



Helping neighbors and enhancing yourself: a spillover effect of helping neighbors on work-family conflict and thriving at work

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Published online: 22 June 2020

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Abstract

Although the beneficial effects of helping behavior in workplace, such as organizational citizen behavior, have long been established, the positive spillover effects of helping neighbors behavior on giver's family and work outcomes are far from clear. By adopting a two-wave design ($N=220$, Chinese workers), this research represents an initial attempt to explore the impacts of helping neighbors behavior, referring to various types of assistance given to one's neighbors, on work-family conflict and on thriving at work and the effect of social functioning. Our hypothesis was largely supported by a structural equation modeling analysis. We found that helping neighbors behavior enhances workplace social functioning of the giver. Moreover, social functioning mediates the effects of helping neighbors behavior on work-family conflict and thriving at work. These findings contribute to research on the positive impacts of community service on family and work outcomes, extending the scope of helping literature.

Keywords Helping neighbors behavior · Social functioning · Work-family conflict · Thriving at work

Helping behavior is a process in which individuals spend time helping others solve problems (Bolino and Grant 2016). The beneficial effects of helping behavior, including positive impacts on both individual and organizational outcomes, have been widely documented (Ng and van Dyne 2005). Given the

prevalence and positive effects of helping behavior, numerous studies have explored its antecedents from individual, family and work aspects (Cameron and Fredrickson 2015; Halbesleben and Wheeler 2015; Clercq et al. 2017). In this respect, a growing body of scholars argue for greater exploration of the benefits of helping behavior for helpers themselves (Lanaj et al. 2016; Koopman et al. 2016).

Helping behavior has been regarded an effective way to facilitate job resources generation (Jia et al. 2020). Surprisingly, though, there has been very little examination of the processes and outcomes of helping behaviors in the community (i.e., helping neighbors), even though most people spend a large part of their lives at community. Helping neighbors behavior denotes the giving of various types of assistance to neighbors (Perkins et al. 1990), which is a special form of pro-social behavior that happened in the community, which is voluntary and aims to assist neighbors to solve problems and accomplish goals (Yumeng Yue et al. 2017; Bolino and Grant 2016; Shakespeare-Finch and Obst 2011). The close spatial location of neighbors makes them particularly unique to performing functions of instrumental and emotional support to each other (Unger and Wandersman 1982). As illustrated in an old Chinese saying that “a close neighbor is better than a distant relative”.

Similarly, ecological system theory posits that community microsystems are social network components capable of

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transferring resources to work and family systems (Griggs et al. 2013; Voydanoff 2005, 2004); community, work and family factors shape an individual's work-family experiences, and may have positive or negative spillover effect on employee outcomes (Voydanoff 2007; Grzywacz and Marks 2000). For instance, social integration in the community enhances individuals' ability to achieve work-family enrichment (Voydanoff 2004). Interactions with the neighbors can provide resources for personal growth within and across different environments or domains (Bronfenbrenner and Ceci 1994). And positive community experiences may result in positive moods or development of cognitive abilities, which might be seen as resources that can be used for adaption in work and family domains (Grzywacz and Marks 2000).

To summarize, prior research has revealed that positive neighboring activities could promote social cohesion, providing individuals with valuable social capital and creating positive outcomes in both family and work domains (Griggs et al. 2013; Voydanoff 2005, 2004). Yet, to date, pro-social research mainly focuses on the effects of workplace helping behavior on family outcomes or vice versa (Lin et al. 2017; Brummelhuis et al. 2010), direct empirical examinations of how helping neighbors influences employees' work and family lives remain absent. Therefore, understanding how helping behavior in the community facilitates resources acquisition provides a necessary theoretical and practical foundation for designing community policies and programs to promote helping behavior and enhance individuals' resources.

