



PROMOTING
AND PRESERVING
UL RESEARCH

This is a preprint of an article that was subsequently published in:
Gender differences in inter-role conflict in Spain
M. Eugenia Sánchez-Vidal, David Cegarra-Leiva, Christine Cross
Employee Relations
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/ER-02-2019-0120>

TITLE: GENDER DIFFERENCES IN INTER-ROLE CONFLICT IN SPAIN

Abstract

Purpose

The issue of individual level conflict between work and life roles remains a feature of studies on the issue of work-life balance. However, few studies have examined gender differences in the work-to-life conflict (WLC) and the life-to-work conflict (LWC) over a given time span in Spain. This paper addresses this gap in the literature.

Design/methodology/approach

This research uses a two-wave (2009-2014) sample of employees with children working in an industrial sector in Spain.

Findings

The 2009 results showed no gender differences in WLC, however, women experienced LWC significantly more than men. Conversely, the 2014 results showed more men suffered WLC and no gender differences were found for LWC.

Research limitations/implications

One limitation is that, although this study collects data from two time periods in the same sector of activity, it is not a longitudinal study. Findings may not be generalizable due to the over-representation of women in our samples when compared to women in the sector, or to differences with other countries or sectors of activities.

Social implications

Our findings are discussed in the context of the economic crisis, the labour market, and family co-responsibility in Spanish society.

Originality/value

Few studies have explored gender differences in inter-role conflict at two time points. This study helps to identify some key findings in terms of co-responsibility.

Furthermore, this research is conducted in Spain, which is under-researched in WLB terms.

Introduction

For many years work and life roles were considered separate domains. Much has changed in recent decades with women's integration into the labour market and this has created challenges for individuals who face the difficulty of finding a life rhythm that allows them to efficiently combine their roles as workers and family members. Both society's and individuals' values are changing: women have entered paid employment in large numbers and men are becoming increasingly involved with childcare and household duties (OECD, 2014; Eurobarometer, 2015). In the business world organizations are also increasingly aware of the existence of these roles and are offering HR practices that allow individuals to effectively combine work and private life (Haar et al., 2019). These are referred to as work-life balance (WLB) practices. However, many organisations maintain their patriarchal view of work and family (Martín et al., 2009) and do not have an organizational culture that supports the availability and use of these WLB measures (Cegarra-Leiva et al., 2012). This is particularly relevant in SMEs as they have more internal limitations when managing their employees and have lower levels of economic resources available for the implementation of what are seen often as costly measures (Dex and Scheibl, 2001). Moreover, the establishment of a supportive WLB culture in SMEs needs to be achieved through an unlearning context that helps to replace old knowledge and routines with new knowledge and ways of operating and this process requires time (Cegarra-Navarro et al., 2016).

For these reasons, some organisational structures and policies fail to adequately recognise the dual roles played by both genders in the labour market (Higgins and

Duxbury, 1992). Additionally, with the changing pace of working life and the reliance on technology at work many employees are expected to be available to work both before and after the normal working day (Butts et al., 2015; Roy, 2016). This exacerbates the problem of conflict between the domains of work and home and is referred to as inter-role conflict; it is the difficulty of participating in one role due to simultaneous participation in another role (Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985). This conflict is generally considered bidirectional: work interferes with life (work-life conflict: WLC) and life interferes with job (life-work conflict: LWC) (Ferri et al., 2018). The negative consequences of inter-role conflict have been well established (Cheng and McCarthy, 2013). Yet, the antecedents and effects of WLC and LWC are considered to differ in the literature. Whereas WLC is expected to lead to outcomes in the private and family domain (e.g. family or marital satisfaction), LWC influences labour outcomes (turnover intentions, absenteeism or professional strain).

This research focuses on the negative aspects of the spillover effect. According to Lourel et al. (2009) work and life interferences constitute a primary source of psychological distress for employees, families and organisations. The importance of understanding conflict between work and private roles is emphasised in recent research which has highlighted that inter-role conflict might have a boomerang effect. For example, WLC can impact on organisational behavioural outcomes such as commitment, turnover intentions or job satisfaction, highlighting that effects between domains are not always simple or direct (Sánchez-Vidal et al., 2011).

In an effort to gain new insights into inter-role conflict this paper examines if working women and men with children suffer from the same inter-role conflict and its evolution over a given period of time. This is achieved by examining the time effect on variables in two data collection waves at different time points, from the same population

under study. Our study also addresses the need for empirical research on work-life conflict in non-Anglo countries, where much of the research has been conducted to date. Researchers recommend conducting studies in different countries, for example in those where family is a key institution (Ollo-López and Goñi-Legaz, 2017). Spain is one such country, but very few studies have used Spanish subjects (De-Luis et al. 2004; Pérez-Rodríguez et al., 2017; Gradaílle-Pernas et al., 2018). We begin this paper by presenting the theoretical background together with the research hypotheses.

Inter-role conflict

In recent decades cultural, demographic and societal changes have resulted in both men and women experiencing the challenge of striking a balance between work and personal life. According to De Luis and colleagues (2004) when gender roles are not clearly separated, individuals may experience more difficulties in balancing their work and their non-working life. Hence understanding individuals' need to strike a balance between work and personal life has become one of the pivotal concerns of work and family academics.

Work-life balance (WLB) is defined in the literature as 'individuals' ability, with independence of age and gender, of finding a life rhythm that allow them to combine their work with other responsibilities, activities or aspirations' (Felstead et al., 2002). Employees suffer personal conflict when they are unable to strike a balance between their life inside and outside work. Several studies have reported that individuals with children feel this conflict more strongly than childless workers (Radcliff and Cassell, 2015). The work-life balance literature defines inter-role conflict as interference of work and private roles which causes problems for and tension among individuals, or is the direct result of incompatible pressures that result from someone's work and family roles" (Moen et al. 2008). The *life role* includes caring for children, the

elderly and the sick, domestic tasks (cleaning, washing, cooking, etc.), acting as consumers (shopping), leisure activities or hobbies or home maintenance (Collins, 2007). On the one hand, the *labour role* demands employees to be greatly committed to the organisations they work for, which means that managers expect employees to work long hours and to prioritise work over personal life (Angrave and Charlwood, 2015). Moreover, given the economic uncertainty, organisations have had to face the usual challenges that stem from a financial crisis, which have fostered a long working hours culture which negatively affects employees' WLB (Anund et al., 2016).

