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A Structural Model of Job Burnout and Work-Family Conflict in Teachers, with the Mediating Role of Mental Health and Psychological Capital: A Gender Comparison

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A B S T R A C T

The purpose of this research is to present a structural model of job burnout based on work-family conflict, mental health, and psychological capital, considering gender differences. The study population comprised sixth-grade teachers in Tehran, from which a sample of 400 individuals (223 female and 177 male) was selected using stratified sampling with equal allocation. Research instruments included the Maslach Burnout Inventory, the Carlson Work-Family Conflict Scale, the Goldberg and Hiller General Health Questionnaire, and the Luthans Psychological Capital Questionnaire. Data were analyzed using correlation matrix and structural equation modeling. All paths were significant at the $p \leq .01$level, except for the path from work-family conflict to job burnout and the path from psychological capital to job burnout. Among these coefficients, mental health ($\beta = 0.82$) had the largest effect on job burnout. Overall, 41% of the total variance in job burnout was explained by work-family conflict, mental health, and psychological capital. There was a difference between the job burnout models for women and men. Given the impact of mental health on job burnout and work-family conflict among teachers, it appears that providing counseling and specialized psychological workshops for teachers could be effective in reducing their levels of job burnout and work-family conflict.

Keywords: *Work-Family Conflict; Gender Differences; Job Burnout; Psychological Capital; Mental Health*

1. Introduction

The teaching profession is widely recognized globally as a highly demanding and stressful occupation, characterized by an array of emotional, cognitive, and physical demands. When these professional demands persistently exceed the adaptive resources and coping mechanisms of educators, it frequently culminates in job burnout, a debilitating psychological syndrome (Astuti et al., 2025). Job burnout is conceptually defined as a prolonged response to chronic interpersonal stressors on the job, leading to emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and a reduced sense of personal accomplishment (Wang et al., 2022). Within the educational context, the prevalence of this syndrome has reached alarming levels, significantly undermining the quality of pedagogy, reducing organizational commitment, and exacerbating turnover intentions among school personnel (Toolaabi et al., 2018). Furthermore, meta-analytical reviews of the educational sector indicate that the structural characteristics of schools, coupled with the intensive interpersonal nature of teaching, create a fertile ground for occupational distress and burnout (Pourrajab et al., 2020). Teachers facing high levels of burnout not only compromise their own occupational well-being but also negatively impact the academic and psychological development of their students (Tajikzadeh et al., 2017). Investigating the intricate web of personal, occupational, and psychological variables that predict or mitigate job burnout remains a critical priority for educational psychology and organizational behavior management.

Among the myriad of psychosocial stressors contributing to occupational burnout, work-family conflict has emerged as a predominant and pervasive factor. Work-family conflict is defined as a form of inter-role conflict in which the role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect (Grönlund & Öun, 2018). The continuous negotiation between fulfilling professional responsibilities and maintaining familial harmony places immense strain on individuals, particularly in demanding professions like teaching (Li et al., 2024). The literature consistently demonstrates a robust and positive association between work-family conflict and the incidence of job burnout across various occupational sectors, including corporate environments (Aminafshar et al., 2020), the petroleum industry (Goodini et al., 2021), municipal administration (Hosseini Nejhad & Pourshahriari, 2020), and law enforcement (Bahary & Ahangar, 2020). When employees are unable to establish a flexible and permeable boundary between their professional duties and family life, their overall work engagement drastically declines, rendering them more vulnerable to emotional exhaustion (Yang et al., 2023). Furthermore, the stress generated by navigating these conflicting domains frequently spills over, affecting the familial climate and creating a bidirectional cycle of tension and burnout (Miller, 2023). In the context of educational administrators and educators, this persistent conflict between professional duties and family responsibilities severely impairs their resilience and heightens administrative and pedagogical burnout (Ede & Mawila, 2025). Studies focusing on parental stress also reveal that the depletion of personal resources due to inter-role conflict diminishes parenting competence, further solidifying the link between work-family tensions and profound burnout (Wang et al., 2023).

The psychological ramifications of prolonged work-family conflict extend beyond mere occupational fatigue; they fundamentally erode the individual's mental health. Mental health, encompassing emotional, psychological, and social well-being, acts as a critical barometer for how individuals handle stress, relate to others, and make choices. When individuals are subjected to chronic work-family conflict, the resulting psychosocial distress manifests in severe mental health deterioration, characterized by elevated anxiety, depressive symptoms, and somatic complaints (Piko & Mihalka, 2018). The depletion of psychological resources not only instigates acute marital and familial conflicts (Shabani et al., 2019) but also serves as a direct catalyst for occupational burnout (Piri & Karbalaee Harafteh, 2019). Empirical evidence firmly establishes that compromised mental health is a powerful predictor of psychological burnout among various professionals, including medical health practitioners and educators (Ashraf et al., 2019). In educational settings, the mental health of teachers acts as a pivotal variable that influences their emotional labor, teaching efficacy, and susceptibility to exhaustion (Lotfi, 2020). Consequently, maintaining robust mental health is indispensable for navigating the complex demands of the teaching profession and preventing the onset of burnout syndrome.

