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FAMILY-FRIENDLY PRACTICES AND TURNOVER INTENTIONS AMONG WORKING PARENTS: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

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Purpose: The paper aims to systematize and synthesize existing research on the relationship between organizational family-friendly practices and turnover intentions among working parents. It identifies when and under what conditions family-supportive actions are associated with lower declared intentions to leave, and proposes an integrative conceptual framework for subsequent empirical testing.
Design/methodology/approach: A structured two-stage literature review was conducted. First, a systematic literature review (SLR) based on a predefined screening procedure was used to synthesize evidence on links between organizational family-friendly practices and turnover intentions among employees with dependent children. Second, bibliometric mapping (Web of Science) was applied to identify dominant research streams and thematic clusters. The scope covers formal organizational practices (e.g., flexible work arrangements, leave, dependent-care support), family-supportive culture, and family-supportive supervisor behaviors.
Findings: The review indicates that family-friendly practices are associated with lower turnover intentions, with effects operating primarily indirectly through reduced work–family conflict and increased work–family enrichment, which translate into higher job satisfaction, work engagement, organizational commitment, and lower emotional exhaustion. Supervisor family-supportive behaviors emerge as a critical implementation mechanism. Outcomes also depend on implementation quality, barriers to use (including flexibility stigma), and contextual conditions such as sector, gender, and parenting stage.
Research limitations/implications: The review draws on a single database (Web of Science), which may limit coverage. The dominance of cross-sectional designs restricts causal inference. Future studies should employ longitudinal and multilevel approaches across occupational groups and national contexts.
Practical implications: Organizations can use family-friendly practices as a retention tool, potentially reducing turnover-related costs (recruitment, onboarding, lost productivity). Returns depend on implementation consistency, managerial behaviors, and minimizing barriers to policy use.
Social implications: Effective organizational family-friendly practices may improve quality of life for working parents, support labor-market attachment, and reduce stigma around using flexibility, informing employer standards and public or industry policy.

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Originality/value: The paper integrates fragmented findings into a concise conceptual framework combining formal organizational practices, family-supportive climate, and supervisor behaviors, specifying key mediators and moderators relevant to retention among working parents.
Keywords: family-friendly practices, turnover intentions, working parents, work–family conflict, family-supportive supervisor behaviors.
Category of the paper: research paper.

1. Introduction

Contemporary organizations increasingly conceptualize retention as an outcome of exchange relationships between employees and the organization, as well as access to resources that enable individuals to fulfil non-work roles. Historically, employee turnover has often been examined through the lens of working conditions and pay-related factors (Hom, Lee, Shaw, Hausknecht, 2017, p. 531). In classic approaches, leaving the organization is commonly treated as a consequence of diminished job satisfaction, lower engagement and trust, and rising psychological costs of work (Dilmaghani, 2021, p. 170; Agarwal, Nelson, 2023, p. 4). From this perspective, organizational family-friendly policies can be understood as an investment through which enhanced loyalty and trust in the employer may reduce turnover, particularly when organizational efforts mitigate tensions arising from the conflict between occupational and family roles (Hill, Matthews, Walsh, 2016, p. 475; Las Heras et al., 2017, p. 338).

The literature offers multiple definitions and classifications of family-friendly policies and practices within organizations. One stream focuses on formal solutions such as flexible work arrangements, parental leave, and dependent-care support, which are frequently framed as mechanisms supporting employees in maintaining work–life balance (Kossek et al., 2023, p. 2065). Another stream highlights contextual factors, including the role of the work environment and organizational culture in shaping whether such practices are accessible and effective in everyday organizational life (Las Heras et al., 2015, p. 338; Taheri, 2021, p. 2115). A third, relational perspective emphasizes supervisor support, conceptualized as a set of behaviors that include emotional and instrumental support, role modeling, and "creative work–family management" aimed at reducing strain at the work–family interface (Hill, Matthews, Walsh, 2016, p. 480; Odle-Dusseau, Hammer, Crain, Bodner, 2016, p. 297). In addition, employee's beliefs about the organization's family-supportive orientation may strengthen or weaken the effects of supervisor behaviors and the employer brand-related signals conveyed by these practices (Hill, Matthews, Walsh, 2016, p. 477; Agarwal, Nelson, 2023, p. 8).