The literature on inter-role conflict distinguishes between work interfering with life and life interfering with work, depending on the spillover effect direction (Lyonette et al., 2007). To describe inter-role conflict we adopt the terms work-to-life conflict (WLC) and life-to-work conflict (LWC). WLC and LWC comprise three conflict types (Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985), time-based conflict (when employees feel time pressures that prevent one role from fulfilling the other's expectations); strain-based conflict (individuals feel exhausted in one role, which results in worse performance in the other); behaviour-based conflict (specific behaviours that are incompatible between both roles) (Kinnunen et al., 2004).

The literature stresses that WLC affects the personal and family domain, whereas LWC impacts mostly work outcomes. First, as stated by Kinnunen et al. (2004), despite some research findings not clearly supporting the consequences of WLC, most of the literature emphasises the relevance of WLC given its relation to satisfaction and well-being (Allen et al., 2001; Zheng et al. 2015), job satisfaction, marital satisfaction (Coverman, 1989), and anxiety and hostility (Frone, 2000). The importance of LWC lies in life interference with one's job possibly predicting individual strain, or other negative consequences, such as turnover intentions, job

dissatisfaction or stress problems (Lourel et al., 2009). LWC can also result in negative work consequences at the workplace as employees are expected to limit the personal life interference with their job.

Cultural differences in WLC and LWC

Several studies have found differences between different nations (Ollo-López and Goñi-Legaz, 2017) in WLC and LWC terms, revealing that social, economic and cultural factors impact the work and family conflict experienced by employees. Countries differ also in how they regulate the availability of measures and how society and the labour market support the use of them. For instance, Finland and Norway reported lower levels of WLC compared to other countries, which was not an unexpected result, as these countries have institutions and companies that offer more generous family-friendly policies than other countries (Crompton and Lyonette, 2006). The working day schedule also changes from one country to another (Fernández-Lozano, 2018) and some countries have working hours which are identified as more family friendly than others. For instance, in Spain, many employees work in the evenings and this directly affects the level of WLC (Fernández-Lozano, 2018). Moreover, the inter-role conflict perceived by employees might vary depending on the societal and family supportive resources employees have (Haar et al., 2019). For instance, the Nordic countries have a wide set of supporting resources for taking care of children in comparison to Spain. There are also important differences in the use and availability of WLB practices by employees. For example, in Spain only 15% of workers use flexitime whereas the figure in Denmark is around 60% of the workforce (Goñi-Legaz and Ollo-López, 2015).

Spain is an interesting country to study for a number of reasons. First, Spain has one of the highest growth rates in female labour force participation in Europe, from 34 per cent in 1990 to 52 per cent in 2017, but this rate is still low in comparison with male

labour participation at 63 per cent in 2017 (World Bank, 2019). In conjunction with this change male labour force participation has dropped considerably since 1990 when it stood at 89 per cent. These changes have occurred over a relatively short period of time meaning the transition from the traditional model of the family structure has been quite radical in Spain. Second, the family unit continues to be an important institution in Spanish society, which creates pressure to maintain the traditional model of patriarchy. The result is that Spanish women leave the labour market more frequently than men to attend to family responsibilities (Meil et al., 2018). They also experience more difficulties in returning to the labour market after child rearing (Gutiérrez-Doménech, 2005). On the other hand, some research recently conducted in Spain has emphasized that male leaders who take parental leave beyond the standard provided time receive negative evaluations of their commitment and performance (Garztia et al., 2018). This type of indirect discrimination is also found to affect career promotions or lower the quality of job content (Meil et al., 2018). Therefore, male workers might fear that using WLB measures can negatively affect their careers, discouraging them from increasing the levels of co-responsibility at home and as a result maintaining gender inequality in the professional world (Garztia et al., 2018).

Third, Spanish employees traditionally work long hours (Fernández-Lozano, 2018) and usually have a long break in the middle of the working day (from 1pm/2pm to 5pm) working in the evenings until 8pm or even later. The typical Spanish working schedule impedes childcare involvement and the fulfilment of family demands (Fernández-Lozano, 2018). The result is that combining family and work brings significant challenges for Spanish employees (DeLuis et al., 2004; Pérez-Rodríguez et al., 2017). Jappens and Van Bavel (2012) note that in the Mediterranean countries support and care are mainly provided by family members living together. They

conclude that mothers in Italy, Greece, and Spain are the most likely ‘to mainly rely on grandparents as childcare providers’ (2012, 108). Nevertheless, another recent study conducted in Spain, Italy, France and New Zealand highlights that perceived support might not be as effective as expected for Spanish families’ work life balance (Haar et al., 2019). Family support can only provide a certain amount of balance, and as a result it is important for Governments to provide support for employees with families to ensure WLB is achieved. Finally, the use of family-friendly policies in Spain is quite low in comparison to other European countries (Poelmans et al., 2003) due to a delay in the approval of legislative measures undertaken in Spain (Pasamar and Valle, 2013) and the lack of WLB supportive culture in organizations (Cegarra-Leiva et al., 2012). De Luis et al (1994) identifies the consequence of the combination of these factors as one which means that work and life conflict levels are still high in Spain.

Gender differences in WLC and LWC

WLC is generated by the two areas of life that have traditionally been gender-specific, therefore gender differences are important. As a result, it can be expected that men and women will perceive and react to WLC and LWC differently. Some research has found little or no gender differences between men and women for WLC (Kinnunen et al., 2004). According to these studies, men and women may experience work-life conflict in a similar way. Others however, have reported higher WLC levels for men (Tand and Cousin, 2005) or believe that men experience higher WLC levels (Hudges and Bozionelos, 2007). Women, however, are generally considered to suffer from higher conflict levels when attempting to balance their work and life roles and the conflict particularly moves from work to life (Lyonette et al., 2007). The rational view of WLC suggests that the amount of conflict an individual perceives increases in proportion to

the amount of time spent on work or life roles (e.g., Greenhaus et al., 1987). Therefore, the more time individuals spend fulfilling responsibilities arising from their work role, the more WLC they will experience, and the more time spent fulfilling family responsibilities, the higher the levels of LWC (McElwain et al. 2005).