This study aims to fill the research gap by examining whether and how helping neighbors behavior influences employees' family and work domains. Specifically, we focus on two forms of employee outcomes: thriving and work family conflict. Thriving is defined as a psychological state composed of the joint experience of vitality and learning (Spreitzer et al. 2005). It has been recognized as an accelerator of job satisfaction, subjective health, task performance, and organizational citizenship behavior (Kleine et al. 2019). Considering the importance of thriving in facilitating individuals' job performance and mental health, we adopted thriving at work as an outcome in the work-domain. Work-family conflict refers to a form of inter-role conflict in which the role stress from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respects (Greenhaus and Beutell 1985). Work-family conflict has always been used as an indicator of individuals' experience in the family domain (Ford et al. 2007). A growing body of interdisciplinary research has demonstrated its importance to employee well-being and performance (Derks et al. 2016; Smith et al. 2018; Ohu et al. 2019). In addition, both work-family conflict and thriving at work are outcomes of the job resources changes (Che et al. 2017; Zhai et al. 2020). COR theory addresses the different roles of resource acquisition and resource loss in shaping employees psychological state (Halbesleben et al. 2014). Therefore, we

base our research on the COR theory and investigate how helping neighbors behavior has a spillover influence on family and work experiences.

By doing this, our research contributes to the current helping behavior literature in two ways. First, our research enlarges the scope of the spillover effect of helping behavior by incorporating given, rather than only received, neighboring behavior. Considering that most research on helping behavior has examined how helping colleagues at work impacts family outcomes or vice versa (Brummelhuis et al. 2010; Lin et al. 2017), there has been relatively little investigation of helping behavior in the community and its spillover influence on individuals' work and family lives. Community-based helping behavior effectively creates a collective pool of energy and resources, from which the individual can draw upon personal depletion (Unger and Wandersman 1982). Resources obtained in the community could spill over to the family and work domains, further enhancing individuals' positive experiences in these two domains (Darling 2007). We provide a finer-grained understanding of helping behavior.

Second, our research uncovers the mechanism underlying the effects of helping neighbors behavior on the work and family life of the giver by introducing social functioning as a mediator. Giving neighboring behavior is a mood-enhancing process that increases cognitive ability, thereby advancing social functioning (Weinstein and Ryan 2010; Bolino and Grant 2016; Munroe-Blum et al. 1996). Social functioning, defined as the capacity of a person to fulfil different societal roles (Schneider et al. 2017), has been previously examined as a critical antecedent to positive work outcomes and fulfillment of family roles (Ikebuchi et al. 2017; Munroe-Blum et al. 1996). Social functioning reveals a person's feelings and thoughts regarding social situations (Schneider et al. 2017), and involves emotional skills and cognitive information processing skills to affect successful interpersonal transactions (Munroe-Blum et al. 1996). We argue that helping neighbors would enhance helpers' social functioning, and sequentially decreases their work-family conflict in the family domain and increases their thriving in the work domain. Accordingly, this research adopts personal social functioning as a potential mediator for the spillover influences of helping neighbors behavior on work-family conflict and on thriving at work, unveiling the mechanism through which community resources shape work and family outcomes.

Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

Helping Neighbors Behavior and Social Functioning

Helping neighbors behavior is a process in which individuals provide assistance to others, which in turn enhances cognitive

information processing abilities and rewards them with positive emotions (Bolino and Grant 2016; Aknin et al. 2015). Social functioning involves emotional skills and cognitive information processing skills to affect successful interpersonal transactions (Munroe-Blum et al. 1996). The conservation of resources theory posits that people invest resources in order to gain resources (Hobfoll 2001; Halbesleben et al. 2014). Helping neighbors behavior is an investment of current resources, such as knowledge, time, and energy, in order to earn future resource acquisition (Bolino and Grant 2016). Therefore, we would expect that helping neighbors behavior influences employee social functioning. Below, we will explain how helping neighbors behavior will influence social functioning.

Helping neighbors behavior may play a particularly important role in the management of emotions. Emotions contain information about a person's relationship with the environment (Brackett et al. 2006). During social interactions, positive moods and regulation of personal emotions contribute to optimal social functioning (Brackett et al. 2006). Numerous studies have noted that helping behavior improves helpers' emotional regulatory focus; it boosts helpers' positive mood and enhances their abilities to maintain a good mood (Carlson et al. 1988; Lin et al. 2017). For instance, Conway et al. (2009) found a "doing good-feeling good" effect and confirmed that helping behavior boosted helpers' positive mood. Prior research provides evidence for the affective resources generation function of helping behavior both at the within- person and between- person level (Lin et al. 2017; Sonnentag and Grant 2012). Based on these theoretical considerations and empirical findings, we expect that helping neighbors behavior are resources generating and will enhance helpers' emotional regulatory skills.

