

*Full Length Research Paper*

# **Relationship between work-family conflict and job satisfaction: The moderating effect of gender and the salience of family and work roles**

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**Work-family conflict has become an issue of particular concern to today's businesses. Its prevalence among employees and the negative consequences of this conflict for one's job satisfaction has led it to become one of the problems that managers and directors have to deal with most. Although there have been researches into the relationship between work-family conflict and job satisfaction, few studies have analysed the role of gender in this relationship. The objectives of this study are to analyse the moderating role of gender and of the salience of family and work roles in the work-to-family conflict and general job satisfaction, while the job's characteristics are controlled. 162 workers from a Spanish public organisation took part in the study. The results from the regression analysis confirms the moderating effect of gender on the relationship between work-to-family conflict and job satisfaction, such that women show a lower level of job satisfaction than men. However, the salience of the family and work roles were not found to have a moderating effect on the aforementioned relationship, neither in the case of men nor in women. The results are discussed in the context of the theory of role identity salience and the gender role theory, as well as the possible cultural effects.**

**Key words:** Work-family conflict, job satisfaction, gender, salience of family role, salience of work role, Spain.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Job satisfaction is an attitude associated with the degree to which people like or dislike their job. A low level of job satisfaction predicts negative attitudes and behaviour in the work context, such as absenteeism, external turnover and reduced productivity (Spector, 1997). Given these negative consequences, an analysis of the factors that determine this satisfaction or dissatisfaction is of great

interest to managers and directors in an organisational context, as such an analysis can facilitate and improve the creation of programmes that are designed to increase job satisfaction and, as a result, reduce negative behaviour. Among others, the characteristics of the job itself and the employees' work values have been identified as factors that may predict satisfaction and dissatisfaction. However, due to its increased prevalence among employees, one of the factors that is currently arousing substantial interest in researchers and business professionals is work-family conflict (Bond et al., 1997; Grandey et al., 2005).

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Work-family conflict occurs when the demands or expectations associated with one domain are incompatible with the demands or expectations associated with the other domain (Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985). Studies have distinguished two components or dimensions of work-family conflict: when activities related to work interfere with family responsibilities (WIF) and when activities related to the family interfere with work responsibilities (FIW) (Gutek et al., 1991). According to the role theory, the expected relationship between work-family conflict and job satisfaction is such that an increase in work-family conflict reduces the level of satisfaction (Frone et al., 1992; Kopelman et al., 1983). This hypothesised negative relationship has been found in most studies (e.g. Adams et al., 1996; Boles, 1996; Carlson et al., 2000; Netemeyer et al., 1996; Perrewe et al., 1999), although not in all (e.g. Aryee et al., 1999; Beutell and Wittg-Berman, 1999; Lyness and Thompson, 1997; O'Driscoll et al., 1992; Thompson and Blau, 1993). Kossek and Ozeki (1998), after revising the studies, have found an average correlation of  $-.31$ ,  $-.27$  and  $-.18$  between job satisfaction and (global) work-family conflict, WIF and FIW, respectively. Likewise, the study review carried out by Allen et al. (2000) on WIF indicates an average correlation of  $-.24$  with job satisfaction. However, the authors of both reviews point out that the nature and strength of the relationship varies greatly from study to study, revealing inconsistent results.

Different authors suggest that these inconsistent results may be due to different limitations and problems in the research studies (Kossek and Ozeki, 1998; Allen et al., 2000; Bruck et al., 2002; Casper et al., 2007; Lapierre et al., 2008; Mesmer-Magnus and Viswesvaran, 2005). To this effect, one of the most important limitations that have been pointed out is that the studies have not considered the conflict's multi-dimensional nature, as most of the researchers continue to use a global measure, without taking into account the two dimensions of the subject (Casper et al., 2007; Mesmer-Magnus and Viswesvaran, 2005). Recognising the two-way nature of work-family conflict is important because the empirical literature has shown that each type of conflict has a different background and results (Byron, 2005; Eby et al., 2005). The consequences of not distinguishing between both dimensions are that we still have very little knowledge about how each one relates to job satisfaction.

Furthermore, research on the work-family relationship has been found to have focused essentially on analysing the main effects, but little attention has been given to the effects of the moderating variables, despite the fact that the inconsistent results between the studies suggest that unidentified moderating variables may be involved (Allen et al., 2000; Boles et al., 2003; Kossek and Ozeki, 1998). So, most of the studies that have looked into the relationship between work-family conflict and job satisfaction have assumed similar expectations and

results between the workers, without considering the individual differences in a range of characteristics, such as gender (Boles et al., 2003). However, there is no clear evidence that supports the assumption that job satisfaction and role expectations are homogenous according to gender. In general, the results of some studies support the proposition that the relationship is stronger in women than in men (Bruck et al., 2002; Grandey et al., 2005; Kinnunen et al., 2004; Kossek and Ozeki, 1998; Wiersma and Van den Berg, 1991). Although there are also other studies, such as that carried out by Parasuraman et al. (1992) in which the work-family conflict was found to have a negative relationship with job satisfaction among men, but not among women.