In the Polish context, the concept of a family-friendly labor market and organizational family-supportive practices has gained increasing scholarly attention, with a focus on how organizational solutions support parents labor-market participation and reduce strain associated with reconciling work and caregiving roles. Michalski and Szwarc (2023) document the diversity of family-friendly practices implemented in Polish firms and emphasize that their effectiveness depends not only on formal availability but also on implementation conditions, including organizational culture and the practical accessibility of solutions.

At the same time, the literature suggests that the mere presence of formal family-friendly solutions may be insufficient if the organizational climate does not encourage the use of entitlements or if the use of such practices is stigmatized (Ferdous, Ali, French, 2020, p. 512). Importantly, evidence remains mixed, especially regarding flexible work arrangements. Dilmaghani's findings indicate that flexible working time often communicated as a form of organizational support for combining work and family roles may foster satisfaction and selected organizational attitudes, yet effects differ across groups and depend on how flexibility is designed (Dilmaghani, 2021, p. 169). Review-based research also points to potential negative consequences of family-friendly policies. Some studies argue that, in specific contexts, such policies may activate mechanisms of perceived inequality and unfairness and intensify stigma, weakening their retention effects and potentially reinforcing gendered disparities in access to resources (Perrigino, Dunford, 2018, p. 612; Ferdous, Ali, French, 2022, p. 512). In this sense, organizational family-friendly policy functions not only as a human capital management instrument but also as a social signal embedded in ideal worker norms, performance evaluation practices, and organizational culture.

An important layer of the discussed problem concerns managerial behaviors, which may either facilitate or weaken the implementation of these policies in the workplace. Training interventions aimed at increasing manager's awareness have demonstrated beneficial indirect effects, for example, higher perceived supervisor support translated into improved job satisfaction and work engagement, reduced turnover intentions, and even enhanced job performance (Odle-Dusseau, Hammer, Crain, Bodner, 2016, p. 299). At the same time, some studies emphasize that relying solely on supervisors is insufficient if the organizational culture does not support a family-friendly workplace (French, Dumani, Allen, Shockley, 2020, p. 542). This points to the need to model these relationships simultaneously at multiple levels. Formal solutions and the development of a family-supportive organizational culture represent macro-level actions, whereas supervisor's behaviors operate as an implementation mechanism that indirectly shapes employee's experiences. Accordingly, the purpose of this article is to conceptualize and synthesize evidence on the relationships between organizational family-friendly practices and employee turnover intentions.

2. Research methodology

The study was conducted as a systematic literature review aimed at identifying and synthesizing evidence on the relationship between organizational family-friendly practices and employee turnover intentions. Web of Science was selected as the sole data source due to its selective journal indexing, consistent metadata, and the possibility of conducting replicable mapping of outputs and citations in management research, while also supporting the article's strict length constraints. The search strategy was based on three conceptual blocks covering parental and caregiving roles (e.g., working parents), constructs related to work–family balance (e.g., work–family, work–life balance), and retention-related outcomes (e.g., turnover intention, intention to leave). This approach yielded a total of 920 records. During dataset preparation, duplicates were removed and the remaining publications were screened based on titles and abstracts (n = 904). Studies were excluded when they did not address family-supportive practices in an organizational context or did not include retention-related constructs. As a result of this stage, 697 records were excluded, and 207 publications were retained for an in-depth abstract assessment. Subsequently, based on the relevance to the review objective and the potential to inform the development of a theoretical model, 64 publications were selected for full-text retrieval. Of these, 10 articles could not be obtained in a form allowing content assessment, while 54 full texts were retrieved, analyzed, and included in the final synthesis. The selection process is presented in PRISMA based flow diagram (Figure 1).

