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Work–Family Interaction

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Chapter Objectives

After studying this chapter, you should be able to:

- define and compare the basic constructs used to describe work–family interaction, and understand the context in which they were developed;
- explain the most common theoretical models applied in work–family interaction research and know their limitations;
- recognize the antecedents and outcomes of work–family conflict and work–family enrichment in the domains of both work and family;
- understand the roles of coping strategies, work–family policies, and culture in promoting work–family balance;
- evaluate the practical value of existing work–family interaction research from the perspectives of employees and organizations.

The issue of how to balance the demands of work and family life receives much attention in today's Western society. The fact that the majority of today's workforce combines work and family responsibilities and the increased eldercare responsibilities due to increasing life expectancies has put work–family interaction into the spotlight.

Working life has also witnessed rapid changes during the past two decades. As a result of globalization, the competition between companies has become increasingly heavy. This has put pressure on organizations and employees to be more flexible and more responsive to changes in working life. Moreover, technology has enabled working at almost any time and in any place. Remote work has also increased. Therefore, the boundaries between work and non-

work (family, leisure, and sleep) are nowadays often blurred. Not being able to separate work from other important life domains and being constantly available reduces the time for rest and recovery (see also **Chapter 14**). All these changes pose a challenge to maintaining a healthy work-life balance.

This chapter describes the nature of the interaction between work and family in individuals' lives, and the context in which research on the links between work and family has developed. Broadly defined, work–family interaction can be seen as comprising the *combined* effects that work and family characteristics *together* exert on work, family, and individual level outcomes such as well-being, health or performance (Voydanoff, 2002). We begin this chapter with a theoretical introduction of the constructs (12.1) and theoretical models (12.2) of work–family interaction and continue with an empirical review of the antecedents and outcomes of work–family interaction (12.3). Finally, we discuss how a healthy work–family balance can be promoted (12.4).

12.1 Basic Concepts of Work–Family Interaction

The earliest studies on work–family interaction were mostly conducted in agrarian environments where work and family were tightly intertwined. Along with the industrial revolution and the growing market economy a counter movement emerged around the 1950s. At that time, there was predominantly a rigid differentiation between work and family roles, as men adopted the breadwinner role outside home and women were homemakers. In the 1970s, when women increasingly entered the workforce, it was claimed that work and family roles interact with each other in the lives of women, but not in the lives of men. Thus, it was common to see work–family interaction as a typical women's issue. Nowadays there is to a large extent consensus that work and family life interact in both genders. However, as can be seen in the use of work-family policies (e.g., parental leave, flexible working times), even today women seem to be more active than men in reconciling work and family roles.

But what exactly constitutes work, and what constitutes family? In the

work–family literature, *work* traditionally refers to paid employment as well as self-employment and entrepreneurship. *Family* most typically refers to a situation living with a partner and/or children, but it may also include ageing parents or good friends with whom one is living. However, based on the fact that the term ‘family’ excludes singles, broader terms such as non-work, home and private life can also be used. This is very likely in the future, as ‘family’ has already taken on new interpretations and meanings. Nevertheless, most concepts and theoretical models reviewed in this chapter use the term ‘family’.

Work–family interaction can best be described through three aspects: (i) degree, (ii) direction, and (iii) valence.

Degree

The degree of work–family interaction refers to the degree of segmentation versus integration of the work and family domains. In *segmentation*, the work and family domains are seen as relatively non-influential towards each other due to physical, temporal, functional, and psychological boundaries between them (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000; Frone, 2003). In contrast, in *integration*, work and family domains are intertwined in terms of time, place, people, behavior, thoughts, and emotions, and there is no clear distinction between work and family domains (Frone, 2003). For example, work arrangements in which one commutes physically from home to work and in which doing job-related tasks at home is rare, refer to segmentation. Conversely, work arrangements in which completing job-related duties at home is a rule rather than an exception, refer to integration.

Direction and valence

Work–family interaction has a bi-directional nature; work can affect family life (work-to-family direction) and family can affect working life (family-to-work direction). The valence of the work–family interaction refers to the fact that the encounter between work and family can be either negative or positive. The combination of direction and valence implies that there are four kinds of interaction between work and family: (i) negative work-to-family interaction,

(ii) negative family-to-work interaction, (iii) positive work-to-family interaction, and (iv) positive family-to-work interaction.

Negative work–family interaction

The roots of the concept of negative work–family interaction lie in the role stress theory and in the scarcity approach to multiple roles. *The role stress theory* postulates that if a given set of social roles impose conflicting role expectations and pressures towards a focal person, it can create psychological conflict and role overload (Kahn et al., 1964). According to the *scarcity approach*, time, energy, and commitment are finite individual resources which can easily drain, leading to role strain (Marks, 1977). Based on these ideas, many concepts of negative work–family interaction have been presented, such as negative work–family *spillover*, work–family *interference*, and work–family *conflict*. Of these, work–family conflict is most widely used, and it 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. That is, participation in the work (family) role is made more difficult by virtue of participation in the family (work) role’ (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985, p. 77).

The basic mechanisms through which work–family conflict occurs are threefold (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). In *time-based* work–family conflict, overlapping schedules and time demands between work and family roles may make it difficult to be present within both life domains as expected. In *strain-based* work–family conflict, work- and family-related stressors and concerns may produce strain and fatigue, due to which the demands of the other life domain are difficult to fulfil. In turn, *behavior-based* work–family conflict refers to different behavioral expectations within work (e.g., being formal and strict) and family (e.g., being loving and tender), and the inability to adjust one’s behavior according to these expectations within each life domain.