According to the review by Parasuraman and Greenhaus (2002), research into gender differences in the work and family relationships have not taken into account the moderating effects of gender on the work-family conflict relationships and the consequences that this brings in work and family attitudes and behaviour. This is why different authors have suggested the need to analyse the moderating role of gender in the work-family conflict and job satisfaction relationship (Eby et al., 2005; Kafetsios, 2007; Kinnunen et al., 2004; Kossek and Ozeki, 1998).

Different relevant theories, such as the Role Theory (Katz and Kahn, 1978), the Role Identity Salience Theory (Stryker, 1992) and the Gender Role Theory (Gutek et al., 1991) support the prediction of gender differences in the relationship between WIF and job satisfaction, that is, that the relationship is stronger in women than in men. The theory of identity salience suggests that the importance, or salience, of the family role may intensify the negative relationship between WIF and job satisfaction. Roles form part of a person's identity when people award them personal significance and when they label themselves in the context of these positions within the social structure (Marcussen et al., 2004). Identity, or role identity, refers to the significance that one gives to oneself on the basis of a structural position and the relationship with a given role (Stryker and Serpe, 1982). Although people generally fulfil and identify themselves with multiple roles, not all roles are equally important or salient for a person's identity (Thoits, 1991). So, people organise the different role identities hierarchically according to the importance or significances that they award them (Stryker, 1980). In this way, there are individual differences in the salience of the family and work roles.

The extent to which work is considered to be satisfactory or unsatisfactory may depend on the degree to which work is seen as a threat to other relevant or salient roles for that person. When the relevant or salient roles for the self, that is, the roles that define our identity, are threatened, we assess the source of the threat negatively (Carlson and Kacmar, 2000; Grandey et al., 2005;

Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985; Lazarus, 1991; Noor, 2004). So, for example, when the work role interferes with the performance of the family role (WIF), there should be a negative assessment of work, providing that the family role is relevant for the self. In keeping with that, Carlson and Kacmar (2000) find that the work role conflict has a greater impact on job satisfaction in those workers who have a high centrality of the family role. The authors conclude that stress in the work domain could reduce the level of job satisfaction due to the fact that work is not assessed and considered to be anything other than an intrusion on the family role.

The perspective of the gender role theory establishes that the family and work roles have traditionally been gender-specific, such that men are socialised so that their central role in life is that of worker and family breadwinner, whereas women are brought up in the line that their essential role in life is at the heart of the family, as wife, mother and homemaker (Guttek et al., 1991). There is empirical evidence that shows that work is more central for a man's identity, whereas the family is more central for a woman (Cinamon and Rich, 2002; Mauno and Kinnunen, 2000; Parasuraman et al., 1992). Given that men are more involved with the work role and that women are more involved with the family role, we can expect men and women to react differently before WIF. So, we would expect that, when work interferes with the family, women (more than men) would develop negative attitudes towards their work, such as a low level of job satisfaction, as they (more than men) perceive work as a threat to their central role in life: the family role.

From this perspective, we should not interpret that WIF does not affect men's job satisfaction, as the role theory establishes that the expected relationship between work-family conflict and job satisfaction is such that an increase in conflict will reduce the satisfaction (Kahn et al., 1964). Moreover, some classic models of job satisfaction, such as that of March and Simon (1958), establish that job satisfaction is influenced by the degree of compatibility between the work role and other important roles in life. Given that the roles of work and family are two of the most important roles in life, we would expect men to also develop negative attitudes, such as a low level of job satisfaction. However, due to gender role socialisation, men show a higher level of identity and involvement with work than with the family, so the interference is less damaging to their social identity and, consequently, less threatening (Grandey et al., 2005; Lazarus, 1991). Furthermore, different studies have suggested that workers with a high degree of involvement in their work spend a large amount of time and energy on their jobs, and as a result, they are more likely to develop a greater sense of control and skill in their work than those who are less involved, which in turn leads to them having a higher level of job satisfaction (e.g. Adams et al., 1996; Rabinowitz and Hall, 1977; Sekaran, 1989). Consequently, we would expect

significant gender differences with regard to the effect size of WIF on job satisfaction.

## THIS STUDY

Different research studies have suggested that each of the two dimensions of work-family conflict affect different result variables. To this effect, some studies show that WIF is more associated with the results related to work, such as job satisfaction and burnout (Bacharach et al., 1991; Gignac et al., 1996; Kossek and Ozeki, 1998), while FIW is more associated with measures of psychological stress (Frone et al., 1992; Klitzman et al., 1997). For this reason, this study has focused on analysing the relationship of WIF, rather than FIW, with job satisfaction. Given the limited number of studies that have analysed the role of gender in this relationship, the gender differences in the effect size of WIF on job satisfaction have been studied, as well as the moderating role of gender in that relationship. Taking the theory of role identity salience and the theory of gender role socialisation as our framework of reference, as well as the results obtained in the aforementioned research projects, we propose the following hypotheses:

### Hypothesis 1

The relationship between WIF and general job satisfaction is stronger in women than in men.

### Hypothesis 2

Gender has significant moderating effects on the relationship between WIF and general job satisfaction.