Furthermore, helping neighbors behavior positively impacts individuals' cognitive information processing. The experiences of helping neighbors solve problems can enhance their ability to solve their own problems (Doré et al. 2017). Recent research has shown that sharing knowledge with others can inspire knowledge providers to learn, and to develop new ideas (Zhu et al. 2018). Helping behavior is a interpersonal interactive process, involving high degree of problem-related knowledge sharing (Bolino and Grant 2016). This interaction enables both helping providers and receivers to reframe a problem or a solution, and develop innovative and useful insights into related difficulties (Shah et al. 2018). Life-related skill development and new idea development are derived from devoting time to serving neighbors and helping them solve problems (Bolino and Grant 2016). Therefore, when using their own abilities to help neighbors with problem solving, they will generate cognitive resources to develop cognitive information processing abilities and facilitate them to solve their own problems. Combining these ideas, we put forward the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: Helping neighbors behavior positively influences social functioning.

Social Functioning and Work-Family Conflict

The conservation of resource theory suggests that those who possess resources are perceived as being more capable of coping with stress and withstanding future loss of resources (Halbesleben et al. 2014). Individuals engaging in helping neighbors behavior experience more positive emotions and high-quality social relationships, while perceiving themselves as capable of addressing problems, which can provide individual resources to address work and family issues (Kan and Yu 2016; O'Neill and Rothbard, 2017). Therefore, we would expect social functioning to potentially influence individual work-family conflict.

One core dimension of personal social functioning is the regulation of personal emotions (Munroe-Blum et al. 1996). At work, emotional regulation allows employees to adapt their emotions to the current situations in order to decrease undesirable emotional impacts on the work environment, facilitating their job performance and enhancing job satisfaction (Mulki et al. 2015; Jung and Yoon 2016). In the family domain, emotional regulation shapes individuals' emotional responses to daily stressful events (Stikkelbroek et al. 2016) and improves their life satisfaction (Sánchez-Álvarez et al., 2015), leading to the fulfilment of their family roles. Thus, social emotional functioning decreases work-family conflict through making their family and work roles more compatible with each other.

Cognitive information processing ability is the other dimension of personal social functioning (Munroe-Blum et al. 1996). Cognitive social functioning refers to the ability to reason, solve problems and learn from problems (Devine and Philips 2001). When encountering role stress from work-family domains, employees with high cognitive social functioning may discover a solution that might fulfill both work-family role demands through brainstorming, time management and assertive communications with leaders or family members (Griggs et al. 2013). Thus, social cognitive functioning provides individuals with positive coping strategies when work and family domains coincide, thereby decreasing work-family conflict. Individuals with high social functioning are emotionally and cognitively ready to cope with inter-role conflict from work and life domains. Thus, we put forward the hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2: Social functioning decreases work-family conflict.

Helping neighbors behavior is the process of helping your neighbors deal with various problems (Perkins et al. 1990),

through which givers can enhance both their cognitive and social emotional functioning. Subsequently, increased social functioning provides givers with positive strategies to cope with role stress from work and family domains. Thus, we hypothesized the following:

Hypothesis 3: Social functioning mediates the relationship between helping neighbors behavior and work-family conflict.

Social Functioning and Thriving at Work

In accordance with the conservation of resources theory, individuals with stronger resource pools often experience spikes in resource accumulation (Feldman et al. 2015). Previous research has identified thriving at work as a valuable resource facilitating employees' advancement within organizations (Hildenbrand et al. 2018). In this vein, we infer that increased social functioning provides individuals with more resources to invest toward thriving at work.

Social emotional functioning is a capacity to regulate personal emotions; that is, observing, evaluating, and changing emotional reactions, intensity and duration in order to maintain positive mood and increase well-being (Aldao et al. 2010). Those with high emotional social functioning will present lower levels of frustration and emotional exhaustion (Martínez-Íñigo and Totterdell 2016). Recent literature reveals that when people possess certain levels of emotional functioning, the emotional demands of their work can become a source of motivation and reduce their levels of emotional exhaustion and stress, leading to greater positive and less negative emotional experiences at work (Hülshager et al. 2013). Kleine et al. (2019) pointed out positive emotional experience is a critical antecedent to thriving at work. Therefore, emotional social functioning positively contributes to thriving at work.