It is commonly assumed that WLC is a problem that affects women more as the family and housework are considered more central domains of women (Mauno and Kinnunen, 2000). Hence WLC is likely to occur more with the female gender as they are expected to prioritise family over work (De Luis et al., 2004). Lyonette et al. (2007) posit that senior professional women experience lower WLC levels than clerks or manual female workers because they are less likely to attend to washing and cleaning tasks themselves and are more likely to pay for home help. However, paying others to take care of children and house has negative stereotypical associations of being a ‘bad mother’ (Collins, 2007). Consequently, mothers are expected to suffer from higher levels of conflict than men due to the higher workload assumed in the domestic sphere.

Recent research studies also support the view that male workers who use paternity leave and days off to attend to family responsibilities receive social and economic penalties, such as negative effects on future earnings, on career promotions or on performance evaluations (McLaughlin and Muldoon, 2014, Gartzia et al., 2018). Additionally, fathers have been found to experience difficulties in assuming new co-parenting roles, with the result that the process of changing gender stereotypes in both organizations and society is taking a long time (Gartzia et al., 2018).

Regarding LWC, researchers seem to provide more homogenous answers. Despite men’s increasing commitment to family and childcare, they still spend less time on domestic work than women (Collins, 2007). Sick children are directly considered a responsibility of mothers (Dilworth, 2004). With regards to LWC, the literature more

confidently states that women will experience higher levels of conflict than men and recognises that the inter-role conflict is higher for parents than for childless employees (Palmer et al. 2012). The number of children has been found to impact on their ability to balance work and life and the level of conflict (Kelly and Voydanoff, 1985).

By way of conclusion, despite the heterogeneity found in the literature results, particularly as regards WLC, we consider that given Spain's cultural characteristics identified earlier, women will experience higher levels of inter-role conflict than men. Moreover, as the objective of this research is to analyse the evolution of inter-role conflict across time, we include two time periods in the hypothesis formulation. Therefore, we propose the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1a. Women with children experience a higher degree of WLC than men with children in Spain in time period 1.

Hypothesis 1b. Women with children experience a higher degree of WLC than men with children in Spain in time period 2.

Hypothesis 2a. Women with children experience a higher degree of LWC than men with children in Spain in time period 1.

Hypothesis 2b. Women with children experience a higher degree of LWC than men with children in Spain in time period 2.

Methodology

Sector and economic situation in 2009 and 2014

We conducted an empirical analysis with two samples of employees who have children and come from SMEs in an industrial sector in Spain at two time points – 2009 and 2014. The metal industry in South East of Spain was the object of our data collection. The structural statistics of companies in this industrial sector in 2017 (INE, 2019a)

indicates that annual turnover in the metal industry amounted to 204,390 million euros and employed 793,415 workers, 37.12% of all industrial workers in Spain (INE, 2017). These firms are mainly involved in the manufacture of metallic products, metallurgy, machinery manufacturing and manufacture of motor vehicles, trailers and semi-trailers.

Employees in this Spanish industry represent 11.24% of all employees, with a similar percentage of employees in the selected study region of Murcia (12.36%). The sector comprises small-sized companies of which a high percentage employs fewer than 50 workers, 96.9% (INE, 2018). This was the focus of our data gathering as the SME population is under-researched in both work-life balance and gender equality terms (Alegre et al., 2007). In 2017, the Murcia Region had 1,818 businesses in the metal sector with less than 10 employees, 472 firms with a workforce between 10 and 50 employees and only 8 firms with more than 250 workers (INE, 2019 b), in total accounting for 15,461 workers. The Industrial Register of Establishments consulted at the time of the data collection (Carm, 2009) stated that the metal industry in this region of Spain comprised 832 SMEs with a total workforce of 16,496. This is a male-dominated sector with around 82% of employees being male both in the year 2009 and 2014 (www.ine.es; CONFEMETAL, 2014). Male and female employees with children were chosen as the target group for analysis.

During the economic crisis in 2009, when the first data collection took place, the unemployment rate in the Murcia Region was high (19% for both sexes, 20% for men, 17% for women) but in 2014, after years of devastating crisis, the unemployment rate reached its maximum before the economic recovery started (27% for both sexes, 27% men, 28% women, and 47% for people under 25 years) (www.ine.es, 2019). The situation in 2014 reflects the consequences of several years of a serious economic crisis. For example, many Spanish companies reduced their businesses and many of them

actually disappeared. Moreover, family annual income was reduced by more than 10% (Ioakimidis et al., 2014) and families experienced a high decline of average purchasing power (Ioakimidis et al., 2014; Gradañlle et al., 2018). Moreover, some researchers have found that in Spain, many social benefits (unemployment benefits, social services for dependent services, WLB practices available for employees, among others) were reduced during the economic crisis (FOESSA, 2013; Gradañlle et al., 2018), which led to an increase in inequality (Eurostat, 2013). Consequently, during the economic crisis many companies that were undergoing significant layoffs and expenditure cuts considered WLB issues as less relevant than other pressing issues (Pasamar and Valle, 2013). Concurrently, workers tried to show themselves as more committed to their organizations due to the fear of losing their jobs (Escribá-Agüira and Fons-Martinez, 2014). In fact, Fernández-Lozano (2018) highlights that the use of specific WLB practices that reduces time at work has actually decreased in the period of economic crisis.

Data collection

Questionnaires were handed out during personal visits to all the companies that agreed to participate. To avoid bias in responses, workers returned their answers in a stamped addressed envelope to our university. The first sample (2009) was composed of 243 employees with children (159 men and 84 women). The second data collection wave took place in 2014 and followed the same methodology as the previous step with the same organisations which previously collaborated in the 2009 research. We received 182 questionnaires from workers with children (126 men, 56 women). Comparing the percentage of women in the sector (18% in both years) and the representation of women in our samples (34% in 2009 and 30% in 2014), we should highlight that women are

over-represented in our samples, a situation that can affect the generalizability of our results for the sector. However, the higher percentage of women is maintained in both years, increasing the internal consistency of the analysis comparison.

Measures

We used several measures taken from the literature used in both questionnaires.

