

Cultural contexts and gender differences in addressing work-family conflict

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Abstract

The need to balance work and private life is an actual phenomenon, with global coverage, as well as the demographic processes that determine it. Although even from the beginning of humanity, adult activity was divided mainly between family and work, changes in economic, social and demographic that occurred in recent decades have led to bringing work-family conflict to the attention of researchers.

At European Union level, for example, Member States are invited "to take appropriate measures to promote a better balance between work and private life for women and men" in light of the recommendations of the European Pact for equality between women and men 2011- 2020 (European Union Council, 2014: 10).

Recent cross-cultural patterns of work-family conflict literature are promoting the moderating role of cultural characteristics in terms of experiencing this conflict and the impact of its consequences. The socio-cultural variables that are frequently bandied include gender roles ideology and horizontally and vertically individualism / collectivism (according to Hofstede's factor analysis), to which are added political and contextual variables.

According to the social identity theory interruptions within and between the identity-roles causes distress unless changes were also made in terms of cultural values.

Work-family conflict occurs as a result of demographic changes, economic trends and society influences, basic cultural values having a

very important role in interpreting personal experiences of work-private life relationship. These are the issues we intend to analyze in this paper.

Key words: work-family conflict, cultural values, gender differences, social role.

Introduction

Building cultural identity involves taking both the transfer of information and values from one generation to another. Different from this, achieving social identity is seen as a social process governed by temporal coordinates, which from a sociological perspective (Stryker, 1980, apud *Annu. Rev. Sociol.* 2008. 34: 15-31) can be defined as reflecting society through self, which also incorporates identities arising from individual roles. Tajfel and Turner propose a psycho-social perspective according to that social identity is under the influence of cognitive conditionalities relating to a person's identity based on the concept of social class.

Family and professional roles are also chosen, assumed and practiced beginning from personal preferences and specific social prescriptions that can be internalized in a lesser or greater extent by the individual, in various stages of its existence. Labor relations, working environment, challenges of solving various tasks are as many ways and opportunities for building a social identity and a healthy self-image.

Currently, family structure no longer allows defining and setting out so clearly the roles of both spouses, as in traditionalist families, because in most couples both partners are working, sometimes at several jobs, so that demands become more complex and more numerous. Every individual has at different life moments both the choice of certain roles, but sometimes has to conform to some obligations, while other members of society and family also have their own expectations of behavior from those with whom they interact, according to the assumed roles .

"Social and professional competition forces family to work increasingly longer. Thus, in most families, both parents work; children spend more time with TV or computer than with their parents. The social urge to produce goods, to prove financial wealth

(a bigger and well maintained house, a more efficient car, more expensive holidays) imposes a rhythm increasingly harder, as it can lead to the feeling that we are always experiencing time crisis. For this reason, in many families arise conflicts, because partners fail to sufficiently and properly communicate among themselves, neglecting their social life (extended family, friends, etc.), personal development etc. "(Kallay, 2011: 9).

Disruptions arising from these various causes are grouped under the term "role stress" - "the roles related stress", manifested in the form of role ambiguity, role conflict, disparity of roles, overcharging or undercharging role, incompetence, with its reverse over-qualification.

Theoretical framework

The concept "work-family conflict" emerged in the early 1980s and refers to those difficulties arising from the incompatibility of professional and personal roles "a form of inter-role conflict in which the role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible so that participation in one role (home) is made more difficult by participation in another role (work)" (Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985: 77). In this context we consider role as the "set of behaviors and attitudes related to a particular social positions that have a specific function for the individual and for society to which he belongs. Each role is actually a set of rights, duties, expectations, norms and behaviors that the person has to comply" (Kallay, 2011: 11).

Social prescriptions that influence expectations related to a certain role, cultural ideals valued in a specific community or in a geographical area and time can vary greatly. Thus, for example in countries where for a large part of the inhabitants the main problem is the economic survival, this lesser involvement in family life is seen as a given, not belonging to the will of the individual, because his involvement training is considered a sacrifice of the employee, who works to ensure a decent living for the family who supports him. It's here about cultural factors in Hofstede's terminology, as moderators

of experiencing a balance or imbalance between private and professional life.

The imbalance between work and private life attracts more unwanted consequences at the individual, family, and organizational level. Thus, the work-family conflict affects physical and mental health of the individual (Frone et al., 2003: 159) is positively correlated with decreasing satisfaction with life (Frone et al., 2003: 161; Kossek & Ozeki, 1998: 141) and increased levels of stress and emotional exhaustion (Rupert et al., 2009: 59). Those who feel affected more by this imbalance also report high levels of anxiety and depression (Frone et al., 2003: 160), fatigue (Kossek and Ozeki, 1998, p.140) and have a higher probability of alcohol consumption (Frone and et al., 2003: 161).

American Psychological Association, remarked in 2007 that US costs of work-family conflict amounts to over 300 billion dollars (American Psychological Association, 2010).

The reasons why the balance between private and professional life can shift are many and may include taking too many or too few roles, poor roles defining, conflict between these roles or mismatch between expectations and personal role. Balancing the roles occurs when assumed roles, the importance they have for the individual, their nature and resources of time and energy fit. When this goal is not reached, it starts from identifying grievances, to which adds finding those areas where we can intervene to improve the problem and identify those environments that allow a person to develop.

Analysis and discussion

Starting from traditionalist expectations, according to which child care, housing and all the housework are assigned to woman, one might assume that hiring its work outside the home will bring new challenges and duties, leading to overcrowding of those who are wives, mothers and employees. In this context it is important to change perspectives and involve husband in household or child-related activities. These changes are related to the educational level of partners, but also the behavioral patterns of families they come from,

and the degree to which these models are taken over or not. The group to which the family belongs, community, friends, models in the media influence the behavior of spouses and their perceptions about what is associated with a particular role.

