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## The family side of work-family conflict: A literature review of antecedents and consequences

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### Abstract

**Objective:** To review the empirical literature on family antecedents and consequences of work-family conflict.

**Background:** Over the last decades, family living and working life have changed profoundly, affecting families' needs and expectations towards reconciliation, as well as perceptions of work-family conflict. Previous reviews of the relevant literature in this flourishing field of research have predominantly focused on the work side of sources and consequences of these conflicts. However, a review of the family side of work-family conflict is still missing.

**Method:** The review of the existing literature followed the guidelines of "PRISMA – Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses." 100 quantitative empirical studies were identified by relevant keywords, including research between 1988–2021.

**Results:** The review of international and interdisciplinary empirical evidence remarkably shows the heterogeneity in research on family antecedents and consequences of work-family conflict in the directions of family-to-work and work-to-family. In addition, the findings of existing studies are inconsistent, if not ambivalent. However, the review also demonstrates a growing body of literature that considers or even focuses on the family side of work-family conflict.

**Conclusion:** The family plays an essential role in reconciling the private and the working life, as it is a source of conflict and a resource for dealing with conflicts at the same time.

**Key words:** Demands, family dynamics, family relations, gender, PRISMA, reconciliation, resources, work-family interface



## 1. Introduction

The family is essential in producing and reproducing individual well-being and health. At the same time, individuals might also experience family-related stressors that jeopardize their well-being and health. Furthermore, individuals carry stress from outside into the family and take stress from within the family elsewhere, for example, into the working sphere. In this sense, the family is harmed by stress or provides resources to deal with it. Concurrently, other spheres of life are harmed by stress from the family or provide resources to deal with it. As the prime example of those interrelations, work-family conflict (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985) is one aspect of well-being that is linked to the family by definition, and that emerges particularly from a mutual interference of family life and work life, challenging individuals and families (Greenhaus & Powell, 2016).

Based on assumptions of inter-role strain (Kahn et al., 1964) and interdependencies between work and family (Kopelman et al., 1983), work-family conflict is defined as “a form of interrole conflict in which the role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect. That is, participation in the work (family) role is made more difficult by virtue of participation in the family (work) role” (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985, p. 77). Work-family conflict can surface in two directions, either from work into the family (work-to-family conflict, in short, “WFC”) or from family to work (family-to-work conflict, in short, “FWC”; Gutek et al., 1991; Netemeyer et al., 1996). Therefore, the family can be a source of conflicts and a place where conflicts from outside have consequences simultaneously (Frone et al., 1992; Voydanoff, 2002).

Over the last decades, scholars have observed profound changes in family and working lives in virtually all Western societies. First, the needs and expectations of individuals have changed significantly because of changing family relations. This relates, for example, to family diversification (e.g., same-sex couples, patchwork families, cross-generational living), increasing in single-parent households, the changing role of fathers in families, or the decreasing prevalence of the traditional male breadwinner model (Beauregard et al., 2009; Bianchi & Milkie, 2010; Byron, 2005; Esping-Andersen, 2009; J. A. Graham & Dixon, 2014; Trappe et al., 2015). Second, these changes have gone hand in hand with developments in the labor market, such as increased female labor participation or more flexible forms of work. Third, welfare states tried to react to these developments by establishing social and family policies to enhance gender equality in the labor market, or support employees’ integration of work and family lives, for instance, by expanding childcare opportunities or introducing and enabling labor market flexibilities (Esping-Andersen, 2009). Still, the sometimes conflicting expectations of private/family and working lives create tensions for basically all individuals (Gallie & Russell, 2009; Winslow, 2005), mainly when other family members are involved (Duxbury et al., 1994; Martínez et al., 2011).

To date, most of the research on the work-family interface has focused on antecedents and consequences of work-family conflict from the perspective of the working sphere, considering family characteristics as control variables, if at all (Byron, 2005; Michel et al., 2011). Though recent reviews summarized a growing literature on non-work-related issues of work-family conflict, they chose specific foci such as looking only at the impact of work-family conflict instead of including its antecedents as well (Allen et al., 2000; Amstad et al., 2011), using a much broader understanding of work-life interference (Bianchi & Milkie, 2010), focusing on the economic perspective of work-family conflict (Molina, 2020), or considering only publications in specific journals (Allen & Martin, 2017). Moreover, studies rooted in family research and with an explicit focus on family issues in connection with work-family conflict were comparatively rare and therefore have not been subject to systematic reviews yet.

We respond to this situation by covering the family side of work-family conflict in the present paper, supplying a review of the literature on antecedents and consequences of work-family conflict, which has focused on the family side of work-family conflict. In doing so, we account for the (theoretical) commonplace that the family is both a source of (work-family) conflict and a figuration in which individuals deal with conflicts from outside (here, the working sphere) at the same time. Thus, our review contributes to a deeper understanding of the (re)production of well-being in families.

More specifically, we reviewed the existing empirical literature on the antecedents and consequences of work-family conflict on the family side between 1988 and 2021, based on a systematic literature search following the recommendations of “PRISMA” for conducting literature reviews (Page et al., 2021). We aim to systematically scour existing empirical research for theoretically and empirically relevant family antecedents and consequences of work-family conflict to provide an overview of the current state of research regarding

the specific importance of the family part in the work-family interface. Thus, we differentiate the two directions (WFC and FWC) of work-family conflict wherever possible and contribute to the systematization of current empirical knowledge by updating and extending information from previous yet older meta-analytic studies or literature overviews (Allen et al., 2000; Byron, 2005). Eventually, by reviewing and categorizing existing findings, we aim to identify possible research gaps and reveal possible directions for future research.