Positive work–family interaction

The roots of the concept of positive work–family interaction lie in the role accumulation theory (Sieber, 1974) and expansion approach (Marks, 1977),

according to which having multiple roles is not harmful, but rather beneficial for individuals. Barnett and Hyde (2001) have elaborated this notion as an *expansionist theory of multiple roles* with four principles of work–family interaction. First, having multiple roles is generally beneficial for both men and women because worker and family roles produce better mental, physical, and relationship health for most adults. Second, Barnett and Hyde (2001) state that the processes which foster the beneficiality of multiple roles are numerous. For example, stress or failure in one role can be compensated for by success and satisfaction in another role, and the added income of dual-earner couples reduces the financial strain of families, contributing to their well-being. Third, the advantageousness of multiple roles on health depends both on the number of roles and the quality of roles. Studies indicate that five roles (i.e., different combinations of the roles of spouse, parent, worker, friend, relative, and group member) might be an optimal number. More important, however, is the subjective feeling that one’s roles are satisfying and manageable (Barnett & Hyde, 2001; Marks, 1977). Finally, according to Barnett and Hyde (2001), the nature of women and of men does not need forcing them into highly differentiated roles. However, in practice work–family issues seem to still be gendered. Women and men tend to work in different occupations and economic sectors, men typically earn more than women, and on average the working conditions experienced by women and men diverge in many ways (Eurofound, 2022). For example, women report worse career prospects and more emotional demands at work than men.

Table 12.1 The four dimensions of work–family interaction with examples.

	<i>Valence</i>	
<i>Direction</i>	<i>Negative</i>	<i>Positive</i>
Work-to-family	Work-to-family conflict <i>'I am often late to pick up my children from day care due to my excessive workload and deadlines.'</i>	Work-to-family enrichment <i>'My current work is so rewarding that even my spouse often comments on my good mood and effort spent on my</i>

		<i>family after a work day.'</i>
Family-to-work	Family-to-work conflict 'I often find it difficult to concentrate on my clients' sorrows due to problems with my spouse.'	Family-to-work enrichment 'I have applied my skills and experience from raising five kids many times in my work as a student counsellor.'

The most often used concept to describe positive interaction between work and family is work–family *enrichment*, which refers to 'the extent to which experiences in one role improve the quality of life in the other role' (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006, p. 73). Parallel concepts for work-family enrichment are *positive spillover*, *enhancement*, and *facilitation*. The feature that combines these various concepts is the emphasis on bi-directional beneficial effects between work and family domains. This occurs when an individual takes the resources created in one domain (e.g., work) and transfers them to the other domain (e.g., family). Table 12.1 summarizes and gives examples of the four dimensions of work–family interaction.

Replay

Work–family interaction refers to the combined effects of work and family characteristics on work, family, and individual outcomes. In some occupations work and family domains can still be segmented in place, time, and thoughts, but integration is more common. The experiences of negative and positive work-family interaction; that is, work-family conflict and enrichment, are bi-directional: (i) work can affect family life, and (ii) family can affect work life. The work–family conflict concept is based on the role stress theory and the scarcity approach, whereas the work–family enrichment concept is based on the role accumulation theory and the expansion approach.

12.2 Theoretical Models of Work–Family Interaction

Theoretical models that help to further understand the work–family interaction

can roughly be classified into two categories. *Antecedent–outcome models* illustrate what factors are likely to increase the experiences of negative and positive work–family interaction and what the possible consequences are. *Spillover models* describe how moods, values, skills, resources, and behaviors transfer from one life domain to another. Thus, the difference between antecedent–outcome and spillover models is that the former concentrate on explaining the antecedents and outcomes of perceived (in)compatibility (i.e., work–family conflict or enrichment) between work and family roles, whereas the latter focus on mechanisms that produce similarity between work and family domains. Spillover models suggest that one’s experiences associated with one life domain can carry over into another domain, for example, good time management at work transfers into good time management at home or irritation towards spouse transfers into resentment towards clients.

Antecedent–outcome models

The basic principles of antecedent–outcome models of work–family interaction (e.g., Frone et al., 1997) are presented in Figure 12.1. First, this figure shows that work–family interaction consists of four dimensions: work-to-family conflict (WFC), family-to-work conflict (FWC), work-to-family enrichment (WFE), and family-to-work enrichment (FWE). WFC and FWC tend to coexist, as do WFE and FWE. Moreover, the relation between conflicts (WFC and FWC) and enrichments (WFE and FWE) is negative: more conflict experienced is linked to less enrichment, and vice versa.

Second, these four dimensions are seen as mediators between work and family characteristics and work-related, non-work-related (including family), and overall stress and health consequences. Specifically, work- and family-related demands are assumed to increase the experiences of WFC and FWC and to decrease the experiences of WFE and FWE. In contrast, work- and family-related resources are expected to decrease experiences of WFC and FWC and to increase experiences of WFE and FWE. In turn, WFC and FWC are expected to decrease an individual’s well-being within each specific life domain as well as overall in life. Similarly, WFE and FWE are expected to increase an

individual's well-being within the specific life domain and overall in life. The specific antecedents and outcomes of work–family conflict and enrichment are introduced in more detail in Section 12.3.