In keeping with the role identity salience theory and the gender role theory, Ford et al. (2007) propose that the gender differences in the effect size of WIF on job satisfaction may also reflect the differences between men and women in the degree in which the family and work roles are central for their identity. So, the magnitude of the relationship between WIF and job satisfaction may be moderated by the salience of the family role identity as opposed to the work role for each gender. Although there are very few studies that have taken on the proposition set by Ford et al. (2007), some studies provide contradictory results. So, Noor (2004), in a sample of women, found no significant moderating effects of the salience of the family role on the relationship between WIF and job satisfaction. Given the limited number of studies that have analysed this question, this study examines the effects of the salience of the family role as opposed to the work role on the relationship between WIF and the job satisfaction of men and women, separately. According to the role identity salience theory and the gender role socialisation theory, we would expect

the salience of the family role identity as opposed to the work role identity to moderate the relationship among women, but not among men, given that the family role is more salient for women than for men. For this reason, the following hypothesis was set:

### Hypothesis 3

The salience of the family role compared with the work role has significant moderating effects on the relationship between WIF and general job satisfaction in the case of women, but not in the case of men.

The conceptualisations of the significance of the identity's salience vary from study to study. Researchers have conceptualised significance in terms of "role centrality" (Martire et al., 2000), "identity salience" (Stryker and Serpe, 1994; Thoits, 1991), "role commitment" (Brown et al., 1987) and "personal involvement" (Frone et al., 1995). While some authors argue that these conceptualisations refer to different things (Callero, 1985; Stryker and Serpe, 1994), others define and measure them in terms of the relative importance of a particular identity for the self (Marcussen et al., 2004). According to Carlson and Kacmar (2000), in the area of work-family conflict, the idea of the importance of a role has mostly been studied as the "role salience", which has been defined as the extent to which a given role is important for the total self-image (Lodahl and Kejner, 1965), or alternatively as the "role involvement", understood as the degree of importance, involvement or psychological identification with a role (Frone et al., 1995; Kanungo, 1982). Research has shown that a high degree of involvement or salience of the work role (Frone and Rice, 1987; Greenhaus et al., 1989) or a high degree of involvement or salience of the family role (Stoner et al., 1991) leads to one experiencing work-family conflict. Moreover, people who have high levels of salience in both the work and family roles experience a greater degree of conflict (Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985). These studies have generally used two lines of research that include the role identity salience construct, and which may be associated with the roles of work and family: a) that which perceives it as centrality, and b) that which perceives it as importance (Carlson and Kacmar, 2000). The centrality approach endeavours to determine the extent to which a given role (e.g. work) is central to one's life, when compared with other roles in one's life, such as those that develop within the family, the community, free time, religion, etc. The importance approach considers each role individually, and salience is expressed in the importance that a person gives a particular role in absolute terms. So, not unlike the centrality approach, this idea considers the value given to the multiple roles in life. Nevertheless, the importance approach is different with regard to the centrality approach in that it considers the roles in absolute terms instead of in relative terms. Given these two lines of

research, in this study we will analyse the moderating effects of the salience of the family role identity compared with that of the work role from both perspectives, that is, both in relative terms and in absolute terms.

Furthermore, in spite of the fact that some studies have supported the proposition that the relationship between WIF and job satisfaction is stronger for women than for men (Bruck et al., 2002; Grandey et al., 2005; Kinnunen et al., 2004; Kossek and Ozeki, 1998; Wiersma and Van den Berg, 1991), these results may be biased, due to the fact that, with the exception of the study carried out by Grandey et al. (2005), most of them have not entailed a control of the characteristics of the jobs that men and women do. To this effect, there is empirical evidence that indicates that job characteristics may have an influence both on the degree of WIF (e.g. Greenhaus et al., 1989; Aryee, 1992; Kinnunen et al., 2004; Voydanoff, 1988) and on job satisfaction (Hackman and Oldham, 1976; Hackman et al., 1975). Given that the types of job that, generally speaking, most men and women tend to do vary, the gender differences observed in the studies may rather be a reflection of the differences in the jobs that both genders generally carry out. So, those studies in which no gender differences have been found in the relationship between WIF and work results (e.g. Frone et al., 1992), support this structural approach rather than the gender role theory (Gutek et al., 1991). That is why, in this study, we have analysed the moderating role of gender and of the salience of the family and work roles in the relationship between WIF and job satisfaction, controlling the work characteristics.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### Participants

Our study sample was made up of 162 workers (75 men and 87 women) at a Spanish public university, 66.7% of whom came under the professional category of PDI (Teaching and Research Staff) and 33.3% under the category of PAS (Administration and Services Staff). The workers' ages ranged between 22 and 50, with an average age of 37 years old; 80.55% had children. The distribution of workers according to level of education was as follows: completed secondary education or vocational training: 14%; with intermediate level courses (diploma students or similar): 12%; with higher degree courses (university degree or post-graduate): 36%; and with a Doctorate and/or Master's degree: 38%. The average amount of time spent at work was 40 h per week.

### Variables and measuring instruments

The socio-demographic variables considered in this study, such as gender, age, level of education, professional category, working day, etc., were assessed using a questionnaire that had been expressly drawn up for this study. Gender was understood as being the person's biological sex.

Work-family conflict was assessed using the scale proposed by Kopelman et al. (1983), in its adapted version that has been validated for the Spanish context by Martínez-Pérez and Osca (2001). Some examples of the items that make up this scale are the

following: "My work schedule often clashes with my family life" or "When I get home after work, I'm too tired to do the things I'd like to do". There were 7-point response options for both scales, from very much disagree (1) to very much agree (7). The alpha coefficient obtained in this study was .88.