To counteract the detrimental effects of work-family conflict and deteriorating mental health, researchers have increasingly turned their attention to positive psychological constructs, most notably psychological capital. Psychological capital refers to an individual's positive psychological state of development, characterized by four

distinct yet synergistic components: self-efficacy, optimism, hope, and resilience (Turliuc & Candel, 2021). Employees endowed with high levels of psychological capital possess the cognitive and emotional fortitude required to interpret stressful workplace events as surmountable challenges rather than insurmountable threats. In educational and organizational environments, robust psychological capital serves as a vital psychological buffer, significantly enhancing emotional intelligence, academic self-efficacy, and overall psychological well-being (Memarzadeh Ghanavati, 2018; Soleymani et al., 2023). This enhanced well-being naturally extends to the student population, where the psychological capital of educators indirectly fosters the mental health and well-being of the youth they instruct (Raji Asadabadi, 2021).

Crucially, psychological capital acts as a formidable defense mechanism against occupational burnout. Research consistently verifies that individuals with elevated psychological capital exhibit higher psychological hardiness and are markedly less prone to experiencing the emotional exhaustion characteristic of burnout (Yazdanbakhsh et al., 2018). This inverse relationship is evident across various professions, from judicial staff navigating high-stakes legal environments (Toukhash & Mirdarikvand, 2019) to teachers managing classroom dynamics (Kalhor & Rashidi Joneidabad, 2020). Furthermore, psychological capital plays a critical mediating role, intervening between demanding occupational conditions—such as ethical leadership challenges or lack of social support—and the subsequent development of job burnout (Motaghed & Ghashghayee Zadeh, 2019; Nazarpour, 2020). By enhancing occupational well-being and facilitating the adoption of adaptive religious and cognitive coping styles, psychological capital effectively mitigates the negative impact of work-family conflict (Homayouni et al., 2020). It empowers individuals, such as artisans and educators, to navigate the friction between their professional and personal lives, thereby reducing the incidence and severity of burnout (Okechukwu et al., 2023). Consequently, the cultivation of psychological capital is paramount for preserving the mental health of educators, particularly female teachers who often bear the brunt of dual-role expectations (Alinejhad & Rouzbahani, 2018).

The intersectionality of these variables is profoundly influenced by gender dynamics. Gender role perspectives dictate divergent societal expectations for men and women regarding professional ambition and domestic responsibilities, significantly altering their vulnerability to work-family conflict and subsequent job burnout (Artz et al., 2022). Female professionals, particularly in cultures that emphasize traditional gender roles like the “ideal employee” versus the “good wife and mother,” often experience a more acute and bidirectional manifestation of work-family conflict, which drastically impairs their job satisfaction and accelerates emotional exhaustion (Su & Jiang, 2023). Although both male and female educators suffer from the demands of their profession, the pathways leading to burnout, as well as the efficacy of their psychological resources, may differ systematically. For instance, the deployment and impact of psychological capital in entrepreneurial and professional settings have been shown to exhibit significant gender differences (Fernandez & Roque, 2021). While female educators might heavily rely on specific facets of psychological capital to buffer the immense pressure of their dual roles, male educators might experience different occupational stressors and utilize different psychological resources to maintain their mental health. Despite the recognized importance of these constructs, there is a conspicuous lack of comprehensive structural models that simultaneously evaluate the intricate interplay between work-family conflict, mental health, psychological capital, and job burnout while explicitly accounting for gender as a moderating variable within the educational sector.

Addressing this gap in the existing literature requires a holistic approach that simultaneously maps the direct and indirect trajectories linking these critical psychosocial variables. A structural modeling approach allows for the clarification of how work-family conflict precipitates job burnout, and more importantly, how mental health and psychological capital mediate this destructive process. By integrating these elements into a unified theoretical framework, researchers can better understand the underlying mechanisms of teacher burnout. Furthermore, conducting a multi-group analysis based on gender is essential to ascertain whether the structural relationships between these variables operate uniformly across male and female educators or if tailored, gender-specific interventions are necessitated. Therefore, the present study aims to present a structural model of job burnout and work-family conflict in teachers, with the mediating role of mental health and psychological capital, while conducting a gender comparison.