## 2. The role of the family in work-family conflict

Families provide instrumental, social, and emotional resources, such as social support, emotional security, and a protected learning and growing environment, for producing and preserving individual well-being. Concurrently, families confront individuals with unique time binds and emotional or cognitive demands, such as care responsibilities, relationship issues, or worries about close family members (Frone et al., 1992, 1997; Voydanoff, 2002). Whereas the positive aspects and experiences are associated with better well-being, the negative aspects of possibly overstraining demands may have negative consequences on individual or family well-being, or family relations, among others (Nomaguchi & Milkie, 2020; Thomas et al., 2017).

Like the family, the working sphere confronts individuals with demands (e.g., long or irregular working hours, work overload). Concurrently, it provides resources (e.g., social support from supervisors or co-workers, flexible working opportunities), which have been theorized and extensively empirically evaluated in light of the job-demands resources model (Bakker et al., 2011; Demerouti et al., 2001). Most generally, performing multiple roles in different life spheres was found to be beneficial for individual well-being (Barnett & Hyde, 2001; Jaga et al., 2013; Mullen et al., 2008). Concepts such as “positive spillover” (Poelmans et al., 2008), “facilitation” (Grzywacz et al., 2007), or “enrichment” (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006) highlight that the feeling of participating in different spheres of life can strengthen a person’s self-esteem, as well as the feeling of being appreciated and needed. This further creates a sense of security because difficulties in one part of life could be balanced by satisfaction in others. Nevertheless, whenever individuals participate in different spheres of life, i.e., playing different roles, the demands from various roles compete for individual resources, especially time, energy, and psychological investment (Greenhaus & Powell, 2016). This tension often produces inter-role conflict (Kahn et al., 1964). Work-family conflict emerges from these role conflicts through the specific interference of the family and the work spheres (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). This means that if demands from both life spheres are high, individuals have to put higher effort into dealing with all those requirements and are more likely to face conflicting demands (Bakker et al., 2011; Bakker & Geurts, 2004). According to the work-family conflict model, “any role characteristic that affects a person’s time involvement, strain, or behavior within a role can produce conflict between that role and another role” (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985, p. 77). Thus, work-family conflicts are further subdivided into time-based, strain-based, and behavior-based conflicts.

From the family perspective, these conflicts are important in two directions: First, the family can be the place where conflicts arise that are transferred to the work sphere (FWC). In this case, working individuals may miss work activities due to the time they must spend on family responsibilities or are preoccupied with family matters at work. Second, work-family conflict can emerge because of work demands spilling over to the family (WFC). At best, resources within the family may “buffer” these conflicts (Reimann & Diewald, 2022). Still, conflicts may trigger consequences, either directly for living conditions in the family, family relations, and well-being, or more indirectly because the available resources are depleted and will not be available to deal with other stressors. Regarding the consequences, research on work-family conflict has focused on the possible negative consequences of both WFC and FWC, although this narrow view has already been criticized (Grönlund & Öun, 2010; Mauno et al., 2006). In the following review part, we will systematically scour existing studies for family antecedents and consequences of work-family conflict that have been subject to empirical research so far and include the main theoretical reasonings behind specific family characteristics.

### 3. Method

Our review of the research literature about family aspects of work-family conflict followed the guidelines of “PRISMA – Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic reviews and Meta-Analyses” (Page et al., 2021), as suggested within the process for systematic reviews in the health sciences by the University of Michigan Library (2022).

#### 3.1 Search strategy

We identified relevant empirical articles through computerized searches within the *Web of Science* and *Science Direct* databases. Both databases comprise research from multiple research disciplines, which is necessary for our review because the literature on work-family conflict has been largely interdisciplinary from its onset. Both databases include peer-reviewed articles only. *Web of Science* further provides transparency about research quality through the indexing of articles in the *Science Citation Index Expanded* (SCIE), the *Social Sciences Citation Index* (SSCI), the *Arts & Humanities Citation Index* (AHCI), and the *Emerging Sources Citation Index* (ESCI). To ensure a certain degree of quality and comparability of research, we only included articles published in journals listed in Clarivate’s *Journal Citation Reports*.

The database query was performed in January 2022, using “work-family conflict” as the prime keyword of choice to retrieve relevant articles from the databases. Taking a closer look at the abstracts, we finally identified the studies to be included in our review. Eventually, we excluded several studies that did not meet our criteria for inclusion (see below) based on a closer look. In this primary research step, we identified 93 articles (see Figure 1). In addition to this systematic search, we checked the references of the 93 articles. Further, we scanned journals that publish work-family studies from a list offered by the Work-Family-Research-Network (Work and Family Researchers Network, 2022) to capture research that was not listed in the screened databases but was well established within the research community. Comparing this list with the journals included in the *Web of Science*, we ran additional searches within the relevant journals (e.g., *Community, Work & Family* before 2015; *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion*; *Gender, Work and Organization*; *Journal of Family and Economic Issues* before 2015). In the end, this procedure identified another seven relevant studies for our review according to our inclusion criteria because most studies were also identified during the initial database query.

