

# Work-Family Enrichment & Work-Family Conflict: A Study in Relationships

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## Abstract

This paper analyses the relationship between work-family conflict and enrichment with job satisfaction in a sample of University teachers. The paper explores this relationship and find that conflict is negatively related to enrichment but enrichment is positively related to job satisfaction and organizational commitment. There are not indirect effects of work-family conflict on job satisfaction, and neither there are cross-over effects of conflict on enrichment.

## Introduction

The literature on work-family conflict (WFC) is quite extensive and many empirical studies have analyzed its antecedents and consequences. WFC may be viewed as the negative side of the work-family interface. Nevertheless there is also a positive side which has been very much less researched. The literature usually refers to this positive side as work-family enrichment (WFE). Although WFE and WFC might be thought to be, as we said, opposite sides of the work-family interface and thereby negatively related, prior research has generally observed small, non-significant relationships between them. Thus, Greenhaus & Powell [1] identified 15 studies in which both WFE and WFC were measured. Only eight of the 21 correlations between WFE and WFC in these studies were statistically significant (three positive and five negative), and their mean value was -0.02. As a result, some scholars have concluded that the extent to which individuals experience enrichment between their work and family roles has no bearing on the level of conflict they experience between these two roles; i.e. WFE and WFC are independent constructs [2, 3]. However, the exact nature of the relationship between WFE and WFC remains a matter of debate in the work-family literature. The purpose of this paper is to explore and test this relationship further.

## Theoretical Discussion and Hypotheses

Although work-family conflict (WFC) continues to be preeminent in work-related studies, several researchers have called for a more balanced approach to the work-family interface by examining the benefits of multiple role memberships, and exploring the positive synergies between work and family under a variety of different labels, including enrichment, positive spillover, enhancement, and facilitation. Whereas many construct labels have been used interchangeably to describe the positive connections between work and family, enrichment is the most comprehensive [4, 5] and researchers have also noted how other constructs such as positive spillover and facilitation can be categorized under work-family enrichment [4, 6]. We adopt Greenhaus & Powell's [1] definition of work-family enrichment (WFE), "the extent to which

experiences in one role improves the quality of life in the other role”, because it offers the broadest conceptualisation of the positive side of the work–family interface at the individual level of analysis [4, 5].

In Greenhaus & Powell’s [1] model, enrichment occurs when resource gains generated in Role A promotes improved individual performance in Role B. Role experiences offer five categories of resources that may be acquired. These include skills and perspectives (e.g., interpersonal skills, coping skills, respecting individual differences), psychological and physical resources (e.g., self-efficacy, hardiness, optimism), social-capital resources (e.g., networking, information), flexibility (e.g., flexible work arrangements), and material resources (e.g., money, gifts). These resources enable improved performance in the other role either directly (i.e., instrumental path) or indirectly (i.e., the affective path). For example, if an employee gains multitasking skills from his or her parenting role, these skills may directly improve his or her job performance. It could also be the case that resources operate more indirectly at producing enrichment via positive affect. That is, experiences gained at home may produce positive affect toward one’s family role in the form of enthusiasm, alertness, and higher energy. In turn, this positive affect from the family role may produce more positive affect in the work role.

A comparison of antecedents of conflict and enrichment according to the review of the literature shows a similar group of variables. For instance, regarding outcomes of conflict and enrichment we find that, among others, job (un)satisfaction, high (low) turnover, family (un)satisfaction, or life (un)satisfaction are mostly found in both studies of conflict and enrichment. Therefore, the analysis of antecedents and outcomes does not imply any direction of the link between both conflict and enrichment, and more empirical results are needed to explore this relationship.

Our paper proposes a research model that links enrichment and conflict to job satisfaction and analyzes the relationships between two dimensions of enrichment and conflict. Similar to conflict, enrichment is bi-directional in nature. That is, benefits can be derived from work and applied to family [(i.e., work-to-family enrichment (WFE properly)] or derived from family and applied to work [(i.e., family-to-work enrichment (FWE)]. Enrichment may be related to a number of important work-related outcomes, including job satisfaction (i.e., degree of pleasure derived from the job) and affective commitment (i.e., emotional attachment to the organization). Drawing on Greenhaus & Powell’s [1] affective path, if a parent perceives resources stemming from his or her family role (e.g., better time management skills as a result of parenting), he or she is likely to be a better parent, which in turn creates more positive emotions at home, and this transfers to more positive emotions at work (i.e., FWE). Conversely, resources acquired at work (e.g., self-esteem) may result in better performance at work, which has the effect of creating more positive affect at work, ultimately transferring to more positive affect in the family domain (i.e., WFE). Thus, in both cases, individuals are experiencing positive emotions about their work, which by extension should lead to higher job satisfaction and affective commitment. Consequently we propose two research hypotheses that directly link this pair of dimensions for enrichment and conflict:

