

# “Work-family conflict and professional commitment: proactive effect of transformational leadership”

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## ARTICLE INFO

Arthi R. and Sumathi G. N. (2020). Work-family conflict and professional commitment: proactive effect of transformational leadership. *Problems and Perspectives in Management*, 18(1), 97-106. doi:10.21511/ppm.18(1).2020.09

## DOI

[http://dx.doi.org/10.21511/ppm.18\(1\).2020.09](http://dx.doi.org/10.21511/ppm.18(1).2020.09)

## RELEASED ON

Wednesday, 12 February 2020

## RECEIVED ON

Thursday, 21 November 2019

## ACCEPTED ON

Friday, 31 January 2020

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## JOURNAL

"Problems and Perspectives in Management"

## ISSN PRINT

1727-7051

## ISSN ONLINE

1810-5467

## PUBLISHER

LLC "Consulting Publishing Company "Business Perspectives"

## FOUNDER

LLC "Consulting Publishing Company "Business Perspectives"



NUMBER OF REFERENCES

52



NUMBER OF FIGURES

1



NUMBER OF TABLES

3

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BUSINESS PERSPECTIVES



LLC "CPC "Business Perspectives"  
Hryhorii Skovoroda lane, 10,  
Sumy, 40022, Ukraine

[www.businessperspectives.org](http://www.businessperspectives.org)

**Received on:** 21<sup>st</sup> of November, 2019

**Accepted on:** 31<sup>st</sup> of January, 2020

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# WORK-FAMILY CONFLICT AND PROFESSIONAL COMMITMENT: PROACTIVE EFFECT OF TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP

## Abstract

The study aims to empirically test the moderation effect of transformational leadership characteristic on the relationship between work-family conflict and professional commitment among school teachers. A cross-sectional study was conducted among 752 teachers currently working in private schools from selected districts in Tamil Nadu, India. Purposive sampling technique is used, and data were collected using a questionnaire. The moderating effect of transformational leadership behavior is examined using hierarchical regression analysis. Grounded with the conservation of resource theory (COR) and transformational leadership theory, the results supported the negative impact of work-family conflict on the professional commitment of teachers. Further, the moderation effect of transformational leadership found to reverse the negative relationship between work-family conflict and professional commitment. Thus, the transformational leadership behavior of leaders (head/principal) was found to foster the professional commitment of teachers. This study is focused only on the dimensions of transformational characteristics on the relationship between work-family conflict and professional commitment of teachers. Also, it would be constructive to examine other mediating or moderating impacts of variables such as peer support, job satisfaction, which can also have a significant impact. Further, the outcome variable related to the perspective of students can also be researched.

## Keywords

transformational leadership, moderation, COR theory, work-family conflict

## JEL Classification

M19, J63, O15

## INTRODUCTION

Teaching as a profession is considered to be blend with emotional demands as it requires continuous interaction with all its stakeholders, including students, parents, management, and peers (Cobbold & Asamani, 2015). The researches in the field of teaching from the late 90s examine the negative impact caused by these emotional demands (Chen, Ayoun, & Eyoun, 2018). Consistent with the conservation of resource theory (Hobfoll, 1989), prolonged stress in the form of work-family conflict leads to adverse effects on job- and health-related outcomes. As a job-related outcome within the teaching profession, it leads to job dissatisfaction, reduced performance, lack of confidence, absenteeism, and turnover intention (Burke & Greenglass, 1989; Schwab, Jackson, & Schuler, 1986). On the one hand, towards health-related outcome, exhaustion leads to mental illness, fatigue, depression, and anxiety (Glass & Mcknight, 1996). Taking into consideration the work-family literature in the context of teaching, a few major findings can be obtained. First, previous literature among teachers has rarely addressed the effect of work-family conflict towards the commitment to profession (Crosswell & Elliott, 2004). Second, as an antecedents, organizational commitment and job satisfaction are consis-

tently related to professional commitment, the complications employees' facing towards balancing work and family life are greatly recognized as a prominent contributor to professional commitment (Kuschel, 2017), which is a major concern for employees in professional jobs such as teaching and is not explored much. Since the work nature of teachers is greatly attributed to interpersonal relations and emotions (Glass & Mcknight, 1996), previous studies failed to examine the relationship between work-family related variables and commitment towards the teaching profession.

