BALANCE SELF-EFFICACY AND THE WORK-FAMILY INTERFACE

ORGANIZATIONAL WORK-FAMILY RESOURCES, ROLE OVERLOAD AND THE WORK-FAMILY INTERFACE:

THE MEDIATING ROLE OF BALANCE SELF-EFFICACY

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**ABSTRACT**

Recent years have witnessed a growing concern for individuals’ abilities to effectively manage work and family. Employees are demanding balance between work and personal life and employers, who are interested in attracting and retaining talent, are looking for ways to respond. One way employers are responding is by implementing work-family initiatives and encouraging a family-supportive culture. In this thesis, I investigate the relationship of such resources (family-supportive organizational perceptions-FSOP and perceptions of implementation of work-family initiatives) and contextual demands (role overload) with the work-family interface (work-to-family conflict and enrichment).

In response to research calls to highlight the role of the individual in shaping the relationships between work and family experiences, I introduce the construct and measure of balance self-efficacy. I define balance self-efficacy as one’s beliefs about one’s own ability to manage resources, demands, and stakeholders from the work and family domains. I argue that balance self-efficacy mediates the relationships between resources and demands from one side and the work-family interface from the other side.

I draw on the Conservation of Resources Theory and the Work-Home Resource Model to propose that balance self-efficacy is a personal resource that enables the individual to perceive less conflict and more enrichment between work and family. I propose that balance self-efficacy is largely drawn from the individual’s perception of his or her context. Hypotheses were tested in a sample of 420 participants employed at a financial institution in the United Arab Emirates. Hypotheses were tested using multiple regression and Bootstrapping techniques using PROCESS by Preacher and Hayes (2008).

The results show that the individual’s cognitive assessment of their own ability to manage work and family (balance self-efficacy) relates negatively to work-to-family conflict and positively to work-to-family enrichment, thus suggesting that balance self-efficacy is not only a resilience resource that employees refer to in moments of conflict but also an enriching resource that allows the individual to view participation in the work domain as beneficial for participation in the family domain. Results also suggest that the employee’s perception of the messages emitted by the organization in the form of perceptions of family supportiveness and perceptions of implementation of work-family initiatives relate positively to an increased sense of balance self-efficacy. Contextual demands, in the form of role overload, relate negatively to balance self-efficacy.

This thesis aims to contribute to the resource-view of the work-family interface and highlight personal agency in determining perceptions of conflict and enrichment between work and family. It does so by focusing on the individual’s assessment of their beliefs in their own ability to manage work and family and the role of organizational context in determining that sense of efficacy. By doing so, the purpose is to shed the light on the malleable aspects of the work-family experiences that can be positively manipulated.

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# CHAPTER I

# INTRODUCTION

Employees are demanding balance between their work and personal lives (Strack, Booker, Von Der Linden, & Strohmayr, 2014). The concern for balance, or lack thereof, between work and family (Hoganson, 2011; p.i) has spurred national and international debates on the role of organizations and work cultures in attenuating the incompatibility between the two main roles in adults’ lives (e.g., Slaughter, 2012; Sandberg, 2013). Organizations are tasked with the mission to implement work-family initiatives, such as telecommuting and flexible scheduling, and to create a climate that recognizes employees’ family roles (Kossek, Lewis, & Hammer, 2010). However, a family-supportive work environment is often challenged by increased job demands. While organizations might genuinely hope to create an environment that supports their employees’ family responsibilities, role overload might deter employees from achieving balance between work and family.

In order to contribute to our understanding of how factors from the work domain shape experiences between work and family, I take a closer look at the relationships between organizational work-family resources (work-family culture and implementation of work-family initiatives), demands (role overload) and the work-family interface (conflict and enrichment). *Conflict* is the extent to which one views demands from work and family as incompatible (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1986); *enrichment* is the extent to which one views their participation in the work (family) domain as beneficial for functioning in the family (work) domain (J. H. Greenhaus & Powell, 2006).

 I argue that resources and demands relate to work-family conflict and enrichment through balance self-efficacy, which I define as individuals’ beliefs about their own ability to manage resources, demands, and stakeholders from the work and the family domains. That level of confidence will then relate to the level of perceived conflict and enrichment between work and family.

I specifically look at how two types of resources relate to balance self-efficacy. Specifically I examine family-supportive work culture and employees’ perception of the implementation of work-family initiatives. Family-supportive culture is the “shared assumptions, beliefs, and values regarding the extent to which an organization supports and values the integration of employees’ work and family lives” (Thompson, Beauvais, & Lyness, 1999; p.392). Implementation of work-family initiatives are the steps taken by the organization, beyond making policies available, to encourage use of work-family initiatives (Eaton, 2003). Ryan and Kossek (2008) emphasize that implementation measures should not alienate or penalize users. I measure implementation from the employees’ perspective. In addition to resources, I also consider the impact of role overload, which is defined as “having too much to do”(Baruch, Biener, & Barnett, 1987).

I examine the above relationships to respond to several calls in the work-family literature. First, Kossek, Baltes, & Matthews (2011) argue that work-family research has granted limited attention to the role of the individual in shaping their work-family experience and that future research should focus on empowering the individual. I therefore focus on self-efficacy given the concept’s rooting in personal agency (Bandura, 1977); balance self-efficacy offers an explanation of how employees’ view of their environment can affect their decision to complete the tasks needed to manage work and family responsibilities. Second, this thesis contributes to an emerging resource-view of the work-family experience. The work-home resource model (ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012) argues that contextual resources and demands drive the development and depletion of personal resources, which in turn affect outcomes in either the work or family domains. That view suggests that contextual resources and demands have a mediated effect on the work-family interface and frames personal resources, such as balance self-efficacy, as a mediator. Role overload and a family-supportive culture have long been examined as direct antecedents of work-family conflict, and to a lesser extent enrichment, in this thesis I seek to understand the mechanism through which resources and demands relate to the work-family interface.

I Use the Conservation of Resources theory (Hobfoll, 1989, 2001, 2002) to argue that *contextual resources* (work-family culture and implementation of work-family initiatives) contribute to the development of the *personal resource* of balance self-efficacy. On the other hand, *contextual demands* (role overload) decrease balance self-efficacy. In turn, balance self-efficacy relates to conflict and enrichment. According to the work-home resource model (ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012) contextual resources are paralleled with contextual demands. While contextual resources help to generate personal resources that positively relate to the work-family experience, contextual demands exert a negative effect on personal resources and will thus have a negative effect on the work-family interface.

By examining the aforementioned relationships, I aim to answer the following research questions: a) do organizational work-family resources and role overload relate similarly to both the conflict and enrichment aspects of work-family balance? b) is balance self-efficacy observable and relevant to the work-family discourse? c) does balance self-efficacy mediate the relationships between work-family resources, overload and each of conflict and enrichment?

To answer the above research questions, I collected data from employees in a financial institution in the United Arab Emirates. Hypotheses were tested in a sample of 420 participants. The context allowed testing hypotheses in a non-Anglo-Saxon context which predominates the work-family literature (Poelmans, Greenhaus, et al., 2013).

## Contributions

### Juxtaposition of enrichment and conflict

I examine the mechanism through which the same set of resources and demands relate to each of conflict and enrichment. That is important for two reasons.