Social cognitive functioning is the capacity to gain insight into complex ideas, such as learning from experience, reasoning, problem solving, and adapting to changing work situations (Devine and Philips 2001). Given that many tasks performed in teams involve reasoning, problem solving, and cooperating with team members, individuals with high cognitive social functioning perceived themselves as more capable to accomplish tasks (Williamson and Clark 1989). Social cognitive functioning assists employees to develop routines and repertoires to complete their tasks, and helps them to meet work requirements in a satisfactory manner (Spreitzer et al. 2005). These are playing vital role in boosting thriving at work (Spreitzer et al. 2012). Integrating the above arguments, we put forward the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 4: Social functioning positively contributes to thriving at work.

Helping neighbors behavior enhances the giver's emotional skills, in the form of emotional regulation, and cognitive ability, the processing of relevant information. Subsequently, such ability increases employees' sense of thriving at work. Hence, we hypothesized the following:

Hypothesis 5: Social functioning mediates the relationship between helping neighbors behavior and thriving at work.

To test our research hypotheses, this study adopts a two-wave design to collect data and test our conceptual model on the basis of the conservation of resources theory (Fig. 1).

Method

Samples and Measurement

Participants were recruited for a two-wave field study from a subject pool recruited based on 2018 public occupancy documents provided by Urban and Rural Planning Department of Harbin City, Heilongjiang Province, China. Participants were employed at different organizations in the Harbin City. All randomly selected participants were at least 18 years of age, working regular, full-time jobs of at least 40 h per week, and having lived in their current communities for at least 1 year. Specially trained social workers from selected communities delivered surveys to 317 participants.

Paper-based survey data collection occurred in two waves on 1st November 2018 and 16th December 2018, respectively. In the first wave, we collected demographic information, helping neighbors behavior and social functioning. In the second wave, which started five weeks after the end of the first wave, we collected work-family conflict and thriving at work. We chose five weeks as the time lag interval because our model dealt with a psychological process and its effects on employees' work and family outcomes. Finally, a total of 220 matched questionnaires were collected, with an effective response rate of 69%.

Respondents worked in diverse industries in mainland China (e.g., construction industry, manufacturing and electronics), and, on average, were 41.26 years old ($SD = 9.60$) with 21.77 ($SD = 11.26$) years of work experiences; 41.4% were males, and 78.6% were married. As to education level, 19.1% were senior school and below; 38.6% were high school; 22.7% were college; 15.9% were bachelor and 3.6% were masters or above.

Measures

All the items in our study were originally developed in English, then translated into Chinese, following a common back-translation procedure (Brislin 1970).

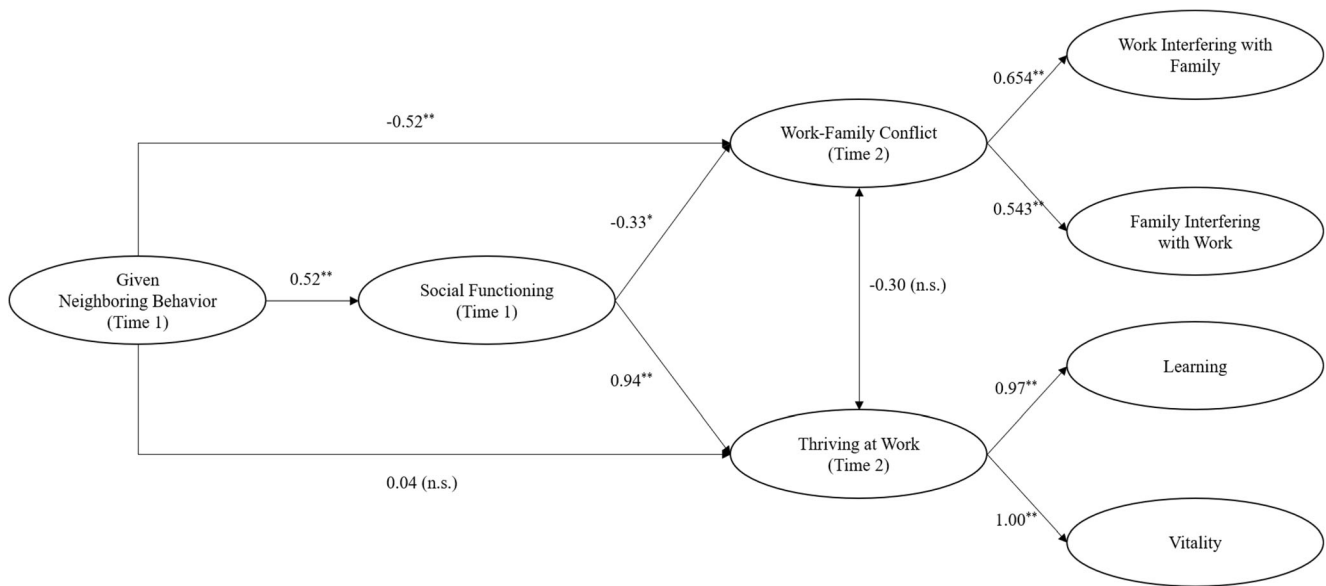


Fig. 1 Research model and result of SEM. *Note.* Model Fit: $\chi^2(367) = 972.94$, CFI = 0.90, RMSEA = 0.08, SRMR = 0.04. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