WLC: Employees were asked to evaluate on a 7-point scale (1= totally disagree, 7= totally agree) different items of WLC. We adopted the measure from Martins et al. (2002), which maintains the three aspects of inter-role conflict (strain, time and behavioural) identified by Greenhaus and Beutell (1985).

LWC: To measure LWC, we used the items developed by Osterman (1995). Employees were asked to evaluate if some work aspects were negatively affected by their family issues (1= totally disagree, 7= totally agree). Special attention was paid to the validity and reliability of these measures. Validity was tested by examining the content and construct validity. The bivariate correlation in 2009 between WLC and LWC was 0.366*** and 0.300 in 2014 ***.

To analyse discriminant validity, a principal factor analysis (with varimax rotation) was carried out with both samples (2009 and 2014) on the inter-role variables, which yielded two factors that explained 65 (2009) and 66 (2014) percent of variance, with Factor 1 accounting for 37 % (2009) and 39 % (2014) of variance, and Factor 2 accounting for 28% (2009) and 27% (2014). These results showed that no single factor emerged, nor did one general factor account for most variance, which indicates that common methods bias may not be a serious problem in the data. The results supported the construct validity of the scales and confirmed the existence of two separate conflicts: WLC and LWC.

INSERT TABLES 1 AND 2 AROUND HERE.

In order to test the hypotheses, *t*-test analyses were conducted. In order to examine the gender differences in WLC and LWC, it was necessary to homogenise the background variables of the sample (Kinnunen et al., 2004). As a result, some control variables were included in the analysis.

Results

Tables 3 and 4 provide data from the *t*-test analysis conducted to test the hypotheses. With this analysis we examined whether the mean values differed between male and female employees.

INSERT TABLES 3 AND 4 AROUND HERE

First, the findings showed no gender differences for WLC in 2009, but greater conflict among men in 2014 was noted. Hence, these results did not support H1, as the first sample evidenced that men suffered greater conflict than women in WLC terms, which was the opposite result to that expected. In relation to H2, the results revealed gender differences in LWC for 2009 and that women suffered a higher degree of LWC than men. However, the *t*-test analysis conducted with the 2014 sample did not confirm that women experienced a higher degree of LWC than men. Therefore, our results from the 2009 sample only partially supported H1.

The data confirmed that there were no significant gender differences in the mean values of number of children, tenure in the company, work categories, academic training, job commitment and WLB culture. Hence, we state that there were no significant differences in these background variables between both genders.

Discussion

Achieving gender equality is recognised as one of the main challenges that societies and organisations face today. Interestingly, the results of the present study indicate that inter-role conflict was not equally experienced by men and women in Spain during the time period in question. Moreover, the factor analysis confirmed that WLC and LWC are separate variables, so they need to be considered as separate constructs. Therefore, conducting a gender analysis on the work and life conflict experienced by employees with children is key to understanding differences in the roles performed by both genders. Using two samples from the Spanish metal sector at two time points, we are able to support the idea that men and women with children could suffer different levels of conflict and it is not always women who experience greater conflict than men.

After examining our findings, and the fact that some hypothesis were unsupported some questions arise: Why did women suffer from higher LWC in 2009? Why were there no gender differences in LWC in 2014? Why were there no gender differences in 2009? Why did men suffer a higher degree of WLC than women in 2014? To deal with each of these in turn we begin with the question of why women suffered from higher LWC in 2009. We were able to confirm the expected hypothesis in this case. In particular, women experienced greater conflict at work by being responsible for household/family responsibilities. This finding in year 2009 confirms previous literature which affirmed that family and child care are considered by both society and by organisations as the mother's responsibility, resulting in mother's experiencing LWC. For instance, women might arrive at work later than men as they have to drop off children to school and they may take more days off than fathers when children are sick (Cross, 2010). Consequently, women might earn lower salaries, or experience more difficulties in being promoted or finding a job (Martínez and Paterna, 2009). Gender

differences in LWC might also be caused by cultural and societal norms (Lyonette et al., 2007). As a result dual career couples are constantly making decisions about how to manage work and family. These decisions include working fewer hours, taking leave, etc. and are gender-marked by society (Martínez and Paterna, 2009).

That brings us to the question of why there were no gender differences in LWC in 2014? It was noteworthy that the same situation did not take place in 2014; that is, we were unable to confirm that women experienced higher LWC levels. We considered that there could be several likely reasons for this change: the economic crisis and employees' fear of losing their job, and the increasing number of female partners who have lost their jobs. Spain suffered significantly from the economic crisis. During this time period, unemployment rates rose sharply from 18% to 24% in Spain and in the Murcia Region from 21% to 27%. Moreover, higher levels of unemployment were reported for women, which reached 30% in the Murcia Region in 2014 (www.ine.es, consulted in July 2016). Academics have confirmed that Spain became the EU-15 country with the worst employment indicators (Escribá-Agüira & and Fons-Martinez, 2014). Unemployment and employees' precarious working conditions have increased labour insecurity levels (perceptions of the likeliness of losing one's job). Research has confirmed that when employees feel insecurity in the labour market, they make additional attempts to show they are committed to their organisations, and absenteeism and turnover levels are substantially lower (Escribá-Agüira & and Fons-Martinez, 2014). Consequently, LWC could be lower among those women who make extra effort to cut their absenteeism and other organisational outcomes due to family circumstances, given their fear of job insecurity. Additionally, recent research conducted by Gradaílle-Pernas et al. (2018) that examined the level of co-responsibility for families during the period 2009-2015 in Spain found that the gender gap in hours devoted to domestic

house and care tasks has reduced, because men are increasingly involved in looking after children and household duties. They argue that in Spain this could be caused by the male unemployment rate and the intensive growth of female breadwinners, so that men have more time available for their families. Given that LWC levels lowered for women, this allowed them to achieve similar levels of conflict (2.8) to men (2.6). So no significant differences appeared between genders.

The third question posed was why were there no gender differences found in WLC in 2009? In WLC terms, we found that both men and women suffered similar work-family conflict levels as a result of having a professional career. This was unexpected. However, as De Luis et al (2004) stated, our data could confirm that work-life conflict is of the same relevance to both genders. Changes in social conceptions, such as men developing their role as fathers and being more family-committed, have resulted in them also suffering increasing pressure from a dual allegiance to both domains (work and life) (Eagle et al., 1997). Nevertheless, it is necessary to consider that women are using significantly more WLB practices than men (James, 2014). According to our data, 29% of men adopted WLB practices in 2009, whereas 67.5% of women adopted them during the same period. This could indicate that adopting WLB practices for women is not enough to diminish their family conflict, possibly because they still perceive that family is a female domain, and feel that they neglect this domain if they work.

