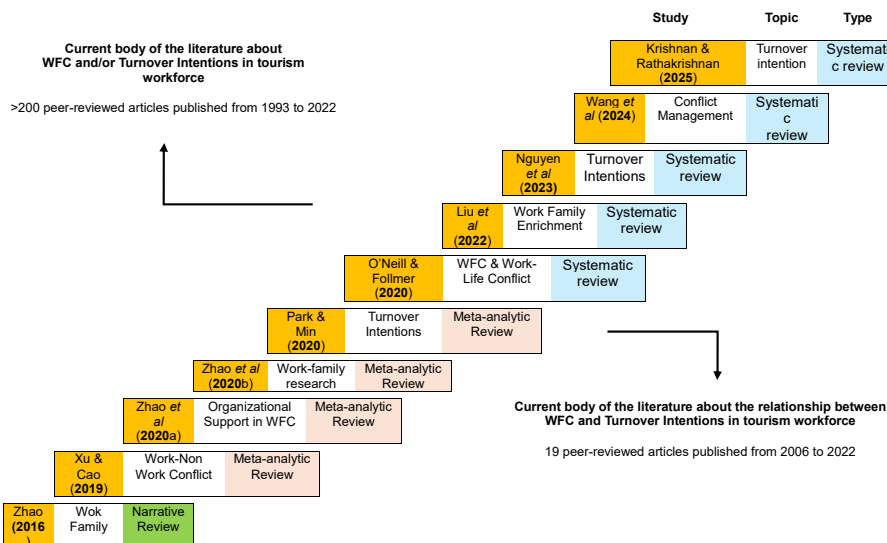


Figure 1. Evolution of literature reviews about work family conflict and turnover intentions in tourism research. **Source:** Own elaboration

- RQ1 (Contextual).* In what organisational and cultural contexts has prior research examined the relationship between work–family conflict and turnover intentions within the tourism and hospitality sector, and how do these contextual characteristics shape the nature of this relationship?
- RQ2 (Conceptual).* How has work–family conflict been conceptualised in tourism and hospitality research – particularly regarding its bidirectional dimensions – and what implications do these conceptualisations have for understanding its link to turnover intentions?
- RQ3 (Theoretical).* Which theoretical frameworks have been used to explain the relationship between work–family conflict and turnover intentions in the tourism and hospitality literature, and how do these theories inform or constrain current understanding?
- RQ4 (Practical).* What mitigating mechanisms have been identified as effective in reducing its impact on turnover intentions?

By answering these questions, the review not only updates the evidence base but also examines whether the apparent dominance of WIF over FIW reflects a genuine theoretical pattern or is instead a consequence of how work–family conflict has been measured in the field.

Methodology

The review adhered to the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA, 2020) guidelines (Page *et al.*, 2021), which included a 27-item checklist (Appendix A) and a flow diagram outlining the stages of identification, screening, and inclusion (Figure 2). Implementing the updated PRISMA 2020 guidelines enhanced transparency, supported replicability, and ensured consistency throughout the methodological process (e.g. Papavasileiou *et al.*, 2025b; Sahoo and Sethi, 2025).

Search strategy

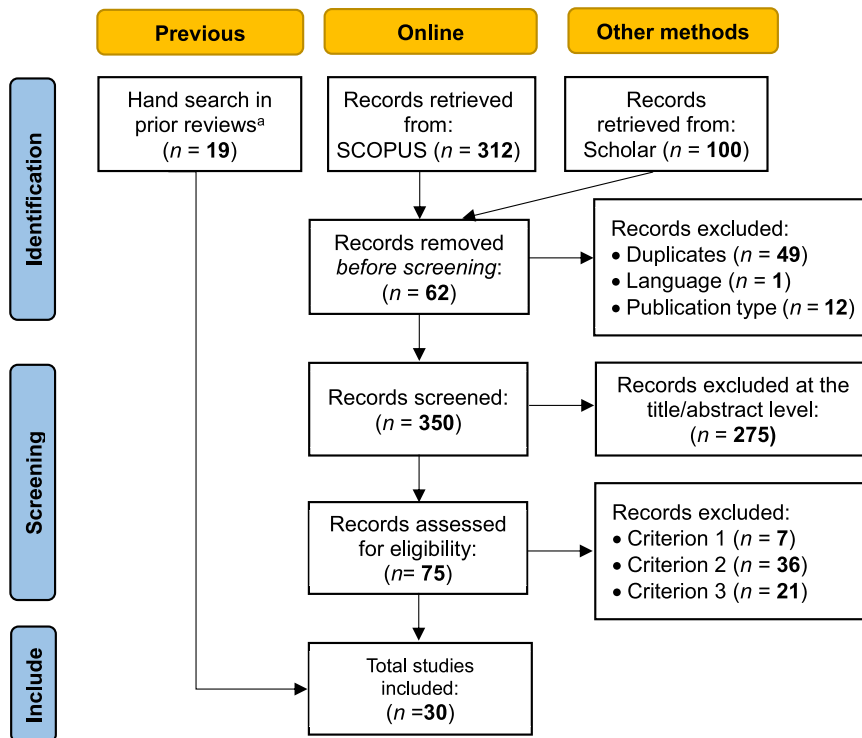
Only studies published in English in peer-reviewed journals were included. These studies had to quantitatively examine the relationship between work–family conflict (WIF and/or FIW) and turnover intentions – including intention to stay and withdrawal behaviours – within the tourism workforce. Guided by these eligibility criteria, we used a three-stage search strategy (Papavasileiou and Stergiou, 2025).