## 1. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND LITERATURE REVIEW

### 1.1. Work-family conflict and professional commitment

Work-family conflict is termed as "a role conflict of the individuals which occurs when a person attempts to fulfill dual roles such as a working mother or a father" (Dubrin, 1991). Concerning the research view, the term work-family conflict is considered as a "form of inter-role conflict in which the pressure created from both family and work are mutually incompatible" (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). But this form of conflict tested under two dimensions termed as work-family conflict (WFC) and family-work conflict (FWC). The foremost dimension, work-family conflict, tends to occur when job-related factors intervene with the accomplishment of family-related responsibilities by an individual (Nart & Batur, 2014; O'Driscoll, Poelmans, Spector, Kalliath, Allen, Cooper, & Sanchez, 2003). Inversely, the second dimension termed as family-work conflict tends to occur when individuals cannot carry out the responsibilities related to work (Hakanen, Schaufeli, & Ahola, 2008). The reason behind the discrimination of WFC and FWC is basically found because of the varied triggering factors related to work and family roles, and prior studies have emphasized that there exists a significant correlation between these roles (Nart & Batur, 2014).

In general, commitment refers to the "one's level of involvement," as an outcome commitment states the agreeableness with the decision and makes great effort to carry it out (Yukl, 2006). Professional commitment represents "the working individuals' understanding and conceptualizes the phenomenon commitment" (Crosswell & Elliott, 2004). The professional commitment of teaching profes-

sionals has been described under three divisions of commitment towards the working organization (desire to work in the organization despite the opportunities), commitment towards the profession (degree of desirability to one's kind of job), and commitment to students' learning (Nais, 1981). These different categories of commitment among professionals towards their job and organization seem to be the greatly affected by drain of their psychological resources such as the drain of energy in the work domain causes lower participation in the family domain (Hobfoll, 1989). Thus, work-family conflict has a greater impact on professional commitment of working individuals, which has also been supported by empirical evidence (Sood & Anand, 2010). The studies of work-family conflict insisted that conflict arises when work role interferes with the family responsibility, and it may originate among teaching professionals in the way of long work hours, rigid schedule and less time spent at home, which results in fatigue, job stress, emotional exhaustion, burnout, and poor performance (Netemeyer, Boles, & McMurrian, 1996; Hobfoll, 1989; Allen, French, Dumani, & Shockley, 2015). On the other hand, the family-work conflict also occurred in the case of family-related responsibility interferes with the work role (Netemeyer, Boles, & McMurrian, 1996). Individuals trying to fulfill the responsibilities of the family, are likely to experience work-family conflict that, in turn, leads to a lower level of professional commitment (Cobbold & Asamani, 2015). Thus, addressing the professionals work-family conflict not only affects their organization outcome but also their commitment towards the profession (Gurbuz, Turunc, & Celik, 2013), which needs further examination since there exists limited number of research examining the professional commitment as the outcome of work-family conflict (Crosswell & Elliott, 2004).

Based on the review of work-family domain literature, the following hypothesis was formulated:

*H1: Work-family conflict will have a negative influence on professional commitment.*

## 1.2. Transformational leadership as a moderator

Many research results highlighted that turnover intention is the foremost reason behind turnover in the organization (Fortuin, 2017). The antecedents of turnover intention, particularly among teachers, are explored through several studies. Organizational and contextual factors are found to be the strongest predictors of intention to leave the jobs. Along with this, recent studies emphasize the importance of leaders' style for turnover intention (Gyensare, Kumedzro, Sanda, & Boso, 2017; Amankwaa & Anku-Tsede, 2015; Green, Miller, & Aarons, 2013; Rafferty & Griffin, 2004; Walumbwa, Wang, Lawler, & Shi, 2004) and followers' commitment towards their profession (Pradhan, Jena, & Kumari, 2016; Choi, Goh, Adam, & Tan, 2016; Pillai & Williams, 2004; Yu, Wang, Zhai, Dai, & Yang, 2015). Proponents of leadership research also argued that effective leadership is the critical requirement for promoting a successful job environment, employees' job performance, and commitment (Yukl, 2012; Cheng & Szeto, 2016). Earlier research identified leadership style with the main focus on organizational outcomes (Blake & Mounton, 1964). Later on, with the focus on leader-follower perspective, Bass (1985) developed two facets of leadership styles: transformational and transactional. Among these two major leadership styles, over the years transformational leadership style gained major attention in the field of organizational studies due to its effective employee and as organizational outcomes (Wright, Moynihan, & Pandey, 2012). With the characteristic of idealized influence, inspirational motivation, individualized consideration, and intellectual stimulation, transformational leaders evoke their followers' self-interest to attain extraordinary goals (Bass, 1985; Casida & Parker, 2011). Further, Bass's (1985) theory of transformational leadership delineates that the transformational leaders act as role models to their followers, gain trust from the followers, motivate them towards attaining difficult goals and focus on their improvement. These characteristics of TFL dimensions pave for building a strong emotional connection with the followers (Bass & Avolio, 1990). Transformational leadership proved