First, the work-family literature seems to be divided into two camps; one camp focuses on conflict and another focuses on enrichment (Chen & Powell, 2012). However, enrichment and conflict are not mutually exclusive and can co-occur (Frone, 2003). Examining both enrichment and conflict responds to research calls to consider both conflicting and enriching aspects of the work-family experiences. For example, Chen and Powell (2012) argue that a resource view of the work-family interface should allow us to examine how the competing forces of resources and demands affect both enrichment and conflict. The work-home resource model (ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012) proposes that the negative and the positive experiences that are transferred from the work to the home domain are a result of resources generation and resources depletion. Resource generation results in enrichment, while depletion results in conflict.

Second, in addition to being divided between conflict and enrichment, the literature is also noted for abundant research on conflict (Eby, Casper, Lockwood, Bordeaux, & Brinley, 2005) and much more limited research on enrichment (Kelly et al., 2008). Therefore there is a need to examine the antecedents of enrichment. Specifically, this study contributes empirical evidence on the nature of the relationships between organizational work-family resources, overload and enrichment. Such evidence is scarce given that most studies focusing on enrichment have mostly examined the outcomes of the construct while the enablers of enrichment have rarely been studied (Siu et al., 2010).

### Balance self-efficacy

Balance self-efficacy is introduced as a mediator between family-supportive culture, perception of implementation of work-family initiatives, role overload and each of work-family conflict and enrichment. Self-efficacy is a resource (Hobfoll, 2002) that has been repeatedly found to be an antecedent for behavioural change (Bandura, 1977,1997, 2011). However, in the work-family literature, discussion of self-efficacy and its importance in shaping experiences between work and family is limited (Hennessy & Lent, 2008). Only a handful of studies look at the role of a domain-specific self-efficacy (e.g. Butler, Gasser, & Smart, 2004; Cinamon, 2006; Hennessy & Lent, 2008).

These self-efficacy studies focus on how workers deal with conflict between work and family (e.g., Cinamon, 2006). I depart from the assumption of inherent conflict between work and family, and take into account the fact that work and family can be both conflicting and enriching (Frone, 2003). I thus introduce “balance self-efficacy”, which measures beliefs about one’s ability to manage demands, resources, and stakeholders from the work and family domains. Management of work and family roles involves specific proactive tasks that can be undertaken by the individual to avoid conflict and allow the work and family experiences to be mutually beneficial. Such tasks may include the division of time and attention. Balance self-efficacy does not assume a persistent conflict between work and family. This new conceptualization of self-efficacy is possible due to advancements in the literature that conceptualize the work-family interface holistically in terms of balance (Carlson, Grzywacz, & Zivnuska, 2009) or satisfaction with balance (Valcour, 2007).

I also depart from previous research that examines general self-efficacy in the work-family literature (e.g. Wayne, Grzywacz, Carlson, & Kacmar, 2007). According to Bandura (2011) self-efficacy is a domain-specific measure which should be tied to desirable attainments (Bandura, 1991). In other words, self-efficacy should examine one’s belief in their own ability to accomplish specific tasks because general self-efficacy challenges the basic premise of social cognition theory which argues that human behaviour is situational (Bandura, 2012).

Understanding whether balance self-efficacy is observable and relevant to the work-family discourse has implications for the degree of malleability of the work-family experience; it has implications for whether it is possible to increase employees’ balance self-efficacy through training. Work-family researchers can benefit from advancements in the social cognition literature to devise interventions that boost self-efficacy in managing work and family. Organizations might thus be able to help employees increase their sense of balance between work and family through increased self-efficacy, which contributes to increased job satisfaction and decreased job stress (Grzywacz & Carlson, 2007). Moreover, focusing on balance self-efficacy is important in the work-family literature because it places the individual back at the center of the work-family experience. Researchers have been critical of an overemphasis on structure of the workplace which has disempowered the individual (Kossek, Baltes, & Matthews, 2011). Research needs to look for ways to empower the individual.

### Investigating mediation

Despite the popularity of resources such as family-supportive culture in helping employees balance work and family, the mechanism through which they relate to the work-family interface has not yet been identified (Kelly et al., 2008). This research gap has two elements to it; first, addressing how a certain resource or demand affects the work-family interface has to go beyond examining whether it relates only to conflict because the work-family interface consists of both negative and positive experiences- conflict and enrichment (Frone, 2003). Understanding the relationship between a variable and the work-family interface warrants an examination of the relationship with conflict *and* enrichment. Previous research has mostly focused on the conflict aspect of the interface (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985;Frone, Russel, & Cooper, 1992; Michel, Kotrba, Mitchelson, Clark, & Baltes, 2011).

The second element to this research gap is in the need to examine the paths through which the context relates to their work-family experiences. Previous research established the direct link between supportive culture, role overload and work-family conflict; however, the mechanism through which they relate to conflict still needs investigation (Allen, 2001; Barrah et al., 2004; Kelly et al., 2008). Once relationships are established in the literature, a further understanding of those relationships requires examination of mediators (Kenny, 1977).

Understanding whether contextual factors relate to the work-family interface through the employees’ cognitive assessment of their ability to manage work and family has implications for both research and the practice. On the scholarly side, it allows us to understand whether contextual resources are conducive to the development of personal resources, such as balance self-efficacy. Personal resources hold added value and utility over contextual resources because they exist under the control of the individual and can thus be mobilized across domains as needed (ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012). Understanding the linkages between the context and balance self-efficacy is important for practitioners because it allows organizations to shape their context in ways that boost self-efficacy. Increased self-efficacy will then have positive influences on job performance and well being.

### Measuring perceptions of implementation

Measuring employees’ perceptions of implementation of work-family initiatives is important for two reasons. First, the measure departs from previous research practices that examine perceptions of availability of work-family initiatives (e.g., Allen, 2001; Anderson, Coffey, & Byerly, 2002). The perception of availability might actually be driven by the steps taken by the organization to implement work-family initiatives; it is thus more informative to understand whether those steps are visible to employees.

Second, implementation has been regarded as a signaling process (Eaton, 2003); one through which the organization sends messages of family supportiveness (Valcour, Ollier-Malaterre, Matz-Costa, Pitt-Catsouphes, & Brown, 2011). The extent to which an organization takes visible and elaborate steps to actively implement work-family initiatives and publicize policies is essential for employees who are trying to determine their behaviour when it comes to family issues (Ryan & Kossek, 2008). Values such as role primacy (Allen, 2001) and accommodations for family matters will be determined by the employee based on the messages they are receiving from implementation of work-family initiatives. In this thesis, I examine whether that perception increases one’s balance self-efficacy.

### Empirical evidence from a developing country

Data for this study were collected in a financial institution operating in the United Arab Emirates. One of the major criticisms of the work-family literature is that it has been mainly restricted to Western countries (Powell, Fransesco and Ling, 2009; Mokomane, 2014). Increasing cultural sensitivity of the theories requires examination of the relationships in different contexts. This study serves that purpose by examining the hypothesized relationships among employees in the United Arab Emirates.

# CHAPTER II

# LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this chapter is to define the main constructs that are used in the hypothesized model: work-family conflict, work-family enrichment, family-supportive culture, perception of implementation of work-family initiatives, balance self-efficacy, and role overload. Hypotheses will be introduced in the next chapter.

## Defining the work-family interface, conflict, and enrichment

The work-family interface refers to “the relationship between employees’ work lives and their nonwork pursuits” (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; p.76). The ‘interface’ is a generic term used to refer to the experiences that result from taking on paid employment while having family responsibilities (Eby et al., 2005). The term is meant to be non-prescriptive in that it does not impose a negative or a positive outlook on how the relationships between work and family should unfold (Mills, 2006). Therefore, the ‘interface’ could refer to the challenges associated with participating in the workforce while attending to family responsibilities (Mokomane, 2014), but it could also refer to the benefits of combining work and family, such as developing skills that are transferable to the other role (Wayne et al., 2007).

