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THE EFFECTS OF LEADERSHIP, FAMILY OF ORIGIN, AND SELF-EFFICACY IN PREDICTING ANTICIPATED WORK-FAMILY/FAMILY-WORK CONFLICT IN STUDENT VOLUNTEERS

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Abstract

Balancing work and family roles proves to be a rather difficult task for most individuals. The social cognitive career theory (Lent, Brown, and Hackett 1994) states that to reach positive outcomes in the work domain, people need to develop self-efficacy through adequate learning experiences. With this study, we tested the importance of two contexts that can provide valuable learning experiences: family and volunteering. Thus, we verified the relationship between the division of labour in the family of origin, respectively, authentic leadership use in the volunteering organization and anticipated work-family and family-work conflict in a sample of student volunteers. Self-efficacy in dealing with the conflict between the two domains was used as a mediator. One hundred and ten students who were also volunteers at the time of the study participated in this research. A series of mediation models showed significant indirect effects from family and volunteering experiences on the conflict between work and family. Spillover effects were also confirmed. This study provides an understanding of how positive contexts such as equitable division of labour in the family and having an authentic leader in the volunteering organization help students develop their self-efficacy, which also contributes to anticipating lower levels of conflict between the work and family domains.

Keywords

family experiences • volunteering • students • career development • work-family conflict • authentic leadership • self-efficacy division of family tasks

1. Introduction

Nowadays, working life requires balancing one's roles at work and at home. In these circumstances, the study of the conflicts between work and family and between family and work has received increased attention from organizational psychologists (Frone 2003; Greenhaus and Beutell 1985; Obrenovic et al. 2020). The conflict between the two domains represents a form of interrole conflict, in which the requirements associated with the roles an individual has at home and at work are mutually incompatible (Greenhaus and Beutell 1985). Conflict can appear in both directions: family can interfere with work (family-work conflict; FWC), or work can interfere with family (work-family conflict;WFC). Given that the maladaptive outcomes of these negative interactions are well known (Cinamon and Rich 2010), companies and institutions have tried to develop various strategies to eliminate or reduce the conflict, but the results have been mostly inconclusive (Kelly 2008; Westring and Ryan 2011).

The difficulties encountered in implementing interventions in the work domain also bring into question the need for a new perspective and the study of new concepts. The need for such an effort no longer arises only in the case of employees. Many individuals are involved in activities with job-like requirements during their youth. As such, they anticipate the future work experiences by carrying out various activities, such as those involving volunteering. These provide information about working life but can also raise expectations about their future involvement at home and at work. A new perspective from which this issue can be studied is that of one's development during one's youth (Westring and Ryan 2011). Immediately after finishing their studies, young people decide to enter the labour market, which requires training and information so that subsequent roles can be fulfilled in the best possible ways.Therefore, a useful construct is that of anticipated work-family conflict

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(also, one can view anticipated family-work conflict as a similar process). Starting from the definition given by Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) to the work-family conflict, its anticipation can be defined as "a belief that future participation in a role at work will interfere with future participation in a role in the family and vice-versa" (Westring and Ryan 2011, 597). Some studies showed that anticipated work-family conflict had low to medium prevalence rates among US undergraduate students and was related to career success (Campbell, Campbell, and Watkins 2015; de Andrade et al. 2019). Also, the anticipated work-family conflict can be integrated into the social cognitive career theory (SCCT; Lent, Brown, and Hackett 1994). This provides information on how individuals choose their careers based on the past experiences, self-efficacy, and expectations regarding future results. More recently, it has been extended to provide some explanations for changes in job satisfaction (Foley and Lytle 2015).