First, as noted in the introduction, we hand-searched the reference lists of earlier reviews relevant to the topic and identified 19 eligible studies. Second, we searched the Scopus database, following the approach recommended by Pakhalov *et al.* (2025, p. 3), who argued that Scopus-based searches reduce the likelihood of missing relevant studies published outside tourism and hospitality journals (e.g. in management, business ethics, or marketing outlets). Using keyword combinations in the “Title, Keywords, and Abstract” fields, this search produced 310 results (Figure 2). Third, we carried out a complementary search on Google Scholar using the same search string, following the recommendations of Sposato *et al.* (2025), and screened the first 100 results (Papavasileiou *et al.*, 2025a).

Screening

The 412 retrieved records were first screened for duplicates and for relevance to language and publication type (i.e. English-language, peer-reviewed journal articles). This initial screening removed 62 records. The first and second authors then independently reviewed the titles and abstracts of the remaining 350 records, with any disagreements resolved by the third author.

This process led to the exclusion of 275 publications, with minimal risk of bias. We then conducted full-text screening of the remaining 75 publications using the eligibility criteria outlined in Appendix B. During this stage, 64 publications were excluded after closer



Inclusion/exclusion criteria: A quantitative study focusing on the relationship between work-family conflict (*Criterion 1*) and turnover intention (including intention to stay and withdrawal behaviours) (*Criterion 2*) within the tourism and hospitality workplace (*Criterion 3*).

Databases	Search string	Limits
Scopus	(TITLE-ABS-KEY ("work- family conflict" OR "family-work conflict") AND ALL ("hospitality" OR "tourism")) AND (LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE , "ar")) AND (LIMIT-TO (LANGUAGE , "English")) AND (LIMIT-TO (EXACTKEYWORD , "Work-family Conflict") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTKEYWORD , "Work-family Conflict"))	Source Peer-reviewed articles (excl. reviews, chapters & conferences) Language English Period No limit
Google Scholar	{"Work-family conflict" OR "Family-work conflict" AND "turnover" AND "tourism" OR "hospitality"}	As above

Figure 2. PRISMA 2020 flow diagram and search strategy for capturing studies about the relationship between work-family conflict and turnover intentions in tourism workforce. **Note:** Last search 22 August 2025; ^a Work-family conflict (Liu *et al.*, 2022; O'Neill and Follmer, 2020; Wang *et al.*, 2024; Xu and Cao, 2019; Zhao *et al.*, 2020a, b) and turnover intentions (Krishnan and Rathakrishnan, 2025; Nguyen *et al.*, 2023; Park and Min, 2020). **Source:** based on Page *et al.* (2021)

examination. For instance, Rasheed *et al.* (2018) focused on female banking employees rather than tourism workers. Similarly, Mensah *et al.* (2023) examined work-leisure conflict, not work-family conflict, among hotel employees. Zhao *et al.* (2024) studied customer misbehaviour, work-family conflict, and withdrawal behaviours but did not evaluate the relationship between work-family conflict and turnover intentions.

Data extraction

The final set of 30 eligible studies was transferred into a Microsoft Excel document. Following [Papavasileiou et al. \(2025c\)](#), we used a standardised data extraction matrix consisting of four spreadsheets aligned with the four research questions guiding the review ([Table 1](#)). This ensured systematic organisation and analysis of contextual, conceptual, theoretical, and practical insights across the included studies.