*H1.- Work-family conflict is negatively related to work-family enrichment*

*H2.- Family-work conflict is negatively related to family-work enrichment*

Powell & Greenhaus [7] theoretically examine the relationship between enrichment and conflict about whether they are opposite sides of the work-family interface, and they conclude that the answer is “yes and no”, or “it depends”. Along the instrumental path, enrichment and conflict may be unrelated when a particular resource is not generated in Role A or when it is generated in Role A but not applied in Role B; in both instances, the lack of application of a resource from Role A to Role B may result in the absence of enrichment but does not necessarily produce conflict. When the resource is applied to Role B, enrichment and conflict represent opposite ends of a continuum that respectively captures the success and failure of the application and may be therefore negatively related. Along the affective path, enrichment and conflict may be either unrelated or negatively related depending upon whether the generation of a particular resource in Role A has no influence on affect in Role A (unrelated) or produces negative affect in Role A that reduces performance in Role B (negatively related). Moreover, enrichment and conflict may be unrelated when positive affect produced in Role A does not influence performance in Role B. That is, neither enrichment nor conflict can occur along the affective path if affect generated by experiences in a role remains within that role. Thus, for each resource, enrichment and conflict may be either unrelated or negatively related depending on the particular conditions that are present.

We also want to analyse the relationship between enrichment and job satisfaction, and we propose:

*H3.- Work-family enrichment and family-work enrichment are positively related to job satisfaction.*

Social exchange theory [8] can be used to explain this hypothesis H3. Social exchange theory has been applied to the employer–employee relationship, such that when favourable treatment is perceived by one party, the other reciprocates, leading to favourable outcomes for both [9]. Applying this to the work–family interface, when employees perceive that their organizations are helping them manage work and family roles, they are likely to feel supported and cared for by the organization [9, 10]. In response to this, employees feel obligated to reciprocate toward the organization in the form of more favourable attitudes due to the norm of reciprocity. This norm obliges individuals to return favourable treatment, such as responding with more positive feelings about the job and the organization [10, 11].

McNall et al. [5] in a meta-analytic review of the consequences associated with work-family enrichment found that there are a number of positive relationships between enrichment and work-, non work-, and health-related outcomes, although these relationships are often small to moderate in magnitude. Both WFE and FWE are positively associated with work-related outcomes, specifically job satisfaction and affective commitment, and positively related to family and life satisfaction. When employees perceive that their work and family roles are enriching, they may reciprocate toward the organization with desired attitudes but not necessarily intentions to remain in the organization. Similarly, if employees perceive that their family is beneficial to their career, they may in turn feel higher levels of life satisfaction and family satisfaction, in accordance with social exchange theory. Furthermore, McNall et al. [5] found that the role from which enrichment originated was more strongly related to various outcomes than the role from which the enrichment was received, which is contrary to results in the work–family conflict literature. Thus, WFE had a stronger effect on work-related outcomes: job satisfaction

and affective commitment; whereas FWE had a stronger effect on a non-work related outcome: family satisfaction. These results suggest that while both types of enrichment are important for enhancing work and non-work satisfaction, the effect appears to be stronger for the role from which the enrichment was generated. This is consistent with social exchange theory such that individuals seem to reciprocate in the form of more favourable attitudes toward the domain that is perceived as the originator of the resource generation. That is, resources generated in the home are more strongly associated to non work-related outcomes, whereas resources generated at work apply more strongly to work-related outcomes.

We use the number of dependents as a control variable of the relationships between enrichment and job satisfaction. The link between job satisfaction and organizational commitment is also explored in order to introduce some measure of organizational performance as outcome of enrichment.

### Procedures for collecting data

The research was conducted in a public higher-education context (characterized by its social and non-profit nature) and within the University System of Bolivia, specifically in the Faculty of Economics and Finance from the University *Juan Misael Saracho* (UAJMS) located at the city of Tarija (southern Bolivia). Primary information was collected during September and October 2010, through questionnaires directly delivered to the total population of the Faculty. The final sample includes 125 completed surveys. Table I summarizes the information of the survey.

Table I. Study's Technical Data

Item	Description
Data Collection Instrument	Questionnaire on job satisfaction and work-family interface, developed by the thesis author, based on validated and contrasted scales.
Analyzed Population	Faculty of Economics and Finance. University of Juan Misael Saracho Autonomus. City of Tarija, Bolivia.
Temporal scope	September and October, 2010.
Sample size	125 university professors
Response rate	95%
Sampling error	2% at 95% of confidence level

We use structural equation analysis (EQS 6.1) to test the research hypotheses. This paper focuses the analysis on the enrichment-conflict interrelationships although we also analysed antecedents of work-family enrichment and other antecedents of job satisfaction in this sample of University teachers.

Work-to-family enrichment and Family-to-work enrichment were assessed as a construct with 18 items adapted from Carlson et al. [6] measured in a 7-point Likert scale. Work-to-family conflict and Family-to-work conflict were assessed as a construct with 10 items adapted from Boyar & Mosley [12] measured in a 7-point Likert scale. Job satisfaction was assessed as a construct with 6 items adapted from Agho et al. [13] measured in a 7-point Likert scale.