Our final question was why did men suffer higher WLC than women in 2014? We expected women would suffer higher conflict levels. One reason for this situation could be that men's WLC levels increased (from 4.3 to 4.8), whereas women maintained similar levels as in 2009 (4.2). If we bear in mind that the background variables are the same, our data does not indicate why men suffered greater anxiety and

lack of time due to these characteristics or working conditions. The only control variable that significantly differed was age, with men being older than women by an average of 2 years. As we indicated earlier in this paper, previous research does not provide homogeneous findings about gender differences in WLC. Some previous publications have reported no gender differences (Kinnunen et al., 2004), which is the case in our 2009 sample. Our 2014 results agreed more with those of Tand and Cousin (2005) or with those of Huges and Bozionelos (2007), who reported that men suffered greater WLC than women.

Despite men's increasing co-responsibility for family and childcare, men are still expected to show high commitment at work by spending long hours in the workplace (Collins, 2007) and the WLB culture in organisations does not support men adopting WLB practices (Dilworth, 2004). An experimental study about the effects of a parental leave of absence on performance evaluations and recommendations for organisational rewards showed that, compared to women, men who were portrayed as having taken parental leave were penalised to a greater extent in their career (Garztia et al., 2018). Mclaughlin and Muldoon (2014) also found that men found it difficult to take days off to cover family responsibilities. In another study of Australian male employees using paternity leave, managers did not trust the reason given by men for taking this leave and considered that they wanted to extend their annual leave (Bittman et al., 2007). However, recent studies have shown that men desire and need WLB. An additional issue is that the economic crisis that hit the Spanish economy reduced family incomes. According to longitudinal research conducted in Spain (2009-2015) with parents, a reduction in family earnings is a significant determinant of the increase in parents' inter-role conflict (Gradaïlle-Perna et al., 2018). All things considered, this might have affected men's need to show higher commitment to organisations because of the fear

they might lose their jobs. We consider that job insecurity, along with managers expecting men to be committed to work, could force men to spend longer hours at the workplace and create more stressful working conditions. Eventually this situation could cause a spillover in their private lives.

In usage terms, around 26% of the men in our 2014 sample of employees with children had no access to any WLB practices, and only 18% of the women did avail of any measure. Moreover, 34% of women used more than four different WLB measures, such as flexible time, tele-working, flexible holidays or continuous working days. For men, only 14% had access to more than four WLB measures. As to the number of WLB practices used by men and women, we ran a *t*-test analysis to see if there were gender differences in average usage (men: mean value of 1.81; women: mean value of 2.43). Although the mean values revealed that women adopted more practices, we were unable to statistically confirm gender differences in their average usage. Nevertheless, we consider that this question needs to be addressed in future research works.

In summary, our results partially confirmed Hypothesis 1; women suffered greater LWC than men in 2009, but not in 2014. We were unable to confirm that women experienced higher WLC levels than men. In fact the 2014 results were contrary to what we expected.

Contributions, limitations and future research agenda

Our first contribution is that few studies have explored gender differences in inter-role conflict at two time points. Over the specific time period women suffered greater LWC than men, but men experienced higher WLC levels than women. In terms of co-responsibility for home and family these findings highlight that both genders are negatively impacted by conflict that arises because of the struggle that takes place in

trying to manage both work and family life. Second, this research was conducted in Spain, which is under-researched in WLB terms (De Luis et al., 2004; Ollo-lópez and Goñi-Legaz, 2017; Pérez-Rodríguez et al., 2017). Our research indicates the need to consider the country's characteristics in understanding and interpreting the results. As such, many contextualised variables need to be considered, such as the market unemployment rate or the evolution of family income and the level of co-responsibility at home during the period considered (Gradañlle-Pernas et al., 2018). Using a sample of employees with children and similar background variables made the comparison more suitable. Third, the research identifies two distinct constructs of the inter-role conflict: from work to life and from life to work. Although this is the main approach adopted in the literature, several academics have used a combined construct for them both (Lyonette et al., 2007). Our 2009 and 2014 data confirm that there are indeed two different conflict directions. Fourth, our findings showed that proving a standardised answer about which gender suffered from greater conflict was not feasible as the results could be affected by other domestic, organisational, national or economic circumstances.

Finally, at the practical level, we can provide some recommendations for institutions, firms and academics. First, both the government and official institutions could begin communication campaigns to foster a change away from the traditional gender stereotypes, to create a society that emphasises co-responsibility for family. Campaigns could also focus on creating a culture where attitudes to WLB practices are more positive. By this we mean that WLB practices could be implemented in all firms for all employees, particularly for men. A focus is also needed on enabling managerial support to empower men to adopt WLB practices. In order to reduce WLC and LWC and promote co-responsibility, men need to equally adopt WLB practices. By fostering

these measures women might be released from assuming most of the care duties and household duties, which would reduce their LWC. Furthermore, men might be able to contribute to their domestic spheres by availing of WLB practices to help them to lower their WLC. In agreement with Martín et al. (2009), we also believe that official institutions could adopt measures that relieve women of their roles as providers of care for children or family relatives, such as providing subsidised care centres for children and dependent people. Finally, the findings of our research could be used for educational purposes, for instance, in HRM courses for open debates, or for cases studies among students.

Like all research, this study has its limitations. First, although we conducted a two-wave study, we do not know if the same respondents answered the questionnaires in both time periods. Second, there is an over-representation of women in our samples compared to the composition of the employees in the metal sector. Finally, findings may not be generalisable to other countries or sectors of activities. The limitations could be addressed in future studies.

One interesting avenue for further research would be to examine other organisational consequences of LWC apart from absenteeism, reduced mobility, etc. such as organisational results. It would also be interesting to include other factors in future research as control variables; e.g., marital support at home, paid household support and other informal networks, such as grandparents, and examine if these factors lower female LWC. Finally, researchers could also examine the barriers and obstacles found in organisations that prevent men from using WLB measures.