In this thesis I examine both the conflict and enrichment aspects of the work-family interface. Conflict is “a form of inter-role 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). The work-family literature is grounded in conflict research because early studies of work-family focused on societal and individual challenges associated with women’s participation in the workforce at times when gender roles persisted (Feldman & Hall, 2013).

The conflict aspect is based on a scarcity hypothesis, which holds that resources such as time and energy are finite and participation in multiple roles depletes resources (Goode, 1960). Accordingly, multiple social roles, such as being a parent and an employee, are said to be in constant struggle over a non-renewable pool of resources (Coser, 1974). This view contends that participation in work and family depletes resources and thus there is an inherent incompatibility between domains, which leads to conflict (Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985).

In 2001, Rothbard advanced the argument of role accumulation that was discussed by Marks (1977) and Sieber (1974) (Rothbard, 2001). According to Marks (1977) engagement in multiple roles does not deplete resources because resources are not finite but, rather, are inherently abundant and expandable. They are abundant in that use in one domain does not restrict use in the other domain; and expandable, in that use in one domain can develop more resources that are transferable to other domains (Kirchmeyer, 1992). For example, an employee who ‘depletes’ the resource of time at work is also ‘producing’ a sense of self-worth that can be used to perform a family role. Indeed, some studies have argued that work and family can be mutually enriching. Kirchmeyer (1992) found that participation in certain non-work domains such as parenting and community work is positively associated with greater organizational commitment and greater job satisfaction. Her study suggested that “time spent in certain non-work domains can expand the supply of resources which are available for work” (Kirchmeyer, 1992; p. 792). Rothbard’s research (2001) led to the development of work-family research that has a positive outlook on the relationship between the two domains. I therefore examine enrichment as “the extent to which experiences in one role improve the quality of life in the other role” (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006; p.72).

The relationships between work and family are bi-directional: work-to-family and family-to-work (Frone, 2003). Elements from the work domain affect outcomes in the family domain, while elements from the family domain affect outcomes in the work domain (ten Brummelhuis and Bakker, 2012; Aryee, Srinivas, & Tan, 2005; Grzywacz & Marks, 2000). For example, Frone et al., (1992) found that job stressors are related to work-to-family conflict, while family stressors are related to family-to-work conflict. Because I am examining factors that are in the organizational context, I focus on work-to-family conflict and enrichment[[1]](#footnote-1).

## Family-supportive culture

Family-supportive culture is defined as employees’ perceptions of the extent to which their organization is supportive of them seeking balance between work and family, which is also referred to as family-supportive organizational perceptions (FSOP) (Allen, 2001). The idea that organizations can be supportive of employees’ family responsibilities started gaining prominence in the 1990s. It is important to note that female participation in the labour market started increasing in the 1970s. By the 1990s, the family structures had shifted (e.g., dual earner families; single-parent families) but this was not yet reflected in how organizations structured jobs. The 1990s was a time when organizations needed to have a serious and bold look into their own culture (Solomon, 1994).

The importance of family-supportive culture was advanced by a study conducted by Thompson, Beauvais, and Lyness in 1999. In their study, culture took the form of a three-factor measure that captured career consequences, managerial support and organizational time demands; they found that work-family culture was negatively related with work-family conflict. Subsequent studies looked at those three factors either aggregately or separately. For example, Adkins and Premeaux (2012) found that managerial support moderated the relationship between hours worked and work-family conflict.

In 2001, Allen (2001) advanced the concept of family-supportive organizational perception (FSOP). She criticized the Thompson et al. (1999) scale as lacking the ‘sharedness’ factor of culture. In other words, as it sheds the light on the three factors contributing to culture, it fails to tap onto the general concept of how much is ‘work’ more salient than ‘family’ (Allen, 2001). She also argued that the Thompson et al. (1999) scale confounds organizational support with supervisor support. Allen (2001) found a negative relationship between family-supportive organizational perception and work-family conflict. Further studies investigating either specific aspects of culture or the culture aggregately established family-supportive culture as an antecedent to conflict (Kelly et al., 2008).

Our knowledge of the relationship between family-supportive culture and enrichment is much more limited; evidence on the relationship between culture and enrichment is still needed (Siu et al., 2010). I further investigate this relationship.

## Perception of implementation of work-family initiatives

Implementation of work-family initiatives are the steps taken by the organization, beyond making policies available, to encourage the actual use of work-family initiatives and not alienate or penalize users (Ryan and Kossek, 2008). Implementation is critical to the success of work-family programs because it determines whether employees feel free to use work-family policies (Eaton, 2003). It is instrumental in raising employees’ awareness of the availability of policies (Christensen, 1997) and in signaling to employees whether they are free to use the programs (Eaton, 2003; Kossek, Lewis, & Hammer, 2010) without threatening their job security (Thompson et al., 1999).

Adopting work-family policies could signal to employees that the organization values family roles (Allen, 2001) but that signaling is contingent upon implementation attributes (Ryan & Kossek, 2008). The employees are at the receiving end of the signalling process. Therefore, it is important to examine employees’ perceptions of the implementation. Perception of implementation will allow us to assess whether the steps that are taken by the organization are visible to employees. Examining implementation from the employees’ perceptive is important because perceptions affect employees’ behaviours beyond realities (Clarkson, Hirt, Jia, & Alexander, 2010). For example, Nishii et al. (2008) found that employees’ perceptions of the reasons behind adoption of human resources policies are indicative of employees’ commitment and satisfaction. I thus examine implementation of work-family initiatives from the perspective of employees.

To measure employees’ perception of implementation, I first identified the attributes of adequate implementation. Ryan and Kossek (2008) identify three attributes for implementation of work-family programs that do not exclude users: universality, negotiability and quality of communication[[2]](#footnote-2). The universality attribute ensures that work-family initiatives can be accessed by all employees; work-family policies do not favour an elite group of employees. The negotiability aspect of implementation takes into consideration that one policy might not fit all; work-family policies can thus be negotiated to fit personal needs. The third attribute, quality of communication, looks at the distribution of programs through communication, which is reflected in the steps taken by the organization to inform its employees about availability and use of policies. Communication can take the form of availability of pamphlets that describe the policies and inclusion of updates on work-family issues in management’s periodic reports (Kelly et al., 2009).

Implementation of work-family initiatives requires a cultural change (Ryan & Kossek, 2008). One step that can be taken by the organization to foster that change is to identify ‘change agents’ that are responsible for advancing work-family initiatives. Those can include hiring a staff member or forming a committee that is formally responsible for overseeing implementation of work-family programs (Kelly et al., 2008)

In summary, perception of implementation of work-family initiatives captures employees’ perception of the steps taken by the organization to encourage use of work-family policies through universality, consideration of individual needs, and proper dissemination of policies to employees. It encompasses visible organizational changes such as hiring staff members and forming committees that are responsible for overseeing implementation; channels of communication of policies, such as report from top management on work-family issues and information sessions; and examination of quality of policies mainly in terms of their universality and consideration of individual needs.