its greater effectiveness than other leadership styles in the environment that entails leadership (Cheng & Szeto, 2016).

Previous studies revealed the key characteristics of TFL can create effective organizational and employee outcomes such as increased organizational commitment (Mesu, Sanders & van Riemsdijk 2015; Kim, 2014), OCB (Carter, Mossholder, Feild, & Armenakis, 2014), job performance (Riaz & Haider, 2010), job satisfaction (Atmojo, 2015), intention to leave (Babalola, Stouten, & Euwema, 2016), self-efficacy (Mittal & Dhar, 2015), and occupational commitment (Pradhan, Jena, & Kumari, 2016). While the studies showed that TFL characteristics help to attenuate the turnover rate and job stress (Kelloway, Turner, Barling, & Loughlin, 2012; Schmitt, Den Hartog, & Belschak, 2016). The literature evidence thus suggested TFL has the intrinsic characteristic to deter followers from turnover behavior by improving their commitment towards teaching. Besides, the moral support gained by the leader/supervisor, specifically with the leader possessing transformational characteristics made the followers resolve work-family conflict more easily. With the base of transformational leadership theory and empirical findings, the following hypothesis is formulated:

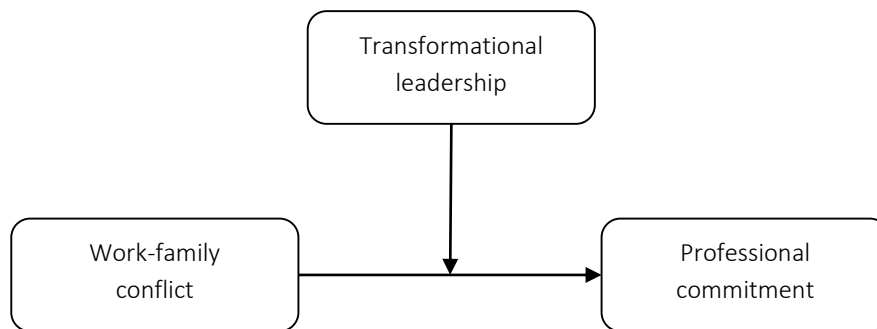
*H2: The negative relationship between work-family conflict and professional commitment of teachers will be moderated (reversed) when their heads/principals possess a high level of transformational leadership characteristics.*

## 1.3. Research framework

The research model for the study is grounded with the help of conservation of resource theory (Hobfoll, 1989) Under this theory, the prolonged stress in the form of work-family conflict will lead to acquiring intense stress-related consequences and, in turn, gives negative personal or career outcomes. Based on this notion, the research model is depicted as in Figure 1.

## 1.4. Model

The model reveals that the work-family conflict (independent variable) as a result of the prolonged experience of conflicts between work and



**Figure 1.** Research framework

family leads to lower commitment towards their profession (dependent variable). Second, as per the notion of transformational leadership theory (Bass, 1985), this negative relationship can be reversed when they have their leader possessing transformational leadership (moderating variable) characteristics.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

The research design opted for the study is a descriptive approach. The data were gathered using a questionnaire and purposive sampling method from teaching professionals working in private schools in the region of Tamil Nadu. Based on the geographical (north, west, east and south) region, 25 schools were selected from four districts. Specifically, teachers who were teaching from grades 9 to 12 were considered since teaching these grades requires demanding work schedules with less time left to spend at home. Thus, the data were collected from the well-defined geographical area from 752 teaching professionals, resulting in the total response rate of 75.2%.