1.1. Measures

Job Burnout: In this research, the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) was used, which contains 22 items and measures three scales: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment. Maslach and Jackson (1981) obtained the internal reliability of the questionnaire dimensions as follows: emotional exhaustion, 0.90; depersonalization, 0.79; and reduced personal accomplishment, 0.71. The validity and reliability of this questionnaire were confirmed for the first time in Iran by Filyan (1992), and its reliability coefficient was estimated at 0.78(Lotfi, 2020). Kazemi (2016), in their research, obtained an alpha coefficient of 0.85for job burnout. Mianji (2016) obtained a Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of 0.88for this questionnaire. The reliability of this instrument in the present study was examined using Cronbach's alpha method, yielding a value of 0.82.

Work-Family Conflict: To measure work and family conflict, the 18-item Work-Family Conflict Scale by Carlson et al. (2000) was used. This scale includes the components of time-based work-family conflict, time-based family-work conflict, strain-based work-family conflict, strain-based family-work conflict, behavior-based work-family conflict, and behavior-based family-work conflict. Carlson et al. (2000) reported the Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient for this test to be between 0.78and 0.87, and Mianji (2016) obtained 0.89. Hashemi et al. (2011) obtained the reliability coefficient of this questionnaire using Cronbach's alpha and the split-half method for the three dimensions of work-family conflict as ranging between 0.70and 0.89, and established its validity via a correlation coefficient of 0.74. The reliability of this instrument in the present study was examined using Cronbach's alpha method, yielding a value of 0.72.

Mental Health: The General Health Questionnaire (GHQ) by Goldberg and Hillier (1979) consists of 28 questions. This instrument comprises 4 dimensions: somatic symptoms, anxiety and insomnia, social dysfunction, and depression. The reliability of this test has been reported as 0.91for the entire test and between 0.77and 0.82for the subscales. Results regarding the discriminant validity of the mental health scale also indicated that this scale can differentiate between clinical and normal groups (Lotfi, 2020). Kazemi (2016), in their research, obtained an alpha coefficient of 0.86for mental health. Goldberg (1993) reported the reliability of this questionnaire at 83%. Molavi (2002) evaluated the validity of this questionnaire along with the Student Life Problems Questionnaire and the Academic Problems Checklist, obtaining 72%and 58%, respectively, using the concurrent validity method with the aforementioned questionnaires (Kazemi, 2016). The reliability of this instrument in the present study was examined using Cronbach's alpha method, yielding a value of 0.82.

Psychological Capital: Luthans' (2007) Psychological Capital Questionnaire (PCQ) contains 24 items and 4 components (self-efficacy, hope, resilience, and optimism). Youssef and Luthans (2007) reported the chi-square ratio for this test as 0.97and 0.08, respectively. Bahadori et al. (2012) also evaluated the reliability of this questionnaire using Cronbach's alpha method at 0.85and reported its content and face validity as acceptable. Shabani et al. (2019) obtained a reliability coefficient using Cronbach's alpha of 0.92for the total score, 0.89for the self-efficacy subscale, 0.90for hope, 0.87for resilience, and 0.89for optimism. The reliability of this instrument in the present study was examined using Cronbach's alpha method, yielding a value of 0.80.

1.2. Data analysis

Data analysis was performed in two sections, descriptive and inferential, using SPSS 22 and LISREL 8.7 software. In the descriptive section, measures of central tendency were calculated, and in the inferential section, the correlation matrix and theoretical model testing were conducted using structural equation modeling.

2. Findings and Results

The skewness and kurtosis indices obtained in Table 1 indicate the normal distribution of the research variables and subscales. Therefore, the assumption of normality is confirmed.