## Balance self-efficacy

I define balance self-efficacy as one’s beliefs about one’s own ability to manage demands, resources, and stakeholders from the work and family domains. By focusing on self-efficacy in the domain of managing work and family I respond to research calls to focus on malleable individual characteristics as a means for work-family research to “empower the individual” (Kossek et al., 2011; p. 363). Malleable characteristics, such as self-efficacy, can be shaped and influenced and are not as stable as personality traits. Research examining stable individual characteristics would, for example, examine the relationship between the five-factor personality model and work-family conflict and facilitation (Wayne, Musisca, & Fleeson, 2004). From a developmental point of view, the focus on personality traits is restrictive because it confines individuals to the benefits and limitations of their personality types. This could be problematic because the individual is then given a passive role and his or her influence in shaping the interface beyond what personality offers is overlooked.

The conceptualization of balance self-efficacy and the further hypothesized relationships with conflict and enrichment are inspired by the literature shift from a passive role to an active role of the individual in managing work and family. The following section highlights recent developments and notes an apparent move towards a more active role of the individual in shaping their work-family experience.

### The individual at the center of work-family experiences

The focus on balance self-efficacy in work-family research is timely because the literature is moving towards a more pronounced role of the individual in affecting the work-family interface. The more pronounced role means that the individual is expected to take action towards making work and family fit together (Clark, 2000). According to social cognitive theory, taking action is preceded by a cognitive assessment of one’s beliefs in one’s own ability to achieve the action (Bandura, 1977). That cognitive assessment is termed self-efficacy (Bandura, 1982).

### A shift from situational factors to individual characteristics in the work-family literature

Traditionally, research in the work-family field has been based on the premise that work and family are incompatible (Feldman & Hall, 2013). That conflict-focused literature emphasizes situational factors such as role pressures (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). Greenhaus and Beutell’s (1985) definition of work-family conflict contends that “participation in the work (family) role is made more difficult by virtue of participation in the family (work) role” (p.77). Subsequent research focused on situational factors that produce the incompatibility between participating in work and family domains; less emphasis had been given to individual characteristics (Allen et al., 2012).

Later conceptualization of the work-family interface, particularly in the years 2000s, started giving more weight to the individual (Feldman & Hall, 2013). For example, the work-family border theory (Clark, 2000) posits an explicit role of the individual in shaping their environment. The work-family border theory depicts the individual as a ‘border crosser’ who is actively moving between the two domains, making decisions, exchanging resources, and thus influencing the work-family experience. The individual’s skills in managing the borders between the different roles is driven by his or her abilities to shape each of the two domains and the common thread between them; “[individuals thus] move [...] back and forth between their work and family lives, *shaping* [emphasis added] each as they went by *negotiating* and *communicating* [emphasis added]” (Clark, 2000; p. 751). This depiction empowers the individual who is actively negotiating and communicating with stakeholders and is not just inherently in a conflict situation as a result of role ambiguity or role pressures.

Work-family research continued moving towards highlighting one’s ability and action in managing work and family. For example, (Carlson et al., 2009) define work-family balance as the individual’s “*ability* [emphasis added] to accomplish socially negotiated role responsibilities at work and in the family” (p. 1464). Similarly, Valcour (2007) defines balance as the “sense of having achieved a satisfactory resolution of the multiple demands of work and family domains” (Higgins, Duxbury, & Johnson, 2000; p. 19). These conceptualizations of balance emphasize the individual’s satisfaction with the way he or she actively divides resources such as time and attention and with the ability to personally balance work and home demands. The employee is interacting, communicating, and negotiating with stakeholders and thus influencing how work and family come together.

 The newer conceptualizations of the work-family interface highlight a paradigm shift from a focus on demands, pressures and resources that originate from the environment to a focus on the role of the individual in shaping contextual demands and pressures and the resulting work-family experience. Further examination of scales emphasizes this change.

In their negative spillover/positive spillover measure, Gryzwacz and Marks (2000) invite the participants to think how “[their] job makes [them] feel too tired to do the things that need attention at home” or how “the love and respect [they] get at home makes [them] feel confident about [themselves] at work”. In other operationalizations of the constructs, participants are asked to think how ‘the amount of time [their] job takes up makes it difficult to fulfill family responsibilities” (Netemeyer, Boles, & McMurrian, 1996). Those measures invite the participant to think in terms of the role and not in terms of how he or she influences these roles; the emphasis is on the ‘job’, the ‘family’ or the ‘home’ and not the individual.

With the balance discourse, on the other hand, employees are asked to think in terms of their own abilities and their own actions. For example, participants are asked to think of “the way [they] divide [their] time between work and personal or family life”; of “[their] ability to balance the needs of [their] jobs with those of [their] personal or family life” (Valcour, 2007), and of “[their ability] to negotiate and accomplish what is expected from [them] at work and in [their] family” (Carlson et al., 2009). What is being measured is not how the individual assesses the effect of one domain over the other but how he or she can affect the common thread between the two domains (Clark, 2000). Thus, the focus is taken away from the impediments caused by social roles to the actions the individuals can undertake to manage the two roles of work and family.

This shift in the literature does not undermine the role of contextual factors; however, it is meant to highlight the person’s ability to either benefit or forgo the resources that are available in their environment. There should therefore be a focus for the intertwining of contextual and personal resources and that is how the work-family experience gets shaped (ten Brummelhuis and Bakker, 2012).

In summary, two ideas are central to the emerging formulation of the work-family interface. First, the individual influences the work-family interface. Second, there are certain skills and activities that need to be performed well to adequately manage the work-family interface. According to the social cognitive theory, engaging in specific tasks is preceded by a cognitive assessment of one’s ability to achieve the task (Gist & Mitchell, 1992). Therefore, I argue in this thesis that engaging in specific tasks to manage work and family is preceded with a cognitive assessment of one’s beliefs in the ability to manage work and family. The idea that cognitive assessment precedes one’s action implies that levels of balance self-efficacy will relate to work-family conflict and enrichment. It would be expected that an employee with higher beliefs in their own ability to manage the work-family interface will report lower work-family conflict. The individual would thus be more able to divide time and attention to avoid or manage conflict situations. He or she would also feel more apt at negotiating role expectations with stakeholders when conflict is foreseen. To capture individuals’ assessments of their beliefs in their own ability to manage the work-family interface, in this thesis I introduce the construct ‘balance self-efficacy’.

Balance self-efficacy is defined as the individual’s beliefs about their ability to manage demands, resources, and stakeholders in the work and family domains. It is conceptually distinct from role specific self-efficacy such as job self-efficacy (Mathis & Brown, 2008) and parental self-efficacy (Cinamom, Wiesel, & Tzuk, 2007). Job self-efficacy is indicative of the person’s belief in their own ability to perform his or her job, and parenting self-efficacy assesses the person’s belief in their own ability to perform the parenting role; but neither is informative of how efficacious the person is in managing the domain where both work and family interact. Balance self-efficacy is meant to capture that; the purpose of a balance self-efficacy measure is to assess the individual’s beliefs in their own ability to manage work and family simultaneously.

### General self-efficacy in the work-family research

Previous discussions of self-efficacy in the work-family literature mainly incorporate the construct of general self-efficacy (GSE), which is a dispositional individual characteristic (Allen et al., 2012) defined as “individuals' perception of their ability to perform in a variety of situations” (Judge, Erez, & Bono, 1998; p.170). For example, Greenhaus and Powell (2006) propose general self-efficacy as an example of psychological resources which precede high performance in work or in the family (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006). General self-efficacy was also proposed by ten Brummelhuis and Bakker (2012) in their Work-Home Resource Model as an example of a key resource that moderates the relationship between contextual demands and resources on one hand and personal resources on the other hand. Meta-analytically, general self-efficacy was found to be negatively associated with work-family conflict (Allen et al., 2012).

