



**UNIVERSITY „AL.I.CUZA” IAȘI**  
**Faculty of Psychology and Education Sciences**

**DOCTORAL THESIS**

*Work-family interface:*

*From conflict and positive interactions perspectives to integrative models*

**SUMMARY**

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Work-family interface is a dynamic research domain, marked by a significant development during the last decades (Rothbard & Dumas, 2006). The importance of this theme is based on the increasing need of balancing work and family demands as important social changes have occurred. Work-family interdependencies research has been determined by changes related to the traditional gender roles and the employees' values, characterized by an increasing emphasis on work-family balance (Greenhaus & Foley, 2007). The study of these relationships was also determined by changes in work characteristics, by the increasing number and complexity of job and family demands, the technological development and global competition being associated with a higher pressure for both organizations and individuals to become more flexible when facing changes (Jones, Burke, & Westman, 2006). Therefore, the management of work-family relationships has become a challenge for researchers and practitioners, the concern for identifying strategies of balancing work and family lives becoming more obvious (Barnett & Hyde, 2001).

This thesis is organized in four chapters. The first three chapters introduce the theoretical background related to the concepts within the empirical studies. Thus, the first chapter addresses the work-family interface issue from the conflict perspective, as well as the positive interactions perspective, with a presentation of the significant theoretical models and the current research trends. Also, in this chapter we analyze the relationship between work-family/family-work interface and job and family satisfaction, one of the most frequent studied research themes in the literature. The second chapter presents a series of mediating and moderating factors, analyzing their role in work-family relationships: cognitions, role centrality, self-efficacy, individual and dyadic coping strategies, the dyadic relationship quality, as well as gender differences in the experience of role conflict and positive interactions. The third chapter addresses interpersonal effects in work-family interface from the interpersonal transfer model perspective proposed by Westman (2006), underlining the importance of the dyadic level of analysis.

Taking into account the current state of research in work-family interface, the inconsistent results of several studies and their limitations, the objective of the empirical approach within the last chapter of this paper is to contribute to the extant literature through four studies, analyzing both negative and positive relationships between the professional and

the family roles at individual and dyadic level, proposing a series of explaining mechanisms of the investigated relationships.

*Study 1. The analysis of work-family cognitions. The construction and validation of the Work-Family Conflict Cognitions Scale (CMF)*

The objective of the first study was to elaborate and validate a work-family conflict cognitions scale, motivated by the lack of such an instrument in the literature and its usefulness in analyzing the mediating role of irrational cognitions in the work-family/family-work conflict and job and family satisfaction relationship.

The construction of the proposed scale is based on the principles of the rational-emotive theory developed by Albert Ellis, according to which rational and irrational beliefs are associated with functional and dysfunctional emotions (Macavei & McMahon, 2010). People with low levels of irrationality and high levels of rational cognitions experience fewer stress factors, perceive daily stress less intensely compared to those characterized by irrational thinking (Caserta, Dowd, David, & Ellis, 2010). According to the stress model in the rational-emotive theory, irrational beliefs represent cognitive vulnerability factors in stressful situations, while rational beliefs are protective factors (David, 2006).

Each item was phrased in order to include: a type of cognition (irrational or rational); a type of cognitive process (demandingness/preferences, catastrophizing/anti-catastrophizing, low frustration tolerance/high frustration tolerance, global evaluation, self-downing/unconditional self-acceptance); two dimensions of the conflict - the direction (work-family and family-work) and the type of conflict (time-based, strain-based, behaviour-based).

The construct validity was tested through exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis. In its initial form with 36 items, the scale was administered to 193 employees in public and private organizations. The confirmatory factor analysis was carried out on 192 participants.

Confirmatory factor analysis data suggest that 15 from the initial items of the questionnaire measure four intercorrelated dimensions related to cognitions people hold regarding the conflict between the two roles. Therefore, the scale has four factors: irrational work-family conflict beliefs, rational work-family conflict beliefs, irrational family-work conflict beliefs, rational family-work conflict beliefs.

Results suggest that the instrument can be useful in measuring irrational and rational cognitions related to work-family interactions. The scale adds to the existing instruments that assess the complex work-family relationships, underlining the importance of analyzing this interaction from a transactional perspective. Also, it can be used in research that aim at studying the relationships between cognitions and work-family interactions or the cognitions as mediating factors in the work-family interface – well-being indicators relationship.

*Study 2. Work-family conflict and job and family satisfaction. The mediating role of cognitions and the moderating role of the importance attributed to work and family*

Relying on Voydanoff's (2008) general conceptual model on work-family interactions and the ABC cognitive model (Ellis, 1994; Beck, 1976), the objective of this study is to analyze the effect of work-family/family-work conflict on job and family satisfaction, as well as the analysis of cognitions as mediating factors of the work-family/family-work conflict and job and family satisfaction relationship. Also, we analyze the moderating role of the importance people attribute to the two roles.