Results – two decades of tourism and hospitality literature (2006–2025)

[Figure 3](#) shows how the literature on work–family conflict and turnover intentions has developed over the past two decades in relation to the four review questions. During the first decade (2006–2015), 13 publications were identified. All but two studies – [Blomme et al. \(2010\)](#) and [Yunita and Kismono \(2014\)](#) – were authored by Osman Karatepe and his collaborators ($n = 11$). Contextually, (RQ1), most empirical evidence from this period focused on front-line hotel employees (93%), with only one study examining workers in travel agencies ([Karatepe and Kiliç, 2015](#)). Also, around 70% of studies originated from the Middle East, with a smaller number conducted in Romania ([Karatepe and Karadaş, 2014](#)), Indonesia ([Yunita and Kismono, 2014](#)), and Nigeria ([Karatepe and Magaji, 2008](#)). Conceptually and theoretically (RQ2 and RQ3), ten studies used bi-directional conceptualisations and hypothesised that both WIF and FIW would positively predict turnover intentions, based primarily on previous empirical findings. Half of these hypotheses were supported (e.g. [Yavas et al., 2008](#)). Three additional studies examined only WIF, and two reported significant positive associations with turnover intentions (e.g. [Blomme et al., 2010](#)). Importantly, none of the studies published during this first decade investigated potential mediating mechanisms (RQ4).

In the second decade (2016–2025), the number of publications increased considerably to 30, with contributions from a wider group of scholars ($n = 50$) and at least one study published each year. During this period, the research expanded contextually (RQ1) beyond hotels into other occupational settings such as casinos (e.g. [Vong and Tang, 2017](#)), restaurants (e.g. [Atmajaya et al., 2024](#)), events (e.g. [Mistry et al., 2024](#)), and yachts (e.g. [Yorulmaz and Sevinc, 2021](#)). Also, the literature shifted toward Asian contexts (59%), including studies conducted in Taiwan ([Wang et al., 2017](#)), Macau (e.g. [Chan and Ao, 2019](#)), Bangladesh ([Arefin et al., 2020](#)), China (e.g. [Pan and Yeh, 2019](#)), and Indonesia (e.g. [Putra and Suwandana, 2020](#)).

Conceptually (RQ2), most studies during this decade examined work–family conflict in only one direction. Fourteen studies operationalised the construct solely as WIF and theoretically (RQ3) hypothesised its positive association with turnover intentions, with most finding supportive evidence (e.g. [Abdou et al., 2022](#)). Three additional studies investigated both WIF and FIW based on conservation of resources theory, although two found no significant effects (e.g. [Bai et al., 2025](#); [Yang and Peng, 2018](#)). Research on mediating mechanisms (RQ4) also began to emerge, with two studies identifying job satisfaction and organisational commitment as mediators (e.g. [Yang and Peng, 2018](#); [Chan and Ao, 2019](#)).

Discussion and future research directions

The review shows that most studies on work–family conflict and turnover intentions originate from the same geographical regions – mainly the Middle East and Asia – and often focus on similar occupational settings, particularly hotel environments. This concentration limits the generalisability of existing findings. The analysis also indicates that much of the literature does not engage with the differences between the cross-domain and matching-domain perspectives. This gap reflects both conceptual constraints, especially the tendency to examine only one direction of conflict, and ongoing theoretical ambiguities in the field. In other words, the findings suggest that the observed pattern is driven more by measurement practices than by a purely theoretical rationale.