References

- Alegre, I., Chinchilla, N., León, C., and Canela, M.A. (2007), "Políticas de conciliación, liderazgo y cultura en 2200 pymes españolas", IESE Business School, 50.
- Allen, T.D., Herst, D.E.L., Bruck, C.S. and Sutton, M. (2001), "Consequences associated with work-to-family conflict: a review and agenda for future research", *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, Vol. 5, pp. 278-308.
- Angrave, D. and Charlwood, A. (2015), "What is the relationship between long working hours, over-employment, under-employment and the subjective well-being of workers? Longitudinal evidence from the UK", *Human Relations*, Vol. 68 No. 9, pp. 1491-1515.
- Anund, A., Ihlström, J., Fors, C., Kecklung, G., Filtner, A. (2016), "Factors associated with self-reported driver sleepiness and incidents in city bus drivers", *Industrial Health*, Vol. 54 No 4, pp. 337-346.
- Bittman, M., Hill, T. and Thomas, C. (2007), "The impact of caring on informal carers' employment, income and earnings: A longitudinal approach", *Australian Journal of Social Issues*, Vol. 42 No. 2, pp. 255–272.
- Brown, L.M. (2010), "The relationship between motherhood and professional advancement: Perceptions versus reality", *Employee Relations*, Vol. 32 No 5, pp. 470-494.
- Butts, M., Becker, W. and Boswell, W. (2015), "Hot buttons and time sinks: the effects of electronic communication during nonwork time on emotions and work-nonwork conflict". *Academy of Management Journal*, Vol. 28 No 3, pp. 763-788.

- Carm (2009), Report of Registro de Establecimientos Industriales, sector del metal. Conserjería de Universidades, Empresa e Investigación. Retrieved from <http://www.carm.es>.
- Cegarra-Leiva, D., Sánchez-Vidal, M^a E. and Cegarra-Navarro, J.G. (2012), "Understanding the link between work-life balance practices and organisational outcomes in SMEs", *Personnel Review*, 41 (3), 359-379.
- Cegarra-Navarro, J.G., Sánchez-Vidal, M^a E. and Cegarra-Leiva, D. (2016), "Linking unlearning with Work-Life Balance: an initial empirical investigación into SMEs", *Journal of Small Business Management*, Vol. 54 No.1, pp. 373-391.
- Chen, B. and McCarthy, J. (2013), "Work, family and school roles: disengagement strategies can help and hinder", *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, Vol. 18 No 3, pp. 241-251.
- Collins, G. (2007), "Cleaning and the work-life balance", *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, Vol. 18 No 3, pp. 416-429.
- Confederación Española de Organizaciones Empresariales del Metal (COFEMETAL) (2014), "Informe Económico y laboral", available at: confemetal.es/uploads/file/documentos-pub/2014-Informe-Economico-Laboral-Confemetal.pdf, pp. 1-41.
- Coverman, S. (1989), "Role overload, role conflict, and Stress: Addressing consequences of multiple role demands", *Social Forces*, Vol. 67 No 4, pp. 965-982.
- Crompton, R. and Lyonette, C. (2006), "Research Note: Some issues in cross-national comparative research on women's employment: a comparison of Britain and Portugal", *Work, Employment and Society*, Vol. 20 No 2, pp. 389-400.
- Cross, C. (2010), "Barriers to the Executive Suite: Evidence from Ireland", *Leadership and Organization Development*, Vol. 31 No 2, pp. 104-120.

- Coverman, S. (1989), "Role overload, role conflict, and stress: addressing consequences of multiple role demands", *Social Forces*, Vol. 67, pp. 965-982.
- De Luis, M^a P.; Martínez, A.; Pérez, M. and Vela, M^a J. (2004), "La flexibilidad de la empresa y la conciliación de la vida laboral y familiar", *Boletín Económico del ICE*, Vol. 2741, pp. 37-52.
- De-Luis, P., Sánchez, A., Pérez, M., and Jiménez, M^a. (2004), "Work-family conflict in a Southern European country. The influence of job-related and non-related factors", *Journal of Managerial Psychology*. Vol. 19. pp. 466-489.
- Dex, S. and Scheibl, F. (2001), "Flexible and family-friendly working arrangements in UK-based SMEs: business cases", *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, Vol. 39 No 3, pp. 411-431.
- Dilworth, J.E.L. (2004), "Predictors of negative spillover from family to work", *Journal of Family Issues*, Vol. 3 No 25, pp. 241-261.
- Eagle, B.W., Miles, E.W. and Icenogle, M.L. (1997), "Inter-role conflict and the permeability of work and family domains: are there gender differences?", *Journal of Vocational Behaviour*, Vol. 50, pp. 168-184.
- Escribá-Agüira, V. and Fons-Martínez, J. (2014), "Crisis económica y condiciones de empleo: diferencias de género y respuesta de las políticas sociales de empleo", *Informe SESPAS*, Vol. 28 No S1, 37-43.
- Eurobarometer (2015), Gender equality report. Special Eurobarometer 428/Wave EB82.4 – TNS Opinion & Social, March 2015. Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/files/documents/eurobarometer_report_2015_en.pdf [Ref list]
- Eurostat (2013), "Gini Coefficient of Equivalised Disposable Income". Available at http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=ilc_di12 (accessed 2 July 2018).

