

WORK-FAMILY CONFLICT IN RELATION WITH RESOURCE CONSERVATION THEORY AND EXPANSIONIST THEORY

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Abstract: *Initially, work and private life were conceptualized according to the model of two separate spheres. From mixing those spheres generally resulted problems, failures, stress, all united under the term "work-family conflict". This wording refers to the role conflict occurred when the requirements of the professional role are incompatible with the family demands (Greenhaus, Beutel, 1985). Later, the relationship between family and profession was seen as a bidimensional construct, the professional roles affecting private roles and vice versa. Although, initially research has paid attention to work-family conflict, it seems, however, that balancing family and professional life is an intriguing, multifaceted domain, which may take positive or negative aspects. The results of recent studies (Barnett and Hyde, 2001) about the benefits in terms of life quality when one is involved in several roles, prompted reconsideration of the issue and the tendency of deepening research, in order to identify variables that determine transforming what was originally lived as a conflict, into a life situation with positive effects for the individual and why not for the organization to which he belongs, his family and thus society.*

Keywords: *work-family conflict; resource conservation theory; expansionist theory*

Introduction

The phrase „work-family conflict” started to make history at the beginning of the 1980’s, with the growing involvement of women in the labour market. These demographic changes among employees led to the reconsideration of those traditionalist conceptions according to which men have a duty to procure the resources needed for living, while women’s mission is to take care of home and children. As the proportion of women with professional activities increased significantly, while striving to achieve housework, the tasks of the two roles have become incompatible, causing the conflict between the two spheres.

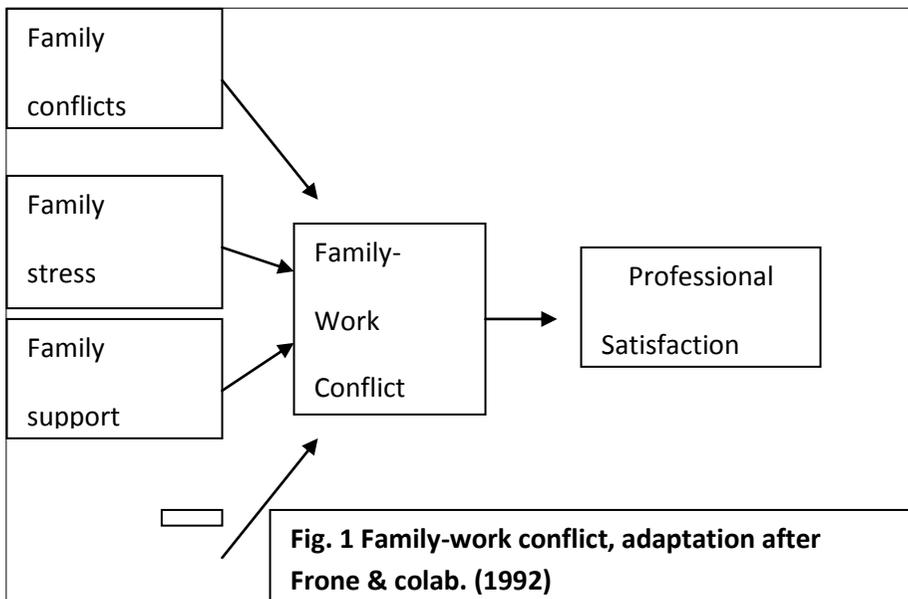
The conclusions of field research (Barnett, 1998: 125-182) are that in our society continues to dominate the idea that work and family are two different areas, competing for our resources of time, energy, attention or involvement.