Helping Neighbors Behavior We used five items from Perkins et al. (1990) to measure helping neighbors behavior. A sample item is “offer a neighbor advice on a personal problem”. Participants indicated to what extent they had engaged in the listed behaviors in the past month (1 = *low frequency*, 5 = *high frequency*). Cronbach’s α was .77.

Social functioning was assessed by six items from the subsdimension of social dysfunction of GHQ-12 validated by Gao (2004) in Chinese samples. A sample item was “I am able to concentrate.” Participants rated the extent to which each statement described them via a 5-point response scale (from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*), with higher scores indicating better social functioning. This scale yielded a Cronbach’s $\alpha = .93$.

Work-family conflict was measured by eight items developed by Grzywacz and Marks (2000). The items of this measurement tap two dimensions of work -family conflict: family interfering with work (FIW) (4 items) and work interfering with family (WIF) (4 items). The scale was measured by a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *never*; 5 = *all the time*). Sample items included “stress at work makes you irritable at home” (FIW) and “stress at home makes you irritable at work” (WIF). Cronbach’s alpha was .90.

Thriving at Work We measured thriving at work by ten items from Porath et al. (2012), based on the work of Ryan and Frederick (1997). This concept has two dimensions: Learning and vitality. Participants indicated how often they experienced thriving while at work using a 5-point response scale (from 1 = *never felt this while at work* to 5 = *feel this way every day*). Sample items for thriving at work are “I have developed a lot as a person (learning),” and “I have energy and spirit (vitality).” Cronbach’s alpha was .95.

Control Variables We controlled for variables that might influence the variables examined in this study. We controlled for gender (0 for male and 1 for female); age (in years), level of education (1 = junior school or below; 2 = senior school; 3 = college; 4 = bachelor; 5 = masters or above), and marital status (0 for married and 1 for single) (Evers et al. 2015; Kubicek and Tement 2016; Gu and Wang 2019). We conducted multigroup SEM based on these demographic variables. There were no significant changes to the path parameters. According to Aguinis and Vandenberg’s (2014) suggestion, we didn’t contain the demographic variables in our SEM analysis.

Results

Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Given the self-reported questionnaire we used in the current study, we first conducted confirmatory factor analysis to examine the potential common method variance (CMV) with Mplus software (Version 7.4). Because our focal variables (work-family conflict and thriving at work) both had subdimensions, we adopted CFA with second order latent variables. For example, items were first loaded on “family interfering with work” and “work interfering with family”, followed by the two subdimensions loaded on the latent variable “work-family conflict”. Results in Table 1 show that our four-factor conceptual model has a better fit ($\chi^2(367) = 972.94$, RMSEA = .08, RMR = .04, CFI = .90) than the best alternative model (i.e., social functioning and thriving at work forming a single factor; $\chi^2(370) = 1004.11$, RMSEA = .09, RMR = .05, CFI = .89), $\Delta\chi^2(3) = 31.17$, $p < .01$.

Furthermore, we ran the first order model ($\chi^2(371) = 1907.86$, RMSEA = .14, RMR = .13, CFI = .74, $\Delta\chi^2(4) = 934.92$, $p < .01$) and the model with an unmeasured CMV factor ($\chi^2(366) = 969.76$, RMSEA = .09, RMR = .05, CFI = .90, $\Delta\chi^2(1) = 3.18$, $p > .05$). The proposed model still showed a better fit. These findings demonstrated that our focal constructs were distinct from each other, and that the CMV in our research was acceptable.