Examining domain-specific self-efficacy might provide more insight into what aspects of self-efficacy allow the individual to better manage work and family together. First, general self-efficacy is a dispositional attribute thus it is not as malleable as domain-specific self-efficacy which can be adjusted and manipulated to benefit the individual (Gist & Mitchell, 1992). Second, Bandura (2012) argues that domain-specific self-efficacy offers higher validity over general self-efficacy. The latter presumes an unachievable efficaciousness across all life domains (Bandura, 2006). In fact, in many cases when general self-efficacy predicts performance, accounting for a domain-specific self-efficacy eliminates this predictiveness (Bandura, 2012), because “Self-efficacy is concerned with people’s beliefs in their capabilities to produce given attainments” (Bandura, 2012; p. 15). Therefore, understanding whether individuals feel confident in their own ability to manage work and family has to be obtained from an assessment of a domain-specific self-efficacy which specifically examines one’s beliefs about their own ability to manage work and family.

### Previous measures of domain-specific self-efficacy

Previous research looking at work-family self-efficacy is limited. The number of studies looking at domain-specific self-efficacy is limited. There are two scales look that look into domain-specific self-efficacy: Butler, Gasser, and Smart (2004) and Cinamon (2006) which was validated by Henessey and Lent (2008).

Butler et al. (2004) define work-family self-efficacy as “beliefs about one’s ability to competently manage conflicts between work and family” (Butler, Gasser, & Smart, 2004; p. 60). Although the scale’s title suggests that the measure captures self-efficacy for *managing* work and family, its definition and items confine self-efficacy to dealing with conflict *after* it arises (See Table 1 for items). The construct is thus built on two assumptions (a) the relationship between work and family is always in conflict, (b) the individual can only *react* to the conflicting situation. These assumptions negate the possibility of an individual’s influence over the work-family interface and do not take into account actions that can be undertaken to offset conflict before it occurs. Also, they do not take into account the research on work-family enrichment and balance. Looking more closely to some of the items’ structure, work-family self-efficacy measure entails some ambiguity and confoundedness. First, ambiguity is caused by the repetitive use of the term ‘handling’ which does not identify specific actions that the individual is engaging in (“I can handle it”, “handling the conflicting demands”, and “I will be able to handle conflicting demands”). It is thus not clear what the individual should be doing to manage conflict. Second, a confound is introduced by the use of the structure “I will”. According to Bandura (2012) “*will* is a statement of intention” (p.16) and thus should not be used to measure self-efficacy. Scales using *will* could be problematic as they do not necessarily tap into a person’s belief in their own capability but, rather, guide the participant to think in terms of a wishful future state (Bandura, 2006).

Cinamon (2006) developed work-family conflict management self-efficacy scale in Hebrew. The scale was then translated to English and validated by Hennessey and Lent (2008). Similar to Butler et al. (2004), the scale is based on the premise of a conflict situation between work and family. Cinamom’s (2006) scale is based on the assumption that difficulties exist either at work or at home, and the scale is meant to capture one’s resilience in coping with that unease (see Table 2 for items).

The initial formation of the scale was based on the assessment of anticipated work-family conflict, i.e. in relation to a foreseen conflict situation- which might have led participants to think of a future desirable situation rather than current efficacy. Nevertheless, the validation by Hennessey and Lent (2008) confirms a relationship with current states of work-family conflict. Similar to Butler et al. (2004), the Cinamon (2006) scale could hold some ambiguity. Most items address a general sense of fit between work and family and ability to generally manage conflict between work and family. While understanding ability to generally fit work and family is important, there was not an identification of specific actions that can be taken by individuals in managing the interface, such as negotiating demands and expectations with stakeholders. As noted, the development of the work-family literature and the identification of specific actions to be taken by the individuals in achieving a satisfactory fit between work and family allow us to identify a more elaborate list of actions to be taken by the individual when managing work and family.

The balance self-efficacy scale that is introduced in this thesis incorporates the notions that work and family can be enriching and that the two domains (work and family) are not bound to a conflict situation that needs to be managed. Individuals have the ability to manage the two roles to a level that is satisfactory to them (Valcour, 2007). Determinants of adequate performance at the work-family level are adapted from two established work-family balance scales: Valcour’s (2007) satisfaction with work-life balance and Carlson et al’s (2009) work-life balance (See Table 3 for full scales). This approach allowed the identification of specific activities that need to be completed by the individual to balance work and family and thus addressed the issue of ambiguity in the previous work-family self-efficacy measures. The activities include division of time, division of attention, negotiation and accomplishment of expectations, successful performance of work and home duties, successful fit of work and family lives, and management of needs of job and family life. Moreover, scale items only include statements of efficacy; as recommended by Bandura (2006), capability statements based on ‘I can’ structure rather than ‘I will’ are used. (See Table for items).

### Role overload

Role overload is a work stressor (Greenhaus, Parasuraman, Granrose, Rabinowitz, & Beutell, 1989); it is defined simply as “having too much to do” (Baruch, Biener, & Barnett, 1987). Overload occurs when the workload is so high that employees feel that they do not have enough resources such as time and energy to get their work done (Gilboa, Shirom, Fried, & Cooper, 2008). It is a hindrance stressor in that it does not positively challenge the individual towards better performance, but rather puts them in a threatening state of mind (Lepine, Podsakoff, & Lepine, 2005).

**Table 1.** Items from work-family self-efficacy scale, Butler, Gasser, and Smart 2004

|  |
| --- |
| Whatever conflict I may experience between work and family, I’m sure I can handle it. |
| I get nervous that I may not be able to do all that is demanded of me because of conflict between work and family. |
| I have reason to believe that I may not perform well in my job because of work and family conflicts. |
| Handling the conflicting demands of work and family is well within my abilities. |
| My past experiences increase my confidence that I will be able to handle conflicting demands of work and family |

**Table 2: work-family conflict management self-efficacy, Cinamon, 2006**

|  |
| --- |
| Attend to your family obligations without it affecting your ability to complete pressing tasks at work. |
| Fulfill all your work responsibilities despite going through having a trying and demanding period in your family life. |
| Fulfill your family role effectively after a long and demanding day at work. |
| Invest in your job even when under heavy pressure due to family responsibilities. |
| Succeed in your family role although there are many difficulties in your work. |
| Succeed in your role at work although there are many difficulties in your family. |
| Invest in your family role even when under heavy pressure due to work responsibilities. |
| Focus and invest in work tasks even though family issues are disruptive. |

**Table 3: Satisfaction with balance and work-life balance scales**

|  |
| --- |
| **Valcour (2007) satisfaction with balance** |
| Indicate level of satisfaction with |
| 1. The way you divide your time between work and personal or family life
 |
| 1. The way you divide your attention between work and home
 |
| 1. How well your work life and your personal or family life fit together
 |
| 1. Your ability to balance the needs of your job with those of your personal or family life
 |
| 1. The opportunity you have to perform your job well and yet be able to perform home-related duties adequately
 |
| **Carlson, Grzywacz, and Zivnuska (2009) work-life balance scale** |
| 1. I am able to negotiate and accomplish what is expected of me at work and in my family
 |
| 1. I do a good job of meeting the role expectations of critical people in my work and family life
 |
| 1. People who are closer to me would say that I do a good job of balancing work and family
 |
| 1. I am able to accomplish the expectations tat my supervisors and my family have for me
 |
| 1. My co-workers and members of my family would say that I am meeting their expectations
 |
| 1. It is clear to me, based on feedback from co-workers and family members, that I am accomplishing both my work and family responsibilities
 |