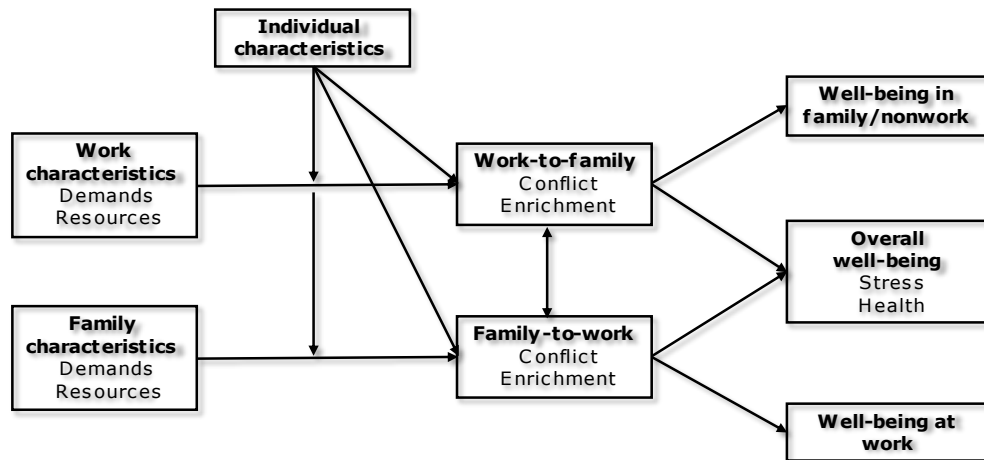


Figure 12.1 Antecedent–outcome model of work–family interaction.

Third, according to the *domain-specificity principle* (Frone et al., 1997), work characteristics are primary antecedent factors generating the experiences of WFC and WFE, which in turn give rise to ill-being or well-being in the family domain. Accordingly, family characteristics are primary antecedent factors for FWC and FWE, which in turn give rise to ill-being or well-being mainly in the work domain.

Finally, various individual characteristics (e.g., gender, socioeconomic status, personality traits, coping strategies) are seen as both antecedents of the four dimensions of work–family interaction as well as moderators of the links between work and family characteristics and the four dimensions of work–

family interaction. Thus, individual characteristics partly determine how often WFC, FWC, WFE, and FWE are experienced. For example, individuals high in neuroticism (a tendency to experience greater anxiety, stress and depression) tend to experience more WFC and FWC. Also, overload and time pressure at work may generate less WFC in individuals who have effective coping strategies (e.g., better time management skills) compared to those with less effective coping strategies.

Spillover models

According to spillover models of work–family interaction, both negative and positive experiences are carried over by an individual from work to family and vice versa without a mediating role of work–family conflict or enrichment. In turn, these spillover effects generate similarity of experiences within these two life domains. What is essential for the existence of spillover between work and family domains is the *positive relation* between a work construct and a distinct, but related, construct in the family domain (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000). For example, if a worker has had a stressful day at work, s/he is likely to come home in a bad mood. This bad mood may then result in tense interactions at home and create a poor family climate. Thus, a worker’s work-related distress is positively linked to his or her family distress.

At the beginning, two forms of spillover were distinguished. *Direct spillover* occurs when the objective conditions of one life domain affect directly the outcomes in the other life domain, whereas *indirect spillover* occurs when an individual’s subjective reactions to objective conditions mediate the effect of these conditions on the outcomes. For example, low wage may directly cause poverty and strain for a family, but one’s dissatisfaction with one’s low wage can also indirectly lead to marital dissatisfaction through worries and disagreements with one’s spouse about financial issues.

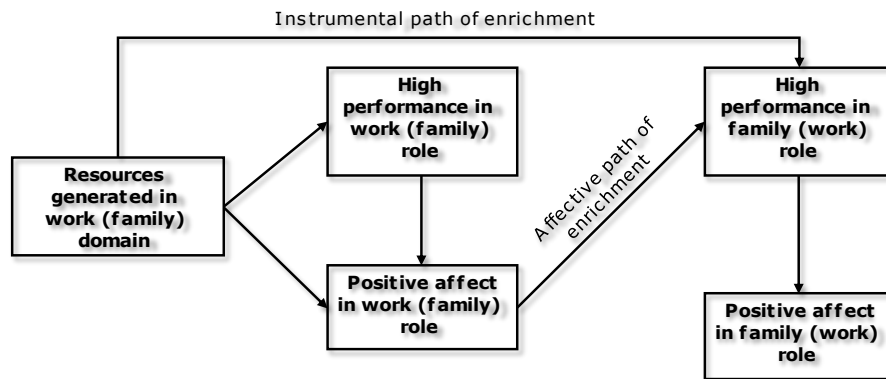


Figure 12.2 Positive spillover of resources, performance, and affect from one life domain to another (adapted from Greenhaus & Powell, 2006, p. 79, Figure 1).

Later, finer-grained models of spillover have been presented that describe in more detail how the experiences, skills or emotions actually transfer from one domain to another, producing similarity between work and family domains (cf. Edwards & Rothbard, 2000). In other words, these finer-grained models of spillover consider in more detail the mediating mechanisms between work and family constructs. One example is the *model of work–family enrichment* by Greenhaus and Powell (2006), which focuses on positive spillover (see Figure 12.2). According to this model, resources (e.g., psychological, physical, social capital, and material resources) gained in performing Role A directly or indirectly improve performance in Role B. The direct improvement of performance in Role B is referred to as the *instrumental path*. The indirect

improvement of performance in Role B through positive affect in Role A is referred to as the *affective path*. Hence, this model emphasizes improved performance as a mediating mechanism explaining positive spillover effects from one domain to another domain.