Although several studies that analyzed the relationship between work-family conflict and job and family satisfaction revealed negative correlations (Burke & Greenglass, 1999; Parasuraman & Simmers, 2001), there are theoretical models which suggest that a stress factor does not determine by itself emotional and behavioural effects, but through the agency of cognitions and personal perceptions (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Ellis, 1994; Beck, 1976). Recently, some authors noticed the importance of studying the role of the cognitive factors in work-family interface (Janasz & Behson, 2007; Van Steenbergen et al., 2008).

In carrying out this study, we relied on the fact that the cognitive-behavioral paradigm principles can explain the cognitive processes underlying the relationship between work-family conflict and job/family satisfaction.

We used the experiment on 192 participants randomly distributed in one of the six experimental groups. In order to test the research hypotheses, the following statistical analysis techniques were used: multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA), analysis of variance (factorial ANOVA), linear regression and structural equation modeling.

The results show that the direction of the conflict influence job and family satisfaction. Job and family satisfaction levels are lower when a work-family conflict is activated compared

to the situation of a family-work conflict. This suggests that a work-family conflict, generated by the professional role, is perceived as being more problematic than the family-work conflict. This fact can be explained by a higher frequency in experiencing this type of conflict and a lower degree of control people perceive when facing this conflict, which is indicated by the activation of irrational beliefs to a higher extent when work interferes with family, suggesting a higher cognitive vulnerability in work-family conflict situations.

As for the type of conflict (time-based, strain-based, behaviour-based), the results show insignificant differences between the participants in their job and family satisfaction levels. Also, data support the fact that the direction of the conflict influence family satisfaction through the agency of irrational cognitions. As the ABC cognitive model suggests, the conflict activates rational and irrational cognitions regarding the work-family relationship, which, in turn, influence, family satisfaction. As the irrational beliefs level increases, the work-family/family-work conflict leads to lower family satisfaction. Our data regarding the conflict - family satisfaction relationship are in accordance with the transactional model of stress (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) and the ABC model (Ellis, 1994; Beck, 1976) within the cognitive-behavioral theory. Thus, cognitions represent an important variable which can reduce or increase the effects of the work-family conflict.

The results also point out the moderating role of the importance people attribute to the professional and the family role. Thus, for individuals who consider work more important than family, the direction of the conflict influences only job satisfaction and the proposed mediation model is not supported for this group. Participants to whom family is more important than work and those who consider both roles as being equally important, the direction of the conflict influences both job and family satisfaction. As for the mediation model, for those who believe that family is more important than work, cognitions mediate the relationship between the direction of the conflict and family satisfaction, as well as the relationship between the direction of the conflict and job satisfaction. For the participants who consider both roles as being equally important, cognitions mediate only the conflict – family satisfaction relationship. For all three groups, the satisfaction level is lower for those confronted with a work-family conflict compared to those for whom we activated the family-work conflict, underlining the greater influence of this type of conflict.

Our study adds to previous research based on two aspects: the experimental approach of the work-family conflict - job/family satisfaction relationship and the explanation of this relationship by testing the mediating role of people's cognitions regarding the conflict between the professional and the family role. Therefore, our study contributes to a better understanding of the relationship between conflict and satisfaction through its analysis from the ABC cognitive model perspective.

*Study 3. The analysis of the relationship between job and family satisfaction and positive work-family interactions. The mediating role of self-efficacy and coping strategies*

The objective of the third empirical study was the analysis of the relationship between family/job satisfaction and positive work-family/family-work interactions, investigating also the mediating role of self-efficacy and individual coping strategies.

In terms of work-family positive relationships, the research results emphasize the fact that they are associated with high levels of satisfaction (Carlson et al., 2010; McNall et al., 2010). The theoretical models on work-family positive interactions (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006; Wayne et al., 2007) include a series of individual variables which represent important resources. Among these, self-efficacy is a protective factor in work-family conflict situations. Another important resource is represented by coping, a variable that was taken into consideration in few studies on work-family positive interactions.

A number of 192 subjects participated in this study. We used structural equation modeling in order to test the direct relationships between job/family satisfaction and work-family/family-work positive interactions, as well as self-efficacy and coping strategies as mediating variables. The results show that family satisfaction is a predictor of two types of positive interactions between the professional and the family role: family-work compensation and family-work transfer of competencies, suggesting that people value to a greater extent a domain when it enhances the functioning in the other domain.

According to the relationships between the variables, a mediation model was tested and the absolute indices showed a very good fit of the model. Self-efficacy, cognitive restructuring and partner support represent the mechanisms through which family satisfaction influences family-work compensation and family-work transfer of competencies. Thus, self-efficacy for managing work-family conflict mediates the relationship between family satisfaction and

family-work compensation and the relationship between family satisfaction and family-work transfer of competencies, representing an important psychological resource. With a higher confidence in their own problem solving abilities and the efficient reliance on their cognitive resources (Maddux, 2007), people with self-efficacy in managing work-family conflict tend to use strategies that make the two roles positively interact.