Table 1. Characteristics of the literature based on the review questions

Study	RQ1 Country	Sector	RQ2 WFC	RQ3 Theory	RQ4 WIF→TI	FIW→TI
Karatepe and Baddar (2006)	Jordan	Hotels	WIF and FIW	Empirical	+	+
Karatepe and Sokmen (2006)	Turkey	Hotels	WIF and FIW	Empirical	+	+
Karatepe and Kiliç (2007)	N. Cyprus	Hotels	WIF and FIW	COR	+	NS
Karatepe and Uludag (2007)	N. Cyprus	Hotels	Only WIF	Empirical	NS	N/A
Karatepe <i>et al.</i> (2008)	N. Cyprus	Hotels	WIF and FIW	COR	+	NS
Karatepe and Magaji (2008)	Nigeria	Hotels	WIF and FIW	Empirical	+	NS
Karatepe and Uludag (2008)	Turkey	Hotels	WIF and FIW	Empirical	+	+
Yavas <i>et al.</i> (2008)	Turkey	Hotels	WIF and FIW	Empirical	+	+
Blomme <i>et al.</i> (2010)	Worldwide	Hotels	Only WIF	Empirical	+	N/A
Karatepe and Azar (2013)	Iran	Hotels	WIF and FIW	Scarcity theory	+	+
Yunita and Kismono (2014)	Indonesia	Hotels	WIF and FIW	Empirical	+	NS
Karatepe and Karadaş (2014)	Romania	Hotels	WIF and FIW	COR	NS	+
Karatepe and Kiliç (2015)	N. Cyprus	Travel agencies	Only WIF	Empirical	+	N/A
Zhou and Wen (2016)	China	Hotels	Only WIF	Empirical	+	N/A
Vong and Tang (2017)	Macau	Mixed ^a	Only WIF	Empirical	+	N/A
Wang <i>et al.</i> (2017)	Taiwan	Hotels	WIF and FIW	COR	+	NS
Yang and Peng (2018)	China	Hotels	WIF and FIW	COR and RDT	+(JS)	NS
Pan and Yeh (2019)	China	Hotels	Only WIF	Empirical	+	N/A
Chan and Ao (2019)	Macau	Casinos	Only WIF	Role theory	+(OC)	N/A
Arefin <i>et al.</i> (2020)	Bangladesh	Hotels	Only WIF	COR	+	N/A
Putra and Suwandana (2020)	Indonesia	Hotels	Only WIF	Empirical	+	N/A
Yorulmaz and Sevinc (2021)	Turkey	Yacht captains	Only WIF	Empirical	+	N/A
Abdou <i>et al.</i> (2022)	Egypt	Hotels	Only WIF	Empirical	+	N/A
Abdelaal and Abbas (2022)	Saudi Arabia	Hotels	Only WIF	Empirical	+	N/A
Uludag <i>et al.</i> (2023)	Nigeria	Travel agencies	Only WIF	Spillover theory	+	N/A
Atmajaya <i>et al.</i> (2024)	Indonesia	Restaurants	Only WIF	Empirical	+	N/A
Mistry <i>et al.</i> (2024)	USA	Events	Only WIF	Empirical	+	N/A
Bai <i>et al.</i> (2025)	Macau	Casinos	Only WIF	Empirical	NS	NS
Bai and Zhou (2025)	Macau	Casinos	WIF and FIW	Empirical	+	N/A
Mistry <i>et al.</i> (2025)	USA	Events	Only WIF	Empirical	NS	N/A

Note(s): Within parenthesis denotes mediator, ^aCasinos, hotels, travel agencies, retail, FandB; COR = Conservation of resources; RDT = Resource depletion theory; N/A = Not Applicable; NS = Not supported; (+) = positive; WIF = Work-Family Interference; FIW = Family-Work Interference; JS = Job satisfaction; OC = Organizational Commitment

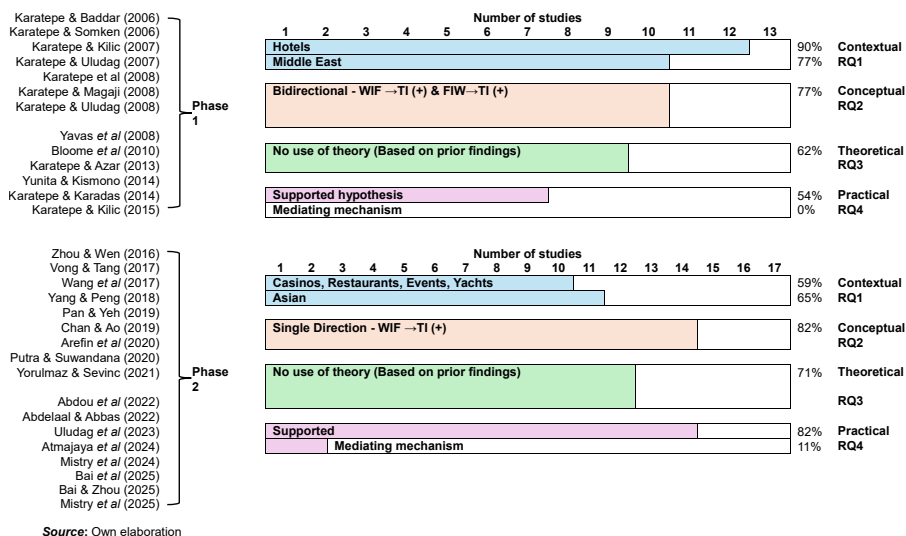


Figure 3. Empirical, conceptual, theoretical, and practical trends and gaps. Source: Own elaboration

In addition, although there is broad agreement that work–family conflict is a strong predictor of turnover intentions, relatively little research has examined the mechanisms that might buffer or mitigate this relationship. [Figure 4](#) outlines future research directions that address these limitations. These recommendations draw on relevant theoretical paradigms and align with recent calls for more comprehensive theoretical development.