To measure the variable work-family conflict, the Netemeyer, Boles, and McMurrian's (1996) WFC scale with 9-items was adopted. The sample items include "I have to miss family activities due to the amount of time I must spend on work responsibilities"; "My work keeps me away from my family activities more than I would like."

The head/principal transformational leadership characteristics of the teaching professionals are assessed the using multifactor leadership questionnaire of 12 items by Avolio and Bass (2004) under four sub-dimensions, including idealized influence, inspiration-

al motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration with three items in each dimension. The sample items include "I have complete faith towards my HOD/Principal"; "My HOD/Principal provides me with new ways of looking at things used to be a puzzle for me."

The teaching professional's commitment towards their profession is assessed using 14 items of professional commitment scale by Aranya, Pollock, and Amernic (1981). The sample items include "I feel very loyal to my profession"; "I am proud to tell others that I am part of teaching profession."

The respondents rate each statement of the scale to the extent it describes them, using the 1-5 point Likert scale, where 1 indicates "strongly disagree," and a score of 5 indicates "strongly agree."

The demographic variables of teaching professionals such as gender, age, income (in months), experience, marital status, and number of children are controlled in the analysis since significant impact are reported by previous research in the area of work-family domain literature (Kinnunen, Feldt, Mauno, & Rantanen, 2010; Drummond, O'Driscoll, Brough, Kalliath, Siu, Timms, & Lo, 2017). Using SPSS 21, statistical analysis was carried out, and the results of frequency distributions, reliability analyses, correlation, and hierarchical regression analysis were reported.

## 3. RESULTS

### 3.1. Model fit – confirmatory factor analysis

In order to test the model fit of the proposed model, a series of confirmatory factor analyses is evalu-

**Table 1.** Measurement validation

Model	$\chi^2$	df	$\chi^2/df$	TLI	CFI	AGFI	SRMR	RMSEA
Full factor model	1.272	1.002	1.37***	0.909	0.939	0.810	0.053	0.037
Model A	1.542	1.001	1.54***	0.812	0.801	0.614	0.062	0.041
Model B	1.423	1.001	1.42***	0.741	0.721	0.621	0.071	0.052

Note:  $n = 742$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ ;  $\chi^2$  = Chi-square;  $df$  = degrees of freedom;  $TLI$  = Tucker-Lewis Index;  $CFI$  = Comparative Fit Index;  $AGFI$  = Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index;  $RMSEA$  = Root Mean Square Error of Approximation;  $RMR$  = Root Mean Square Residual; Model A and Model B are compared with full measurement model.

ated and compared with all other possible models using AMOS 21.0. The results of all measurement models are shown in Table 1. Initially, the full factor model (i.e., the three-factor model with WFC, TFL, and professional commitment loaded as unique constructs) was examined, and the result indicated acceptable and good fit ( $\chi^2/df = 1.379$ ,  $TLI = 0.909$ ,  $CFI = 0.939$ ,  $AGFI = 0.810$ ,  $RMSEA = 0.037$ ,  $SRMR = 0.053$ ). Next, the other possible models (i.e., from Model A and Model B) are evaluated and compared with the full measurement model.

Full factor model: all variables are loaded as unique constructs:

- **Model A:** work-family conflict and transformational leadership as one factor and professional commitment loaded into as another factor;
- **Model B:** transformational leadership as one factor and work-family conflict and professional commitment loaded into as another factor.

The obtained result from Table 1 clearly depicted that the full factor model presented satisfactory and best fit among all other models. Thus, the result indicated the preliminary support for the conception that work-family conflict, emotional exhaustion, turnover intention, emotional intelligence, and transformational leadership are distinct constructs. Thus, from the results, the discriminant and convergent validity are established.

### 3.2. Descriptive statistics

The respondent's demographical characteristics include gender, age, marital status, number of children, total experience in teaching and working hours. The demographical characteristics

of 752 respondents are assessed with percentage analysis. The result of percentage analysis represents out of 752 teaching professionals, 349 (46%) are males, and 403 (54%) are females. The particulars of respondents on age indicates that most of the respondents fall under the category of 27-30 years (24%) and 31-35 years (23%), subsequent to that the respondents of age group between 36-40 years (21%) and age group between 22-26 years (17%) are recorded. The least number falls to the age group of above 40 (16%).