Descriptive Statistics

Table 2 provides the descriptive statistics and correlations of all study variables. Table 2 shows that helping neighbors behavior was positively related to social functioning ($r = .44$, $p < .01$), negatively related to work-family conflict ($r = -.44$, $p < .01$), and positively associated with thriving at work ($r = .46$, $p < .01$). Social functioning negatively related to work-family conflict ($r = -.42$, $p < .01$) and positively related with thriving at work ($r = .71$, $p < .01$). Work-family conflict negatively related with thriving at work ($r = -.45$, $p < .01$).

Results of Structure Equation Model

We adopted a structure equation model to test our hypotheses by Mplus (Version 7.4). Results were shown in Fig. 1. We found that helping neighbors behavior had a positive effect on social functioning ($\beta = .52$, $p < .01$), supporting hypothesis 1. Social functioning negatively affected work-family conflict ($\beta = -.33$, $p < .01$) and positively affected thriving at work ($\beta = .94$, $p < .01$), supporting hypothesis 2 and hypothesis 4. The direct relationship between neighboring behavior and work-family conflict was significant ($\beta = -.52$, $p < .01$), whereas the relationship between helping neighbors behavior and thriving at work was insignificant ($\beta = .04$, $n.s.$).

Furthermore, to test the indirect effect, we followed the distribution-by-product method to calculate the indirect effect, and to generate the 95% confidence interval (CI) using a

bootstrap simulation with 20,000 replications (Selig and Preacher 2008). Results in Table 3 show that the direct effect of helping neighbors behavior was significant for work-family conflict (effect = $-.52$, 95% CI = $[-.72, -.33]$), but not for thriving at work (effect = $.04$, 95% CI = $[-.03, .11]$). The indirect effects of neighboring behavior on work-family conflict via social functioning (effect = $-.17$, 95% CI = $[-.28, -.07]$) and on thriving at work were significant (effect = $.49$, 95% CI = $[.38, .60]$), supporting hypothesis 3 and hypothesis 5.

Discussion

Drawing upon the conservation of resources theory, we developed and tested a model explaining the positive influences, both directly and indirectly, of neighboring behavior on employees' work-family conflict, and on thriving at work (i.e., work family conflict and thriving at work are mediated by social functioning). As expected, in a two-wave data design from 220 Chinese employees, we found that helping neighbors could reduce the giver's work-family conflict. Work-family conflict represents that individuals do not have adequate job resources to fulfill their work and family role responsibilities (Grzywacz and Marks 2000). These results are in line with our theoretical reasoning (Hobfoll 2001; Halbesleben et al. 2014), which suggests that helping behavior is a resource generation process. Helping neighbors behavior enhances individuals' integration in the community and offers them community resources to cope with work-family conflict. In particular, when assisting neighbors to accomplish goals, helpers can reap positive mood and self-development (Bolino and Grant 2016). The resources obtained in this process can be spillover into work and family domains to resolve work-family conflict (Kan and Yu 2016; O'Neill and Rothbard, 2017).

However, we did not confirm the effect of given neighboring on employees' work life. Thriving is a joint positive

Table 1 Results of Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Model	Variables	χ^2	df	$\Delta\chi^2$	RMSEA	RMR	CFI
Four-Factor	NBG, SF, WFC, WT	972.94	367		.08	.04	.90
Three-Factor	NBG, SF, WFC + WT	1015.98	370	43.04**	.09	.07	.89
Three-Factor	NBG + SF, WFC, WT	1289.53	370	316.59**	.11	.07	.85
Three-Factor	NBG + WFC, SF, WT	1005.81	370	32.87**	.09	.09	.89
Three-Factor	NBG + WT, SF, WFC	1294.20	370	321.26**	.11	.07	.84
Three-Factor	SF + WFC, NBG, WT	1020.45	370	47.51**	.09	.07	.89
Three-Factor	SF + WT, NBG, WFC	1004.11	370	31.17**	.09	.05	.89
One-Factor	SF + WT + WFC + NBG	1329.83	373	356.89**	.11	.08	.83

NBG = Helping Neighbors Behavior, SF = Social Functioning, WFC = Work-Family Conflict, WT = Thriving at Work

** $p < .01$

Table 2 Mean, Standardized Deviance, and Correlations

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1.Gender	–							
2.Age	.12	–						
3.Marital Status	.08	-.39**	–					
4.Education	-.08	-.40**	.136*	–				
5.Given Neighboring Behavior	.04	-.02	.159*	.20**	(.77)			
6.Social Functioning	-.01	-.06	.07	.32**	.44**	(.93)		
7.Work-Family Conflict	.06	.31**	-.06	-.46**	-.44**	-.42**	(.90)	
8.Thriving at Work	-.04	-.10	.11	.38**	.46**	.71**	-.45**	(.95)
Mean		41.26			1.87	3.10	3.00	3.18
SD		9.60			.58	.83	.82	.73