Another example is *the work-home resources model* by ten Brummelhuis and Bakker (2012), which covers both positive and negative spillover. The model provides a view on what occurs when the work and home domains conflict with or enrich each other. Conflict is the result of a process whereby contextual demands such as overload, multitasking, and conflicts in one domain drain personal resources, for example, energy, mood, and skills, leaving a person with insufficient personal resources to function in the other domain. In contrast, enrichment is experienced when such resources as support, autonomy, and feedback in one domain replenish, or add to, one's personal resource supply. Subsequently, performance in the other domain improves. Thus, the model views the work-home interface as a set of processes whereby demands and resources in the work (or home) domain impact outcomes in the home (or work) domain via changes in personal resources.

Replay

Two broad categories of models explaining the interaction between work and family – antecedent-outcome models and spillover models – have been introduced. Models in the first category emphasize the importance of determining the key demands that increase work-family conflict and the key resources that enhance work-family enrichment. This is because reducing work-family conflict and enhancing work-family enrichment is related to individuals' work- and family-related well-being. Spillover models do not contain concepts such as conflict or enrichment but apply the concept of spillover (i.e., transfer of experiences, moods, skills, and behaviors from one life domain to another) to explain the processes through which resources or demands in one domain are linked to individuals' well-being or performance in the other domain.

Work–family balance

In addition to the concepts of work–family conflict, enrichment, and spillover, there is also the concept of *work–family balance* — a term used frequently in everyday life and recently also in the scholarly literature. Grzywacz and Carlson (2007) have classified the definitions of this concept into two approaches: work–family balance can be seen as either (i) an overall, subjective appraisal of one’s work–family situation (a unidimensional view) or (ii) comprising several components of the work–family situation that give meaning and define it (a multidimensional view).

Overall appraisal of work–family balance

An overall appraisal of work–family balance refers to an individual’s general assessment concerning the entirety of his or her life situation. For example, work–family balance has been defined as a ‘global assessment that work and family resources are sufficient to meet work and family demands such that participation is effective in both domains’ (Voydanoff, 2005, p. 825) and ‘an overall appraisal of the extent to which individuals’ effectiveness and satisfaction in work and family roles are consistent with their life values at a given point in time’ (Greenhaus & Allen, 2011, p. 174).

Components approach to work–family balance

According to the components approach, work–family balance consists of several sub-dimensions (Grzywacz & Carlson, 2007). The use of conflict and enrichment to define balance is common. Frone (2003) proposes that work–family balance consists of the simultaneous experience of *high* work–family enrichment and *low* work–family conflict. Another example of the components approach based on conflict and enrichment is a typology in which work–family balance is divided into four types (Grzywacz et al., 2008; Rantanen et al., 2011): beneficial, harmful, active, and passive. In the first two types the experiences of work–family conflict and enrichment are each other’s’ *opposite*: either enrichment is high and conflict is low (beneficial type), or conflict is high

and enrichment is low (harmful type). In the latter two types, the experiences of work–family conflict and enrichment are *equivalent*: both are high (active type) or both are low (passive type). When studying the existence of the four balance types using a methodology in which the number of types is not known a priori, the results have been mixed. These four types have either all been detected (Moazami-Goodarzi et al., 2019) or only parts of them (a beneficial type and an active type) have emerged (Rantanen et al., 2013).

A more recent multidimensional definition is offered by Casper et al. (2018). On the basis of a comprehensive literature review, they ended up with the following definition of balance: ‘Employees’ evaluation of the favorability of their combination of work and non-work roles, arising from the degree to which their affective experiences and their perceived involvement and effectiveness in work and non-work roles are commensurate with the value they attach to these roles’ (p. 197). Thus, the definition has three dimensions: (i) *affective*, (ii) *effectiveness*, and (iii) *involvement balance*. When people have more positive and fewer negative emotions in highly valued work and non-work roles (affective balance), when they believe that they perform well in these valued roles (effectiveness balance) and are adequately engaged in the valued roles (involvement balance), they have a healthy work–family balance.

Work Psychology in Action: Work-family balance in remote work during the COVID-19 pandemic

Remote work is often described as a flexible, technologically feasible, and family-friendly work arrangement. A review by Shirmohammadi et al. (2022) revealed that adequate workspace at home – characterized as good physical conditions, free from distraction and noise – was key to employees’ successful adjustment to remote work and to their work-family balance during the COVID-19 pandemic. Technostress (stress related to technical aspects of work) and isolation were the two major challenges that remote employees had to deal with while depending on ICTs to work. In addition, a large amount of housework and intensive childcare demands were imposed on remote workers. The authors highlight the important role human resource development (HRD)

practitioners can play in assisting employees to find a fit between their expectations and experiences of remote work.

Replay

There is no strong theoretical consensus regarding the definition of work–family balance, in spite of the fact that terms like work–family balance and work–life balance are frequently used in everyday language and research. Work–family balance can be seen as (i) a single overall appraisal of one’s work–family situation, (ii) consisting of several dimensions such effectiveness, satisfaction, fit, and involvement, or (iii) different combinations of work–family conflict and enrichment experiences.