Following the two existing lines of research to define and assess the salience of role identity in the area of the work-family interface, the salience of the family role identity variable, as opposed to the salience of work role identity was assessed both in terms of the relative centrality of one role with regard to another, and in terms of the absolute importance of each role in one's life. One way of assessing the relative centrality in empirical literature has been to ask the participants to deal out one hundred points among five roles or categories: leisure, community, work, religion and family (Whitley and England, 1977), such that the points given to the work domain, for example, are used to determine the relative level of work centrality. This assessment in relative terms forces the individual to order and assess each role and, consequently, to choose between the roles according to their degree of importance (Carlson and Kacmar, 2000). Seen as a study mainly interested in the family role as opposed to the work role, the salience or relative centrality of the family role with regard to the work role was measured using the following item: "Place a cross (X) in the box that best expresses your position as regards the two extremes (work/family) shown below". Both extremes were separated by a 7-point scale (work 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 family), where (1) represents "The least important thing in my life" and (7) represents "The most important thing in my life". The assessment in absolute terms does not force the individual to choose between the two roles, but it does ask him or her to assess the degree of importance that a given role has in his or her life. So this approach requires two separate questions: one for work, and another for family. A measure of the absolute importance of each domain was then obtained by means of two questions: "How important is work in your life?", "How important is the family in your life?" (Stoner et al., 1991). The response scale for both items is a Likert-type scale with a 7-point response format, ranging from (1) "The least important thing in my life" to (7) "The most important thing in my life".

The general job satisfaction was assessed using the Spanish adaptation (by Bravo et al. (1994) of the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (Weiss et al., 1965). The scale is made up of 5 items. Four of these items refer to specific aspects of the job, such as wages, job safety, friendship with work colleagues and the supervisor's ability to make decisions. The fifth item refers to the general job satisfaction. The response scale is a Likert-type scale with a 7-point format, ranging from (1) "Not at all satisfied" to (7) "Exceedingly satisfied".

## Procedure

The information was collected by means of an anonymous questionnaire made up from different scales used in the study. Participation in the study was voluntary. In the case of the PAS sector, the questionnaire was handed out individually and personally during working hours. In the case of the PDI sector, the questionnaire was sent through the Administrative Staff of the Department to which the participants belonged. In both cases, the envelope included a presentation letter in which the study was shown, guaranteeing that the data would be kept anonymous and confidential, and an explanation of how to fill out the questionnaire was also included. In order to maintain the participants' anonymity, once finished they placed the duly completed questionnaire in the envelope addressed to the researchers, and the said envelope was then sent to the researchers through the internal mail system. 350 questionnaires were handed out, and 193 were returned; of which

only 162 could be used in this study.

## RESULTS

The SPSS statistics package (version 15.0 for Windows) was used to analyse the data.

### Preliminary analyses

Before analysing the study's hypotheses, a range of exploratory analyses were carried out on the central variables in this study. Firstly we checked to see if there were any differences according to professional category or job and gender in: WIF, relative salience of family compared with work, absolute salience of the family role, absolute salience of the work role, and the level of general job satisfaction. The results of the mean difference analyses (Student's t-test) indicated that there were significant differences according to the professional category in WIF ( $t = -4.830$ ,  $p < .001$ ), such that the PDI staff experience a higher level of WIF (Mean = 4.277, SD = 1.312) than the PAS staff (Mean = 3.205, SD = 1.362). Likewise, significant differences were found in the relative salience of the family role as opposed to that of the work role ( $t = 2.518$ ,  $p = .013$ ), such that the PAS staff place more importance on the family compared with work (Mean = 6.23, SD = .912) than the PDI staff (Mean = 5.79, SD = 1.085). No significant differences were obtained in any of the variables according to gender. The typical deviations and means can be seen in Table 1.

Furthermore, in order to verify whether there were any significant differences between the degree of absolute importance of the work role and of the family role, a mean difference analysis (t-test) was carried out for the related samples. The results indicated that there were significant differences ( $t = -.17409$ ,  $p < .001$ ), such that the degree of importance given to the family role was higher (Mean = 6.27, SD = .917) than that given to the work role (Mean = 4.50, SD = .829). These results were maintained for each gender, separately (Women:  $t = -11.600$ ,  $p < .001$ ; Men:  $t = -13.343$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

Likewise, partial correlation analyses were carried out, controlling the effect of the professional category, between gender, WIF, the relative salience of the family role with regard to the work role, the absolute salience of the work role, the absolute salience of the family role and general job satisfaction. The results indicated that WIF had a negative and significant relationship with general job satisfaction ( $r = -.410$ ,  $p < .001$ ). The relative salience of the family role with regard to the work role had a positive relationship with the absolute salience of the family role ( $r = .707$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and a negative relationship with the absolute salience of the work role ( $r = -.317$ ,  $p < .001$ ). The absolute salience of the work role had a positive relationship with general job satisfaction ( $r = .345$ ,  $p < .001$ ), (Table 2).