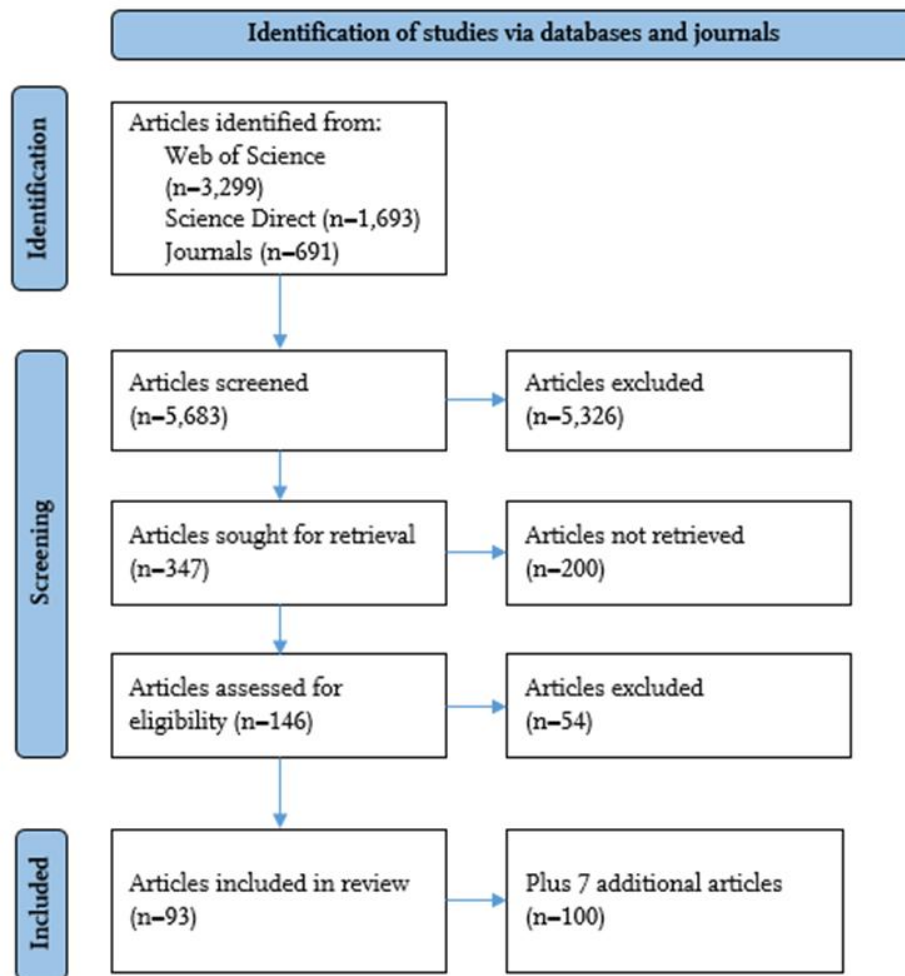
Finally, our review comprised 100 articles from various disciplines, i.e., psychology (n=36), sociology and family studies (n=29), management (n=13), health (n=12), industrial relations and labor (n=2), education (n=2), nursing (n=2) and sports (n=1). Most of the selected studies relied on cross-sectional data (n=83), and only a few studies applied a longitudinal approach (n=17). Overall, the studies cover the period from 1988–2021. Of those, only 12 articles were published before the year 2000. The number of publications continuously increased in the 2000s (n=16) and the 2010s (n=48), and 24 studies were already available in the years 2020 and 2021.

#### 3.2 Criteria for inclusion

We included international and interdisciplinary research to enhance country-specific and discipline-specific views. Given the focus on family-related antecedents and consequences of work-family conflict, we applied the following criteria to include research articles in our review: First, we included quantitative empirical research only to ensure the congruence of the general work-family conflict measurement. Second, we included original journal articles only and did not use preprints, working papers, grey literature, or summarizing meta-studies. Third, we selected only samples that included workers who had a partner and/or a child to stay abreast of the common perception of a family.

Fourth, we did not include studies looking only at job-related indicators or outcomes because our scope was on family indicators of work-family conflict and implications on family members. If articles considered work- and family-related indicators or outcomes, we used only the family perspective for our review. Fifth, we only reviewed research addressing the specific concept of work-family conflict. Thus, we excluded studies on related concepts such as work-family enrichment, balance, or fit, aiming to avoid a mixture of concepts (Voydanoff, 2005a). Table A in the [Appendix](#) gives a detailed overview of the methods and results of the included studies.

Figure 1: PRISMA 2020 flow diagram for new systematic reviews, including searches of databases and registers only



Note: Own presentation, based on Page et al. (2021). Reporting date: January 2022.

### 3.3 Presentation of the results

Our literature review laid bare that the research on work-family conflict has been very heterogeneous, especially regarding samples, measurements – i.e., of different directions (WFC or FWC) and dimensions (strain-, time-based, or behavior-based) of work-family conflict – as well as regarding the concepts of family antecedents and consequences. Thus, to arrange the central empirical findings, we clustered the empirical studies thematically according to their main contributions. We divided the presentation of the results into two main parts: *Family antecedents* of work-family conflict and *family consequences* of work-family conflict. We further identified the following thematic subsections: *Family antecedents*: Care responsibilities, number of children, age of children, family type, housework, partner's employment, psychological family strains, financial resources, family and partner support; *Family consequences*: Family support, family satisfaction, couple satisfaction and relationship quality, child-parent relationships and parenting, child well-being and behavior.