The anticipated work-family/family-work conflict can be viewed as a series of expectations for future results (Westring and Ryan 2011). Thus, it would be useful to understand the antecedents of such expectations. Lent and Brown (2013) consider that the expectations about one's performance in a task are largely dependent on the individual's self-efficacy regarding that task. In turn, self-efficacy develops as a result of the learning experiences, which act as a source of information about it. However, the studies that have tried to highlight the factors leading to the development of anticipated work-family/family-work conflict have focused mainly on the family or on the personal characteristics of the individual and less on the learning opportunities provided by an environment similar to the one people find in their work places (Westring and Ryan 2011; Wright et al. 2020). With this study, we aim to further explore the factors that lead to the anticipated work-family/family-work conflict by taking into account a variable specific to volunteering, an activity that shares important similarities with an actual job. That being so, along with one's family situation and self-efficacy, we integrated the perceived leadership style the individuals encounter during their volunteeringas an associated variable of the anticipated work-family / family-work conflict.

1.1. Family-related factors, self-efficacy, and anticipated work-family/family-work conflict

Previous research has indicated that the exposure to a parental model that emphasizes the equity of roles in child care is associated with a lower level of anticipated work to family conflict and with a lower tendency to sacrifice career-related opportunities (Cinamon 2006; Fernández-Cornejo et al. 2016). On the contrary, other studies have shown that the male students whose mothers worked had anticipated a higher level of conflict between work and family (Weer et al. 2006). The authors suggested that the result was explained by the paternal role model because the fathers involved in the study also experienced higher levels of work-family conflict. However, Weer and his collaborators' study (2006) seems to be the exception and not the norm. The exposure to a working maternal model leads to a decreased anticipated conflict between work and family (Chait Barnett et al. 2003). On a more general note, previous results show that family influence is negatively related to anticipated WFC (Wright et al. 2020). Moreover, from a theoretical standpoint, we can consider that the exposure to an egalitarian family model could predict a lower anticipated conflict between work and family (and family and work), as this creates learning experiences for young people and models that could increase their self-efficacy in each domain (Bandura 1986). Previous empirical findings also support this view. Having successful role models has a positive impact on one's self-efficacy (Laviolette, Radu Lefebvre, and Brunel 2012). In this regard, self-efficacy is cultivated through the identification with the role models, which allows young people to set desirable, feasible, and accessible goals for themselves. When parental role models are concerned, being exposed to a model that combines the family-related and work-related requirements successfully might act as a positive learning environment for one to develop one's own self-efficacy in balancing these domains. Simultaneously, self-efficacy was related to anticipated family-work and work-family conflict, with more self-efficient students reporting lower levels of anticipated conflict (Cinamon 2006).

1.2. Perceived leadership style, self-efficacy and anticipated work-family/family-work conflict

Cinamon (2006) considers that young people view the interactions between family and work as more negative compared to those between work and family. This might happen mainly because many young people work during their studies. Also, according to Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory, self-efficacy develops based on previous experiences (such as volunteering) as a precedent for a job, but also through contact with role models. Therefore, not only can young volunteers learn to be more efficient in finding a work-life balance by experiencing conditions similar to those in the work place, but the same could happen due to meeting leaders that allow them to increase their self-efficacy and, directly or indirectly, decrease their anticipated conflict between work and family.

The leadership style practiced by superiors has been linked to the way in which employees perceive the negative interactions between work and family. Authentic leadership correlates negatively with the work-family conflict felt by the employee (Braun and Nieberle 2017). On the contrary, despotic leadership determines the emergence of work-family conflict through emotional exhaustion (Nauman and Fatima 2018).

A high level of transactional leadership, combined with a low level of transformational leadership, encourages employees to commit deviant acts against the organization, even when they do not show a higher level of work-family conflict (Morgan, Perry, and Wang 2018). For this research, we operationalize the style of leadership as authentic leadership. A person who practices authentic leadership is one who is "aware of the way he thinks and behaves and who is perceived by others as being aware of his or others' values, knowledge, or advantages; […] They are confident, hopeful, optimistic, resilient, and highly moral"(Avolio, Luthans, and Walumbwa 2004, 4 as cited in Avolio and Gardner 2005).

While most studies have focused on the relationship between leadership style and work-family conflict, other authors suggest that it is also linked to the family-work conflict (Li, McCauley, and Shaffer 2017). This might be particularly important due to the spillover effect (transfer from one domain to another; Byron 2005). In these circumstances, we consider that it is necessary to verify the relationship between the leadership style and the anticipated work-family/family-work conflict.