**Table 1.** Means and SD of the variables according to gender.

Variables	Sex- gender	Mean	SD
Job implication	Women	4.56	.750
	Man	4.52	.907
Family implication	Women	6.30	1.096
	Man	6.20	.811
Family-Job implication	Women	5.92	1.139
	Man	5.96	.943
Job satisfaction	Women	5.29	1.462
	Man	5.31	1.313
WIF	Women	3.859	1.5229
	Man	3.984	1.2961

**Table 2.** Partial intercorrelations between variables, when the effect of the job characteristics is controlled.

Variables	1	2	3	4	5
1. WIF	-				
2. Family-Job implication	.136	-			
3. Family implication	.057	.736**	-		
4. Job implication	-.043	-.419**	-.218*	-	
5. Job satisfaction	-.539**	-.023	.095	.058	-

\*\*  $p < .001$ ; \*  $p = .055$ .

### Primary analyses

In order to put hypothesis 1 to the test, that is, to verify whether the relationship between WIF and general job satisfaction is stronger in women than in men, partial correlation analyses between WIF and general job satisfaction were carried out separately for each gender, controlling the professional category (PDI and PAS). The results indicated that there was a negative and significant relationship between both variables in the case of women ( $r = -.489$ ,  $p < .001$ ), but that there was no relationship in the case of men ( $r = -.190$ ,  $p = .108$ ).

In order to put hypothesis 2 to the test, that is, to verify whether gender has any significant moderating effects on the relationship between WIF and job satisfaction, a hierarchical step-by-step regression analysis was carried out in which professional category was included, in the first step, as the independent variable, with the purpose of keeping check on the effects of the job's characteristics. In the second step, WIF was included. In the third step, gender, and in the last step, the interaction of WIF with gender. General job satisfaction was taken as the dependent variable. Step 1 shows that the job's characteristics are not a significant predictor of job satisfaction. In steps 2 and 3, only WIF had a significant

relationship with job satisfaction. In step 4, gender and the interaction of WIF with gender had a significant relationship with job satisfaction (change in  $R$  squared =  $.025$ ,  $p < .05$ ). The effect of interaction appears as the most significant in predicting job satisfaction, indicating that women are less satisfied with their job than men. The final model was significant,  $F(1, 154) = 4.640$ ,  $p < .05$ , and explains the 16% variance in job satisfaction (Table 3).

In order to verify hypothesis 3, that is, to verify whether the salience of the family role as opposed to the work role has any significant moderating effects on the relationship between WIF and job satisfaction in the case of women, but not in the case of men, hierarchical step-by-step regression analyses were carried out separately for each gender.

The first analysis aimed to verify whether the relative centrality of the family role with regard to the work role has any moderating effects on the relationship between WIF and job satisfaction. In the first step, the professional category was included as the independent variable, with the purpose of controlling its effects. In the second step, WIF, in the third, the relative salience of the family role with regard to the work role, and in the fourth step, the interaction of WIF with that salience was included. In the

**Table 3.** Coefficients of the hierarchical step-by-step regression analysis for the moderating effect of gender.

Step	Factor	B	SE B	B
1	Job	-.132	.228	-.046
2	Job	-.271	.228	.095
	WIF	-.372	.076	-.392**
3	Job	.275	.231	.096
	WIF	-.372	.076	-.393**
	Gender	.028	.204	.010
4	Job	.302	.229	.106
	WIF	-.185	.115	-.195
	Gender	1.248	.602	.462*
	WIF × Gender	-.310	.144	-.512*

$R^2 = .002$  for step 1;  $\Delta R^2 = .134$  for step 2 ( $p < .001$ );  $\Delta R^2 = .000$  for step 3 ( $p = .900$ );  $\Delta R^2 = .025$  for step 4 ( $p = .033$ ). \*\* $p < .001$ . \* $p < .05$ .

**Table 4.** Coefficients of the hierarchical step-by-step regression analysis for the moderating effect of the salience of the family role as opposed to the work role (in relative terms) in both genders.

Step	Factor	Women			Men		
		B	SE B	$\beta$	B	SE B	$\beta$
1	Job	-.445	.310	-.158	2.65	.353	.089
2	Job	-.181	.291	.064	.435	.363	.146
	WIF	-.506	.094	-.556**	-.205	.123	-.203
3	Job	.208	.303	.074	.388	.372	.130
	WIF	-.511	.096	-.561	-.198	.124	-.196
	Family-Job S.	.042	.121	.034	-.105	.168	-.075
4	Job	.212	.305	-.451	.244	.760	.241
	WIF	-.411	.389	.085	.159	.477	.114
	Family-Job S.	.104	.262	-.127	-.072	.122	-.484
	WIF × Family-Job S.	-.018	.066				

Women:  $R^2 = .025$  for step 1;  $\Delta R^2 = .259$  for step 2 ( $p < .001$ );  $\Delta R^2 = .001$  for step 3 ( $p = .727$ );  $\Delta R^2 = .001$  for step 4 ( $p = .790$ ).  
Men:  $R^2 = .008$  for step 1;  $\Delta R^2 = .038$  for step 2 ( $p = .100$ );  $\Delta R^2 = .005$  for step 3 ( $p = .535$ );  $\Delta R^2 = .005$  for step 4 ( $p = .557$ ).  
\*\* $p < .001$ .

case of women, step 1 showed that the job's characteristics are not a significant predictor. In steps 2 and 3, WIF was a significant predictor, while in step 4 there were no significant predictive factors. The final model was not significant, explaining 28.6% of job satisfaction (Table 4). In short, the results revealed that, in the case of women, there are only significant main effects according to WIF, but there are no significant interactive effects of WIF with the relative salience of the family role as opposed to the work role. In the case of men, no effect was found to

be significant (Table 4).