Whenever possible and relevant to specific research results, we differentiated the directions of work-family conflict; when using the term work-family conflict, we referred to both WFC and FWC. As the studies were largely inconsistent in reporting differentiated findings for time-based, strain-based, or behavior-based conflicts, and as most of the studies did not distinguish those specific sub-dimensions of conflict at all, we did not present those distinctions for reasons of clarity. However, Table A in the [Appendix](#) comprises all 100 studies of our review and a detailed overview of all results.

## 4. Family antecedents of work-family conflict

### 4.1 Care responsibilities

Work-family conflict was particularly high among people with high caregiving demands. This applied, on the one hand, to parents, and among those, especially to mothers and parents of children with problems or disabilities. On the other hand, this applied to persons with elder care dependents (Asiedu et al., 2018; Boumans & Dorant, 2021; DePasquale et al., 2016; M. Graham et al., 2021; Moore et al., 2007; Nomaguchi, 2012; Premeaux et al., 2007; Si et al., 2020; Stefanova et al., 2021; Stephens et al., 2001; Voydanoff, 2005b). However, our review revealed mixed evidence for the direction of the association between child-related care tasks and conflicts, as well as for the conflict directions WFC and FWC. For instance, Frone et al. (1997) found child-related tasks to be related to higher FWC only, but several studies found no significant relationship with WFC or FWC at all (Asiedu et al., 2018; Nomaguchi, 2012; Reimann et al., 2019). In contrast, other research found higher daily childcare commitment going hand in hand with lower WFC (Bai et al., 2021; Nomaguchi, 2009), at least with men (Voydanoff, 1988).

### 4.2 Number of children

Several studies used the number of children in the household as a proxy for care responsibilities. Most studies assumed that both WFC and FWC, but especially FWC, increased with the number of children in the household. Still, empirical research documented mixed evidence: notwithstanding differences in measuring the number of children in the household, some studies did not find a relationship between the number of children and WFC/FWC at all (Annor, 2016; Asiedu et al., 2018; Cooklin et al., 2016; Kinnunen & Mauno, 1998; Loerch et al., 1989; Nomaguchi, 2009; Reimann et al., 2019). Other studies, in contrast, reported that more children in the household were associated with greater WFC and FWC (Fetetro & Nomaguchi, 2018; Hammer et al., 1997; Premeaux et al., 2007).

### 4.3 Age of children

Having younger children was assumed to be associated with higher WFC and FWC because, for example, the time investment in care is expected to be higher for younger children (Gallie & Russell, 2009). All studies included in our review uniformly pointed in this direction (Allen & Finkelstein, 2014; Erickson et al., 2010; Fetetro & Nomaguchi, 2018; Gallie & Russell, 2009; Lopez et al., 2020; Nomaguchi, 2009; Nomaguchi & Fetetro, 2019). Both WFC and FWC were highest among parents of young children before school age. Moreover, this relationship seemed to be gendered, as this effect was stronger for women than men. Only two of the nine studies that included the age of children as a relevant predictor did not find a significant association with WFC and FWC (Loerch et al., 1989; Reimann et al., 2019).

### 4.4 Family type

Focusing on different family types, single parents were assumed to experience greater WFC and FWC, especially FWC, because they had to bear family demands alone and were not able to share them with a partner, resulting in less emotional and instrumental support, more hours spent on childcare and household chores as well as higher financial strain (Duxbury et al., 1994; Minnotte, 2012). The reviewed studies showed mixed empirical results. Whereas half of the studies did not find a relationship between single-parent status with WFC and FWC (Duxbury et al., 1994; McManus et al., 2002; Minnotte, 2012; Moilanen et al., 2019; Winslow, 2005), the other half found single parents to report higher WFC (Nomaguchi, 2009), and higher FWC in particular (Erickson et al., 2010; Nomaguchi, 2012; Premeaux et al., 2007; Reimann et al., 2019). Moreover, this specifically applied to single parents who had more than one child and to those who could only rely on formal childcare (Reimann et al., 2019), those with children of school age (Erickson et al., 2010), and single mothers (Nomaguchi, 2009).

#### 4.5 *Housework*

Some studies suggested that not only care responsibilities were important for time constraints within the family, but time spent on housework could increase the likelihood of work-family conflict as well. These studies showed that more time spent on housework was indeed associated with higher FWC (Cerrato & Cifre, 2018; Erickson et al., 2010; Fetto & Nomaguchi, 2018; Reimann et al., 2019), though not with higher WFC (Nomaguchi, 2009; Voydanoff, 1988). Furthermore, one study found WFC to be higher when women and men perceived their partners to do a smaller share of the domestic chores (Cerrato & Cifre, 2018). In contrast, the other studies did not report significant associations with WFC.

#### 4.6 *Partner's employment*

The partner's employment status was assumed to restrict his or her available time and capacity for family demands. Consequently, arranging work and family lives should be most difficult in dual-earner couples, who were expected to experience higher work-family conflict than individuals in families where only one partner was employed (Gallie & Russell, 2009). Studies found that WFC and FWC were higher when the partner of the primary respondent was employed. This was particularly the case when the partner worked irregular hours (i.e., during evenings/nights/weekends, overtime), the more hours the partner worked overall, as well as when the partner experienced role conflict him- or herself (Gallie & Russell, 2009; Greenhaus et al., 1989; Hammer et al., 1997; Hart & Kelley, 2006; Smoktunowicz & Cieślak, 2018; van Daalen et al., 2006). Other studies found no relationship between partners' employment with WFC and FWC (Kinnunen & Mauno, 1998; Loerch et al., 1989; Voydanoff, 1988). Overall, however, the results highlighted that it was less important if the partner was employed or not, but rather specific employment conditions of the partner were crucial.