Many young people are members of various volunteer organizations and in this way, they get in touch with various types of leaders who serve as examples of how the interactions in their future job might work. On the same note, we believe that the experience gained in a volunteer organization, operationalized by the type of leadership they have encountered, can be a learning experience for young people and a source of self-efficacy. Both superior leadership and volunteering can lead to the development of self-efficacy. Given that self-efficacy is formed through exposure to competent models, but also through social persuasion (which can be a trait of a good leader; Yukl 1999), previous research has concluded that there is a positive link between leadership and self-efficacy (Liu, Siu, and Shi 2010; Yang, Ding, and Lo 2016). In terms of volunteering, studies have shown that itis an important predictor of self-efficacy (Brown, Hoye, and Nicholson 2012; Stukas et al. 2016).

1.3. The current study

We believe that this is the first study to verify the relationships between the perception of leadership and the anticipated work-family/family-work conflict. To our knowledge, no previous study has proposed such an approach. From an empirical standpoint, the research would bring an important element of uniqueness. In addition, we propose a new field of study in Romania. Other studies have focused on the conflict between work and family (Karatepe 2013; Spector et al. 2007; Turliuc and Buliga 2014), but we found no study on the anticipated conflict. Finally, we are interested in exploring these links among volunteers, a population that has received less attention in the country.

Our study will be the first to verify the effect of family-based and work-based learning experiences (volunteering) on anticipated work-family/family-work conflict. We believe that the relationships will be mediated by the self-efficacy specific to each field. In addition, we will consider not only the direct relationships, but we will also take into account a possible spillover effect between the domains. More specifically, we want to verify whether (1a) a more equalitarian division of family tasks is associated with lower anticipated work-family conflict, and (1b) the relationship is mediated by the self-efficacy in managing the anticipated work-family conflict; (2a) positive volunteering experiences (a perception of higher authentic leadership) are associated with lower anticipated family-work conflict, and (2b) the relationship is mediated by self-efficacy in managing the anticipated family-work conflict; (3a) a more equalitarian division of family tasks is associated with lower anticipated family-work conflict, and (3b) the relationship is mediated by the self-efficacy in managing the anticipated family-work conflict; (4a) positive volunteering experiences (a perception of higher authentic leadership) are associated with lower anticipated work-family conflict, and (4b) the relationship is mediated by self-efficacy in managing the anticipated work-family conflict.

2. Research Design and Methodology

2.1. Participants

The population of interest was composed of Romanian undergraduate college students, and a convenience sample was recruited using online announcements targeting various student associations across Romania. The announcements contained a link redirection to the online form that was used for this study. The participants had to be volunteers in at least one student association to be eligible to participate. The final sample consisted of 110 participants, with ages between 18 and 29 years old (M = 20.67; SD = 1.74). Of these, 74 (67.3%) were women and 36 (37%) were men. The participants were volunteering in between one and four associations and were spending between one and twenty (M = 6.59; SD = 5.74) weekly hours working for the associations. In terms of their academic year, 48 (43.6%) participants were in the first year, 38 (34.5%) in the second year, 17 (15.5%) in the third year, and 7 (6.4%) in the fourth year. Finally, 76 (69.1%) of the participants reported that their mother worked during their childhood and adolescence and 89 (80.9%) reported that their father worked during their childhood and adolescence.

2.2. Procedure

Ethical approval was obtained from the authors' university ethical board. Data were collected using an online anonymous questionnaire.

2.3. Measures

Anticipated work-family/family-work conflict. The Multidimensional Measure of Work–Family Conflict questionnaire developed by Carlson, Kacmar, and Williams (2000) was adapted to measure the anticipated work-family and family-work conflict. We followed the procedure used by Westring and Ryan (2011) and by Coyle et al. (2015), authors who used the aforementioned questionnaire in a similar manner. The questionnaire contains eighteen items (e.g., "My work will keep me away from family activities more than I would like".). The answers are given on a Likert-type scale, from 1 (never) to 4 (all the time.) A higher score shows a higher anticipated work-family/family-work conflict. The alpha-Cronbach's coefficient reported in other studies ranged from 0.73 to 0.92 (Coyle et al. 2015; Westring and Ryan 2011), showing that the adaptation of this questionnaire is suitable for research. Also, the original questionnaire was previously used on the Romanian population (Șulea, Vîrgă, and Galben 2012).