In the second regression analysis, the aim was to verify whether the absolute importance of the family role, as opposed to the absolute importance of the work role in life, has moderating effects on the relationship between WIF and job satisfaction. In the first step, the professional category was included as the independent variable. In the second step, WIF was included. In the third step, the absolute salience of the family role was included, as well as the absolute salience of the work role, and in the

**Table 5.** Coefficients of the hierarchical step-by-step regression analysis for the moderating effect of the salience of the family role and of the work (in absolute terms) in both genders.

Step	Factor	Women			Men		
		B	SE B	$\beta$	B	SE B	$\beta$
1	Job	-.399	.316	-.141	.382	.354	.127
2	Job	.230	.299	.081	.605	.366	.201
	WIF	-.498	.095	-.551**	-.237	.122	-.236
3	Job	.238	.303	.084	.439	.292	.146
	WIF	-.507	.094	-.562**	-.181	.096	-.181
	Family S.	.235	.137	.170	.157	.148	.098
	Work S.	.207	.184	.113	.860	.132	.599**
4	Job	.178	.304	.063	.345	.304	.114
	WIF	-.527	1.504	.584	-1.918	1.155	-1.915
	Family S.	-.211	.365	-.153	-.208	.550	-.130
	Work S.	-.369	.480	-.201	.259	.519	.181
	WIF x Work S.	-.129	.264	-.756	.287	.245	1.444
	WIF x Family S.	-.114	.208	-.859	.194	.164	1.323
	WIF x Family S. x Work S.	.045	.037	1.763	-.025	.033	-.844

Note. Women:  $R^2 = .020$  for step 1;  $\Delta R^2 = .255$  for step 2 ( $p < .001$ );  $\Delta R^2 = .032$  for step 3 ( $p = .181$ );  $\Delta R^2 = .037$  for step 4 ( $p = .259$ ).

Men:  $R^2 = .016$  for step 1;  $\Delta R^2 = .056$  for step 2 ( $p = .056$ );  $\Delta R^2 = .378$  for step 3 ( $p < .001$ );  $\Delta R^2 = .022$  for step 4 ( $p = .460$ ). \*\* $p < .001$ ; \*  $p < .05$ .

fourth, the interactions of WIF with each of them separately, and with the interaction of those saliences. In the case of women, significant main effects of WIF were only found in the different steps. The final model was not significant, explaining 34% of job satisfaction variance (see Table 5). In the case of men, there were only significant main effects of the salience of the work role in step 3, indicating a positive influence of that variable over general job satisfaction. The final model was not significant, explaining 2% of job satisfaction variance (Table 5).

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Taking the role identity salience theory and the gender role socialisation theory as our framework of reference, the fundamental objective of this study was to analyse the moderating role of gender in the relationship between WIF and job satisfaction when the job characteristics are controlled. We also aimed to verify the differential effects for each gender of the salience of the family role, as opposed to the work role, as moderators of the relationship between WIF and job satisfaction. In keeping with these objectives, three hypotheses were raised, the results of which are thus discussed.

### Hypothesis 1: The relationship between WIF and general job satisfaction is stronger in women than in men

In keeping with the hypothesis, the results revealed that

while for women the relationship between WIF and job satisfaction is high and significant, no such relationship exists in the case of men. These results are consistent with those found in other studies (Allen et al., 2000; Bruck et al., 2002; Grandey et al., 2005; Kinnunen et al. 2004; Kossek and Ozeki, 1998; Wiersma and Van den Berg, 1991), which also found a higher relationship in women than in men. It is worth highlighting that, while most of these studies have obtained a relationship that is significant for both genders (where the difference between women and men lies in the effect size), in this study, WIF does not significantly relate to job satisfaction among men. So the results appear to be more consistent with those obtained in other studies in which the relationship is only significant in women, but not in men (e.g. Kinnunen et al., 2004; Wiersma and Van den Berg, 1991).

### Hypothesis 2: Gender has significant moderating effects on the relationship between WIF and general job satisfaction

In agreement with the hypothesis, the results indicated that there are significant interactive effects of WIF with gender. So we have found support for the proposition laid out in hypothesis 2. As a result, we may state that gender has a moderating effect on the relationship between WIF and job satisfaction. As was to be expected, women were revealed to have a lower level of job satisfaction than men. These results are also in keeping with those obtained



by Grandey et al. (2005), who found that WIF predicted job satisfaction in women, but not in the case of men, after controlling job characteristics such as the job's autonomy and monotony, as well as mood. These results support the role identity salience and gender role socialisation theories, as when the job's characteristics are controlled, WIF predicts a lower level of job satisfaction in women than in men.

**Hypothesis 3: The salience of family role has significant moderating effects on the relationship between WIF and general job satisfaction in the case of women, but not in the case of men**

Contrary to what would be expected, according to hypothesis 3, the results revealed the non-existence of any significant interactive effects of WIF with the salience of the family role as opposed to the work role, both in relative and absolute terms, among men and among women. So the salience of the family role in women appears not to moderate the relationship between WIF and job satisfaction. These results are consistent with those obtained by Noor (2004), who found that, in a sample of women, the salience of the family role did not moderate the relationship between WIF and job satisfaction.