- Felstead, A., Jewson, N., Phizacklea, A., and Walters, S. (2002), "Opportunities to work at home in the context of work-life balance", *Human Resource Management Journal*, Vol. 12 No 1, pp. 54-76.
- Fernández-Lozano, I. (2018), "Finding time for children. Fatherhood, jobs and available time in Spain, 2003-2010". *Revista Internacional de Sociología*, Vol. 76 No 3, pp.104, 1-16.
- Ferri, L.M., Pedrini, M. and Riva, E. (2018), "The impact of different supports on work-family conflict", *Employee Relations*, Vol. 40 No 5, pp. 903-920.
- FOESSA (2013), "Desigualdad y Derechos Sociales. Análisis y Perspectivas 2013", Fundación Foessa, Madrid. Cáritas Española.
- Frone M.R. (2000), "Work-family conflict and employee psychiatric disorders: the national comorbidity survey", *Journal of Applied Psychology*, Vol. 85, pp. 888-895.
- Gartzia, L., Sánchez-Vidal, M^a E. and Cegarra-Leiva, D. (2018), "Male leaders with paternity leaves: effects of work norms on effectiveness evaluations". *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, Vol. 27 No 6, pp. 793-808.
- Goñi-Legaz, S. and Ollo-Lopez, A. (2015), "Factors that Determine the Use of Flexible Work Arrangement Practices in Spain", *Journal of Family Economy Issues*, Vol. 36 No 3, pp. 463-476.
- Greenhaus, J.H., and Beutell, N.J. (1985), "Sources of conflict between work and family roles", *Academy of Management Review*, Vol. 10, pp. 76-88.
- Greenhaus, J.H., Bedian, A.G., Mossholder, K.W. (1987), "Work experiences, job performances, and feelings of personal and family well being", *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, Vol. 31, pp. 200-215.
- Gradaílle Pernas, R., Caballo-Villar, M^a.B. and Lorenzo-Castiñeiras, J.J. (2018), "Conciliación en las áreas urbanas de Galicia (España): Un estudio longitudinal (2009-

- 2015) de las familias con hijos en Educación primaria", *Pedagogía Social, Revista Interuniversitaria*, Vol. 32, pp. 31-43.
- Gutiérrez-Doménech, M. (2015), "Employment after motherhood: a European comparison", *Vol 12 No 1*, pp. 99-123.
- Haar, J. M., Sune, A., Russo, M, Ollier-Malaterre, A. (2019), "A cross-national study on the antecedents of work-life balance from the fit and balance perspective", *Social Indicators Research*, 142, pp. 261-282.
- Higgins, C.A. and Duxbury, L. (1992), "Work-family conflict: a comparison of dual-career and traditional-career men", *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, Vol. 13 No 4, pp. 389-411.
- Hughes, J., and Bozionelos, N. (2007), "Work-life balance as source of job dissatisfaction and withdrawal attitudes. An exploratory study on the views of male workers", *Personnel Review*, Vol. 36 No 1, pp. 145-154.
- INE (2007), Encuesta de Población Activa. Retrieved from <http://www.ine.es/daco/daco42/daco4211/epa0417.pdf>.
- INE (2018), Estadística Estructural de Empresas: Sector Industrial. Retrieved from https://www.ine.es/prensa/eesi_2017_a.pdf
- INE (2019a), Estadística Estructural de Empresas: Sector Industrial 2017. Retrieved from <https://www.ine.es/dynt3/inebase/es/index.htm?padre=4652&capsel=4653>
- INE (2019b), Empresas por CCAA, actividad principal (grupos CNAE 2009) y estrato de asalariado. Retrieved from <http://www.ine.es/jaxiT3/Tabla.htm?L=0&t=298>
- Ioakimidis, V., Cruz-Santos, C. and Martínez-Herrero, I. (2014), "Reconceptualizing social work in time of crisis: An examination of the cases of Greece, Spain and Portugal", *International Social Work*, Vol 57 No 4, pp. 285-300.

- James, A. (2014), "Work-Life 'Balance', Recession and the Gendered Limits to Learning and Innovation (Or, Why It Pays Employers To Care)", *Gender, Work and Organisation*, Vol. 21 No 3, pp. 273-294.
- Jappens, M. and Van Bavel, J. (2012), "Regional family norms and child care by grandparents in Europe", *Demographic Research*, Vol 27 No 4, pp. 85-120.
- Kelly, R. and Voydanoff, P. (1985), "Work family role strain among employed parents", *Family Relations*, Vol.34, pp. 367-374.
- Kinnunen, U., Geurts, S., and Mauno, S. (2004), "Work to family conflict and its relationship with satisfaction and well-being: a one year longitudinal study of gender differences", *Work & Stress*, Vol. 18 No 1, pp. 1-22.
- Lyonette, C., Chompton, R., and Wall, K., (2007), "Gender, occupational class and work-life conflict", *Community, Work and Family*, Vol. 10 No 3, pp. 283-308.
- Lourel, M., Ford, M.T., Gamassou, C.E., Gueguen, N., and Hartmann, A. (2009), "Negative and positive spillover between work and home. Relationships to perceived stress of job satisfaction", *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, Vol. 24 No 5, pp. 438-449.
- Lyonette, C., Crompton, R. and Wall, K. (2007), "Gender, occupational class and work-life conflict", *Community, Work and Family*, Vol. 10 No.3, pp. 283-308.
- Martín, S., De los ríos, I.; Cazorla, A. and Martínez-Falero, E. (2009), "Pilot study on the influence of stress caused by the need to combine work and family on occupational accidents in working women, *Safety Science*, Vol. 47 No 2, pp. 192-198.
- Martínez, M.C., and Paterna, C. (2009), *Perspectiva de género aplicada a la conciliación*", en Martínez Martínez, M.C. (Eds), *Género y conciliación de la vida familiar y laboral: un análisis psicosocial*. Ed. Universidad de Murcia.

- Martins, L.L., Eddleston, K.A., and Veiga, J.F. (2002), "Moderators of the relationship between work-family conflict and career satisfaction", *Academy of Management Journal*, Vol. 45, pp. 339-409.
- Mauno, S. and Kinnunen, U., (2000), "Job insecurity and well-being: a longitudinal study among male and female employees in Finland", *Community, Work and Family*, Vol. 2, pp. 147-171.
- McElwain, A., K., Korabik, K. and Rosin, H.M. (2005), "An examination of gender differences in work-family conflict", *Canadian Journal of Behavioural Science*, Vol. 37 No 4, pp. 283-298.
- Mclaughlin, K., and Muldoon, O. (2014), "Father identity, involvement and work-family balance: an in-dept interview study", *Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology*, Vol. 24, pp. 439-452.
- Meil, G., Romero-Balsas, P. and Rogero-García, J., (2018), "Parental leave in Spain: use, motivations and implications", *Revista Española de Sociología*, Vol. 27, pp. 1-18.
- Moen, P., Kelly, E., and Huang, R. (2008), "Fit inside the work-family black box: an ecology of the life course, cycles of control reframing", *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, Vol. 81, pp. 411-433.
- Ollo-López, A. and Goñi-Legaz, S. (2017), "Differences in work-family conflict: which individual and national factors explain them?", *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, Vol. 28 (3), pp. 499-525.
- Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD] (2014), *Balancing Paid Work, Unpaid Work and Leisure*. Available at: <http://www.oecd.org/gender/data/balancingpaidworkunpaidworkandleisure.htm> [Ref list]

