Women entrepreneurs and work-family conflict: an analysis of the antecedents

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Introduction

- The lesson presents the topic of work-family conflicts (WFC) experienced by women entrepreneurs. Although academic attention towards WFC has increased over the years, the conversation on WFC issues in relation to entrepreneurs is still scarce (Jennings and McDougald 2007). In the past years, a general justification for such scant attention paid to entrepreneurs' WFC was the widespread theoretical assumption that being an entrepreneur would imply benefiting from greater freedom and flexibility than employees, allowing the former to better balance work and family demands. In reality, results on the point are mixed: Parasuraman and Simmers (2001) verify that self-employers experience more WFC than employees and lower family satisfaction while Beutell (2007) verified that self-employers experience less WFC than employees.

- Given that women own about 46% of all the businesses in the world (GEM 2017), understanding the antecedents of women entrepreneurs' WFC and their mechanism seems to be particularly relevant for helping women, but also policy makers, to identify more targeted actions to reduce the strain of WFC and thus reduce the negative highlighted consequences.

- Through this lesson, the reader can acquire specific knowledge about what is WFC and which are the main antecedents of WFC experienced by women entrepreneurs.

Definition

- WFC is "a form of inter-role conflict in which the role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect" (Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985, 77).

- WFC is empirically conceptualized as a construct generated by two bidirectional effects: (a) work-family conflict (WIF), occurring when work interferes with family life, and (b) family-work conflict (FIW), occurring when family life interferes with work.

Definition

- Regarding the antecedents:
  - factors related to an individual's job (i.e. work domain variables) have been verified to be antecedents of WIF

  - factors related to individuals' family and non-work life (i.e. family domain variables) are generally classified as antecedents of FIW.

  (e.g. Frone et al. 1992a, 1992b, 1997; Greenhaus and Beutell 1985; Byron, 2005; Ford et al., 2007; Michel et al., 2011).

Hypotheses

- The most verified hypotheses are the following:

  - ***Within-domain hypothesis***:

    - factors related to an individual's job (i.e. work domain variables) have been verified to be antecedents of WIF

    - factors related to individuals' family and non-work life (i.e. family domain variables) are generally classified as antecedents of FIW.

      (e.g. Frone et al. 1992a, 1992b, 1997; Greenhaus and Beutell 1985; Byron, 2005; Ford et al., 2007; Michel et al., 2011).

- The new hypotheses elaborated in the the literature are the following:

- Regarding the antecedents

  - ***cross-domain hypothesis***

    - factors related to an individual's job (i.e. work domain variables) have been verified to be antecedents of FIW

    - factors related to individuals' family and non-work life (i.e. family domain variables) have been verified to be antecedents of WIF.

      (e.g. Byron, 2005, Mesmer-Magnus and Viswesvaran, 2005, Michel et al., 2011; Hargis et al., 2011)

Selected antecedents and consequences

We focus our attention on the WFC antecedents experienced by women entrepreneurs, verifying both the within- and cross-domain effects of work/family stressors on WIF and FIW. Typically, antecedents are mostly classified in work and non-work variables (e.g. Byron 2005;Michel et al. 2011) and the specific antecedents selected in this paper were chosen as they are those most frequently included both in reviews of WFC antecedents (Byron 2005; Ford et al. 2007; Michel et al. 2011) and in WFC models (e.g. Michel and Clark 2009).

Work-domain antecedents

1) **Job involvement**

2) **Time committed to work**

3) **Flexibility**

Family-domain antecedents

1) **Family involvement**

2) **Parental demand**

3) **Time committed to family**

Variables' definition

- Job involvement: refers to "the importance of work to the individual, and to his or her psychological involvement in the work role" (Parasuraman and Simmers 2001).

- Flexibility refers to flexible work arrangements defined as "alternative work options that allow work to be accomplished outside of the traditional temporal and/or spatial boundaries of a standard workday" (Shockley and Allen 2007, p. 480).

- Family involvement refers to the importance that individuals attribute to the family and the related psychological investment they put into their family.

- Parental demand refers both to the number of children of working parents and to children's ages.

- Time committed to family is the time an individual devotes to family.

Antecedents: Work domain variables

- Hp 1.a: Increased **job involvement** is positively related to WIF experienced by women entrepreneurs.

- Hp 1. b: Increased job involvement is positively related to FIW experienced by women entrepreneurs.

- Hp 1.c: **Time committed to work** is positively related to WIF experienced by women entrepreneurs.

- Hp 1.d: Time committed to work is positively related to FIW experienced by women entrepreneurs.

- Hp 1.e: **Flexibility** is negatively related to WIF experienced by women entrepreneurs.

- Hp 1.f: Flexibility is negatively related to FIW experienced by women entrepreneurs

Antecedents: Family domain variables

- Hp 2 a: Increased family involvement is positively related to WIF experienced by women entrepreneurs.

- Hp 2 b: Increased family involvement is positively related to FIW experienced by women entrepreneurs.

- Hp 2.c: Parental demand is positively associated with FIW experienced by women entrepreneurs.

- Hp 2.d: Parental demand is positively associated with WIF experienced by women entrepreneurs.

- Hp 2.e: Time commitment to family is positively associated with FIW experienced by women entrepreneurs.

- Hp 2.f: Time commitment to family is positively associated with WIF experienced by women entrepreneurs.

Social supports

- We have also decided to include in the model the social support.