12.3 Work–Family Interaction: Antecedents and Outcomes

In this section the antecedents and outcomes of work–family interaction – both conflict and enrichment – are discussed in line with the antecedent–outcome models presented in Section 12.2. The antecedents are categorized into three broad categories relating to work, family, and personality characteristics. The outcomes include work, non-work, and stress-related outcomes.

Antecedents of work–family conflict

According to the models of work–family interaction (see Section 12.2), antecedents within the work and family domains should be related to WFC and FWC, respectively. Empirical studies seem to confirm this domain-specificity expectation. In a meta-analysis by Michel, Kotrba et al. (2011), the potential antecedents were categorized into five groups: (i) role stressors, (ii) role involvement, (iii) social support, (iv) work/family characteristics, and (v) personality characteristics. The main findings are summarized in Table 12.2.

Job role stressors and social support at work were the best predictors of *WFC*. Of the role stressors, having too many tasks to do (role overload), incompatible role pressures within the work domain (role conflict), and a large amount of time devoted to work (time demands) were linked to higher *WFC*.

Of the different forms of social support, in addition to supervisor and co-worker support, particularly organizational support – employees’ belief that their work organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being – was related to lower WFC (see also a meta-analysis by French et al., 2018).

In the family domain, the best predictors of FWC were family role stressors. Of these, incompatible role stressors within the family domain (role conflict), having too many family tasks (role overload), and lack of family–role clarity (role ambiguity) were related to higher FWC. However, social support in the family domain, like spousal support, was only weakly related to lower FWC.

In addition to these theoretically expected relations, Michel, Kotrba et al.’s (2011) meta-analysis revealed some unexpected findings: besides to higher WFC, work role conflict and work overload were linked to higher FWC and, correspondingly, family role conflict and family role overload were linked to higher WFC, besides to higher FWC. In their meta-analysis, French et al. (2018) found that social support emanating from the work domain (organizational support in particular) consistently related to less FWC, besides to less WFC. In fact, none of the forms of social support studied by French et al. (2018) supported the domain-specificity principle.

Table 12.2 Main antecedents of work–family conflict.

<i>Work-to-family conflict</i>	<i>Family-to-work conflict</i>
<i>Job role stressors</i>	<i>Family role stressor</i>
Role overload (+)	Role overload (+)
Role conflict (+)	Role conflict (+)
Time demands (+)	Role ambiguity (+)
<i>Social support</i>	
Organizational support (–)	
<i>Personality characteristics</i>	<i>Personality characteristics</i>
Neuroticism (+)	Neuroticism (+)
Internal locus of control (–)	Internal locus of control (–)

Note: + = a positive relation, - = a negative relation

Besides the work and family antecedents reviewed above, personality characteristics have received research attention. Of these, locus of control and the Big Five personality characteristics, including neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experiences, agreeableness, and conscientiousness, received sufficient empirical attention to allow meta-analytic examination (Allen et al., 2012; Michel, Kotrba et al., 2011; Michel, Clark et al., 2011). Of these factors, neuroticism was most important, being moderately related to both higher WFC and higher FWC. Also, internal locus of control – the extent to which an individual feels outcomes are caused by the individual or self, as opposed to external variables such as chance – contributed slightly to both forms of work–family conflict: internal orientation was related to a lower level of WFC and FWC.

Replay

Of the antecedents of work-family conflict, the most important predictors of WFC and FWC belong to role stressors and social support: work role overload and conflict as well as low organizational support best predict WFC, whereas FWC is best predicted by family role conflict and overload. In addition, personality factors such as neuroticism and locus of control also play a role, although seemingly minor.

Outcomes of work–family conflict

The traditional assumption in work–family research was for a long time that WFC predominantly has consequences for the family (the receiving) domain, whereas FWC impacts the work domain. This assumption is referred to as the *cross-domain principle*. However, in one of the first reviews by Allen et al. (2000) on the consequences of WFC it was found that things were not that simple. They found that WFC was related to all types of outcomes: most strongly to increased turnover intentions, life dissatisfaction, and increased burnout and stress symptoms. Apparently, for many employees work–family conflict goes hand in hand with higher risks of stress and burnout.

Meta-analyses (Amstad et al., 2011; Shockley & Singla, 2011) also support

the view that the cross-domain principle is not valid as both types of conflict (WFC and FWC) have shown stronger relations to within-domain (the originating role) outcomes than to cross-domain (the receiving role) outcomes (see Figure 12.3). Thus, WFC was more strongly associated with work-related than with family-related outcomes, and FWC was more strongly associated with family-related than with work-related outcomes. These relations can be explained by cognitive attributions regarding the source of conflict. For instance, when an employee feels that the work role drains his or her resources and leaves less time for family obligations (experiencing WFC), s/he is likely to blame the work role and as a consequence feels less satisfied with it.