Regarding the marital status, out of 752 respondents, most of them are married (66%) compared to respondents who are unmarried (34%). Regarding to the number of children out of 752 respondents, each of 301 respondents have one child (40%), each of 125 respondents have two children (16%), each of 49 respondents have more than two children (7%), and the remaining 277 respondents those who are not married and a few others married have no children (37%). Based on the details on experience obtained from the school currently working, most of the respondents fall into the category of 2-5 years of experience (253 respondents, 32%). Over 216 respondents out of 752 members fall into the category of 8-10 years of teaching experience. are 134 respondents (18%) possess 6-8 years of teaching experience, and around 11% of respondents possess more than 10 years, and equivalently, 11% of them have one year of experience. Finally, concerning the working hours, the obtained information reveals that the majority of the respondents, i.e., 408 (54%), work between 9 and 12 hours a day. Next to that, 211 (28%) respondents work between 6 and 8 hours a day, and 133 respondents (18%) work more than 12 hours a day.

The results of Table 2 indicate the mean, standard deviation (SD), Cronbach's alpha (reliability), and bivariate correlation among study variables. The mean transformational leadership (mean

= 3.68) as perceived by the respondents is high. And with respect to work-family conflict (mean = 3.20) and professional commitment (mean = 3.02), work-family conflict showed a negative correlation with professional commitment, and transformational leadership showed a positive relationship with professional commitment. The obtained results provided preliminary evidence for the study hypotheses *H1* and *H2*.

**Table 2.** Means, SD, reliability, and correlation of the study variables

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4
WFC	2.02	1.19	(0.896)	–	–	–
TFL	3.45	0.51	–0.413**	–0.509**	(0.824)	–
PC	2.80	0.78	0.494**	0.501**	0.551**	(0.866)

Note: WFC – work-family conflict, TFL – transformational leadership, PC – professional commitment.

### 3.3. Hierarchical moderated regression analysis

With the established reliability and validity of the research model, the paths of the proposed hypotheses are tested using hierarchical regression analysis.

**Table 3.** Moderated regression analysis

Predictor	Professional commitment		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
<b>Step 1: Control variables</b>			
Gender	2.325**	–	–
Age	–0.895	–	–
Qualification	–2.221**	–	–
Marital status	–0.456	–	–
Years of experience	1.384	–	–
Children	–1.258	–	–
Working hours per day	–0.214*	–	–
<b>Step 2: Main effect</b>			
Work-family conflict (WFC)	–	–0.816**	–
Transformational leadership (TFL)	–	3.367**	–
Idealized influence	–	3.010*	–
Individualized consideration	–	5.450**	–
Intellectual stimulation	–	3.001**	–
Inspired motivation	–	2.015**	–
<b>Step 3: Interaction effect</b>			
WFC x TFL	–	–	2.765**
R <sup>2</sup>	0.074	0.318	0.352
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.050	0.297	0.348
F-value	2.483	6.311	6.584
Change of R-square	–	–	0.400

Note: \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ , \* $p < 0.10$ , \*\* $p < 0.05$ .

With the hierarchical regression as a first step, the analysis is carried by controlling the demographic variables include gender, age, number of children, and experience of the teachers as it has a significant impact in few studies. As a second step, the independent variable work-family conflict and transformational variable are loaded separately to find the impact on professional commitment. Finally, as a third step, the interaction effect of transformational leadership and work-family conflict was regressed towards professional commitment.

The result of hierarchical moderated regression from Table 3 showed the negative variance ( $\beta = -4.816$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) explained by the criterion variable work-family conflict is reversed when the same interacts with transformational leadership ( $\beta = 3.367$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). That is, the negative effect of work-family conflict is reversed and showed a positive effect with the transformational leadership towards the professional commitment of teachers. The effect size, i.e., the adjusted  $R^2$  change is above the range from 0.316 to 0.358, which indicates the presence of moderating effects. Hence, hypothesis *H2* is accepted.

Further, to support the interaction (proactive) effect, the interaction based on the levels of work-family conflict (high and low level) with levels of professional commitment (high and low) concerning the leader's transformational leadership trait levels is examined. The result of the emphasized that teachers who were possessing higher the level of work-family conflict has less commitment towards the profession, but the negative effect is buffered if they work under the leader (head/principal) with higher level of transformational characteristics. Thus, this proves the proactive effect of leadership transformational characteristics on the negative relationship between work-family conflict and professional commitment.