Among the analyzed coping strategies, cognitive restructuring and partner support mediate the relationship between family satisfaction and the two types of positive interactions: family-work compensation and transfer of competencies. When facing a conflict between the professional and family demands, people who use cognitive restructuring tend to focus on the positive aspects of their lifestyle, to interpret the conflict experience in terms of personal development, influencing family-work compensation and transfer of competencies. As for partner support, when family satisfaction levels are high, people will use coping strategies that are based on instrumental and emotional support within the family: asking for help in problematic situations, focusing on communicating with the partner in order to better understand the situation. These strategies influence in their turn the two forms of positive interactions.

This study adds to previous research regarding the relationship between the positive interactions and well-being indicators by identifying some individual explaining factors and suggesting ways through which organizational specialists can contribute to the development of some personal abilities that can facilitate positive work-family interactions.

*Study 4. A dyadic model of work-family interactions: conflict, positive relationships and individual and interpersonal well-being. The mediating role of dyadic coping and the quality of the dyadic relationship*

After the analysis of the conflict and the positive interactions between the professional and the family role at individual level, we end the research approach with a study in which we aim at integrating both perspectives – the positive and the negative one – in a dyadic analysis, investigating the individual and the interpersonal effects of work-family/family-work conflict and positive interactions on individuals' well-being through the mediating role of dyadic coping and the dyadic relationship quality, based on Westman's (2006) interpersonal transfer

model and analyzing the data using the Actor-Partner Interdependence Model (Kenny & Cook, 1999).

Research on interpersonal effects is based on the transfer model, the analysis unit being represented by the dyad (Westman, 2006). As for the interpersonal transfer process in work-family interface, the few studies based on this perspective can be grouped in two categories: one that focuses on the relationship between a partner's work-family conflict and the other partner's work-family conflict (Hammer et al. 1997; Westman & Etzion, 2005) and the second that considers the relationship between one partner's work-family conflict experience and the other partner's stress (Montgomery et al., 2008).

The participants were 80 married couples, both partners being employed. In order to test the research hypotheses, models regarding the intra- and interpersonal relationships between the variables were designed. In accordance with the purpose of explaining the relationships between work-family/family-work conflict and individual well-being, as well as the relationship between the positive interactions and well-being, a series of mediation models were tested.

Our data suggests that the experience of the conflict between the professional and the family role in one partner predicts the other partner's well-being. The higher the conflict level in one individual, the lower the partner's well-being. This result supports Westman's (2006) interpersonal transfer model.

The analysis of the indirect effects shows that dyadic coping strategies reported by one partner mediates the relationship between his family-work strain-based conflict and his well-being. Also, family-work strain-based conflict in one partner predicts the other partner's well-being through the agency of the dyadic coping reported by the latter.

As for the relationship between work-family/family-work positive interactions, the quality of the dyadic relationship and well-being, the types of positive interactions that have significant relationships with well-being are represented by work-family/family-work compensation and transfer of competencies. The analysis of the relationship between work-family compensation and well-being showed both actor and partner significant effects.

Investigating mediation in the dyadic models of the positive interactions, the results underline the fact that the quality of the dyadic relationship mediates the relationship between work-family compensation in one partner and his well-being. Work-family compensation



leads to an unfavorable evaluation of the couple relationship which, in turn, negatively influences personal well-being. Thus, the relationship between work-family compensation and low levels of well-being can be explained by the unfavorable evaluation of the dyadic relationship.

The dyadic relationship quality is also a mediator between family-work compensation in one partner and well-being. Family-work compensation leads to a positive evaluation of the dyadic relationship which, in turn, positively influences individual well-being. Also, family-work compensation in one partner influences the other partner's well-being through the way the latter evaluates the quality of the marital relationship.

Our results are similar to those of Steenbergen, Kluwer and Karney (2014) regarding the mediating role of the couple's positive behaviours and the positive perceptions of the partner's behaviours in the relationship between work-family facilitation and marital satisfaction. In accordance with the need of investigating the interpersonal effects of the positive interactions, the present study yields data regarding the direct relationships between different types of work-family positive interactions and partners' well-being, pointing out the role of the dyadic relationship quality in explaining these relationships.

Through the methodology we used and the results, this study approaches one of the limitations in the literature, which consists of the over-emphasis on the individual level of analysis.

### *Conclusions*

The present work contributes theoretically, methodologically and empirically to the existing literature. Theoretically, our research underlines the important role of the cognitive factors and some individual variables in work-family interface issues. Also, the dyadic analysis of the relationship between conflict/positive interactions and well-being yields new data regarding the role of some factors at interpersonal level. The practical implications of the results are related to the ways in which work-family relationships can be enhanced by organizational specialists.

Methodologically, we used a wide range of statistical analysis techniques. The second study investigated the work-family – job/family satisfaction relationship using the experiment. At the same time, the actor-partner interdependence model and structural equation modeling

allowed us to test theoretical models and examine mediation relationships, emphasizing the explaining role of some variables.

Thus, despite some limitations related to the cross-sectional designs, the self-report variables and some demographic characteristics of the samples, the results of our empirical approach adds to the existing studies in the literature, yielding new data regarding work-family interactions and contributing to the confirmation of some theoretical perspectives in this research domain.