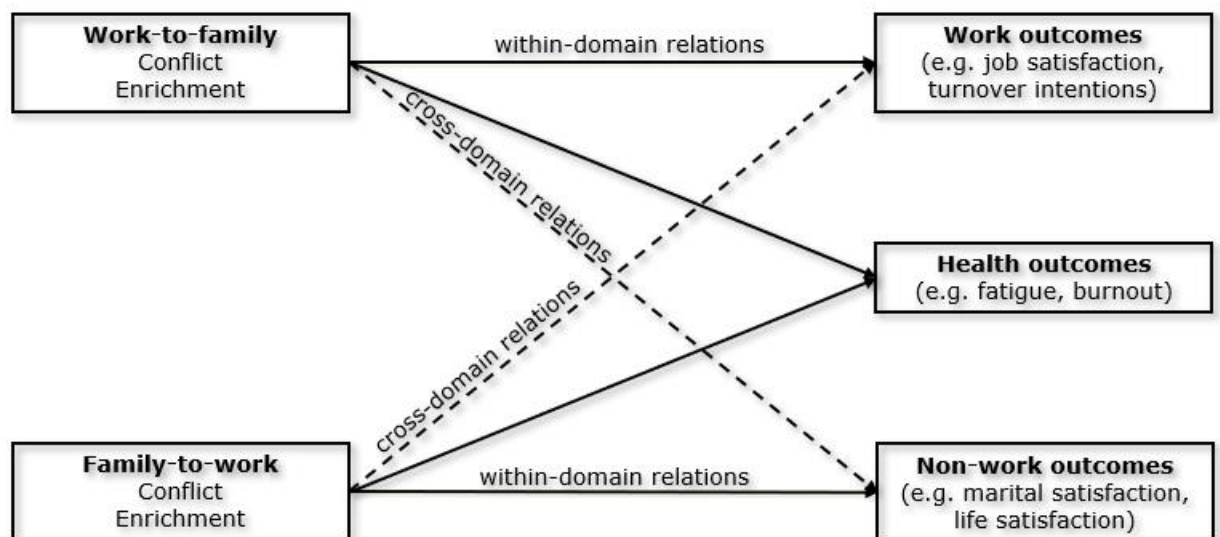


Figure 12.3 Outcomes of work–family conflict and enrichment.

It has been argued that the cross-domain principle might work best in longitudinal studies, where outcomes are assessed at a later point in time than the experience of work–family conflict. However, in a review that focused on longitudinal studies, Peeters et al. (2013) reported with respect to WFC that consequences can be found in both the originating (work) and the receiving

(family) domain, and health consequences are also to be expected. With regard to the effects of FWC, results were less clear, but it seems that employees' health is particularly likely to suffer from FWC. In addition, in a meta-analysis of longitudinal studies by Nohe et al. (2015), WFC had a stronger effect on work-specific strain (e.g., exhaustion, burnout, and irritation at work) than did FWC, supporting the within-domain relations/matching hypothesis, rather than the cross-domain relations/hypothesis.

Replay

Research on the consequences of WFC and FWC has received much attention. On the basis of the cross-domain principle, early theorists assumed that WFC would primarily have consequences for the family domain and that FWC would result in problems in the work domain. However, later research showed that both WFC and FWC may have consequences across different life domains.

Antecedents of work–family enrichment

In line with the enrichment models (see Section 12.2), empirical findings suggest that various resources play a main role in enrichment experiences. In a meta-analysis by Lapierre et al. (2018), these resources were divided into three categories in both work and family domains: (i) resource-providing contextual characteristics, (ii) resource-depleting contextual characteristics, and (iii) personal characteristics. The main findings are summarized in Table 12.3. As regards *Work-Family Enrichment* (WFE), resource-providing contextual work characteristics and work-related personal characteristics best predicted WFE. Of the contextual work resources, social support from supervisors and from co-workers and job autonomy were related to higher WFE. Work engagement, work centrality and work involvement, describing overlapping work-related personal characteristics capturing an individual's psychological investment in their work, were each related to higher WFE. Of family-related antecedents, WFE was predicted by support from family.

As regards *Family-Work Enrichment* (FWE), the same categories – resource-providing contextual family characteristics and family-related

personal characteristics – were the strongest contributors to FWE. Of the contextual family resources, support from family was linked to higher FWE. Both family involvement and family centrality, describing family-related personal characteristics, contributed to higher FWE. In addition to these family-related antecedents, (family-focused) support from co-workers and work engagement in particular turned out to be important for FWE.

Although the characteristics associated with work had stronger relations with WFE and those associated with family had stronger relations with FWE, several work-related antecedents were also significantly related to FWE.

Table 12.3 Main antecedents of work–family enrichment

<i>Work-to-family enrichment (WFE)</i>	<i>Family-to-work enrichment (FWE)</i>
<i>Resource-providing contextual characteristics of work domain</i>	<i>Resource-providing contextual characteristics of family domain</i>
Supervisor support (+)	Support from family (+)
Co-worker-support (+)	<i>Personal characteristics of family domain</i>
Job autonomy (+)	Family involvement (+)
<i>Personal characteristics of work domain</i>	Family centrality (+)
Work engagement (+)	<i>Resource-providing contextual characteristics of work domain</i>
Work centrality (+)	(Family-focused) co-worker support (+)
Work involvement (+)	(Family-focused) supervisor support (+)
<i>Resource-providing contextual characteristics of family domain</i>	Job autonomy (+)
Support from family (+)	<i>Personal characteristics of work domain</i>
	Work engagement (+)

<i>Personality characteristics</i>	<i>Personality characteristics</i>
Extraversion (+)	Extraversion (+)

Note: + = a positive relation

In addition, personality characteristics have received attention. Extraversion – a tendency to be sociable, dominant, and experience positive emotionality – turned out to have the strongest relation with high positive work–non-work (including family) enrichment, whereas the other Big Five characteristics were only weakly related to high enrichment experiences in both directions (except for neuroticism, which was not significantly related to enrichment experiences) (Michel, Clark et al., 2011). It has been argued that extraversion promotes enrichment by building up individual resources in a given domain by eliciting positive emotions that support both the discovery of novel and creative actions and ideas, as well as seeking out constructive solutions and resources to help reduce work–family conflict.