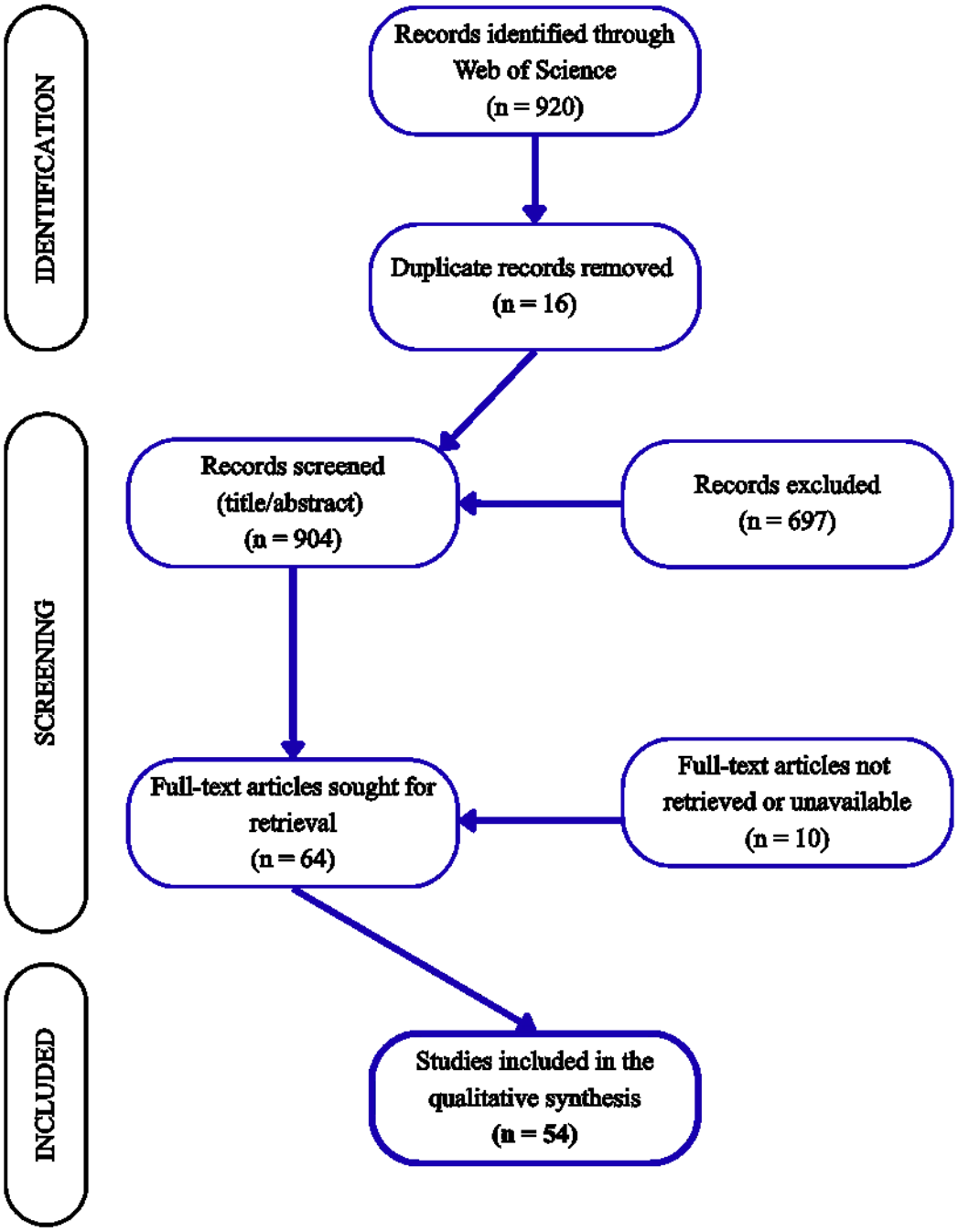

Figure 1. PRISMA-based flow diagram of study selection.

Source: own elaboration based on Web of Science search results and the study selection process.