**Table 4.** Work-family balance tasks. The below tasks form the basis of the balance self-efficacy measure

| **Tasks that are completed in the work-family domain**  | **Authors (year)** | **Scale /measure**  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Simultaneous management of role needs  | Allen et al. (2010)Valcour (2007) | Balance measureSatisfaction with balance |
| Achieving a general sense of fit | Allen et al. (2010)Valcour (2007) | Balance measureSatisfaction with balance |
| Division of time  | Valcour (2007) | Satisfaction with balance |
| Division of attention  | Valcour (2007) | Satisfaction with balance |
| Negotiation of expectations with stakeholders | Clark, 2000Carlson, Gryzwacz, and Zivnuska, 2009) | Work/family border theoryWork-family balance definition and measure |
| Meeting expectations of stakeholders   | Clark, 2000Carlson, Gryzwacz, and Zivnuska, 2009) | Work/family border theoryWork-family balance definition and measure |
| Simultaneous successful performance in both domains  | Carlson, Gryzwacz, and Zivnuska, 2009) | Work-family balance definition and measure |

# CHAPTER III

# THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESES

There are two theoretical frameworks that are used in this thesis; the Conservation of Resources Theory (COR; Hobfoll 1989, 2001), and the Work-Home Resources Model (ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012). The two theories are important to understand the relationships between resources, demands, and the work-family interface. COR allows us to understand people’s reaction to stress; its basic premise is that individuals are in a constant quest to accumulate resources, and events which threaten valuable resources and thus cause stress (Hobfoll, 1989, 2000). The work-home resource model (WHRM) uses COR’s premises to suggest specific relationships between resources and demands from one domain to outcomes in the other domain; it is specific to work-family experiences (ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012). According to WHRM, contextual resources from work (home) relate positively to the individual’s personal resources; while contextual demands relate negatively to personal resources. In turn personal resources relate positively to outcomes in the home (work) domain. In order to understand the WHRM, which is unique to work-family research, it is important to first review COR.

The main premise in this thesis is that work-family resources from the organization allow individuals to develop the personal resource of balance self-efficacy. Balance self-efficacy (BSE) is also affected by role demands; role overload depletes balance self-efficacy because it diminishes one’s sense of control over their time and energy. The personal resource of BSE will have implications on how the individual perceives the relationship between work and family.

## The Conservation of Resources Theory (COR)

 Hobfoll’s Conservation of Resources (COR) theory (1989, 2001) offers a useful framework to understand how resources can be used to manage the interface between work and family. COR was initially suggested by Hobfoll in 1989 as a comprehensive theory to further our understanding of stress. Its main assumption is that individuals struggle to gain, maintain, and accumulate resources and that stress occurs as a result of either the threat of losing, or the actual loss, of *valued* resources (Hobfoll, 1989, 2002). Resources can be either *contextual* or *personal* based on where they originate from (Hobfoll, 2002). *Contextual resources* exist in the domain in which individuals operate and are not specific to the self; such resources include support such as that provided in a family-supportive work environment. *Personal resources* are specific to the individual and include personal traits and energy (ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012). For example, time and self-efficacy are personal resources (Hobfoll, 2001). For an individual to experience stress when a resource is threatened he or she has to value the resource; some resources are only valuable when they serve as a “means for attainment of other valued resources” (Hobfoll, 1989, p.516). The availability of flexible working hours, for example, is a contextual resource that is not valued in and by itself; its use allows development of a more valued proximal resource such as ‘time with loved ones’ (Hobfoll, 2001).

The COR theory proposes that individuals can go through phases of *loss* and *gain spirals.* Loss spirals occur when stress arises and resources are depleted to mitigate the impact of the stressors (Hobfoll, 2001). A stressful situation between work and family could cause a resource loss spiral. For example, an employee, who is on her way to a meeting, gets a phone call to pick her son up from daycare. She now has to call her colleague to cover for her and use the resource of social support; she also has to go to daycare, pick up her son and go home and use the ‘work time’ for a family matter. Two resources are used in this example, in order to deal with the emerging conflict situation: social support and work time. Such a situation can be particularly stressful for the employee if the culture at her organization does not accommodate arrangements for family emergencies. The lack of a supportive culture at the organization could make the individual feel unable to manage the conflict; she would feel less confident in her ability to make the arrangements to deal with the emerging situation, which will cause her to perceive work and family as being in conflict.

The tenet of loss spiral was first used in the work-family literature by Grandey and Cropanzano (1999). The authors suggested that COR provides a good theoretical framework to understand how specific aspects from work (family) domain, such as work overload, affect aspects from family (work), such as time with family (work). They note that “interrole conflict leads to stress because resources are lost in the process of juggling both work and family roles” (Grandey & Cropanzano, 1999; p. 357). The authors continue to explain that the actual or probable loss of resources create a “negative state of being” (Grandey & Cropanzano, 1999; p. 357).

The Conservation of Resources’ COR’s tenet of *gain spiral* has been given much less attention in behavioural research in general (Salanova, Schaufeli, Xanthopulou & Bakker, 2010) but also in work-family research. *Gain spirals* occur when there is no demand for the resources which can then be used to develop other valued resources (Hobfoll, 2002). Individuals who have access to more resources are likely to take risks by investing resources towards the development of more valuable resources and thus go through what is called a *gain spiral*- a phase of compilation of resources (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008). The tenet of gain spiral highlights the importance of employees’ access to contextual resources. In the organization, access to a family-supportive culture would allow the employee to develop more proximal resources. The link between organizational work-family resources and the development of personal resources is better highlighted using the Work-Home Resources Model.

The Work-Home Resources Model (ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012) uses the main premises of COR to devise a conceptual model that depicts the work-home interface as a process, which entails a sequence of resources and demands that impact outcomes from each domain. The WHRM suggests that demands and resources from the work (home) domain relate to outcomes from the home (work) domain only through development or depletion of personal resources. Based on the premise of *gain spiral,* contextual resources instigate the development of personal resources that are under the control of the individual and can thus be mobilized between the two domains (ten Brummelhuis and Bakker, 2012). Supportive culture, for example, is a contextual resource that is valuable to the extent that it allows the individual to develop a more proximal and personal resource that can be under his or her control.

Based on the above theoretical frameworks, I hypothesize three sets of relationships. In the first set, I examine the relationship between balance self-efficacy and each of conflict and enrichment. I then examine the direct relationships between the three antecedents and each of conflict and enrichment. In the third set of hypotheses, I examine the mediated relationship between the three antecedents (culture, perception of implementation, and role overload) and each of conflict and enrichment.

## Relationships between self-efficacy and the work-family interface

Studies examining work-family self-efficacy and the work-family interface are limited. Butler, Gasser and Smart (2004) were interested in observing the use of family-friendly benefits as the outcome. Therefore, the role of work-family self-efficacy in predicting work-family conflict was not examined. However, the correlation table in the study indicates that work-family self-efficacy correlates negatively with work-to-family conflict (Butler et al., 2004). Cinamon (2006) found that efficacy to manage work-to-family conflict relates negatively with work-to-family conflict (β=-.36. *p*<.01). Hennessy and Lent (2008) validated Cinamon’s (2006) results; they found that self-efficacy in managing work-to-family conflict relates negatively with work-to-family conflict (β=-.42. *p*<.01).

