International Conference on Strategic Innovative Marketing, IC-SIM 2014, September 1-4, 2014, Madrid, Spain

# The complications and challenges of the work-family interface: A review paper

Theodosia Tsionou[a],*, Nikolaos Konstantopoulos[a]

*aBusiness School, University of the Aegean, 8 Michalon Str.,Chios 82100, Greece*

## Abstract

During the last few decades researchers have developed a genuine interest in the interaction of the work and family domains. This paper is an attempt to review the recent literature and to categorize the various outcomes produced by the relationship between work and family. In other words this review article assesses the consequences of the work-family interface through the perspective of conflict and facilitation, as argued in previous research.

© 2015 The Authors. Published by Elsevier Ltd. This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC-ND license (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/).
Peer-review under responsibility of I-DAS- Institute for the Dissemination of Arts and Science.

*Keywords:* work-family interface; outcomes; conflict; facilitation

## 1. Introduction

Over the last twenty five years, researchers seem to have acknowledged the relationship between the domains of work and family as an extremely important issue (Eby et al., 2005; Greenhaus & Powell, 2006; Greenhaus, Allen & Spector, 2006). Despite the fact that in the past work and family were considered to be unrelated to each other (Kanter, 1977), the growing body of empirical research has proven this was just a myth and has ultimately shed light on their interdependence (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000; Greenhaus, Allen & Spector, 2006). At first this relationship between the two domains was believed to be strictly negative (Work-Family Conflict), nevertheless scholars have only recently argued that the work-family interface can also have a positive side (Work-Family Enrichment).

Even though this interface has been a vigorous area of research activity in recent decades, to the best of authors' knowledge there is not another recent review article that presents both the positive and negative consequences of the

---

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +30-22710-35169; fax:+30-22710-35099.
  *E-mail address:* th.tsionou@aegean.gr

work-family relationship. Thus, the main purpose of this paper is to focus on the work-family literature in order to identify the outcomes that derive from both the conflict and the facilitation process, and to propose areas that have not been given attention yet.

## 2. Work-family interface

Both the conflict and the enrichment theory, as well as the key aspects of the work-family literature are presented in this chapter.

### 2.1. Work-Family Conflict

Greenhaus and Beutell (1985: p.77) were the first who referred to the work-family conflict and defined it as "a form of inter-role conflict in which role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect", meaning that "participation in the work (family) role is made more difficult by virtue of participation in the family (work) role" (Van Steenbergen & Ellemers, 2009; Kalliath, Hughes & Newcombe, 2012). In other words, individuals hold a number of roles, which in order to fulfill they consume resources, such as time and energy. The amount of these resources is fixed and thus the involvement in multiple roles results in the allocation of much greater resources to one role than the others (Rothbard, 2001; Greenhaus & Powell, 2003). As a consequence the individual's effectiveness in some life roles is being compromised (Greenhaus, Allen & Spector, 2006) and thus the experience of conflict between the work and the family domains is inevitable (Karatepe & Bekteshi, 2008).

Despite the fact that at first researchers used to study only one direction of the conflict (work interference with family) (Cooke & Rousseau, 1984; Bedeian et al., 1988), they soon realized that work-family conflict is a bidirectional phenomenon (Choi & Kim, 2012; Kalliath, Hughes & Newcombe, 2012), and as such it consists of two dimensions, work-to-family and family-to-work (Frone, Russell & Cooper, 1992; Frone, Yardley & Markel, 1997; Zhao, Qu & Ghiselli, 2011). According to Netemeyer et al. (1996: p. 401), work-family conflict (WFC) refers to "a form of inter-role conflict in which the general demands of, time devoted to, and strain created by the job interfere with performing family-related responsibilities", whereas family-work conflict (FWC) refers to "a form of inter-role conflict in which the general demands of, time devoted to, and strain created by the family interfere with performing work-related responsibilities" (Karatepe & Bekteshi, 2008; Karatepe, 2009).

### 2.2. Work-Family Facilitation

Even though in most academic circles the relationship between work and family was considered to be negative, researchers have recently argued that the interaction between the two domains might also be positive (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006; Stoddard & Madsen, 2007; Beutell & Wittig-Berman, 2008; Rotondo & Kincaid, 2008; Wayne, 2009; Choi & Kim, 2012; Russo & Buonocore, 2012). According to the role expansion theory conceptualized by Marks (1977) "role fulfillment can even create energy that can be used to enhance the fulfillment of other roles" (Van Steenbergen & Ellemers, 2009: p. 618). In other words, engagement in multiple roles can nurture a number of benefits for employees, which in turn can "outweigh the difficulties or costs associated with work and family roles" (Demerouti et al., 2004; Kinnunen et al., 2006; Karatepe & Bekteshi, 2008: p. 517).

To examine the synergistic effect of work and family roles, scholars have utilized a variety of different labels (Grzywacz & Butler 2005; Greenhaus & Powell 2006), such as enrichment, facilitation, enhancement and positive spillover (McNall, Nicklin & Masuda, 2010). In spite of the fact that there are some differences between these terms (Carlson et al., 2006; Russo & Buonocore, 2012), they are apparently not well understood (Hammer & Hanson, 2006; McNall, Nicklin & Masuda, 2010), and thus they are often used interchangeably in the literature (Frone, 2003; Wayne, 2009). Due to Sieber (1974) work-family enhancement is the attainment of useful in several life challenges resources from a particular domain (Russo & Buonocore, 2012), whereas positive spillover happens when the individual transmits the benefit to another domain (McNall, Nicklin & Masuda, 2010). Work-family facilitation refers to "improvements in the life system through resources gained in a specific sphere of life", as argued in 2008 by Grzywacz and Butler, whereas work-family enrichment appears to be "the extent to which experiences in one role improve the quality of life in the other role", as Greenhaus and Powell (2006: p. 73) postulated (Russo &