The synthesis was conducted using a narrative approach, focusing on identifying the dominant causal pathways, areas of inconsistency across studies, and contextual conditions shaping the effectiveness of family-friendly practices. Particular attention was paid to family-supportive supervisor behaviors as an implementation mechanism and as a core element of the proposed theoretical model.

3. Family-friendly practices and turnover intentions: results of the bibliometric analysis

The results of the bibliometric analysis and the literature review indicate that the relationship between family-friendly practices and turnover intentions is predominantly conceptualized as a multi-layered configuration comprising formal HR solutions, organizational culture, and supervisor behaviors. The formal practices stream focuses primarily on flexible work arrangements and their links to employee attitudes and turnover intentions (Dilmaghani, 2021, p. 171; Berber et al., 2025, p. 7; Straub, Vinkenburg, van Kleef, 2020, p. 21). Within the same stream, studies addressing caregiving roles frame the availability and use of flexibility practices as support for combining paid work and caregiving responsibilities (Bainbridge, Townsend, 2020, p. 488). The second component concerns a family-supportive organizational climate and culture, conceptualized as the degree to which organizational norms, values, and practices facilitate work–family integration and reduce the costs associated with using family-friendly arrangements (Las Heras et al., 2015, p. 338; Taheri, 2021, p. 2115). The third component highlights managerial behaviors as an implementation mechanism, most commonly operationalized as family-supportive supervisor behaviors (FSSB), alongside the construct of perceived organizational support (Odle-Dusseau et al., 2016, p. 300; Hill, Matthews, Walsh, 2016, p. 473; Marescaux et al., 2020). Consequently, family support is more often treated as a configuration of formal and informal practices embedded in an organizational culture that encourages the use of family-friendly solutions and is reinforced through supervisor–employee relationships, rather than as a stand-alone set of HR policy provisions (Kossek et al., 2025, p. 2081).

At the level of explanatory mechanisms, the literature is dominated by mediated pathways in which family support influences turnover intentions through employee's work and family experiences and their work-related attitudes. The most frequently tested mechanism is work–family conflict (WFC), which is reduced by supervisor behaviors and organizational culture and, in turn, relates to lower turnover intentions (Agarwal, Nelson, 2023, p. 188; Liu et al., 2020, p. 812; Afsar, Rehman, 2017, p. 98). The reviewed studies also repeatedly include job satisfaction and satisfaction with work–family balance as mediators, incorporating these constructs strengthens the retention-oriented interpretation of the observed relationships (Taheri, 2021, p. 2115; Las Heras et al., 2017, p. 338; Dilmaghani, 2021, p. 7). Some models further include "organizational attitudes", such as trust and intrinsic motivation, which mediate the relationship between supervisor support and turnover intentions (Nguyen, Haar, Smollan, 2020, p. 162; Kulik, 2024, p. 1312).

From a strain perspective, emotional exhaustion is a recurring theme, both as a mediator between work–family conflict and turnover intentions and as an outcome influenced by supervisor support (Gull et al., 2023, p. 74; Jolly, Gordon, Self, 2022, p. 17). Boundary

conditions and inconsistencies in results are typically explained by organizational and social context. Gender is visible both in mechanisms and moderating effects: in several studies, supervisor support more strongly reduces exhaustion and turnover intentions among women (Jolly, Gordon, Self, 2022, p. 1084; Kulik, 2024, p. 1322). From an institutional perspective, the regulatory environment and cultural differences are highlighted as relevant conditions shaping the mechanisms through which balancing work and family roles translates into retention outcomes (Las Heras, Rofcanin, Escribano, Kim, Mayer, 2021, p. 335; Berber et al., 2025, p. 4).