According to COR, self-efficacy is a personal resource that adds to one’s resilience and persistence in difficult situations (Hobfoll, 2002). Levels of self-efficacy determine one’s resolve in engaging in behaviours needed for task performance (Bandura, 1977). For example, someone who feels confident in his or her own ability to manage demands, resources and stakeholders from the work and family domains (balance self-efficacy) is likely to engage in the activities of managing work and family. Therefore, when an individual reports higher levels of balance self-efficacy, the positive cognitive assessment of their efficacy implies that they feel they have the capability to manage work and family. According to social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1991), which links self-efficacy to task performance, individuals with higher balance self-efficacy are thus more likely to perform the steps needed to better manage work and family. They feel adept at completing tasks such as negotiating with stakeholders and dividing their time effectively between the two domains. Achieving those tasks will have positive repercussions on how the person perceives the fit between work and family. According to WHRM, personal resources, such as balance self-efficacy, relate positively to outcomes from the work and the family domains (ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012). Therefore individuals who report higher levels of balance self-efficacy will also report lower levels of conflict and higher levels of enrichment, because balance self-efficacy is a personal resource that will allow employees to better manage work and family. Better management of work and family will manifest in perceptions of lower conflict and higher enrichment.

*Hypothesis 1: balance self-efficacy is negatively related to (a) work-to-family conflict and (b) positively related work-to-family enrichment*

## Relationships with work-family conflict

### Family-supportive work culture

The Conservation of Resources Theory (Hobfoll, 2001, 2002) suggests a negative relationship between work-family culture and conflict as it contends that the individual’s perception of the environment relates to his or her own perception of their personal resources. Furthermore, culture is a form of contextual resource whose availability in the environment adds to one’s resource pool (Hobfoll, 2001). According to Hobfoll’s (2001) COR Model, the investment of a resource towards an action necessitates access to a pool of resources. The availability of resources in the environment, such as a culture of family-supportiveness, would allow the instigation of a resource gain spiral, which is the process of developing new resources from a pool of existing resources (Hobfoll, 2002). Indeed, previous research has found that employees are more likely to use work-family programs when the organization is supportive of family matters; Thompson and Beauvais (1999) found a regression coefficient of .195 (*p*<.000) between work-family culture and utilization of family-friendly benefits.

In stressful situations, culture also alleviates the pressure on other important resources. Employees can benefit from the availability of support in their organizations to decrease conflict between work and family. For example, an employee who asks for accommodation for family purposes in a non-supportive culture is putting pressure on his job security and reputation, which are threatened. In such a situation, the absence of a supportive culture amplifies the conflict between work and family; thus, employees who report lower levels of family-supportive culture will also report higher levels of conflict between work and family. Another employee who asks for family accommodations in a family-supportive culture invests that culture towards less conflict between work and family without risking other valuable resources. Therefore employees who report higher levels of family-supportive culture will also report lower levels of conflict between work and family. Culture is thus likely to contribute to lower levels of conflict between work and family, because it is a contextual resource that can be directly used towards attenuation of conflict, as evidenced by Allen (2001) who found that employees’ perceptions of family-supportiveness negatively relates to work-family conflict (β= -.50; *p*<.000), even after controlling for use of work-family benefits. Thompson, Jahn, Kopelman and colleagues (2004) found that intangible perceptions of family-supportiveness at the organization (emotional support) related negatively to work interference with family (β= -.31; *p*<.000). In an inter-disciplinary review of the work-family literature, Kelly et al., (2008) argue that studies in the field confirm a direct and negative relationship between family-supportive culture and work-family conflict. I thus hypothesize that the relationship between family-supportive culture and work-family conflict will be in line with previous evidence from the literature, which is supported by COR’s premises of investment of resources pools towards attenuation of a stressful situation. Therefore:

*Hypothesis 2: family-supportive culture (FSOP) is negatively related to work-to-family conflict.*

### Perception of implementation of work-family initiatives

There is no previous research on the possible links between employees’ perceptions of work-family initiative implementation and the work-family interface. However, these links are important to understand because researchers suggest that implementation steps are instrumental in raising employees’ awareness of availability of policies (Christensen, 1997) and in indicating to employees that they can use work-family policies (Eaton, 2003). Implementation establishes whether the employee considers policies as potential resources to use when needed (Kossek, Lewis, and Hammer, 2010) or as a threat to other valuable resources such as job security (Thompson et al., 1999). Given the importance of implementation in signaling family supportiveness to employees, I examine the relationship between employees’ perception of implementation of work-family initiatives and the work-family interface. The purpose is to understand whether visibility of the implementation steps by employees has a negative effect on perception of conflict and a positive effect on perception of enrichment.

Evidence suggests that employees’ perceptions of the availability of work-family initiatives relates negatively to work-family conflict (Kelly et al., 2009), because the availability of policies signals a message of family-supportiveness to employees (Kossek, Lewis, and Hammer, 2010). Therefore, the steps that are taken by the organization beyond making policies available are also expected to signal supportiveness. According to Ryan and Kossek (2008), implementation of work-family initiatives that is based on universality, negotiability, and quality of communication encourages employees to use work-family programs when needed without feeling alienated or risking being penalized. Therefore, employees’ perception of the steps taken by the organization to implement work-family initiatives will positively impact their perception of the supportiveness of their organization. According to COR, employees’ positive assessment of the environment will boost their perception of their resources pool. Their sense of resourcefulness will have a positive effect on how they view the relationship between work and family. Therefore, the more visible the implementation steps are to an employee, the less she will perceive conflict between work and family.

*Hypothesis 3: Perception of implementation of work-family initiatives is negatively related to work-to-family conflict.*

### Role overload

According to the work-home resource model, the organizational context has both resources and demands elements that exert, consecutively, positive and negatives forces on outcomes in the home domain. In my model I include one such contextual demand, role overload.

Previous research has established overload as an antecedent of work-family conflict, because overload places a demand on time and energy (Kelly et al., 2008). Duxbury, Higgins and Mills (1992) found that employees who feel that they have a high workload to the point of overload are likely to be using their personal time to deal with the situation, which translates into conflict. According to COR, overload is a stressor that pushes the individual to invest other resources in effort to attenuate its negative effect on more valuable resources such as employment and job security (Hobfoll, 2002). The individual is more likely to miss family time and prioritize work to alleviate the stress of overload (Fu & Shaffer, 2001). In a sample of 344 participants employed in multiple organizations in Turkey, a positive relationship was found between role overload and work-family conflict (Gurbuz, Turunc, & Celik, 2012). The results suggest a significant relationship between role overload and work-family conflict, after controlling for other factors such as perceived organizational support (β=.36; *p<001*) (Gurbuz et al., 2012). Other studies confirm these results in different contexts. For example, in a sample of 267 staff members employed in a university in Hong Kong, Fu and Shaffer (2001) found that role overload positively and significantly relates to time-based and strain-based work-interference-with-family (interestingly, not behaviour-based) (β= .37 and β=.32, *p<.001*).