#### 4.7 *Psychological family strains*

Another important stream of research focused on psychological strains, such as family pressure, parental overload, parenting stress, family strain, or family conflict, as antecedents of work-family conflict. Family involvement was hypothesized to correlate with greater WFC and FWC because individuals with high family involvement were assumed to prioritize family roles and thus were expected to be mentally preoccupied with these roles (Frone et al., 1992). These kinds of strains were found to be associated with higher WFC and FWC in several studies (Annor, 2016; Aryee et al., 1999; Carlson & Perrewé, 1999; Cerrato & Cifre, 2018; Fetto & Nomaguchi, 2018; Ford, 2011; Frone et al., 1997; Higgins et al., 1992; Hong et al., 2021; Loerch et al., 1989; Minnotte & Minnotte, 2018; Ross et al., 2021; Voydanoff, 2005b). Only Landolfi et al. (2020) did not find a significant association between family workload and FWC. Moreover, higher family involvement was associated with more work-family conflict, especially with greater FWC (G. A. Adams et al., 1996; Carlson & Perrewé, 1999; Frone et al., 1992; Hammer et al., 1997; Loerch et al., 1989). Contrary to the overwhelming support of the assumptions, Higgins et al. (1992) did not find a connection between family involvement and WFC.

#### 4.8 *Financial resources*

Higher family income was assumed to be a resource that correlates with lower work-family conflict because income may provide a financial leeway for outsourcing demands, for example, by using (private) external childcare opportunities or domestic help or by allowing larger or nicer living spaces, or recreational activities (Jacobs & Gerson, 2021; Schober & Stahl, 2014). In contrast, the lack of financial resources was often considered a serious demand, especially for single-parent households (Nomaguchi, 2009). Despite the apparent relevance of financial resources, none of the reviewed studies found a significant correlation between family or household income and WFC or FWC (Annor, 2016; Aryee et al., 1999; Fetto & Nomaguchi, 2018; Nomaguchi, 2009; Reimann et al., 2019; Winslow, 2005). Nevertheless, research pointed to the role of family income as a moderator of other family demands and strains (Ford, 2011; McManus et al., 2002).



## 4.9 Family and partner support

A large stream of literature investigated family and partner support as a resource associated with lower work-family conflict. According to our review, social support appeared to be the topmost target of empirical research in this field. Already Greenhaus & Beutell (1985) stated in their seminar paper that the lack of social support, for example, low spousal support, might be an additional demand and, thus, a work-family conflict increasing stressor. This idea was uniformly supported because family and spousal support were associated with lower levels of both WFC and FWC (Adams & Golsch, 2021; Adams et al., 1996; Annor, 2016; Aryee et al., 1999; Aycan & Eskin, 2005; Blanch & Aluja, 2012; Boyar et al., 2014; Carlson & Perrewé, 1999; Ferri et al., 2018; Frone et al., 1997; Greenhaus et al., 2012; Griggs et al., 2013; Irak et al., 2020; Landolfi et al., 2020; Mauno & Rantanen, 2013; Minnotte & Minnotte, 2018; Nomaguchi, 2012; Noor et al., 2019; Premeaux et al., 2007; Seiger & Wiese, 2009; Selvarajan et al., 2013; van Daalen et al., 2006; Voydanoff, 2005b). The same applied to a similar measurement of family embeddedness and WFC/FWC (Li et al., 2019).

Griggs et al. (2013) and van Daalen et al. (2006) found that the support of close family members (partner or children) reduced FWC. Family support was also found to moderate the association between family pressure and emotional exhaustion with WFC and FWC (Annor, 2016; Pluut et al., 2018), as well as the effects of role stressors, parental overload, family strain, and time demands on WFC and FWC (Carlson & Perrewé, 1999; Seiger & Wiese, 2009).

Furthermore, the research found gender differences in the association of family support with work-family conflict. The analysis by Adams & Golsch (2021) showed that family support was especially associated with FWC for women. For men, this support reduced the level of WFC. This was in line with the results of Blanch & Aluja (2012), who found a significant relationship between family support and WFC only for men. In sum, family support seemed to be especially beneficial for men's WFC, preventing their work obligations from interfering with family life, arguably because the family or spousal support reduced men's family responsibilities. For women, family support seemed to be especially beneficial to avoid interference between their family responsibilities and work obligations.

## 5. Family consequences of work-family conflicts

### 5.1 Family support

Although most studies in our review understood family support as an antecedent of WFC and FWC, some studies also contributed to the understanding of family support as an outcome of work-family conflict or especially looked at the bidirectional relationship between family support and conflict. Adams et al. (1996) and Li et al. (2021) hypothesized an inability or unwillingness of the family to provide support when the WFC or FWC of the individual is high. Adams et al. (1996) found a negative association of WFC with emotional and instrumental family support. This was in line with Li et al. (2021) and Ross et al. (2021), who found a negative effect of FWC on family support and a negative effect of WFC on marital support.