At European level, studies (Kotowska, 2010: 1-96) show that while for women a priority problem is the lack or insufficiency of time necessary for daily activities, men believe that they spend too much time at work. In the study, these gender differences among the participants were not recorded in the Nordic countries. Most people involved in the study (90%) feel an imbalance in work-family relationship. Women are the ones who report to a greater extent than men work-family conflict existence, and the family-work direction imbalance also.

Many statistics also note differences between the north and south of the continent in terms of age at marriage for men and women, differences which Jack Goody says is observed since the sixteenth century, and later on these differences fade until 1800.

While in southern parts of the European continent girls were leaving early parental home to marry and move with in-laws, in the north, older age at marriage enabled them to also get employed before getting married, which led to a lower reliance of women.

Some historians and sociologists believe that „the embryo of modern family” appeared in the Nordic countries, smaller families complementarity, affection for children and partner, freedom of choice were the result of greater financial autonomy.

In Romania, following a Soros survey on family life were recorded the following answers: 75% of those surveyed considered that "having a job is a good thing, but what women really want is to have family and children "(The Foundation for an Open Society, 2014, p.48), while less than 40 percent of respondents believe that "a wife who does not work is as determined as one that has a paid job" (The Foundation for an Open Society, 2014: 48). Adding the positions of those surveyed regarding these two statements, we can conclude that for a large proportion of those interviewed, the stereotype is that the central role of women is that of having a family, but women who

work and have families are truly fullfield. Field data actually found in this case, but not unique, which otherwise comes to support the expansionist theory, that promotes the beneficial effects of overlapping roles (Pogan 2015: 66-73, Baruch and Barnett, 1986: 578-575, Barnett and Hyde, 2001: 781-796).

Further, were investigated respondents' opinions on the effect of the mother's involvement in working life has on family life and children. More than half of the study subjects deemed a full-time job of the woman will not negatively affect family life or relationships with children. The vast majority of those questioned (93%) consider fair for both partners to work in order to financially support the family, over 80 percent see a step toward women independence having a profession.

These data, obtained from a national probabilistic sample, two-staged, with a margin of error of 2.8% at a confidence level of 95% for non-institutionalized adult population of Romania, shows that respondents' opinions were largely removed from the traditionalist model, but that work is valued not only financially, but also because of its beneficial effects on the individual (85% believes that the involvement of women in the profession contributes to their independence).

These results are important, especially given that in an attempt to radiography Romanians attitudes towards work, Monica Heinz realized her "Work ethic of today Romanians". As specific features of our country, the author notes the following: the work is done superficially, there is corruption at all levels, employees have no respect for punctuality. Monica Heinz finds the causes of these attitudes in that the Romanians have a negative perception of themselves, have no respect for themselves but not against fellow citizens.

Given the fact that self-image is built, from birth, largely as a result of interactions with others, starting first in the family, this also being the first frame in which to learn and practice respect, it is normal when the aim is to elucidate attitudes and behaviors related

to work, especially work-family relationship, to analyze the family context.

The primary group theory and of self mirrored, by G. H. Cooley, claims that we are what others think about us that we are. Family, the microcosm of society, encourages association and intimate cooperation, face to face. The primary group borrows to the individual the sense of value, allows sharing expectations and facilitates practicing the first contacts with the society.

As in society, but more visible within the family, two successive processes constantly repeat: individualization and socializing. Getting self-image, their own identity is achieved by identifying children with same-sex parent first, then distancing from him/her - recognizing their own existence independent of the parent. Then, at all various stages of development, identification and individualization always repeat, as we have said, first in the family, then in school, group of friends, labor collective, community, and society.

In these continuous oscillation appears obvious the influence of values of others on the formation of own perceptions, influence which may be lower or higher. The historical context also has its own contribution. Thus, for example, while in Western Europe societies were advanced, already talking about states or empires, in Romania we can not speak of states in the true sense until much later (Boia, 2012: 8). We could thus say that the Romanians work ethic has its origins in agricultural societies, where peasants work for subsistence, not for profit. This position may however be transformed by capitalism and the capitalist state claims our country.

Another hypothesis is that religion brings influence through social models proposed and accepted. According to Christianity, Adam and Eve were cast out of Heaven and sent to work, what makes us think that for the Christian religion work is a punishment, while the Protestant work ethics promoted by Max Weber, is different. Here, work is the most important.

Conclusions

We assumed at the beginning of this paper that work-family conflict occurs as a result of demographic changes, economic trends and society influences, basic cultural values having a very important role in interpreting personal experiences of work-private life relationship.

Therefore we emphasised in the previous paragraphs the role of family examples, mass-media, church, historical background in creating personal patterns of interpreting work-family relationship. The social support of the relatives or other closed ones is also very important.

The need to balance work and private life is an actual phenomenon, with global coverage, as well as the demographic processes that determine it. Although even from the beginning of humanity, adult activity was divided mainly between family and work, changes in economic, social and demographic that occurred in recent decades have led to bringing work-family conflict to the attention of researchers.

Another hypothesis that highlighted our research was that according to the social identity theory interruptions within and between the identity-roles causes distress unless changes were also made in terms of cultural values. This is mainly important in terms of migration, because new social models are sometimes quickly borrowed by immigrants, while their heritage is different.

Recent cross-cultural patterns of work-family conflict literature are promoting the moderating role of cultural characteristics in terms of experiencing this conflict and the impact of its consequences. The socio-cultural variables that are frequently bandied include gender roles ideology and horizontally and vertically individualism / collectivism (according to Hofstede's factor analysis), to which are added political and contextual variables.

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