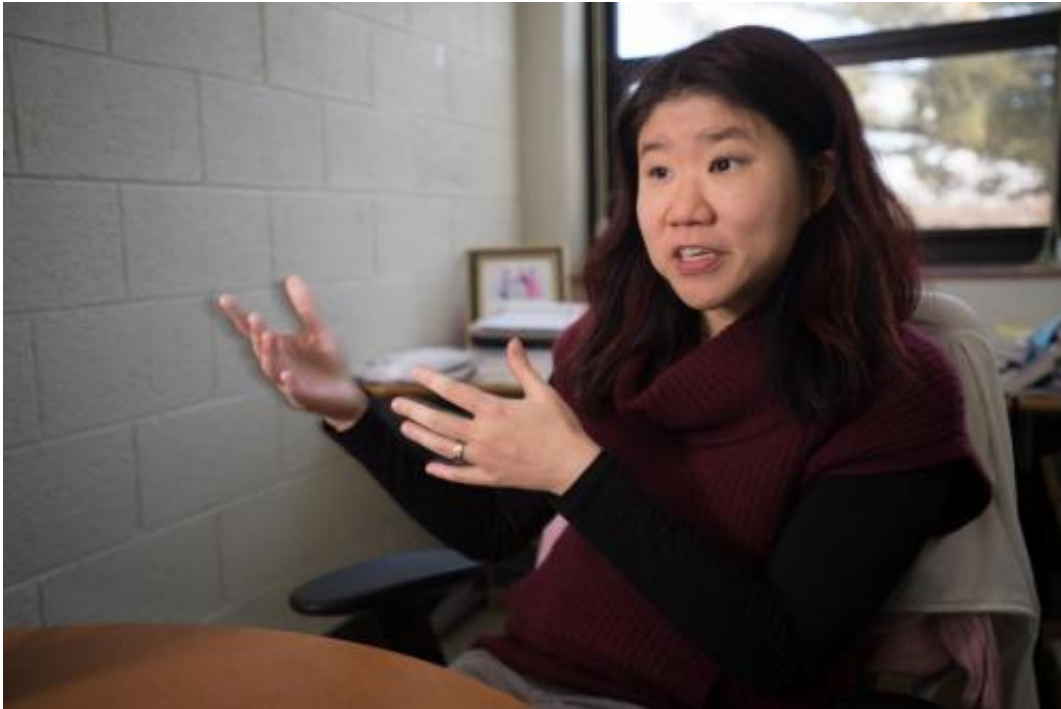


# Work-family conflict linked to verbal abuse

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A study co-authored by Michigan State University psychologist Chu-Hsiang Chang suggests work-family conflict can lead to verbal abuse. Credit: Michigan State University

People whose family life regularly interferes with their job are more likely to become emotionally exhausted and, in turn, verbally abusive to co-workers and loved ones, a new study indicates.

The good news: Having a supportive boss can curtail this harmful spiral, said Chu-Hsiang Chang, associate professor of psychology at Michigan

State University.

"It appears that having a supervisor who is aware and supportive of work-[family](#) balance may not only reduce the work-family conflict itself but also weaken its downstream effect on verbal aggression," said Chang, who co-authored the study with fellow scholars from the United States and China.

For the study, published online in the *Journal of Applied Psychology*, Chang and colleagues surveyed 125 employees at five information-technology companies four times each weekday for three consecutive weeks.

While past research has explored positive attitudes and behaviors related to work-family issues - such as satisfaction and performance - this study is one of the first to investigate the effects of work-family conflict on negative interpersonal behaviors at work and home.

"We wanted to see if people who experience work-family conflict are less able to suppress their dark tendencies and more apt to act out on their aggressive impulses," Chang said.

Indeed, when [family life](#) interfered with work (such as having to miss an important meeting because of a sick child), participants reported higher emotional exhaustion, which led them to be more rude or verbally abusive toward supervisors, co-workers and [family members](#).

Because supportive supervisors had a positive effect, Chang recommends companies make it a higher priority to select and train managers who can provide family support for employees.

"Supportive managers should model the right behavior—in other words, don't send your employees emails at 11 p.m. and expect them to respond,

for example."

Employees can also engage in emotional and physical "recovery" activities both at work and at home, such as a lunch break away from the office or stretching exercises for relaxation, Chang said.

Provided by Michigan State University

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