## 4. DISCUSSION

The results supported the hypothesis *H1*, which states that the work-family conflict of teaching professionals negatively influenced their professional commitment. The findings of the direct effect showed a negative impact of work-family conflict directly on professional commitment

( $\beta = -0.816$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) among teaching professionals, which is also supported by previous studies (Chen, Ayoun, & Eyoun, 2018; Breevaart, Bakker, Demerouti & Derks, 2016). In line with the above-mentioned literature evidence, this study showed the negative relationship between teaching professionals' WFC and their professional commitment.

Further, the study also reports the significant effect of moderation by the transformational behavior of the leaders (head/principal). The result of interaction *WFC x TFL* behavior has a positive and significant influence on professional commitment. That is, the moderation effect showed a significant proactive impact on professional commitment. The interaction effect occurred with a high level of work-family conflict, and leaders exhibiting a high level of transformational characteristics. That is, the teachers showed a lower level of commitment towards their teaching profession when they experience more of work-family conflict, but the behavior of the head/principal with transformational characteristics reverses this effect and enhances the commitment towards their job. With specific to the heads/principals' transformational characteristics, compared to all the sub-dimensions, 'individualized consideration' has a greater effect, which enhances the teacher's professional commitment.

As the COR theory suggests, the individuals encountered any threat or loss of resources, they try to cope it up with other available resources. In this notion, the teaching professionals encountered the prolonged stress in the form of work-family conflict felt emotionally exhausted, and thus they find a way to cope with their available emotional/psychological resources. Thus, in one way, heads/principals' transformational leadership behavior was found to have a greater impact on enhancing their professional commitment.

## 5. LIMITATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The current study adds to the existing knowledge on work-family conflict, especially toward the COR theory of Hobfoll (1989). As per COR theory notion, personal resources in the way of support from peers, leaders, and emotional stability help

the working individuals manage their work-family or family-work conflicts. This study arrived at the findings that the behavior of the leaders as an important variable in reducing the consequences of WFC towards professional commitment.

The major findings of the study revealed the proactive effect of transformational leadership dimensions of their heads/principals' action as a profound variable in reversing the outcomes of work-family domain conflict. Thus, on the one hand, the management can also select the employees based on leadership behavior testing interviews. On the other hand, for the existing leaders, the management could focus more on development of transformational leadership skills of heads/principals. In addition to the benefit gained by the management, the teaching professionals' and heads/principals' can also benefit from these regular training methods. That is, for instance, these kinds of training shape their behavior, such as the leadership skills, in turn, help them to be aware of performing deep actions than surface acting as their role involved more managing people.

It is certain to acknowledge the limitations of the present study. The following are the few limitations of the study from which the recommendations for future studies can be made. First, the data were collected at one point in time, and the conclusions were obtained through cross-sectional data. That is, the experience of work-family conflict and exhaustion was measured at only one point in time. Thus, the variation in exhaustion level, which may have an impact on the outcomes, was not captured in this study. In future, the longitudinal study can attempt to overcome this limitation. Second, with the support of some previous major literature in work-family domain studies, the demographic variable, which have an impact on work-family related roles, which was analyzed in this study. In future, this may also be taken into account. Finally, as the moderator, the study showed the significance of individual difference variable, leadership behavior, as the major variable coping with the consequences of WFC. Since the work and family roles rely on both the individual and family-oriented support, in future, the family-related variable such as family support and spouse support can also be tested as a moderator.

## CONCLUSION

This research examines the moderating role of the head's/principal's transformational behavior on the consequences of work-family conflict confronted by teaching professionals. The imbalances experienced in fulfilling the roles of work-family domain lead to work-family conflict. The result showed that teaching professionals working in schools faced more work-family conflicts, which has a direct negative impact on their commitment to the teaching profession. The interference of work in their family roles made them not to fulfill the responsibility of their family, which is reflected in the form of negative consequences to both organization and itself, especially on commitment towards the profession. As the conservation of resource (COR) theory signifies the support in the form of emotional or social aspects and helps the individuals to manage the stress in the form of work-family conflict towards negative outcomes, this study proves that the leadership behavior, specifically with the transformational characteristics, supports them in coping with work-family conflict and in enhancing their commitment towards their teaching profession.

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