Replay

Current evidence supports the view that various resources at work (e.g., supervisor and co-worker support, job autonomy) and in the family (e.g., family support) facilitate work-family enrichment experiences in the domains of work and family. In addition, of the personal characteristics, work engagement – defined as a characteristic capturing one’s psychological investment in work – and extraversion in particular seem to be important in promoting both WFE and FWE.

Outcomes of work–family enrichment

Outcomes of work-family enrichment are diverse. In a meta-analysis by Zhang et al. (2018) they were divided into four categories: (i) affective outcomes, (ii) resource outcomes, (iii) performance outcomes, and (iv) general well-being. The results are summarized in Table 12.4. *Work-Family Enrichment* was linked to such work-related outcomes as job satisfaction, work engagement, and work performance. However, it had a strongest link to life satisfaction. *Family-Work Enrichment* had strongest links to family satisfaction and family

performance, but it was also linked to work performance, life and job satisfaction. Thus, WFE and FWE had stronger effects on within-domain consequences than cross-domain consequences; that is, the matching hypothesis received stronger support than the cross-domain hypothesis.

Table 12.4 Main outcomes of work–family enrichment.

<i>Work-to-family enrichment (WFE)</i>	<i>Family-to-work enrichment (FWE)</i>
<i>Well-being outcomes</i>	<i>Family domain</i>
Life satisfaction (+)	<i>Affective outcomes</i>
<i>Work domain</i>	Family satisfaction (+)
<i>Affective outcomes</i>	<i>Performance outcomes</i>
Job satisfaction (+)	Family performance (+)
<i>Resource outcomes</i>	<i>Work domain</i>
Work engagement (+)	In-role performance (+)
<i>Performance outcomes</i>	Job satisfaction (+)
In-role performance (+)	<i>Well-being outcomes</i>
<i>Family domain</i>	Life satisfaction (+)
Family satisfaction (+)	

Note: + = a positive relation

Replay

The positive consequences of work–family enrichment are diverse across different life domains for both WFE and FWE. Examples of such outcomes are job, family, and life satisfaction, and good performance at work and in the family.

12.4 Ways of Dealing with Work and Family Demands

This section discusses how employees and organizations manage work and family demands. First, individual coping strategies are discussed. Next, the roles of organizations and society in supporting the reconciliation of work and family demands are considered.

Individual coping strategies

Coping strategies refer to 'an individual's cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person' (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984, p. 141). Thus far it has quite consistently been shown that active, *problem-focused coping* aiming to solve the stressful situation is beneficial in reducing both WFC and FWC.

In contrast, *emotion-focused coping*, referring to emotional regulation behavior such as talking to someone or showing one's irritation or anxiety, and *avoidance-focused coping* such as wishful thinking, denying the stressful situation, or hoping that time will resolve the problem, have received limited attention in work–family research. However, it has been shown that the use of emotion-focused coping gave rise to higher WFC and the use of avoidance coping to higher FWC and WFC.

Context-specific or situational coping strategies have also been studied. They are assumed to explain better why some individuals experience more work–family conflict and less work–family enrichment than others (Somech & Drach-Zahavy, 2007). Specifically, work–family coping strategies describe what people do or think when they face challenges in combining work and family demands (Mauno et al., 2012; Somech & Drach-Zahavy, 2007).

These work–family coping strategies can be divided into two types: strategies that decrease demands and strategies that increase resources (see also [Chapter 17](#)). Reducing working hours, giving up some tasks at work/home, prioritizing, restricting social life, and lowering one's role expectations are examples of demand-decreasing coping strategies. In contrast, seeking work–family support, for instance, by delegating tasks to one's spouse/co-workers, and hiring domestic help, trying to find benefits/learn from difficult situations, and using proactive/future-oriented coping (e.g., planning one's work week, building a back-up system within the family, proactive negotiations with one's spouse/supervisor) are examples of resource-increasing coping strategies within the work–family context. There is

some evidence showing that resource-increasing coping strategies are beneficial in coping with the demands between work and family (Mauno et al., 2012; Neal & Hammer, 2007).

Work–family policies and culture

Organizations can also support their employees in balancing work and family life. Work–family policies and a supportive work–family culture prevailing in the organization play an important role in this respect. Work–family policies refer to formal support and a supportive work–family culture refers to informal support in assisting employees' work–family integration. Because organizations are always operating as a part of larger socio-political cultures or regimes, the national context plays also an important role.

Formal work–family policies cover leave (e.g., parental leaves, reduced working hours for family reasons) and flexibility arrangements (e.g., flexible working hours, remote work), and their availability varies strongly across different welfare regimes. For example, the Nordic countries, including the Scandinavian countries and the Netherlands, have a good package of statutory work–family policies, whereas in more liberal or conservative welfare regimes, such as those in the United Kingdom and the United States, these have a weaker legislative basis.

Informal work–family culture refers to the shared assumptions, beliefs and values regarding the extent to which an organization supports and values the integration of work and family lives (Thompson et al., 1999). According to Thompson et al. (1999), work–family culture consists of three specific components: (i) managerial support; that is, whether managers show social support for and sensitivity to employees' family responsibilities, (ii) career consequences, which refer to the perception of negative career development opportunities as a consequence of utilizing work–family benefits or spending time in family-related activities, and (iii) organizational time demands that refer to expectations that employees prioritize working time above family time.