Values in the parenthesis are Cronbach’s α

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

subjective experience of vitality and learning, deriving from favorable interpersonal interactions (Zhai et al. 2020). Both work-family conflict and thriving at work are impacted by fluctuations of job resources (Zhai et al. 2020; Che et al. 2017). In our model, the direct effect is insignificant. This does not mean helping neighbor behavior has no effect on employee outcomes, as Table 2 shows that these two variables are positively related ($r = .46, p < .01$). An alternative explanation is that the benefits yielded by helping neighbors can only be transferred into positive resources at work through an inherent transformation process. Based on conservation resource theory, our research unveiled this process by indicating that helping neighbors enhanced givers’ social functioning, further decreasing their work-family conflict, and improving their thriving at work. Social functioning reveals individuals’ emotional regulation skill and cognitive information processing abilities to achieve successful interpersonal transaction (Schneider et al. 2017). Social functioning is nurtured by individuals’ resources and sequentially motivate individuals to achieve self-development (Pulkkinen et al. 2011; Rönkä et al. 2001). Helping neighbors behavior aids individuals to acquire both emotional and cognitive resources, resulting in increase in social functioning. Furthermore, social functioning serves as a bridge linking helping behavior in the community to

individuals’ experiences in both work and family domains. Social functioning renders individuals with resources to decrease work-family conflict and enhance thriving at work. Our results are in line with the conservation resource theory that helping neighbors is a strategic investment of resources promoting an increase in social functioning. Further, the elevated social functioning can avoid potential loss of resources triggered by work-family conflict, and can achieve further resource acquisition, resulting in thriving at work.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

These findings offer contributions to research on helping behavior, as well as on work-family conflict literature. First, this research related to the spillover effect of helping neighbors behavior has largely overlooked the positive influences of helping neighbors on this important topic. Helping behavior is beneficial for resources acquisition, which has been examined in the organizational psychology literature (Bolino and Grant 2016). For instance, Lin et al. (2017) found a spillover effect of helping behavior at work on emotional support at home. In addition to organizational factors, and family factors, we argue that for individuals, other social factors such as neighbors may also play an important and interactive role in

Table 3 Result of Bootstrapping Test

Path	Effect	SE	95%LLCI	95%ULCI
Direct Effect				
Given Neighboring Behavior → Work-Family Conflict	-.52	.10	-.72	-.33
Given Neighboring Behavior → Thriving at Work	.04	.04	-.03	.11
Indirect Effect				
Given Neighboring Behavior → Social Functioning → Work-Family Conflict	-.17	.06	-.28	-.07
Given Neighboring Behavior → Social Functioning → Thriving at Work	.49	.06	.38	.60

Bootstrapping = 5000, LLCI = Lower level confidence interval, ULCI = Upper Level confidence interval

their work and family life. Ecological system theory addresses the importance of neighborhood in transferring resources to work and family (Voydanoff 2004, 2005). Neighborhood is a social context providing residents with social capital, social cohesion and collective efficacy (Suglia et al. 2016). A growing body of research examines how neighborhoods can contribute to the promotion of social functioning for inhabitants (Maass et al. 2017). However, previous research on the topic of spillover effect tends to neglect the impact of neighborhood. The need for social connection is a fundamental human drive found across different cultures and contexts (Kadushin 2002). Helping neighbors is a fundamental way to get involved in the neighborhood social environment (Perkins et al. 1990), thereby developing personal social networks as a critical resource. There is robust evidence that neighborhood resources can influence employee well-being (Kearns et al. 2015; Liu et al. 2017). This research contributes to the conservation of resources theory by adopting helping neighbors behavior and exploring its spillover effects on the family (work-family conflict) and work (thriving at work) domains.