Given that those effects were also not found among men, we may state that there are no gender differences in the moderating effects of the salience of the family role in the relationship between WIF and job satisfaction. The preliminary analyses revealed the non-existence of gender differences in the degree of importance given to the family and work. Given that there are no gender differences in the salience of the family role, it is reasonable to expect there to be no gender differences in the moderating effect of the salience of the family role. However, the preliminary analyses also indicated that the degree of importance that the participants place on family was significantly greater than the importance they place on work, and this result was maintained when each gender was considered separately. The role identity salience theory suggests that, when the roles that are self-relevant (in other words, the roles that are central to our identity) are threatened, we appraise the source of the threat in a negative way, generating negative attitudes towards the source of the threat (Carlson and Kacmar, 2000; Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985; Lazarus, 1991; Noor, 2004). Consequently, although there may not be any gender differences in the degree of importance placed on the family, according to the role identity salience theory we would expect the family role salience to have moderating effects on the relationship between WIF and job satisfaction, both in women and in men. Moreover, some studies, such as that carried out by Carlson and Kacmar (2000), point out that work role conflict has a greater impact on job satisfaction in those

workers who have a high centrality of the family role. However, we obtained no confirmation of that proposition. Consequently, the results obtained do not appear to be consistent with the explanations offered in the role identity salience theory and in the gender role theory with regard to the reason why women who experience WIF show a lower level of job satisfaction than men who are in the same situation.

Furthermore, the general pattern of results obtained indicates that WIF emerges as the most significant variable when it comes to predicting a low level of job satisfaction among women. However, in the case of men, the salience of, or involvement with work emerges as the most significant variable when it comes to predicting a high job satisfaction. These results are inconsistent with those obtained in other studies in which the salience of the work role has been found to relate positively to job satisfaction in women too (e.g. Noor, 2004), and there is also a direct effect, over and above, the main effect of the work-family conflict. So, the factors that fundamentally predict job satisfaction in the men and women in our sample are different.

By way of conclusion, we may say that the results indicated that, in keeping with the role identity salience theory and with the gender role theory, the relationship between WIF and job satisfaction is greater among women than among men, and that gender emerges as a significant moderator of that relationship, even when the job characteristics are controlled. Nevertheless, the salience of the family role does not moderate the relationship between WIF and job satisfaction neither among the women nor among the men, despite the fact that both genders assess the family role, as opposed to the work role, as being the most important in their life. So the results obtained do not support the proposition that states that, when the roles that are central to a person's identity are threatened by other roles, negative attitudes towards the threatening roles are developed (Carlson and Kacmar, 2000; Grandey et al., 2005; Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985; Lazarus, 1991). Consequently, the high level of importance or involvement with the family does not appear to explain why WIF predicts a low level of job satisfaction in women. Noor (2004) did not find any moderating effects for the family role salience either, and suggests that the family salience is probably a more important predictor in the case of satisfaction with one's family and with one's life. However, we believe that there is at least one alternative reason why the family role salience does not moderate the relationship between WIF and job satisfaction. The operational definition, and therefore, the way of assessing salience, may be having an influence on the obtained results. According to Stryker (1980) the identity salience refers to the probability that an individual will develop an identity through situations. From this perspective, an identity is salient when it is invoked, whether intentionally or not, in a number of situations (Stryker, 1980; Stryker and Serpe, 1992).

However, many researchers have conceptualised salience as a conscious organisation of identities and, alternatively, they have defined and measured salience in terms of the importance, centrality or relevance of a particular identity for the self-concept or as “the relative ranking of the identity with respect to other identities” (Marcussen et al., 2004; Rosenberg, 1979; Thoits, 1991). A number of authors argue that salience and these other conceptualisations, such as centrality, are different and that they should be specifically assessed (Callero, 1985; Stryker and Serpe, 1994). The two existing lines of research have been used in this study to deal with the influence of role identity salience in the work-family interface, and the results are inconsistent, as, for instance, those obtained by Noor (2004), using a measure of the importance of each role for identity. So perhaps future research projects should reconsider and control the way of operationalising, that is, of defining and assessing the role identity salience.

Given that gender emerges as a moderating variable in the relationship between WIF and job satisfaction, we would assume that other variables, which co-vary with gender, and which have yet to be identified, are influencing that relationship. One alternative is to consider, not just the salience of role identity, understood as psychological or cognitive salience, but also the behavioural involvement with role, where this is understood as the investment of physical resources and time in order to meet family responsibilities and demands on a behavioural level (Carlson and Frone, 2003). To this effect, some researchers (Kossek and Ozeki, 1998; Ford et al., 2007) suggest that the behavioural involvement with the family role could possibly have a major effect on that relationship.

One question related to our results is worth a more detailed consideration: why, in our study, there are no differences in the extent to which family and work are central for each gender, as the gender role theory establishes. We believe that at least one of the reasons that may explain these results is the possible influence of cultural effects. Different studies indicate that culture affects the significances, perceptions and experiences of individuals with regard to work, family, gender and work-family conflict (Blair-Loy and Frenkel, 2005; Shapiro and Hammer, 2004). A significant cultural dimension is the cultural models of family and work. These models basically reflect the significance and importance of family and work for both genders. Spain is characterised by a gender culture that leans towards strong family relationships and support networks, and towards a low level of individualism (Duncan and Pfau-Effinger, 2000; Flaquer, 2004; Hofstede, 1980; Poelmans, 2001). So, as some studies indicate, the family as an institution is very strong for both genders, and the perception of the family's importance emerges as a significant cause of work-family conflict for both genders, such that the greater the importance men and women place on the

family, the less work-family conflict they experience (De Luis et al., 2004).