A major constraint on the effectiveness of formal solutions is flexibility stigma, understood as sanctions and norms that discourage employees from using flexible arrangements (Ferdous, Ali, French, 2022, p. 510). Synthetic accounts also systematize potential negative consequences of implementing work–life balance policies (including family-related arrangements), pointing to mechanisms of inequality, stigma, and unintended side effects that may weaken an organization's ability to retain employees despite the formal availability of support (Perrigino, Dunford, Wilson, 2018, p. 600). Methodologically, the reviewed articles are dominated by quantitative survey-based studies, frequently employing mediation and moderation models (SEM, PROCESS, AMOS), complemented by multilevel analyses and a smaller number of qualitative studies and reviews (Las Heras et al., 2017, p. 512).

Overall, the literature synthesis suggests that family-friendly support is associated with lower turnover intentions primarily through reducing work–family conflict, while accounting for moderators such as stigma, gender, and institutional and sectoral context (Taheri, 2021, p. 2113; Agarwal, Nelson, 2023, p. 9; Ferdous, Ali, French, 2022, p. 514; Perrigino, Dunford, Wilson, 2018, p. 600). Based on the synthesis of the reviewed studies, a simplified conceptual model is proposed (Figure 2). The model integrates formal family-friendly practices (e.g., work flexibility, leave, and caregiving-related solutions), organizational culture and climate, and family-supportive supervisor behaviors as factors linked to turnover intentions. The model assumes that the effect of organizational family-friendly actions on turnover intentions is predominantly indirect and operates at the work–family interface. At the same time, it incorporates boundary conditions that may strengthen or weaken these relationships.