Second, we further adopt the resourceful aspect of helping neighbors behavior and examine its spillover mechanism by incorporating social functioning as a mediator. Although ecological system theory points out the potential of neighborhood resource which can be transferred into resources at work and family, it does not elaborate the underlying spillover mechanism (Griggs et al. 2013). Helping neighbors behavior is a process generating valuable resources. This research specifies such resources as social functioning, a composite capacity involving emotional regulation skills and cognitive information processing ability (Munroe-Blum et al. 1996). Helping neighbors involves dealing with problems and taking charge of one's own actions, which improves the giver's ability to regulate emotions and to develop cognitive skills for processing information (Bolino and Grant 2016; Emery et al. 2016). Consequently, increased social functioning provides givers with positive strategies to cope with emotional and cognitive demands, in both work and family domains, leading to an increase in thriving at work and a decrease in work-family conflict. This study identifies the influences of social functioning on the spillover process of helping neighbors behavior.

Our research also has practical implications for both individuals and communities. This research reveals the positive impacts of helping neighbors on generating social resources. Residents should actively participate in community social events and develop personal social networks through providing help to neighbors. Community managers should pay attention to the influences of social workers, who are skilled at organizing social events and enhancing social cohesion for the current communities. Community managers can recruit skilled social workers to not only provide beneficial trainings to improve residents' abilities to help, but to also organize community-building social activities.

Limitations

Although our research provides evidence for the merits of helping neighbors, some limitations and directions for future research are worth noting. In particular, the present research is a two-wave design and, as such, inferences about firm causality cannot be made. We cannot rule out the potential reversed causal relationship between our focal variables. A future experimental design or multi-stage cross-lagged design are encouraged to infer the causal influences or reversed causality of helping neighbors behavior, social functioning, and outcomes (i.e., work-family conflict and thriving at work) (Sherf et al. 2019; Moazami-Goodarzi et al. 2015).

The second limitation is our reliance on self-reported surveys; doing this may raise the concern of common method variance (CMV; Podsakoff et al. 2012). To address this, we collected our data in two waves with a five-week time lag. Such separation is one of the most effective remedies for limiting CMV (Johnson et al. 2011). Further, we performed confirmatory factor analysis to test the discriminative validity of our focal variables, confirming that our measurement concepts could be distinguished from each other. Therefore, we could expect that the common method bias would not pose a serious threat to our results. Nevertheless, future research would also benefit from using an objective or other rating of outcomes (e.g., spouse reported WFC) (Podsakoff et al. 2003).

Third, for theoretical reasons, we examined the mediating effect of social function, capturing the influence of social functioning on the relationship between helping neighbors behavior and work family outcomes. In addition to these factors, examining other mediators should be advantageous. For example, previous research has revealed the negative influences of helping behavior at work, revealing its influences on ego-depletion (Dalal and Sheng, 2019), which was not considered in this study. Future research should take the negative side of helping behavior in the community into consideration in order to develop a holonomic conceptual model for helping neighbors behavior.

Fourth, another statistical limitation in our study is that the mean of helping neighboring behavior is small. The helping neighboring behavior achieves a mean of 1.87 on a 5-point Likert scale. It satisfies the current situation in Chinese urban communities to a certain degree. The samples in the present study are full-time workers, resulting in their contacts with neighbors are informal, irregular and sudden. With a low frequency of helping neighbors behavior, helpers also could improve their social function and thriving at work, and decrease work-family conflict through helping neighbors, which justifies the necessity to take an actor-centric view on the impacts of helping neighbors behavior. However, some problems should also

be addressed by future research. Future research is recommended to incorporate contextual factors, for instance the social network in the community, community supportive climate and even the physical environment of the community (Mao and Zhao 2012; Wilkinson 2008; Vries et al. 2013). Moreover, there are some policies are under implementation to enhance social connections among residents and establish harmony community (Liu et al. 2018). The progress of social policies should also be considered in the model by future research.

Conclusions

Given the importance of helping behavior in the community, the present study aimed to elucidate the psychological processes by which helping neighbors behavior relates to work-family conflict and thriving at work. Using a two-stage longitudinal sample, we provide support for COR theory in that social functioning serves as a key mechanism of helping neighbors behavior on work-family conflict and thriving at work. We encourage future research to investigate the merits of helping behavior in the community on individuals' work and family outcomes.

Acknowledgements Our research is supported by the National Natural Science Foundation of China (Grant no. 71772052, 71701083), University of Chinese academy of social sciences Monumental Projects (Grant no. 0201080303819138), and Yunnan Province Applied Basic Research Planning Project (Grant no. 2019FB084).

Compliance with Ethical Standards All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional and/or national research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki Declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards.

Conflict of Interest The authors declare that they have no conflict of interests.

Informed Consent Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

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