### 5.2 Family satisfaction

Our review revealed that family satisfaction was negatively associated with work-family conflict. This means that higher WFC and FWC were related to lower family satisfaction, less quality of family life, and lower family performance (Burch, 2020; Carlson & Perrewé, 1999; Frone et al., 1997; Higgins et al., 1992; Hill, 2005; Huang et al., 2004; Kalliath et al., 2017; Landolfi et al., 2020; Orellana et al., 2021; Rathi & Barath, 2013). Two reviewed studies did not fully support this conclusion (Aryee et al., 1999; Kalliath et al., 2017). Kalliath et al. (2017) confirmed this association for Australian employees but found WFC to be higher if family satisfaction was high among Indian employees, suggesting cultural differences in this association. Furthermore, Burch (2020) found that family satisfaction was a mediator of the relationship between WFC and other family outcomes, mediating the association with a higher likelihood of couple separation and a lower likelihood of childbirth.

### 5.3 *Couple satisfaction and relationship quality*

Similar to the findings for family satisfaction, researchers suggested that work-family conflict related to lower couple or marital satisfaction and lower relationship quality. Regarding marital satisfaction, the results of the reviewed studies showed that a high level of work-family conflict, both WFC and FWC, was negatively associated with marital satisfaction and marital quality (Aycan & Eskin, 2005; Bagherzadeh et al., 2016; Dinh et al., 2017; Hart & Kelley, 2006; Hill, 2005; Leach et al., 2021; Ross et al., 2021; Voydanoff, 2005a; Yoo, 2022). Minnotte et al. (2015) and Huffman et al. (2017) found that the individual effects of FWC and WFC amplified each other. They showed that marital satisfaction was lowest when both WFC and FWC were high. Leach et al. (2021) found a similar pattern, looking at couples' accumulated WFC and FWC. Among married couples, a high level of WFC of one partner was associated with lower relationship satisfaction of the other partner (Lu et al., 2016; Yucel & Latshaw, 2020). A high level of a partner's WFC further reduced the positive effect of one's own low WFC (Wilson et al., 2018). Wilson et al. (2018) emphasized the positive association of congruence in FWC with relationship satisfaction. Other studies found similar effects for inter-couple relationships, highlighting more inter-parental conflict when WFC or FWC were high (Vahedi et al., 2018, 2019).

### 5.4 *Child-parent relationships and parenting*

Generally, the reviewed literature hypothesized that parent-child relationships and parenting behavior were negatively affected by work-family conflict. In line with this assumption, Cinamon et al. (2007) and Cho & Allen (2012) found a high level of WFC to be associated with less parent-child interaction. Lau (2010) found this relationship for fathers and their child(ren) in particular. Moreover, the father's involvement in time spent with children was shown to be lower if the level of WFC was higher (Kuo et al., 2018). Similarly, self-reported parent-child relationship was lower if WFC was higher among parents (Verweij et al., 2021). In line with this, work-family conflict was linked to different dimensions of parenting. Higher WFC and FWC were associated with more irritable, harsh, or permissive parenting styles (Cooklin et al., 2015, 2016; Dinh et al., 2017; Leach et al., 2021; Matejević & Đorđević, 2019; Strazdins et al., 2013; Vahedi et al., 2019; Verweij et al., 2021; Yang & Kim, 2021), more parenting stress and overload (Frone et al., 1997; Hess & Pollmann-Schult, 2020; Hwang & Jung, 2020; Moreira et al., 2019; Si et al., 2020), lower parenting warmth and consistency, parental engagement, and parenting performance (Aycan & Eskin, 2005; Cooklin et al., 2016; Ferreira et al., 2018; Lau, 2010; Matias et al., 2017; Matias & Recharte, 2020; Moreira et al., 2019; van den Eynde et al., 2020), and less parental self-efficacy and perceived parenting confidence (Cinamon et al., 2007; Matias et al., 2017; Vieira, Matias, Lopez, et al., 2016). Regarding cross-parental effects, studies found that parents' WFC was positively related to their partner's parental stress, which applied especially to mothers (Hart & Kelley, 2006; Matias et al., 2017).

### 5.5 *Child well-being and behavior*

Parents' WFC and FWC were quite consistently linked to negative effects on family life and parental behavior. Therefore, it seemed plausible to assume that these conflicts might also directly or indirectly influence children's well-being and behavior. According to our review, a growing body of research has looked at this specific topic over the last decade. Recent studies found negative associations of parents' WFC and FWC with children's general health (Ohu et al., 2019), with mental health, and problem behavior (Dinh et al., 2017; Hart & Kelley, 2006; Hess & Pollmann-Schult, 2020; Leach et al., 2021; Strazdins et al., 2013; Vahedi et al., 2018, 2019; Vieira, Matias, Ferreira, et al., 2016; Yucel & Latshaw, 2021). This negative effect seemed to be comparably strong in cases when both parents experienced high WFC or FWC (Dinh et al., 2017; Leach et al., 2021; Strazdins et al., 2013).

Moreover, it was found that parents' high WFC and FWC had negative effects on parenting behaviors which then were related to lower mental health of the children; that is, work-family conflict indirectly threatened child well-being mediated by other family and parenting characteristics (e.g., family environment and relationships, psychological distress, harsh and irritable parenting) (Dinh et al., 2017; Hess & Pollmann-Schult, 2020; Strazdins et al., 2013; Vieira, Matias, Ferreira, et al., 2016). Orellana et al. (2021) found no direct effect of parents' WFC on the adolescent child's family satisfaction. However, if parents had higher levels of

WFC, the child was likelier to perceive parents' WFC negatively regarding the parent-child relationship. In turn, the parent-child relationship mediated the relationship of parents' WFC with children's family satisfaction. These indirect effects may explain the deviating results in van den Eynde et al. (2020), who did not find a direct effect of parents' WFC or FWC on child behavior.