Both supportive work–family policies and supportive work–family culture are beneficial for work–family interaction (for reviews, see Kinnunen et al., 2005;

Kossek et al., 2011; Mesmer-Magnus & Viswesvaran, 2006). However, studies which have compared the relative importance of work–family policies vis-à-vis culture have indicated that culture has more impact than policies (see Butts et al., 2013, for a meta-analysis). If the organizational culture is not family-supportive, work–family policies are useless because a non-supportive culture discourages using these policies.

Replay

Both individual coping efforts, like problem solving, and organization-based work–family support in terms of supportive work–family culture and work–family policies seem to be beneficial for balancing work and family demands. Of individual coping strategies, resource-increasing coping efforts, like delegating at home/work as one example, seem to be most promising. Moreover, supportive work–family culture has turned out to be more beneficial than formal work–family-friendly policies.

12.5 Conclusions

This chapter aimed to understand work–family interaction in individuals' lives. Although in the 20th century the negative conflict perspective dominated the work–family literature, nowadays there is consensus that work–family interaction has four dimensions: (i) work-to-family conflict (WFC), (ii) work-to-family enrichment (WFE), (iii) family-to-work conflict (FWC), and (iv) family-to-work enrichment (FWE). Work–family conflict is a form of inter-role conflict in which the role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect, whereas work–family enrichment refers to the extent to which experiences in one role improve the quality of life in the other role.

The main antecedents of WFC and WFE seem to be predominantly work-related. Various job role stressors and job demands relate to WFC, and job resources relate to WFE (see Tables 12.2 and 12.3). Similarly, the main antecedents of FWC and FWE are family-related. Various family role stressors and family demands relate to FWC and family resources to FWE (see Tables

12.2 and 12.3). Nevertheless, there are several antecedents which do not follow this domain-specificity principle. Current research has also shown that WFC and FWC may have negative consequences across both work and family domains, in addition to health- and stress-related outcomes. Similarly, the positive consequences of WFE and FWE can be found in both the work and family domains as well as in life satisfaction.

In order to contribute to good psychological well-being and well-functioning of employed individuals, a key question is how to decrease work–family conflict and to increase work–family enrichment to achieve better work-family balance. From the conflict perspective, decreasing job demands such as time pressure and work overload, as well as family demands like family role overload, is important. Similarly, increasing job resources such as job autonomy and social support, as well as family resources like support, is significant from the enrichment perspective. There are several things that individual employees might do to reduce both types of conflict as well as to increase both types of enrichment. They can seek out and develop appropriate social support networks at work and at home, reduce or reorganize the time devoted to work and family demands, and find ways to reduce or better cope with stressors and demands at work and home. Also, between partners who both work full-time an equal division of domestic duties would be beneficial, especially for women, because women spend still more time doing domestic tasks than men. This might also improve relationship satisfaction.

Work Psychology in Action: Ways of dealing with the challenges of the sandwiched generation

In a US study entitled *Working couples caring for children and aging parents* (Neal & Hammer, 2007), participants sandwiched between care demands from two generations were asked to evaluate how often they used different coping strategies in response to their many work and family duties. The strategy that both men and women used most was prioritizing (*'I prioritize and do the things that are most necessary'*). Humor was among the strategies most used (*'I try and find humor in the situation'*). Women also planned how to use their time

and energy, concentrated on the positive sides of their situation, and gave up their personal time and leisure activities. Men instead tended not to do tasks that could be done by other available persons. Participants also mentioned limiting their social activities as a common coping strategy, but the researchers found that this was not advisable: limiting social activities as well as spending less time with spouse and other family members was related to higher work–family conflict and decreased well-being.

Work–family interaction is not only an individual-level phenomenon: work–family conflict, enrichment, and balance all have organizational-level antecedents and outcomes. The organizational initiatives can be discussed under the general label of work–family policies and culture. These initiatives fall into several categories, which include flexible work arrangements, work leave, dependent-care assistance, and general resource services. However, a key question is how to improve the degree of informal support of organizations; that is, the work–family culture. In this regard, the role of supervisors is important. When supervisors are supportive towards their employees’ needs related to life outside work, employees find it easier to reach a healthy work–family balance, which has positive consequences for their health and well-being.

Discussion Points

1. Which theoretical model describing work–family interaction, introduced in Section 12.2, would be your personal favorite and why?
2. Based on your knowledge from the country you live in, what do you think about possible gender or cultural differences in work–family reconciliation?
3. What consequences would hybrid working (flexible working in the workplace and from home) have for the work–family interface? Would you recommend hybrid working and if so, under what circumstances?

Learning by Doing

1. In this chapter, four different types of work–family interaction were distinguished. Observe adults in your life, and see whether you can discover examples of each type of interaction.
2. Employees (and students as well) seem to differ in their preferred strategy to either segmentate or integrate their work (study) life with their private life. Take a look at the study by van Steenbergen et al. (2018) and try to disentangle for yourself what your own preference is, how it manifests itself, and how it is related to your academic performance and well-being. What could you do in your daily life to meet your own preference better?
3. Over the past decades work–family research has mainly focused on traditional couples and heteronormative individuals. Do you think that LGBTQ+ employees face some unique challenges that impact their work–family interface in ways that current work–family research may not be fully capturing? If so, what could organizations and societies do to help them in these work-family challenges? Read then the review article by Murphy et al. (2021) about the LGBTQ+ work–family interface. Does it reinforce or change your thinking?

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