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Table 1

Descriptive indices of research variables

Variable	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
Emotional Exhaustion	1.00	5.00	4.0375	1.07889	−1.182	0.758
Depersonalization	1.00	5.00	3.3275	1.18268	−0.355	−0.834
Lack of Personal Accomplishment	1.00	5.00	3.6850	1.08569	−0.683	−0.091
Physical Functioning	1.00	5.00	3.9875	1.06780	−1.067	0.541
Anxiety	1.00	5.00	4.6800	0.69556	−2.661	7.978
Social Functioning	1.00	5.00	4.0775	1.03401	−1.099	0.715
Depression	1.00	5.00	3.8325	1.13033	−0.839	−0.004
Self-Efficacy	1.00	5.00	4.1700	1.05541	−1.360	1.370
Hope	1.00	5.00	4.1875	0.94317	−1.301	1.551
Resilience	1.00	5.00	3.2950	1.24774	−0.371	−0.812
Optimism	1.00	5.00	3.0750	1.25031	−0.212	−1.005
Time-based Work-Family Conflict	1.00	5.00	3.1650	1.18798	−0.196	−0.734
Time-based Family-Work Conflict	1.00	5.00	3.5075	1.20772	−0.485	−0.621
Strain-based Work-Family Conflict	1.00	5.00	3.2650	1.22209	−0.286	−0.843
Strain-based Family-Work Conflict	1.00	5.00	3.9925	1.18573	−1.091	0.204
Behavior-based Work-Family Conflict	1.00	5.00	3.1250	1.34495	−0.149	−1.138
Behavior-based Family-Work Conflict	1.00	5.00	2.7925	1.21372	0.158	−0.877

Since the basis for analyzing causal models is the correlation matrix, it is presented in Table 2. Here, all coefficients are significant at the 0.01 level. The highest correlation coefficient (r=-0.46) belongs to mental health and psychological capital.

Table 2

Correlation matrix of research variables

Variables	1	2	3	4
1. Job Burnout	1			
2. Mental Health	-0.21^{**}	1		
3. Psychological Capital	-0.25^{**}	-0.46^{**}	1	
4. Work-Family Conflict	-0.34^{**}	-0.41^{**}	0.32^{**}	1

To test the theoretical model and research hypotheses, the structural equation modeling method was used. Figure 1 presents the path coefficients, and Figure 2 presents the t-values of the research model. According to this model, work-family conflict, the exogenous variable of the research, indirectly affects job burnout mediated by mental health and psychological capital.

Figure 1 displays the tested research model. The numbers inscribed on the paths are the path coefficients (β); all paths, except for the path from work-family conflict to job burnout and the path from psychological capital to job burnout, are significant at the $p \leq .01$ level. Among these coefficients, mental health ($\beta = -0.82$) has the largest effect coefficient on job burnout. The numbers on the rectangles and ellipses represent the explained variance. The results indicate that 41% of the total variance in job burnout is explained by the variables of work-family conflict, mental health, and psychological capital.

Table 3

Estimation of direct, indirect, and total effects of the model

Paths	Direct Effect	Indirect Effect	Total Effect	Explained Variance
On Job Burnout from Work-Family Conflict	0.01	0.43	0.43	41%
On Job Burnout from Mental Health	−0.82	-	−0.82	
On Job Burnout from Psychological Capital	−0.01	-	−0.41	
On Mental Health from Work-Family Conflict	−0.53	-	−0.53	
On Psychological Capital from Work-Family Conflict	−0.93	-	−0.93	