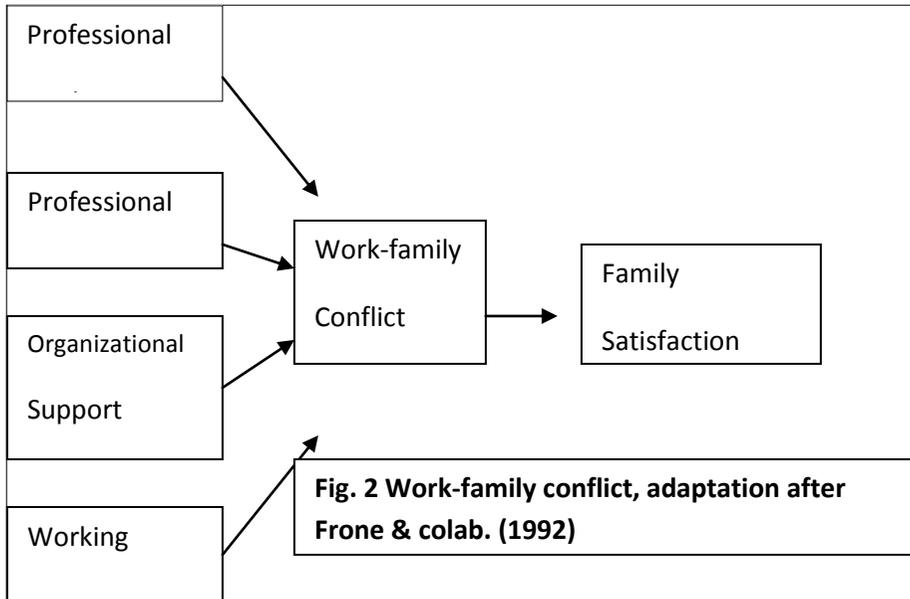
Conceptualization

When work affects family we are talking about work-family conflict, and if private life interferes with the profession, exists the family-work conflict, the first direction of the conflict is the most frequently studied.

Frone (1992: 65-78) proposed a model according to which work-family conflict is both an outcome and a predictor of marital and professional satisfaction, the latter being influenced by particularities of work and private life. Thus, professional stress, family problems, family conflicts are the variables most often associated with the appearance of conflict between family and professional life, these factors having negative effects on work and family.

As a predictor, work-family conflict has undesirable organizational consequences that could take the form of absenteeism, resignations, personnel fluctuation (Hepburn and Barling, 1996:311-318; Kossek, 1990: 769-791). Health also suffers from the imbalance between job and family.





It is noted in these two figures how family satisfaction is influenced by a number of factors of the working environment and job satisfaction is in turn explained by specific family variables.

Resource conservation theory

The theory of resource conservation (Grandey and Cropanzano, 1999; Hobfoll, 1999: 350-370) is often used as a starting point in the effort to conceptualize work-family conflict. According to it, people's aim is to get new resources, either as material (money, houses, and cars) or emotional, spiritual or energetic (more time, a certain social status, personal characteristics and various others). When these resources are threatened or lost, stress appears.

The resource conservation theory explains emerged stress from the concern on the reduction of resources in the future, a new point of view by referring to the classical theories (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984), according to which this tension is an individual's response to the challenges coming from the external environment.

Thus, work-family conflict occurs as a consequence of the resources consumed when the individual attempts to reconcile private and professional life. Deficit hypothesis, according to which human beings have limited, predetermined energy resources, supports this assumption, outlining a scenario whereby when a domain gets all attention, most resources are consumed in that direction, so that involvement in other life aspects is lesser, and the role is less well met (Gutek, Searle, Klepa, 1991: 560-568). According to the deficit hypothesis, the more roles a person handles, the more constraints and overloads will affect that person.

However, feelings of satisfaction arising in relation to fulfilling a certain role were seen by some authors (Grzywacz and Bass, 2003: 248-262) as fuelling the resources tank that contributes to counteract the negative effects of work-family conflict.

Expansionist theory

Expansionist theory argues that involvement in multiple roles creates for the individual a greater variety of opportunities and skills that facilitate his personal development, thus contributing to a better functioning. (Pogan, 2014: 146).

Expansionist hypothesis starts from the hypothesis that energy or time can increase, they are not some fixed variables, limited to a predetermined value. In this way, when a person occupies various roles, energy reserves are developed; multiple roles are beneficial for physical, mental, relational and individual health. This theory is supported by the assumption that when acting in several positions, the individual is involved in various processes, such as "small conflicts, adding value, social support, opportunities for experimenting success, widening reference, growth of self-complexity, similarity of experiences and gender role ideology" (Barnett and Hyde, 2001:784) .