## 6. Discussion and conclusions

The awareness of family and work being mutually intertwined spheres of life certainly is not new (Bianchi & Milkie, 2010; Greenhaus & Powell, 2016; Kossek, 2016; Voydanoff, 2002). However, the fundamental relevance of work-family issues may have never been higher than at the beginning of the 21st century, not least because of the most recent developments of the COVID-19 pandemic (Reimann et al., 2022; Schieman et al., 2021). Whereas the work side of work-family conflict was subject to extensive research (Byron, 2005; Michel et al., 2011), the family side, in turn, did not receive as much attention to date. Addressing this gap, this review article documented international and interdisciplinary quantitative research literature on family-related issues in the context of work-family conflict. Applying the guidelines for review articles provided in the "PRISMA" statement (Page et al., 2021), we identified 100 articles per January 2022, covering a period from 1988 to 2021.

Shortly summarized, the reviewed studies highlighted that work-family conflict was more pronounced among women and men with caregiving responsibilities, with young children, in earlier stages of the family cycle, with high family involvement, and with higher family or parental strain and conflict. Results on time spent on housework, partner's employment, and the number of children were found to be mixed. Research on the consequences of work-family conflict stressed that work-family conflict was negatively related to marital and family satisfaction, as well as to family performance and parenting behavior. Studies on children's health showed that work-family conflict adversely affected children's well-being and mental health. This emphasized the importance of reconciliation between family and work demands, not only for workers' personal well-being and health but also for other family members and the family as a unit.

Although most of the studies did not explicitly focus on the analysis of gender, the results of gender-sensitive studies suggested that men and women experienced inter-role conflict differently, presumably because of their different commitments to work and family (Adams & Golsch, 2021; Hammer et al., 1997), or their different perceptions of work-family conflict (Schulz & Reimann, 2022). Therefore, future research will benefit from integrating concepts of gendered caregiving responsibilities or possible role permeability in their discussions of work-family conflict. This will contribute to our understanding of gender-sensitive findings, especially to the still puzzling issue of men responding more strongly to developments in the working sphere and women responding more strongly to developments in the family (Capitano & Greenhaus, 2018; Cerrato & Cifre, 2018).

Even despite this review's narrow focus on the family side of work-family conflict as a very specific manifestation of inter-role conflicts in the work-family interface, the empirical work we reviewed turned out to be very heterogeneous in terms of the concept of work-family conflict, i.e., regarding definitions, dimensions (strain-based, time-based, behavior-based) and directions (FWC, WFC) of work-family conflict. Equally multifarious were the samples, regional scopes, and measurements of the empirical investigations. A reason for this may lie in the common assumption that work-family conflict is a highly subjective concept that needs to be tailored to the specific contexts under study, which not least resulted in diversified empirical approaches and, ultimately, data. Important contextual factors include different welfare states, specific family and work policies, and cultural differences. However, the specific historical context at the time of a study also needs to be considered. Our review covered empirical studies between 1988 and 2021. Though work-family conflict most likely was an issue over this period, the political, structural, and cultural contexts changed nationally and internationally through more than 30 years of research. The COVID-19 health and social crisis is arguably the most recent example for the current period, but other examples such as the financial crisis in 2008 or the EU's growing together and the accompanying introduction of European laws might also have impacted possible family antecedents and consequences, or work-family conflicts themselves. With all this variety in mind, it seems less surprising that the findings we summarized in our review were inconsistent, if not ambivalent, in some cases. Thus, future research will profit from a conceptual debate that identifies the common denominator of work-family conflict, which may indeed be Greenhaus & Beutell's (1985) classical definition and the notional leeway to account for contextual variation.

The family side of antecedents and consequences of work-family conflict also might need further theoretical thinking. The broad array of reviewed studies showed how women's, men's, and children's family situations were positively and negatively associated with experiences of work-family conflict and vice versa. Theoretically, this can be framed in terms of a "family-demand and -resources perspective" on work-family conflict, in an analogous manner to the job demand-resource perspective, which has been a common frame of reference regarding the work side in the work-family literature (Bakker et al., 2011; Demerouti et al., 2001; Frone et al., 1992; Voydanoff, 2002). Nevertheless, as the inconsistent findings suggest, further conceptual work is necessary to disentangle which family characteristics need to be considered demands, which can be viewed as resources, and the circumstances under which this applies. The more elaborated theoretical considerations on the work side of work-family conflict might also explain the smaller number of studies on the family side of conflicts. Another explanation could be that the levels of WFC are usually higher than FWC and that WFC is better explained by work conditions than by family characteristics (O'Driscoll et al., 2004). However, this observation needs further theoretical thinking.

In addition, the interplay of family demands and resources considerably differs between different family constellations and ways of living, e.g., between single-parent and two-parent households or between parents with childcare obligations and singles with responsibilities for elderly care, which is increasingly accounted for in recent studies (Bernhardt & Recksiedler, 2022). Integrating existing knowledge into a systematic evaluation of family demands will arguably broaden our understanding of the family side of work-family conflict in diverse family constellations. This, at least, requires clear descriptions of the processes under study, the relevant predictors, and the possible mechanisms linking causes and consequences. Thereby, empirical research will benefit from more comprehensive theoretical developments in this field and overcome ad hoc hypothesizing on single family characteristics.