Figure 1

Path coefficients of the tested research model

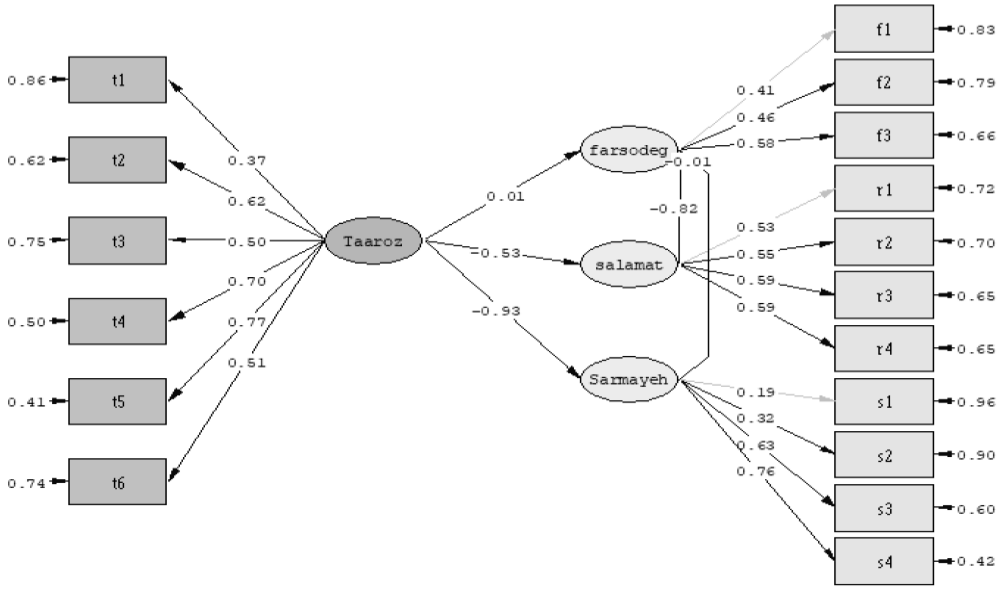
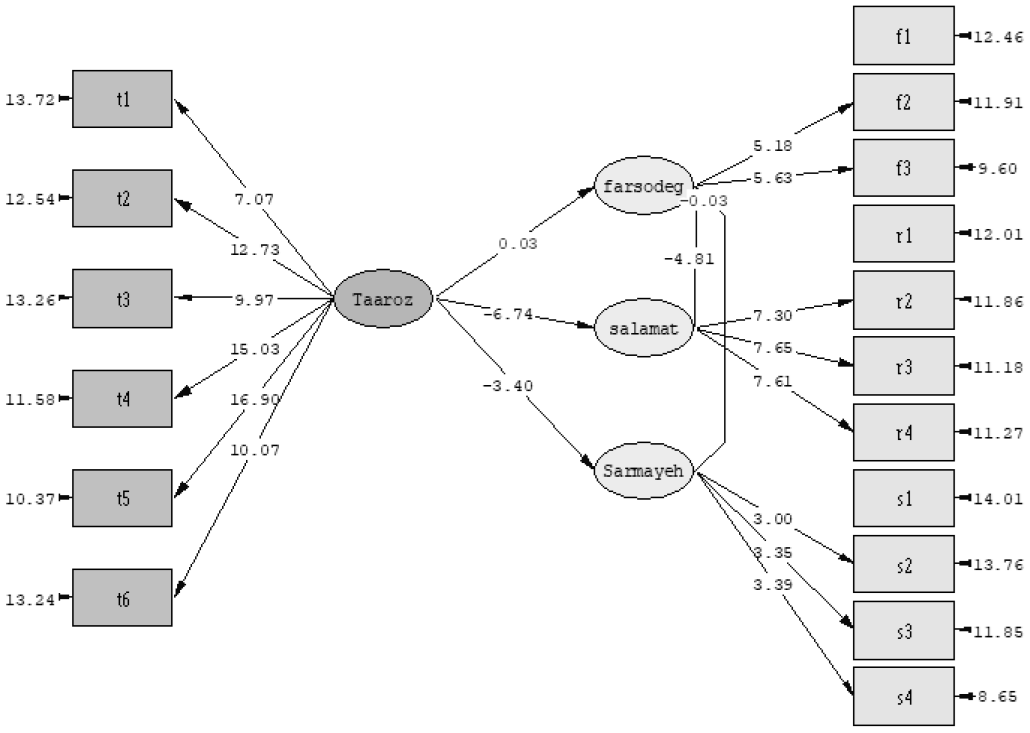


Figure 2

T-values of the tested research model



Taaroz = Work-Family Conflict, Fasodeg= Burnout, Salamat = Health, Sarmayeh = Capital

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From Table 3, it is evident that after controlling for pretest effects, significant differences existed between the two groups for both occupational stress and distress tolerance. Specifically, a significant difference was found between the experimental and control groups for occupational stress (p = .020, F = 6.230) and for distress tolerance (p = .001, F = 79.473).

Given the significance of the therapy effect on both variables after controlling for pretest, the primary hypothesis was confirmed. With 99% confidence, it can be concluded that compassion-focused therapy significantly reduced occupational stress and enhanced distress tolerance among emergency department nurses.

The obtained findings indicate the significant effect of independent and mediating variables on job burnout. According to Table 4, the ratio of chi-square to degrees of freedom is 2.23, which shows that the proposed model has an adequate fit. Since the chi-square statistic is sensitive to sample size and model complexity, alternative fit indices are also used to evaluate the acceptability of the model.

Table 4

Fit indices of the tested model

Index	Estimate
Chi-square to degrees of freedom ratio (χ^2/df)	2.23
Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA)	0.05
Goodness of Fit Index (GFI)	0.98
Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI)	0.90
Comparative Fit Index (CFI)	0.95
Normed Fit Index (NFI)	0.93

According to Ghasemi (2013), values greater than or equal to 0.90for the CFI, GFI, and NFI indices, and an $RMSEA \leq 0.08$, indicate a favorable model fit. Considering the desired values of the model fit indices, the indices obtained in the present study—Goodness of Fit Index (GFI), Comparative Fit Index (CFI), and Normed Fit Index (NFI)—show that the model fit is appropriate.