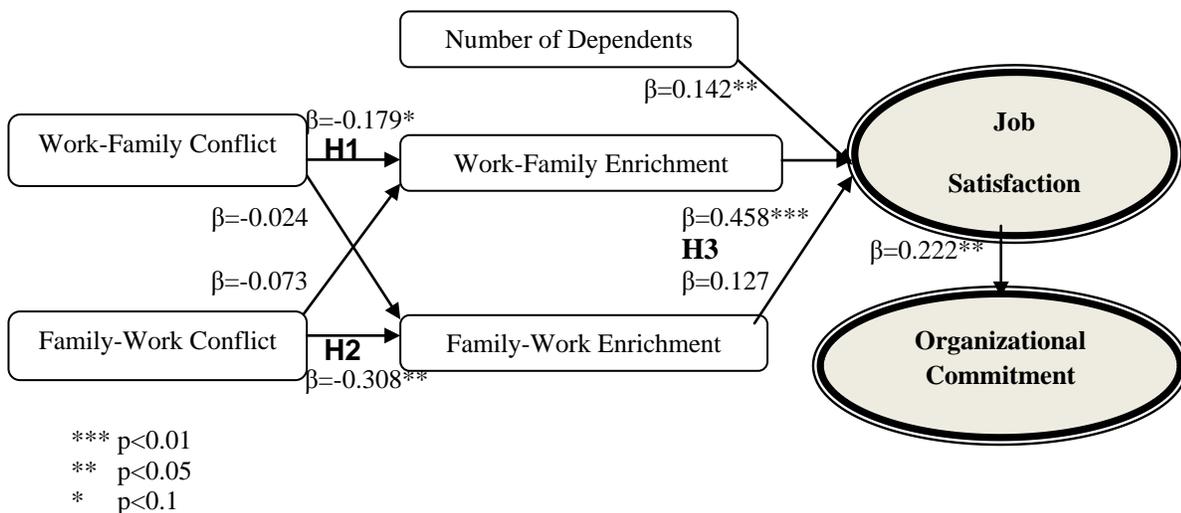
Organizational commitment was assessed as a construct with 6 items adapted from Meyer et al. [14] measured in a 7-point Likert scale.

## Results

Figure I shows the main results related to the research hypotheses. All constructs are statistically valid and the model is statistically significant (CFI=0.805; RMSEA=0.082). We find that in this sample of University teachers WFC is negatively related to WFE ( $\beta=-0.179$   $p<0.1$ ) which supports hypothesis H1. Conflict and enrichment from work to family (in both cases) are related to each other. This means that there is WFE when there is not WFC, and that there is not WFE when there is WFC. The negative experiences of the work-family interface are related to positive experiences of such interface. Therefore, conflict may influence negatively on enrichment from work to family direction.

Similarly, FWC is negatively related to FWE ( $\beta=-0.308$   $p<0.05$ ) which supports hypothesis H2. Conflict and enrichment from family to work (in both cases) are related to each other. This means that there is FWE when there is not FWC, and there is not FWE when there is FWC. The negative experiences of the family-work interface are related to positive experiences of such interface. Therefore, conflict may influence negatively on enrichment from family to work direction.

Figure I. Research model and results.



We have also analyzed the links between WFC and FEW, and between FWC and WFE but the results do not show statistically significant relationships. This means that there are not crossover effects between conflict and enrichment. Regarding hypothesis H3, we find that WFE is positively related to job satisfaction ( $\beta=0.458$   $p<0.01$ ) but FEW is not significantly related which partially supports our hypothesis. Finally job satisfaction is positively related to organizational commitment ( $\beta=0.222$   $p<0.05$ ) which suggests that efforts to improve the work-family interface may contribute to enhance the involvement and additional effort by employees in their companies.

There are not indirect effects of WFC and FWC on job satisfaction. Only the direct effects of conflict on enrichment are statistically significant. This means that implementing organizational practices that enhance enrichment are more important for job satisfaction than those practices aimed at reducing conflict.

### **Discussion and conclusion**

The results of this study may be important inputs in designing human resources policies on work-family balance and organizational flexibility, in order to improve the satisfaction of teachers and their contribution to the optimal organizational performance. Demanding expectations, limited resources of the system and possible mismatch between demands and results that society places on education, justify the need for research on human resources within the education sector. Considering the leading role of teachers in achieving educational and social purposes of universities, it is very important to focus on specific policies in universities that ensure high levels of commitment and job satisfaction in order to improve teacher performance and reduce costs associated with labor turnover.

These results could also be extended to other organizational contexts. Considering the significant positive associations of work-to-family enrichment with job outcomes in our study, organizations must realize its importance and may enhance the quality of employees' work and family lives by, for instance, redesigning jobs and enhancing supervisor support. Considering the role of perceived supportive work-family culture in enhancing the level of job satisfaction, organizations should take initiatives to develop a family-friendly culture. By enhancing the level of work-to-family enrichment organizations' efforts to introduce any kind of intervention will be meaningful and effective. The findings of the present study reiterate that the positive interaction between work and family is a new paradigm to explain the relationships between work and family, which were traditionally treated in literature either as independent or conflicting domains. Thus, organizations not only should make strategic efforts to develop people through organizational interventions, but also should consider their family as integral part and facilitator of individual as well as organizational performance.

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