- Osterman, P. (1995), "Work/family programs and the employment relationship", *Administrative Science Quarterly*, Vol. 40, pp. 681-700.
- Palmer, M.; Rose, D., Sanders, M., and Randle, F. (2012), "Conflict between work and family among New Zealand teachers with dependent children", *Teaching and Teacher Education*, Vol. 28, pp. 1049-1058.
- Pasamar, S., and Valle, R. (2013), "Work-life balance under challenging financial and economic conditions", *International Journal of Manpower*, Vol. 38 No 8, pp. 961-974.
- Pérez-Rodríguez, V., Palací-Descals, F. and Topa-Cantisano, G. (2017), "Family friendly corporate culture and work-family conflict among employees with shift work", *Acción Psicológica*, Vol. 14 No 2, pp. 193-201.
- Poelmans, S., Chinchilla, N. and Cardona, P. (2013), "The adoption of family-friendly HRM policies: competing for scarce resources in the labour market", *International Journal of Manpower*, Vol. 24 No 2, pp. 128-147.
- Radcliff, L. and Cassell, C. (2015), "Flexible working, work-family conflict and maternal gatekeeping: the daily experiences of dual-earner couples", *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, Vol. 88 No.4, pp. 835-855.
- Rege, M., and Solli, I. F. (2013), "The impact of paternity leave on fathers' future earnings", *Demography*, Vol. 50, pp. 2255–2277.
- Roy, G. (2016), "Impact of mobile communication technology on the work-life balance of working women – a review of discourses-", *Contemporary Management Research*, Vol. 10 No 1, pp. 79-101.
- Sánchez-Vidal, M^a E., Cegarra-Leiva, D., and Cegarra-Navarro, J.G. (2011), "¿Afecta el conflicto trabajo vida de los trabajadores en la empresa?", *Universia Business Review*, Vol. 1 No. 19, pp. 100-115.

Tand, N. and Cousin, C. (2005), "Working time, Gender and Family: an East-West European Comparison", *Gender, Work and Organization*, Vol. 12 No 6, pp. 527-550.

World Bank, 2019, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.TLF.CACT.FE.ZS>

Zheng, C., Molineux, J., Mirshekary, S. and Scarparo, S. (2015), "Developing individual and organisational work-life balance strategies to improve employee health and wellbeing", *Employee Relations*, Vol. 37 No 3, pp. 354-379.

Table 1: Rotation factor matrix. Year 2009.

Survey items	Loading		% of explained variance
Work-life conflict			36.84%
Anxiety about their jobs frequently spilled over into their home (personal) lives	0.164	0.706	
Their jobs prevented them from spending the time with their families or friends that they would like	0.024	0.848	
They had to give up performing what were important tasks for them at home if these conflicted with important job-related tasks	0.189	0.819	
Life-work conflict			28.033%
Family issues affect tardiness or absenteeism at work	0.784	0.130	
Family issues affect turnover at work	0.841	0.103	
Family issues affect recruitment difficulties	0.743	0.073	
Family issues affect refusal to relocate	0.801	0.203	
KMO	0.740		
Bartlett test	551.9090***		

Notes: Extraction method: principal factor analysis; rotation method: varimax with Kaiser normalisation; ^a rotation converged in three interactions

Table 2: Rotation factor matrix. Year 2014.

Survey items	Loading		% of explained variance
Work-life conflict			38.927%
Anxiety about their jobs frequently spilled over into their home (personal) lives	0.163	0.698	
Their jobs prevented them from spending the time with their families or friends that they would like	0.136	0.775	
They had to give up performing what were important tasks for them at home if these conflicted with important job-related tasks	0.035	0.857	
Life-work conflict			26.990%
Family issues affect tardiness or absenteeism at work	0.814	0.126	
Family issues affect turnover at work	0.846	0.123	
Family issues affect recruitment difficulties	0.772	0.187	
Family issues affect refusal to relocate	0.839	0.045	
KMO	0.744		
Bartlett test	419.893***		

Notes: Extraction method: principal factor analysis; rotation method: varimax with Kaiser normalisation; ^a rotation converged in three interactions

Table 3. *T*-test analysis and the control variables. 2009.

VARIABLES	MEN (N= 159)	WOMEN (N= 84)
	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)
Age***	42.78 (8.44)	36.38 (5.43)
Number children	1.79 (0,677)	1.76 (0.693)
Tenure in the company**	11.12 (8.10)	9.31 (4.96)
Professional category	2.59 (1.20)	2.76 (0.84)
Academic training**	2.09 (0.855)	2.29 (0.658)
Satisfaction	4.87 1.26	5.01 1.18
Performance	5.40 (0.97)	5.48 (1.01)
Turnover intentions	2.74 1.33	2.59 1.32
Commitment	5.02 (1.80)	5.33 (1.52)
WLB culture	3.70 (0.02)	4.00 (1.16)
H1: WLC	4.33 (1.46)	4.2 (1.57)
H2: LWC***	2.63 (1.47)	3.38 (1.72)

* p< 0.05; ** p < 0.01; *** p < 0.001

Table 4. *T*-test analysis and control variables. 2014.

VARIABLES	MEN (N=101)	WOMEN (N=56)
	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)
Age**	38.11 (7.66)	36.82 (5.9)
Number children	1.40 (0.84)	1.50 (0.88)
Tenure in the company	9.66 (6.77)	9.55 (5.31)
Professional category	3.82 (1.19)	3.87 (0.610)
Academic training	3.18 0.91	3.17 (0.83)
Satisfaction	4.99 (1.1)	5.05 1.10
Performance	5.57 (0.90)	5.75 0.717
Turnover intentions	2.53 (1.40)	2.51 1.40
Commitment	5.37 (1.37)	5.49 1.10
WLB culture	3.65 (1.12)	3.94 0.98
H1: WLC*	4.79 (1.36)	4.27 (1.40)
H2: LWC	2.68 (1.60)	2.88 (1.48)

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$