Contextual directions – expand beyond frontline employees

The analysis shows that research in this area is concentrated within a narrow geographic scope – mainly the Middle East and Asia – which limits the broader applicability of existing findings. To improve generalisability, future research should expand the empirical base by incorporating evidence from more diverse cultural and occupational contexts. For example, [Mistry et al.](#)

	Current Trends	Future Directions	Paradigms to follow	Recent calls
Contextual	Focused on front-line employees	Expand beyond front-line centric samples	Employees in kitchens (e.g. Magrizos <i>et al.</i> , 2023)	test the generalisability of the findings with empirical evidence that occurs behind closed doors as in the case of kitchen chefs (Giousmpasoglou <i>et al.</i> , 2025; p.150)
Conceptual	WFC as a single direction phenomenon of WIF	Acknowledge the bidirectional nature of WFC	Simultaneously consider WIF and FIW (e.g., Kappe <i>et al.</i> , 2025)	...the bidirectional nature of WFC warrants separate evaluation, given that previous research did not account for this distinction (Kobayashi <i>et al.</i> , 2025; p.2).
Theoretical	Cross-domain as the dominant perspective	Adopt alternatives to approaches	Delve deeper into the source attribution approach (e.g., Zhang <i>et al.</i> 2019)	workforce researchers should use tourism settings as a test bed for new concepts or the development of new theories. (Ladkin <i>et al.</i> , 2023; p. 11)
Practical	Lack of testing for mitigating mechanisms	Identify mitigating mechanisms	Positive psychology constructs as mediators (e.g., Chan & Ao, 2019)	adopt more comprehensive models by integrating mediators to uncover underlying psychological processes (Liu <i>et al.</i> , 2025; p.2191)

Source: own elaboration

Figure 4. Current contextual, conceptual, theoretical and practical trends, future directions, paradigms and interdisciplinary calls. **Source:** Own elaboration

(2024) offer useful insights by examining members of an international event association in the United States. The review also highlights that most studies focus on frontline employees, a pattern previously noted by [Magrizos et al. \(2023\)](#). They observed that hospitality workforce research tends to prioritise front-line roles while overlooking back-of-house environments such as kitchens (p.2760). Extending research to underexplored occupational groups – such as chefs – would help address this imbalance and respond to recent calls by [Giousmpasoglou et al. \(2025, p. 150\)](#) to test the generalisability of existing findings using data gathered from “behind closed doors.”

Conceptual directions – acknowledge the bidirectional nature of work–family conflict

The conceptual analysis shows that much of the recent literature does not differentiate clearly between the cross-domain and matching-domain perspectives. This is largely because work–family conflict is often operationalised in a unidirectional way, focusing only on WIF. This limitation has been noted by [Nohe and Sonntag \(2014\)](#), who argue that studies examining work–family conflict and turnover intentions frequently overlook the comparative value of assessing both WIF and FIW simultaneously. Although earlier studies by Karatepe and colleagues did examine both directions, they generally assumed that each would have uniformly positive effects, making it difficult to distinguish their unique contributions. To address this issue, future research should conceptualise work–family conflict as a genuinely bidirectional construct and test WIF and FIW concurrently (see [Kappe et al., 2025](#)). This approach also aligns with recent calls in social science and medical research, which emphasise that the bidirectional nature of work–family conflict requires separate evaluation because earlier studies did not adequately capture this distinction ([Kobayashi et al., 2025, p. 2](#)).

Theoretical directions – matching-domain versus cross-domain explanations

The review also shows that most hypotheses in the existing literature are based on earlier empirical findings rather than on strong theoretical reasoning. Among the few studies that used an explicit theoretical framework, conservation of resources (COR) theory was the most common. This theory aligns with the cross-domain perspective, which argues that demands and resource loss in one domain should primarily affect outcomes in the other. According to this logic, conflict originating in the family domain (FIW) should have the strongest influence on work-related outcomes such as turnover intentions. However, empirical studies consistently show the opposite pattern: WIF is the stronger predictor. This contradiction highlights an important theoretical gap.