- Social support is defined as "instrumental aid, emotional concern, informational, and appraisal functions of others in the work (family) domain that are intended to enhance the wellbeing of the recipient" (Michel et al. 2011, p. 92).

Social supports

- Hp 3.a: Networking support moderates the effects of work demand on WIF.

- Hp 3.b: Partner support moderates the relationship between family demand and FIW.

- Hp 3.c: Family support moderates the relationship between family demand and FIW.

- Hp 3.d: Private/public services moderate the relationship between family demand and FIW.

Context

- We have decided to verify such a model in Italy.

- According to EUSTAT(2019), Italy shows:

1) one of the lowest women employment rates in the European Union (53.8%), whose average rate, considering 28 countries, stands at 68.7%,

2) one of the highest gender employment gap, i.e.19.6%, against 11.4% registered in the EU-28 (Eurostat, 2019).

3) Moreover, in 2019, the employment rate of women between 25 and 49 years with no children is 64.9% and it decreases dramatically for women with one children to 59.4 % and to 56.5% for women with two children (Eurostat, 2020). In the EU-28, only in Greece, Turkey and northern Macedonia the employment rate for women with children is less than 60% (Eurostat, 2020).

Methodology

- 669 usable responses, 31.35% response rate.

- The survey was based on 35 multiple choice answers.

Variables	Measure	Alpha coefficient
WIF	Four six-point Likert-type items	0.843
FIW	Four six-point Likert-type items	0.842
Job involvement	Four six-point Likert-type items	0.702
Time committed to work	1 item	
Flexibility	Two six-point Likert-type items	0.798
Family involvement	Four six-point Likert-type items	0.785
Parental demand	Several questions relating to the presence or absence of children, the number of children, and the age of the children	0.755
Time committed to family	2 items	0.864
Social Supports	1 six-point Likert-type item	

Sample characteristics

The surveyed women had to meet the following criteria:

i) they had to hold at least 51% of the firm's ownership;

ii) they had to be actively involved in the business, by managing the daily business activities;

iii) at least one person had to be employed in the firm.

Info about the sample

- The largest percentage of the surveyed women:
  - is located in the North of the country (78.3%),
  - is aged between 37 and 50 (52.2%),
  - has a good level of education, as 48% of respondents have a secondary education and 31.4% have a degree,
  - is in a couple (72.8%)
  - has at least one child (70%) and only 30% of the children are not 6 years old.
- The firms they own:
  - 80% have fewer than nine employees.
  - 70% work in the service sector.

Findings (1)

Measurement Equations with Standardized Errors and z-value for WIF

WIF			
	Estimate	Std.Err.	z-value
Job Involvement	1.226***	0.180	5.902
Flexibility	-0.369***	0.081	-4.537
Time Committed to Work	0.51***	0.155	3.297
Family Involvement	0.735***	0.095	7.767
Parental Demand	0.443	0.130	3.409
Time Committed to Family	-0.075	0.074	-1.002
R-Squares	0.655		

Hp 1 a	Job Involvement WIF	Supported
Hp 1 b	Time Committed to Work WIF	Supported
Hp 1 c	Flexibility WIF	Supported

Measurement Equations with Standardized Errors and z-value for FIW

FIW			
	Estimate	Std.Err.	z-value
Family involvement	1.191***	0.240	4.970
Parental demand	0.235	0.152	1.546
Time committed to family	0.421***	0.126	3.356
Job involvement	1.062***	0.281	4.363
Flexibility	-0.002	0.076	-0.030
Time committed to work	0.109	0.152	0.712
R-Squares	0.611		

Hp 2 a	Family Involvement FIW	Supported
Hp 2 b	Parental demand FIW	Not Supported
Hp 2 c	Time committed to family FIW	Supported

Findings (2)

Social supports' moderating effects		
	Moderator effect estimate on WIF	Standardized moderator effect estimate
Networking X Job Involvement	-1.1682	0.96
Networking X Flexibility	0.4059	-0.64
Networking X Time Committed to Work	-0.561	0.35
	Moderator effect estimate on FIW	Standardized moderator effect estimate
Partner X Family Involvement	-1.205292***	1
Partner X Parental Demand	-0.23782	0.02
Partner X Time Committed to Family	-0.426052***	0.21
Family X Family Involvement	-1.114776***	0.91
Family X Parental Demand	-0.21996	0.00
Family X Time Committed to Family	-0.394056***	0.18
Services X Family Involvement	-1.148124***	0.94
Services X Parental Demand	-0.22654	0.01
Services X Time Committed to Family	-0.405844***	0.19

Hp 3 a	Networking WIF	not supported
Hp 3 b	Partner support FIW	Partially supported
Hp 3 c	Family support FIW	Partially supported
Hp 3 d	Private/public services FIW	Partially supported

Conclusions

- Our results support:
  - *The within domain* relations **but also** *cross-domain effects* emerge from our research.
  - The notion that social supports within the family domain reduce the influence of family domain variables on FIW.

- Several limitations:
  - Selected selection of antecedents
  - Lack of family definition in the survey
  - Focused on a selected country

- Future research:
  - Focus on cross-domain effects
  - Longitudinal analyses
  - Focus on work–family enhancement

To deepen the topic

- Poggesi, S., Mari, M., & De Vita, L. (2019). Women entrepreneurs and work-family conflict: an analysis of the antecedents. *International Entrepreneurship and Management Journal*, *15*(2), 431-454.