Some further methodological limitations stood out in our review. As Molina (2020) emphasized in his literature review, only a few studies have used a longitudinal approach (Dinh et al., 2017; A. Li et al., 2021). According to our review, this applied explicitly to the antecedents of work-family conflicts. Reversed causality might be an issue in studies that rely on cross-sectional analyses. For instance, time spent with children might not (only) lead to higher work-family conflict. However, higher work-family conflict may also explain fewer time capabilities for engagement in childcare, or the conflict may already be a result of existing time constraints (e.g., due to own health issues, care for other relatives) that limit time investments in childcare as well. In addition, possible long-term consequences of work-family conflict that were discovered in the few longitudinal studies (e.g., for children's health) hint at the profound processes in families that are connected to the experience of work-family conflict within families. Thus, future research would primarily benefit from a stronger pursuit of longitudinal designs, particularly regarding the family antecedents of work-family conflict. The intra-familial dependencies and partners' crossover effects were only considered in a few studies so far (Hammer et al., 1997; Lu et al., 2016; Orellana et al., 2021; Yucel & Latshaw, 2020). To investigate the processes of conflict emergence and conflict handling within families more closely, the potential of dyadic data seems to be one direction of research that needs to be taken forward. However, these approaches have become more prevalent in recent years (Latshaw & Yucel, 2022). Finally, though well-established and multidimensional scales to measure work-family conflict are available (Carlson et al., 2000; Netemeyer et al., 1996), many studies only covered one-item measures or single dimensions or directions of conflicts. As the diverging results on WFC and FWC clearly showed, the sources of conflicts within the family, and the consequences of those conflicts, have distinctive relationships to both directions of work-family conflict. However, this also applies to different forms of WFC and FWC. Though some studies differentiated between time-based and strain-based conflicts, behavior-based conflicts were rarely investigated. This may at least be reflected critically as a one-dimensional measure cannot cover the different dimensions of role stressors (Kopelman et al., 1983). Thus, the restriction to single dimensions might explain inconsistent or lacking results and even miss essential differences between antecedents and consequences for different family members.

When it comes to practice or policy implications of our knowledge on antecedents and consequences of work-family conflict, scholars mainly target two directions: On the one hand, it is focused on the organizational role or the need to change the individual work situation. This is either by organizational policies providing work-family supportive measures (Abendroth, 2022), especially through possibilities for flexible working, or by individual career decisions (Adams & Golsch, 2022). On the other hand, experts in this field demand social policy and welfare state support, for example, by expanding childcare and parental leave opportunities and making them more flexible. Concluding from this review, the summary of existing studies

vividly demonstrates that the manifold processes within families and their complex relationships with work-family conflict need to be understood more deeply. Evaluating how policies should be designed that target the handling of work-family conflicts, future research needs to focus further on the family side of work-family conflict. It is necessary to actively tackle the unavoidably intertwined connections between family and work, to further demonstrate how families deal with conflicts from different sources and with different consequences, whether different family constellations have specific resources available to deal with those conflicts, or how diverse families distribute demands and resources between family members.

## Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

## “CRediT author statement

*Mareike Reimann*: Research impulse; conceptualization; project administration; supervision; writing – review & editing. *Florian Schulz*: Research impulse; conceptualization; project administration; supervision; writing – review & editing. *Charlotte K. Marx*: Conceptualization; investigation; project administration; writing – original draft preparation. *Laura Lükemann*: Conceptualization; investigation; project administration; writing – original draft preparation.

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# Information in German

## Deutscher Titel

Die Familienseite des Vereinbarkeitskonflikts: Ein Literaturüberblick zu Ursachen und Konsequenzen

## Zusammenfassung

**Fragestellung:** Dieser Beitrag überblickt die empirische Literatur zu den Ursachen und Konsequenzen des „work-family conflict“ aus einer Familienperspektive.

**Hintergrund:** In den letzten Jahrzehnten haben sich Familien- und Arbeitsleben stark gewandelt. Dies hatte einen Einfluss auf die Bedarfe und die Erwartungen an die Vereinbarkeit dieser beiden Lebensbereiche sowie an die Wahrnehmung von Konflikten bei der Vereinbarkeit. Frühere Übersichtsarbeiten zu diesem Thema haben vornehmlich die Arbeitsseite dieser Konflikte betrachtet und der Familie weit weniger Beachtung zu Teil werden lassen.

**Methode:** Dieser Literaturüberblick folgte den PRISMA-Richtlinien zur Erstellung von systematischen Literaturanalysen. Mittels einer Schlagwortsuche wurden 100 quantitative empirische Studien zwischen 1988 und 2021 für diesen Literaturüberblick ausgewählt.

**Ergebnisse:** Die internationale und interdisziplinäre empirische Forschung zeigt eine große Heterogenität in den Themen und den Befunden. Es wird deutlich, dass die Perspektive der Familie zwar nach wie vor deutlich seltener eingenommen wird als die der Arbeit, aber gleichzeitig die Forschungsaktivität in dieser Hinsicht stärker denn je floriert.

**Schlussfolgerung:** Die Familie ist von entscheidender Bedeutung für die Vereinbarkeit von Privatleben und Arbeit, da sie gleichzeitig die Ursache für Konflikte als auch der Ort, in dem Konflikte gelöst werden, sein kann.

**Schlagwörter:** Bedarfe, Familiendynamik, Familienbeziehungen, Gender, PRISMA, Vereinbarkeit, Ressourcen, Arbeit und Familie

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