To address this issue, we encourage scholars to consider the source attribution perspective ([Zhao et al., 2019](#)). [Yang and Peng \(2018, p. 441\)](#), for example, found that source attribution mechanisms explained the relationships between work–family conflict and job outcomes more effectively than resource depletion models. Using this alternative lens may provide a more coherent theoretical explanation and also aligns with [Ladkin et al.'s \(2023, p. 11\)](#) suggestion that tourism settings should serve as “a test bed for new concepts or the development of new theories.”

Practical directions – identify mitigating mechanisms

Despite broad agreement that work–family conflict is a strong predictor of turnover intentions, the literature shows limited interest in identifying mechanisms that could buffer or weaken this relationship. Shifting research attention toward such mitigating factors would allow future studies to move beyond merely documenting negative outcomes and instead identify strategies that reduce or prevent them. Only two studies in the current review – [Yang and Peng \(2018\)](#) and [Chan and Ao \(2019\)](#) – identify mediating mechanisms, showing that job satisfaction and organisational commitment may lessen the impact of WIF.

Future research should build on this work by examining additional mediators, including variables grounded in positive psychology such as work engagement and perceived

organisational support. This direction aligns with [Liu et al.'s \(2025, p. 2191\)](#) call for more comprehensive workforce models that incorporate mediators to reveal the psychological processes underlying work–family conflict.

Emerging evidence also suggests that resilience-enhancing and flexibility interventions may be promising. For example, [Amiri et al. \(2026\)](#) found that an eight-session resilience training programme based on the Resiliency Wheel significantly reduced work–family conflict among nurses and their spouses, with no gender differences in effectiveness. Also, [Tirrel et al. \(2026\)](#) found that turnover intentions significantly decline when employees work flexibly. We encourage scholars to explore whether similar interventions could help reduce work–family conflict and turnover intentions among tourism employees and their partners.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to situate business research within the broader discourse on work–family conflict by examining its patterns and its implications in the workplace. To achieve this, we conducted a systematic literature review of the relationship between work–family conflict and turnover intentions in the tourism and hospitality industry. The review provides an updated and comprehensive synthesis of the empirical evidence, incorporating a substantial body of research published since the most recent reviews. In total, the dataset includes 30 peer-reviewed studies published between 2006 and 2025 by 60 contributing scholars.

By consolidating existing findings and identifying key contextual, conceptual, theoretical, and practical limitations, the review offers a strong foundation for advancing research on work–family conflict and workforce retention within the sector. The future research directions proposed here provide a clear and actionable agenda for addressing current gaps, aligning with calls for more rigorous, diverse, and contextually informed scholarship.

Beyond its substantive contributions, this study also raises methodological standards for systematic reviews in business research. Rather than relying solely on a traditional PRISMA flow diagram ([Figure 2](#)), the review fully adheres to the PRISMA 2020 checklist ([Appendix A](#)) and provides detailed documentation of how studies were evaluated against predefined eligibility criteria ([Appendix B](#)). In this way, it contributes to recent efforts to operationalise PRISMA 2020 within business-related research (e.g. [Jalilvand and Ataei, 2026](#); [Pakhlov et al., 2025](#); [Truong et al., 2026](#)), thereby strengthening transparency, credibility, and methodological rigour.

This study is not without limitations. Most notably, the review was limited to peer-reviewed articles published in English. This restriction may partly explain the absence of research from regions such as South America and France, where scholars often publish in Spanish, Portuguese, or French instead of English ([Boncourt et al., 2022](#); [Takahashi et al., 2025](#)). Future reviews would benefit from multilingual search strategies to achieve broader and more representative coverage. Encouragingly, an emerging stream of tourism research has begun to integrate non-English scholarship – for example, studies written in Spanish, Portuguese, and French (e.g. [Romera et al., 2024](#)) – helping bring non-English tourism knowledge “out of the shadows” ([Papavasileiou and Stergiou, 2025](#)).

Despite these limitations, we encourage scholars to build on the literature identified in this review – especially studies that recognise the bidirectional nature of work–family conflict – and to undertake meta-analytic comparisons that contrast findings from tourism and hospitality with those from other sectors, such as nursing or education. Such work will deepen understanding of work–family conflict across occupational settings and contribute to the development of more effective workforce strategies in service-intensive industries.

Supplementary material

The supplementary material for this article can be found online.

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