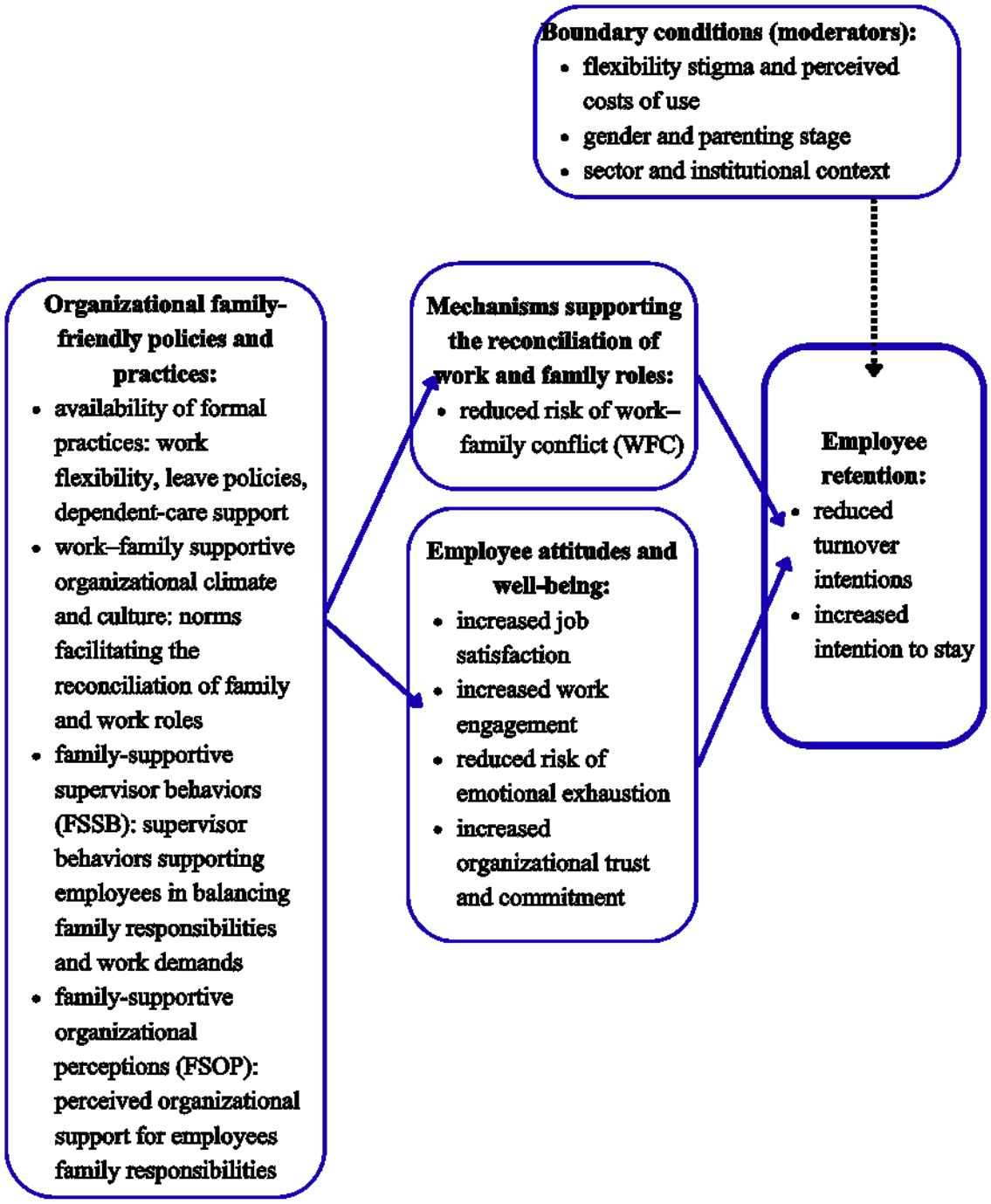

Figure 2. Theoretical model of the relationship between organizational family support and employees' turnover intentions.

Source: own elaboration.

The model offers an ordered and conceptual synthesis of findings that facilitates the identification of recurring patterns and the sources of inconsistencies across studies. It also specifies measurable constructs and relationships that can be examined in further empirical research across different employee populations and sectors, thereby enabling a shift from descriptive synthesis to testing the conditions under which family-friendly support is most strongly associated with retention.

4. Conclusion

The literature review indicates that organizational family-friendly policies and practices are meaningfully associated with employee's turnover intentions, while this relationship rarely takes the form of a simple direct effect. Most frequently, the impact operates through processes involved in reconciling work and family roles, including reducing work–family conflict and strengthening positive spillover (i.e., work–family enrichment). These processes subsequently translate into key employee attitudes and states, such as higher job satisfaction, stronger work engagement, greater organizational trust, and lower emotional exhaustion. This suggests that organizational family-friendly actions serve not only a social function but also a strategic role in retention. At the same time, the reviewed evidence reveals inconsistencies depending on the type of support, implementation quality, and organizational and institutional context. This justifies framing the phenomenon in terms of boundary conditions and constraints that shape when and how family-friendly practices are effective.

At the organizational level, it is critical to treat family-friendly policies as a coherent retention system rather than a stand-alone set of benefits. In practice, this implies designing integrated bundles of solutions (e.g., work flexibility, caregiving support, leave arrangements), accompanied by clear rules of access, transparent communication, and systematic monitoring of outcomes. Such an approach helps reduce the risk of stigmatization and addresses the "availability–use gap" between the formal presence of practices and their actual utilization. At the managerial level, the role of supervisors is particularly salient, as they act as day-to-day implementers of organizational policies. The influence of managerial behavior becomes visible in routine decisions related to planning, task allocation, performance evaluation, and responsiveness to employee's caregiving needs. Accordingly, developing family-supportive supervisor behaviors should be embedded in people-management standards rather than treated as an ad hoc intervention. At the employee level, organizations can enhance the effectiveness of family-friendly practices by simplifying procedures, increasing predictability of rules, providing informational support, and reducing social barriers related to policy use. These measures support retention by stabilizing employees' decisions to remain in the organization.

Finally, the review highlights that the effectiveness of organizational family-friendly policies and practices should be assessed not only in terms of formal adoption, but also with regard to their functioning in everyday practice. Future research should therefore simultaneously incorporate the organizational level (policies and culture), the managerial level (supervisor behaviors), and the individual level (employee's work–family experiences, attitudes, and states), while testing relationships in models capable of explaining both dominant mechanisms and sources of empirical inconsistency. This creates a clear need to complement review-based evidence with empirical verification using both qualitative and quantitative designs.

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