To examine the moderating role of gender and compare the equation model of the present study, the multi-group structural equation modeling analysis method was used. In this method, two separate analyses are not conducted for each group; rather, a single analysis is performed simultaneously to examine the significance indices and test the hypotheses. In this analysis, path coefficients for both groups are obtained simultaneously first. The obtained model is called the unconstrained model, in which the path estimates for the two groups are different. In the next step, the parameters are restricted across the two groups; in other words, in this model, the parameters of the two groups are considered equal, which is called the constrained model. Furthermore, if the difference in chi-square (between the unconstrained and constrained models) shows a significant difference compared to the critical chi-square, it can be concluded that the moderating effect is confirmed, indicating that at least one or more paths differ significantly between the two groups. If the moderation hypothesis is confirmed, then the standardized coefficients of the model for both groups are compared, and the significance of the difference between these coefficients is examined.

Table 5

Descriptive indices of research variables

Variable	Mean - Female Teachers	Mean - Male Teachers	Standard Deviation - Female Teachers	Standard Deviation - Male Teachers
Job Burnout	3.5022	2.9661	0.536	0.186
Mental Health	4.0807	3.8814	1.250	0.48
Psychological Capital	3.5112	2.6384	0.501	0.190
Work-Family Conflict	2.9731	2.5650	0.67	0.368

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The results from Table 5 present the descriptive indices of the research variables, specifically the mean and standard deviation for the two groups.

In order to compare the conceptual model for the two groups of female and male teachers, the unconstrained and constrained models of this analysis were first compared.

Table 6

Fit indices of unconstrained and constrained models

Index	Estimate - Unconstrained Model	Estimate - Constrained Model
χ^2	54.84	167.53
df	26	36
Chi-square to degrees of freedom ratio (χ^2/df)	2.10	4.65
Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA)	0.04	0.08
Goodness of Fit Index (GFI)	0.97	0.91
Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI)	0.94	0.86
Comparative Fit Index (CFI)	0.94	0.74
Normed Fit Index (NFI)	0.90	0.69
$\Delta\chi^2$	112	
Δdf	10	

According to Table 6, the unconstrained model has favorable fit indices, but this is not the case for the constrained model. Moreover, the difference in chi-square and degrees of freedom between the unconstrained and constrained models is 112and 10, respectively, which is significant at the $p < .05$level (the critical chi-square value with 10degrees of freedom at a 0.05confidence level is 18.31). Given the significance of the chi-square difference, it can be concluded that both groups of women and men have different regression weights. Therefore, the moderating role of gender in the model is confirmed. Considering the proof of the moderating role of gender in the equation model, the direct effects for both groups were examined in this model. The standardized direct effects for both groups are reported in Table 7.

Table 7

Estimation of direct effects of the unconstrained model for the two groups

Paths	Direct Effect - Female Teachers	Direct Effect - Male Teachers	Explained Variance - Female Teachers	Explained Variance - Male Teachers
Effect of work-family conflict on job burnout	0.02	0.01	46%	29%
Effect of work-family conflict on mental health	−0.56	−0.41		
Effect of work-family conflict on psychological capital	−0.90	−0.72		
Effect of mental health on job burnout	−0.80	−0.84		
Effect of psychological capital on job burnout	−0.01	−0.01		

Overall, the “job burnout” variable in female teachers is explained by a total of 46%by the variables of work-family conflict, mental health, and psychological capital. The “job burnout” variable in male teachers is explained by a total of 29%by the variables of work-family conflict, mental health, and psychological capital. To determine the significance of the difference between the obtained standardized direct coefficients, it is necessary to test the significance of these coefficients. For this purpose, the critical values for the difference between the parameters were examined.

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Table 8

Matrix of critical values for differences between model parameters

Parameter	Pw1	Pw2	Pw3	Pw4	Pw5
Pm1	0.77	–	–	–	–
Pm2	–	1.98	–	–	–
Pm3	–	–	2.78	–	–
Pm4	–	–	–	−0.23	–
Pm5	–	–	–	–	0.04

In the above table, the parameter $pw1$ represents the path from work-family conflict to job burnout for female teachers, while $pm1$ represents this path for the male teacher group. The critical value for their difference is -0.77, which is less than 1.96, indicating that the difference between these two paths is not significant.

The parameter $pw2$ denotes the path from work-family conflict to mental health for female teachers, and $pm2$denotes the same path for the male teacher group. Its critical value is 1.98, which is greater than 1.96, indicating a significant difference between these two paths for the female and male teacher groups.

The parameter $pw3$ indicates the path from work-family conflict to psychological capital for female teachers, and $pm3$represents this same path for the male teacher group. The critical value is 2.78, which is greater than 1.96, signifying that the difference between these two paths is significant for the female and male teacher groups.