Studies that aimed the validity of the expansionist hypothesis (Baruch and Barnett, 1986, Barnett and Hyde, 2001: 578-585) have shown that filling several roles simultaneously has beneficial effects. For example, "researchers noted, especially in men, that job related stress is strongly countered by a quality marital relationship, since it appears that the opportunity to share the difficulties of the day to a sensitive partner works as a resource in overcoming obstacles " (Pogan, 2014:146).

For women who have abandoned traditional view studies also demonstrate that there are some situations when roles overlapping brings advantages. For women who are wives, mothers and employees the mental and physiological wellness level is superior to that of wives or mothers unemployed, but also compared to the single career females . So it seems that involvement in professional roles has positive results for women, and for men adding responsibilities in the family helps (Stevens, Minote, Mannon, Kiger, 2007: 242-262).

For operationalization and empirical testing of these new assumptions outlined in addressing work-family relationship, were introduced a number of terms that have a positive connotation, contrary to previous approaches. We intend to give a few examples in the following lines.

Work – family auto-enhancing is "the extent to which aspects of the family or work role provide resources to facilitate the performance of the opposite role" (Voydanoff, 2002:138-164). Work-family facilitation entails the "extent to which participation in work (or home) is facilitated by experiences, skills and opportunities gained or developed at home (the place of the work)" (Frone, 2003: 143-162).

Job - home positive interactions "describes how one's behaviour from a domain is influenced by the positive reactions built in the other field". (Geurts et al. 2005: 319–339).

Other authors speak of work - family enrichment as "the extent to which the experiences from one role improve the life quality of the other role." (Greenhaus and Powell, 2006: 72-92).

Positive family-work spill over represents the "transfer of emotions, skills, behaviours, and values with positive aspects from the original to the receiving domain, having beneficial effects on the receiving area" (Hanson et al., 2006: 249–265).

Work - family facilitation is "the extent to which the individual engaging in a life field (eg, work or family) bring gains (developmental, emotional, capital or efficiency) that contribute to the better functioning of the other area of life (family or work) ". (Wayne et al., 2007: 63–76).

Watching all these terms we can notice the mutual beneficial effects that these two major areas of existence of any human being have on individual functioning.

Conclusions

Both perspectives, the resources conservation and expansionist thesis, have supporters who argue results empirically, which helps both to represent a valid starting point in addressing relations between private life and profession. Although when it comes to balancing family and professional life, the central concept is "work-family conflict," recent studies have noted positive correlation in terms of involvement in both kinds of roles (Marks MacDermid, 1996: 417- 432).

Expansionist theory can be seen in contrast with conventional approaches to the interface between work and private life, conceptualized as work-family conflict, perspectives according to which professional and family roles are negatively correlated. An additional argument which supports the expansionist theory is the benefits that the satisfaction of fulfilling a certain role has at psychological level, on the individual wellbeing. The quality of a role, measured by the satisfaction felt, has the merit to offset the difficulties posed by this . In other words, the difference between the stressful aspects of a role and the ones that bring satisfaction in achieving a role, represent the quality of that role. (Barnett et al., 2006: 209-221).

The quality of the professional role has been identified as being associated with the distress level (Barnett et al., 1993: 794-806), high levels of job satisfaction positively correlating with low rates of psychological distress.

Regarding the relationships quality, recent research (Hyde, DeLamater, Durik, 2001: 10-23) noted that involvement in work positively influences family involvement. In a study on the benefits of marriage for employed women (Oppenheimer, 1997: 431-453) the highest marital stability

was seen in couples where both partners undertake professional activities. This can be highlighted by reference to the classical theory of roles homophily proposed by Simpson and England, according to which "roles solidarity within the family leads to increased solidarity and reduces marital conflict" (Simpson; England, 1981:180-204).

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