Self-efficacy in managing work-family / family-work conflict. It was measured using the Self-Efficacy for the management of work-family conflict scale, developed by Cinamon (2006). It contains eight items: four for measuring self-efficacy in managing the work-family conflict (e.g. "To be successful in your role in the family even if you face difficulties at work.") and four for measuring self-efficacy in managing the family-work conflict (e.g. "Investing in the workplace even when family responsibilities put pressure on you"). The responses are measured on a Likert-type scale that ranges from 0 (not at all confident) to 9 (very confident). The alpha Cronbach's coefficient in the original study was 0.86 for both subscales (Cinamon 2006).

Authentic leadership. This was measured by the Authentic Leadership Inventory (Neider and Schriesheim 2011). This inventory contains sixteen items (e.g. "My leader listens carefully to alternative perspectives before drawing a conclusion"), measured on a scale from 1 (strong disagreement) to 5 (strong agreement). In previous studies, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the scale proved to be higher than 0.70 (Neider and Schriesheim 2011; Rahimnia and Sharifirad 2014).

The division of family tasks. This was measured with the help of the two items adapted from Cinamon (2006). These items refer to the parental patterns observed by the respondent in late childhood and adolescence. One of the items refers to the way in which the father took care of family affairs, and the other one to the way in which the mother took care of the child. For both items, lower scores indicate a more traditional division of labour and higher scores indicate a more equalitarian division of labour. The total score was computed by averaging the two items' responses.

All the instruments were translated using the back-translation method (Brislin 1970).

2.4. Statistical analyses

The descriptive statistics and the correlational analyses were computed using IBM SPSS Statistics 20. The analyses regarding the mediation models were performed using the Process for SPSS (Hayes 2017). Bootstrapped confidence intervals that should not contain zero were used to empirically validate the indirect effects.

3. Results

3.1. Preliminary analyses

Table 1 presents the means and standard deviations for each variable, as well as the correlations between them. Authentic leadership correlated positively with self-efficacy in managing work-family (r = .21, p = .03) and family-work conflict (r = .32, p < .001). The division of family tasks was positively associated with self-efficacy in managing work-family (r = .27, p < .01) and family-work conflict (r = .19, p = .04). Self-efficacy in managing work-family conflict correlated negatively with anticipated work-family (r = -.46, p <.001) and family-work conflict (r = -.27, p <.01). Self-efficacy in managing family-work conflict was negatively linked to anticipated family-work (r = -.30, p < .001) and work-family conflict (r = -.20, p = .03). Although we found no correlation between the proposed predictor variables (authentic leadership and division of family tasks) and the proposed outcomes (anticipated work-family and family-work conflict), we still proceeded to test the proposed mediation models. The analyses were in line with more recent guidelines that support this approach (Rucker et al. 2011).

3.2. H1a and H1b

In this model, the division of family labour was introduced as the predictor, anticipated work-family conflict was introduced as the outcome, and the self-efficacy in managing the anticipated work-family conflict was introduced as the mediator. We found

Table 1. Means, standard deviations, and correlations between the variables

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1. Authentic leadership	3.93	.69	-				
2. Division of family tasks	2.70	.86	-.07	-			
3. WFC self-efficacy	7.57	1.79	.21*	.27**	-		
4. FWC self-efficacy	7.56	1.60	.32**	.19*	.60**	-	
5. Anticipated WFC	2.74	.82	.05	-.14	-.46**	-.20*	-
6. Anticipated FWC	2.57	.69	-.01	-.05	-.27**	-.30**	.77**

Note. WFC = work-family conflict; FWC = family-work conflict; *p < .05; **p < .01

that the exposure to a more equalitarian family division of labour was associated with more self-efficacy in managing the anticipated work-family conflict (b = .56, p < .01). Also, more self-efficacy in managing the anticipated work-family conflict was associated with less anticipated work-family conflict (b = -.20, p < .001). Although we found no total effect of the division of family labour on the anticipated work-family conflict (b = -.13, p = .14), the indirect effect through self-efficacy in managing the anticipated work-family conflict was significant (b = -11; 95% CI [-.22; -.02]). This model explained 20% of the time in the variance of anticipated work-family conflict.