The parameter $pw4$ represents the path from mental health to job burnout for female teachers, and $pm4$represents the same path for the male group. Its critical value is 0.23, which is less than 1.96, indicating that the difference between these two paths for the female and male teacher groups is not significant.

The parameter $pw5$ indicates the path from psychological capital to job burnout for female teachers, and $pm5$indicates the same path for the male teacher group. The critical value is 0.04, which is less than 1.96, demonstrating that the difference between these two paths for the female and male teacher groups is not significant.

3. Discussion

The primary objective of the current research was to evaluate a structural model of job burnout and work-family conflict among teachers, emphasizing the mediating roles of mental health and psychological capital, alongside a gender comparison. The findings derived from the structural equation modeling indicated that the proposed theoretical model possesses an adequate fit with the empirical data. The results demonstrated that work-family conflict does not exert a significant direct effect on job burnout; however, it has a profound indirect impact through the degradation of mental health and the depletion of psychological capital. Notably, the variables of work-family conflict, mental health, and psychological capital collectively accounted for a significant portion of the variance in job burnout, explaining 46%of the variance for female teachers and 29%for male teachers.

The structural analysis revealed that work-family conflict is a significant negative predictor of both mental health and psychological capital. This finding aligns with the extensive body of literature highlighting the detrimental consequences of role incompatibility on individual well-being (Ede & Mawila, 2025; Grönlund & Öun, 2018). When teachers struggle to balance the intense emotional and cognitive demands of their classrooms with their familial obligations, the resulting chronic stress systematically erodes their psychological resources (Li et al., 2024). This boundary permeability issue, where stress from the workplace spills over into the home and vice versa, significantly diminishes overall work engagement and cognitive functioning (Miller, 2023; Yang et al., 2023). Previous studies have consistently documented that intense inter-role conflict leads to elevated psychological distress and administrative burnout among educational professionals and corporate employees alike (Aminafshar et al., 2020; Goodini et al., 2021; Hosseini Nejhad & Pourshahriari, 2020). Furthermore, the stress generated by work-family conflict heavily compromises a teacher's mental health, leading to anxiety, depressive symptoms, and social dysfunction, which inherently accelerates the burnout process (Piko & Mihalka, 2018; Wang et al., 2023).

Furthermore, the model established that mental health is the strongest predictor of job burnout among the studied variables, showing a substantial negative relationship ($\beta = -0.82$). As mental health deteriorates due to occupational and familial stressors, the likelihood of experiencing emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced

personal accomplishment increases dramatically. This result is strongly corroborated by prior research indicating that robust mental health is a fundamental prerequisite for sustained occupational well-being and pedagogical efficacy (Ashraf et al., 2019; Lotfi, 2020; Piri & Karbalaee Harafteh, 2019). When educators lack the psychological stability required to manage classroom dynamics and administrative pressures, they quickly become overwhelmed, leading to a state of profound burnout (Pourrajab et al., 2020; Toolaabi et al., 2018).

Similarly, psychological capital was identified as a critical mediating variable. The findings indicated that a reduction in psychological capital—encompassing self-efficacy, hope, resilience, and optimism—subsequently heightens susceptibility to job burnout. Teachers equipped with high psychological capital are generally more capable of employing adaptive coping strategies, maintaining psychological hardiness, and buffering the adverse effects of occupational stressors (Kalhor & Rashidi Joneidabad, 2020; Yazdanbakhsh et al., 2018). The literature confirms that positive psychological resources act as an essential protective shield against the emotional exhaustion associated with demanding professions (Toukhash & Mirdarikvand, 2019; Turliuc & Candel, 2021). By enhancing emotional intelligence and academic self-efficacy, psychological capital not only prevents burnout but also fosters a more positive and productive educational environment (Memarzadeh Ghanavati, 2018; Soleymani et al., 2023). The mediating role of psychological capital in mitigating the effects of challenging work environments and inter-role conflicts has been well-documented across various occupational cohorts, reinforcing the validity of the current model (Homayouni et al., 2020; Motaghed & Ghashghayee Zadeh, 2019; Nazarpour, 2020; Okechukwu et al., 2023; Raji Asadabadi, 2021).