From this cultural perspective, the fact that we have not obtained any data to support the part played by role identity salience in the relationship between WIF and job satisfaction could also be explained. Some research indicates that the individualism-versus-collectivism factor is an important variable in the work-family domain (Masuda et al., 2008; Spector et al., 2004; Yang et al., 2000). Given the tendency of individualist cultures to stress the importance of meeting the needs of self-improvement and self-fulfilment, separating or segmenting the experiences of the work and family roles (Lu et al., 2006; Shafiro and Hammer, 2004; Yang et al., 2000), Yang (2005) argues that people in individualist societies tend to separate their identity with work and with the family, instead of perceiving their identities as a single whole. However, in collectivist cultures, work tends to be seen, not as a means to promote oneself, but as a way of improving the family's well-being, where the family is the central role in their lives (Lu et al., 2006; Masuda et al., 2008; Spector et al., 2004; Yang et al., 2000). That is why people in collectivist societies tend to perceive their identity with work and the family as intertwined, that is, as a single whole, rather than separated or segmented identities (Yang, 2005).

According to the research carried out by Hofstede (1980), Spain is a less individualist and more collectivist country than other, Anglo-American countries such as, for example, the USA or Canada. From this perspective, we believe that the degree in which the family is central to the identity of Spanish workers cannot explain the relationship between WIF and job satisfaction, due to the fact that they might not perceive work as a source of threat to their fulfilment of the family role, as in collectivist societies, work is perceived as a means to improve the family's well-being and, therefore, as another responsibility that corresponds to both genders in the family. In short, the work role may not be perceived as an intrusion on the family role, as it is intertwined with the family roles. One support for this reasoning comes from different studies in which these cultural values are shown to possibly influence the degree in which work-family conflict relates to job satisfaction (Grzywacz et al., 2007; Masuda et al., 2008; Spector et al., 2004; Yang et al., 2000). So, while in Anglo-American countries, a moderately strong relationship is usually obtained between work-family conflict and job satisfaction, not all studies that have been carried out in cultural contexts outside of the USA have been consistent. To be more specific, different studies carried out in collectivist cultures, such as Asia, Latin America and Eastern Europe, do not find these relationships or they find the relationships to be significantly weaker than those found in Anglo-American countries (Aryee and Luk, 1996; Aryee et al., 1999; Grzywacz et al., 2007; Spector et al., 2007). Spector et al. (2007) argue that people in individualist countries are

more likely to emphasise their own needs, and this is why they could respond more negatively to a job that interferes with their needs.

## LIMITATIONS AND CONTRIBUTIONS

Although we believe that our study contributes somewhat to reducing the void in knowledge regarding gender differences in the relationship between work-family conflict and job satisfaction, there are some methodological limitations that need to be considered when interpreting the results. To this effect, the relatively small sample size should be taken into account, and the fact that the sample is made up of workers from two professional categories from one single organisation. This highlights the fact that this sample has particular characteristics, so the considerations implied by these results must be limited to the population that is represented by the analysed sample. As mentioned above, another possible limitation of this study is the approach or line of assessment followed to assess the salience of the family and work roles. Moreover, a three-item measure may not be sufficiently sensitive to grasp the complexity of this construct. So future research studies should pay special attention to the approach or line of assessment, refining the operationalisation of this variable. Lastly, our study is correlational and self-reporting, which also poses a limitation.

In spite of the aforementioned limitations, we believe that the study contributes in different ways. On one hand, it contributes to broadening our knowledge about the role of gender in the relationship between WIF and job satisfaction. Although it only focuses on one of the dimensions of work-family conflict, that is, WIF, it recognises and defines its multi-dimensional nature, helping to clarify the relationship between this dimension and job satisfaction. This aspect is extremely important, as a greater knowledge of how the dimensions of work-family conflict are associated with job satisfaction may help to prioritise and design assistance programmes in businesses and organisations, and to improve counselling action. To this effect, we cannot overlook the negative consequences, both personal and organisational, that come with work-family conflict and the resulting low level of job satisfaction (physical and psychological distress, low level of productivity and commitment, turnover intention, etc.).

Furthermore, given that most studies dealing with this relationship have mainly been carried out in Anglo-American or Asian countries (Shapiro and Hammer, 2004; Spector et al., 2004), this study contributes to broadening our knowledge about how workers from a different culture (that is, the Spanish culture) experience work-family conflict and its consequences on their work attitudes. As Gelfand and Knight (2005) point out, the contemporary global economy requires us to know how

work-family relationships operate within and between cultures. Therefore, the managers of multicultural and transnational organisations could be more effective if they knew how work-family conflict affects the work attitudes of employees from different cultures, as the policies that have been implemented to reduce work-family stress and, consequently, increase job satisfaction, that have been effective in other societies, such as in North American societies, may not be so effective in a different culture, such as the Spanish culture.

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