3.3. H2a and H2b

In this model, authentic leadership was introduced as the predictor, anticipated family-work conflict was introduced as the outcome, and the self-efficacy in managing the anticipated family-work conflict was introduced as the mediator. We found that authentic leadership was associated with more self-efficacy in managing the anticipated family-work conflict (b = .73, p < .001). Also, more self-efficacy in managing the anticipated family-work conflict was associated with less anticipated family-work conflict (b = -.14, p < .001). Although we found no total effect of authentic leadership on the anticipated family-work conflict (b = -.01, p = .96), the indirect effect through self-efficacy in managing the anticipated family-work conflict was significant (b = -10; 95% CI [-.20; -.03]). This model explained 10% of the variance of anticipated family-work conflict.

3.4. H3a and H3b

In this model, the division of family labour was introduced as the predictor, anticipated family-work conflict was introduced as the outcome, and the self-efficacy in managing the anticipated family-work conflict was introduced as the mediator. We found that a more equalitarian division of family labour was associated with more self-efficacy in managing the anticipated family-work conflict (b = .35, p = .04). Also, more self-efficacy in managing the anticipated family-work conflict was associated with less anticipated family-work conflict (b = -.13, p < .01). Although we found no total effect of the division of family labour on the anticipated family-work conflict (b = -.04, p = .60), the indirect effect through self-efficacy in managing the anticipated family-work conflict was significant (b = -05; 95% CI [-.11; -.001]. This model explained 9% of the variance of anticipated family-work conflict.

3.5. H4a and H4b

In this model, authentic leadership was introduced as the predictor, anticipated work-family conflict was introduced as the outcome, and the self-efficacy in managing the anticipated work-family conflict was introduced as the mediator. We found that authentic leadership was associated with more self-efficacy in managing the anticipated work-family conflict (b = .53, p = .03). Also, more self-efficacy in managing the anticipated work-family conflict was associated with less anticipated work-family conflict (b = -.22, p < .001). Although we found no total effect of authentic leadership on the anticipated work-family conflict (b = -.06, p = .56), the indirect effect through self-efficacy in managing the anticipated work-family conflict was significant (b = -12; 95% CI [-.25; -.01]. This model explained 23% of the variance of anticipated work-family conflict.

4. Discussion

This study aimed to test some antecedents of perceived work-family and family-work conflict on a sample of student volunteers. Our results show some interesting patterns of mediation. All our participants were volunteering in at least one organization during the study, and although we did not find a direct link between their leaders‘ authentic leadership and the perceived work-family and family-work conflict, the indirect relationships through their self-efficacy in dealing with the work-family and family-work conflict were significant. Similarly, the way in which they perceived the division of family labour in their family of origin did not directly relate to their anticipated work-family and family-work conflict, showing only an indirect association through the same patterns of self-efficacy.

Our findings are deeply rooted in the SCCT (Lent, Brown, and Hackett 1994) and provide evidence of the importance of finding worthy role models even before entering into the work field. Both family of origin and organizational environment from the volunteering organization are shown to be valuable distal factors that provide the necessary information in lowering the anticipated conflict between family and work or work and family. Moreover, these act as crucial learning experiences and lead to the development of self-efficacy in balancing future work and family roles.