A critical component of the present study was the multi-group analysis utilized to test the moderating role of gender within the structural model. The significant difference in the chi-square values between the unconstrained and constrained models ($\Delta\chi^2 = 112,\ p < .05$) definitively confirmed that the structural paths differ significantly between male and female teachers. Specifically, the pathways from work-family conflict to mental health, and from work-family conflict to psychological capital, were significantly stronger for female teachers compared to their male counterparts. This suggests that female educators are disproportionately affected by the friction between their professional and domestic roles. This vulnerability can be attributed to entrenched gender role expectations and societal norms that often place a heavier burden of domestic and caregiving responsibilities on women, compelling them to strive toward the conflicting ideals of the "ideal employee" and the "good mother" (Artz et al., 2022; Su & Jiang, 2023). The heightened severity of marital and work-family conflicts among women inherently leads to a more rapid depletion of their psychological capital and mental health reserves (Alinejhad & Rouzbahani, 2018; Shabani et al., 2019). These gender disparities in experiencing and processing occupational stress, and the subsequent divergent impacts on psychological capital and burnout, are consistent with broader organizational research findings (Astuti et al., 2025; Bahary & Ahangar, 2020; Fernandez & Roque, 2021; Tajikzadeh et al., 2017; Wang et al., 2022).

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, the present study provides robust empirical evidence supporting a structural model wherein work-family conflict indirectly exacerbates job burnout among educators by systematically depleting their mental health and psychological capital. Although work-family conflict does not directly trigger burnout, its profound degradation of internal psychological resources—with mental health emerging as the most critical protective factor against occupational exhaustion—highlights a perilous pathway to professional deterioration. Crucially, the multi-group analysis elucidates the significant moderating role of gender, demonstrating that the destructive impact of work-family conflict on both mental health and psychological capital is markedly more severe for female teachers than for their male counterparts. These findings collectively underscore the urgent necessity for educational policymakers to implement gender-sensitive, family-friendly institutional practices and targeted psychological interventions designed to mitigate inter-role friction, fortify psychological capital, and ultimately safeguard the occupational well-being of the teaching workforce.

The current study, while providing valuable insights into the dynamics of teacher burnout, is subject to several limitations that must be acknowledged. First, the research utilized a cross-sectional design, which captures data at a single point in time. Consequently, while causal relationships are implied by the theoretical structural model, definitive causal inferences regarding the chronological sequence of work-family conflict, mental health degradation, psychological capital depletion, and the onset

of job burnout cannot be absolute. Second, the data collection relied exclusively on self-report questionnaires. This methodological approach introduces the potential for common method variance and social desirability bias, as participants might consciously or unconsciously alter their responses to present themselves in a more favorable light, particularly concerning sensitive topics like mental health and familial conflicts. Finally, the statistical population was restricted to sixth-grade teachers operating within specific educational districts in Tehran. This geographic and occupational specificity limits the generalizability of the findings to educators teaching different grade levels, those residing in rural areas, or professionals operating within entirely different cultural or international educational systems.

To build upon the findings of this study and address its limitations, several avenues for future research are recommended. Future investigations should prioritize longitudinal or experimental research designs to accurately map the temporal dynamics and establish definitive causal links between work-family conflict, psychological resources, and job burnout over extended periods. Furthermore, researchers are encouraged to diversify their methodological approaches by incorporating multi-source data collection, such as peer evaluations, supervisor ratings, or objective physiological stress markers, to mitigate the biases inherent in self-report measures. Expanding the statistical population is also crucial; future studies should replicate this structural model across different educational tiers—such as primary, secondary, and higher education contexts—as well as across diverse geographical regions and cultural settings to enhance the external validity of the findings. Additionally, subsequent research could enrich the model by integrating other potential moderating or mediating variables, such as organizational support, emotional intelligence, or specific coping mechanisms, to provide a more granular understanding of the burnout phenomenon.

Based on the empirical evidence demonstrating the severe impact of work-family conflict and depleted mental resources on teacher burnout, educational policymakers and school administrators must implement targeted, proactive interventions. It is highly recommended that educational institutions establish accessible, confidential, and specialized psychological counseling services designed specifically to address the unique stressors faced by teachers. Schools should routinely organize psychological empowerment workshops focused on cultivating the core components of psychological capital—namely, resilience, optimism, self-efficacy, and hope—equipping educators with the cognitive tools necessary to navigate occupational adversity. Furthermore, administrative bodies should critically review and revise institutional policies to foster a more family-friendly work environment. This could include offering flexible scheduling, providing administrative support for workload management, and establishing clear boundaries regarding after-hours communication. Particular attention and tailored support systems must be directed toward female educators, recognizing the disproportionate impact of dual-role demands on their psychological well-being, thereby ensuring a healthier, more engaged, and effective teaching workforce.

Authors' Contributions

Authors equally contributed to this article.

Declaration

In order to correct and improve the academic writing of our paper, we have used the language model ChatGPT.

Transparency Statement

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Declaration of Interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.

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Ethical Considerations

The study protocol adhered to the principles outlined in the Helsinki Declaration, which provides guidelines for ethical research involving human participants.

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