Previous studies showed that students find some crucial work-related benefits in volunteering, such as having the first job/career experiences, developing leadership skills, or, more generally, having the opportunity to learn new things (Blais et al. 2017; Smith et al. 2010). While all these elements are important in the development of various career-related skills and in fostering self-efficacy, our study shows that having a leader who practices an authentic leadership style also leads to the development of self-efficacy and to a reduction in anticipated work-family and family-work conflict. Leaders act as role models for their employees (Kranabetter and Niessen 2017; Sims and Brinkmann 2002). Moreover, there is important evidence showing that the leader‘s authentic leadership use and the followers‘ work-family balance are strongly related (Braun and Nieberle 2017; Braun and Peus 2018). Our study

adds to these findings by providing additional evidence on the benefits of volunteering and of having a leader practicing authentic leadership in the organization. Not only that the general volunteering context provides great opportunities to develop self-efficacy, but having the right leader also helps young people feel more self-efficient, thus anticipating less work-family/family-work conflict.

The family environment represents a fertile ground for developing self-efficacy in dealing with the anticipated work-family/family-work conflict (Cinamon 2006, 2010). This study provides further evidence for the previous findings. When more egalitarian family roles were implemented during the participants' childhood, they reported higher levels of self-efficacy in dealing with the two types of conflict. Also, self-efficacy mediated the relationships between the division of labour in the family of origin and the anticipated work-family/family-work conflict. A previous study showed that students who attribute high importance to the family experience had the lowest levels of anticipated work-family conflict (Cinamon 2010). By using these findings together with the social cognitive learning theory (Bandura 1986), we might assume that watching both parents invest equally in the family provides the opportunity to learn a similar behavioural pattern. Thus, the students might consider that they will do the same in their own families. Also, by being exposed to an equalitarian division of labour, they might have learned the necessary skills to support their own future behaviours. Consequently, they become more self-efficient and by doing this, they anticipate less conflict between the two domains.

This study shows that along with the family of origin, previous organizational environments, and, most importantly, the types of leadership encountered are also relevant factors that can foster self-efficacy and reduce the anticipated negative interferences between family and work domains. Nowadays, more and more young individuals choose to spend their time volunteering, and the benefits of such experiences are shown by our study. Moreover, we tested both the cross-domain effects by studying the relevant spillover effects. Consequently, we found that being exposed to a more equalitarian family environment lowers the anticipated work-family conflict, as well as the anticipated family-work conflict. In addition, encountering a leader who is using an authentic leadership style has similar effects on both domains. These findings provide additional support for the work-family enrichment framework (Greenhaus and Powell 2006) by showing that having positive family and work experiences helps young people develop self-efficacy and anticipate less conflict between the domains of work and family.

However, this study is not without limitations. First, the number of participants included in the study is rather low. Also, given that the participants came from only one country, these results could be considered specific to the Romanian population. The findings could be different in countries with more equalitarian views in family relationships and with a long tradition of volunteering. From a methodological standpoint, the conclusions that can be made based on a cross-sectional design are rather limited. A longitudinal study would be useful to see whether the family environment and volunteering experiences really account for changes in perceived work-family/family-work conflict, not only in the anticipated one. Finally, while volunteering activities are important for future career development, they are not the only work experiences a student or young person can learn from. Many young individuals work during college or even during high school, and experiences such as these could be of particular interest for future studies.

5. Conclusion

This study aimed to test whether the early family of origin experiences and volunteering could impact the anticipated work-family and family-work conflict for student volunteers. Using the SCCT, we computed a series of mediation models and verified the associations between the division of family labour in the family of origin, respectively, the authentic leadership practiced by the volunteer organization's leader, and the anticipated work-family and family-work conflict. Self-efficacy in managing the work-family and family-work conflict was used as a mediator. The results found significant indirect effects, showing that family and volunteering experiences act as distal factors related through self-efficacy to the anticipated interactions between work and family. Moreover, this study shows evidence of a positive spillover effect between the domains. Thus, our research provides evidence for the importance of family and volunteering for young people's career development. Having positive experiences and role models before starting their career help students develop self-efficacy in dealing with the possible negative interactions between the two domains. Consequently, they anticipate lower levels of conflict between the domains, which might help them be more optimistic and resourceful in finding and maintaining suitable jobs and careers.

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