The Conservation of Resources theory can help explain the positive relationship of role overload with work-family conflict. Role overload is a contextual demand which, according to the WHRM, relates negatively to personal resources and also to outcomes in the family domain (ten Brummelhuis and Bakker, 2012). According to COR, when employees view a stressor in their environment, they will direct their resources towards attenuation of its impact and decrease its threat to more valuable resources (Hobfoll, 2001). Therefore, employees who report higher levels of role overload use family time at work to stop overload from threatening their job security. Consequently, they are more likely to report conflict between work and family (Fu and Shaffer, 2001). I thus hypothesize that in my sample, employees who report higher levels of role overload will also report higher levels of conflict between work and family.

*Hypothesis 4: Role overload is positively related to work-to-family conflict.*

## Relationships with work-family enrichment

The relationships between the organizational work-family resources, role demands and enrichment have been examined to a much lesser extent than the relationships with conflict. Despite the development of theoretical models clarifying the nature of enrichment (e.g., Greenhaus & Powell, 2006), most studies examining enrichment have focused on its outcomes rather than its antecedents (Siu et al., 2010). Investigating the relationship between contextual resources (family-supportive culture and perception of implementation) and enrichment is important because it allows us to understand whether resources in the organization are important to instill a sense of enrichment between work and family in addition to decreasing the sense of conflict between the two domains. Moreover, investigating the relationship between role overload and enrichment is important because it responds to a resource-view of the work-family interface, which contends that resources are not in isolation from demands (ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012).

Enrichment is defined in this thesis as “the extent to which experiences in one role improve the quality of life in the other role” (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006; p. 72). Inherent in this definition is the notion of generating and mobilizing resources across domains. For example, Greenhaus and Powell (2006) argue that resources, such as skills or psychological resources, generated in one role assists performance in the other role. According to COR, the development of resources requires access to a pool of resources which the individual invests towards the development of other resources (gain spiral). According to the WHRM, contextual resources are the starting point that allows enrichment between work and family. In fact, ten Brummelhuis and Bakker (2012) define enrichment as the process of transforming contextual resources into personal resources. At the same time, the WHRM recognizes that the multiplication of resources does not occur in isolation from contextual demands. Thus enrichment will also be subjected to negative effect from such stressors as role overload. The relationship of each of the three antecedents (family-supportive culture, perception of implementation of work-family initiatives, and role overload) will be examined separately in the following three sections.

### Family-supportive culture

There is limited research investigating the relationship between perceptions of family-supportive culture (FSOP) and work-family enrichment (Wayne, Casper, Matthews, & Allen, 2013). However, theoretical and empirical evidence suggest a positive relationship between FSOP and enrichment.

To start with, the notion of enrichment occurs when experiences are generated in one domain can be mobilized and utilized in the other domain (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006). An example of that is a mother who sees that her “planning skills have improved tenfold since becoming a parent” and sees that her “ability to anticipate things” with her kids trained her well to understand complex situations at work and anticipate implications (Ruderman, Ohlott, Panzer, & King, 2002; p. 374). In this example, the mother developed the skills of ‘planning’ and ‘ability to anticipate’ in the family domain and applied the acquired skills and abilities in the work domain. Still, perceiving skills that are developed in the family domain as relevant to the work domain requires certain conditions such as “a supportive work [....] environment” (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006; p. 79). According to the WHRM, a contextual resource, such as family-supportive culture, is critical in instigating enrichment between work and family (ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012). Therefore, it is hypothesized that a family-supportive culture at work will relate positively with work-family enrichment.

Empirical evidence corroborates the proposed positive relationship between FSOP and enrichment. Different forms of support at work have been found to relate positively with work-family enrichment. Cohen and Kirchmeyer (1995) found a positive correlation of .14 (p < .05) between organizational support for non-work activities and resource enrichment from non-work responsibilities; given that this was not a main relationship in this study, further analysis were not conducted. Other specific forms of support were found to relate positively with enrichment. For example, Wayne et al. (2006) examined the relationship of a three-factor culture variable consisting of time demand, managerial support, and career consequences with affective work-family enrichment; only time demand was negatively associated with enrichment with a moderate correlation (r = -.21, *p* < .01). Siu et al. (2010) found supervisor support to be positively related with enrichment (β=.14, *p*<.001). Organizational support, supervisor support and colleague support were found to aggregately relate to enrichment in a sample of 516 employees from three different organizations in the Netherlands (β=.15; *p<.001*). Because organizational support for family issues was found to relate more strongly to the work-family conflict than did general organizational support or supervisor support (Kossek, Pichler, Bodner, & Hammer, 2011), it is expected that employees’ perception of organizational family-supportiveness will relate positively to enrichment. This relationship was examined in one study recently conducted in a sample of 1,044 employees in a US engineering consulting firm (Wayne et al., 2013). The study found a positive relationship between a shortened 5-item version of FSOP and enrichment (β=.46, *p<.*01).

In summary, both COR and the WHRM suggest that family-supportive organizational culture is critical in instigating enrichment between work and family. Moreover, there is empirical evidence suggesting that different forms of support relate to work-family enrichment. Given that support for family issues was found to relate more strongly to the work-family interface than other types of support (Kossek et al., 2011), it is expected that FSOP will positively relate to enrichment. Therefore, based on both theory and previous research, I hypothesize:

*Hypothesis 5: Family-supportive culture (FSOP) is positively related to work-to-family enrichment.*

### Perception of implementation of work-family initiatives

Perceptions of implementation of work-family initiatives are expected to follow similar lines to family-supportive culture in relating to work-family enrichment because they offer to employees the same signals of family-supportiveness that culture does (Kossek, Lewis, and Hammer, 2010). As previously noted, contextual resources are an integral element in the process of work-family enrichment (ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012); therefore it is expected that perception of implementation will relate positively to enrichment. When the organization takes elaborate steps to implement work-family programs based on universality, negotiability, and quality of communication (Ryan & Kossek, 2008), it is confirming to employees that it provides support for family matters. The extent to which the steps that are taken by the organization are visible to the employee enhances the positive assessment of the organizational environment, which in turn enhances the employees’ perception of their pool of resources (Hobfoll, 2002). Therefore, seeing pamphlets on how to benefit from flexibility at work and how to negotiate flexibility with supervisor allows the employee to acknowledge access to resources. Ryan and Kossek (2008) argue that implementation is critical in creating a culture of inclusion that does not penalize users of work-family programs; that is because implementation signals that employees are allowed to have a life outside work (Wayne et al., 2013). It is therefore expected, that the employee’s perception of implementation steps will relate positively with work-family enrichment.

*Hypothesis 6: Perception of implementation of work-family initiatives is positively related to work-to-family enrichment*

### Role overload

The relationship between role overload and work-family enrichment is rarely examined. One possible reason for the lack of studies examining overload and the relationship with enrichment could be that enrichment is derived from a positive organizational scholarship perspective or POS (Wayne, Grzywacz, Carlson, & Kacmar, 2007). Positive organizational scholarship examines phenomena that have long been the focus of organizational studies but focuses on what is positive (Cameron et al., 2003). Thus when the environment is examined, the focus is to move away from observing disablers (stressors for example) to observing enablers (resources). Instead of focusing on stressors such as role ambiguity, limited flexibility, and hours worked to understand the effect of work on the family (Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985), positive organizational scholars focus on family-supportive resources (Lambert & Haley-Lock, 2004) and positive affectivity (Wayne et al., 2007) and how they positively affect the relationship between work and family. That shift coincides with commitment of POS to “purposely illuminate how contexts and processes, and their interactions, are related to positive states in individuals, groups and organization” (Cameron et al., 2003, p.5). It should be noted, however, that positive experiences do not happen in isolation from negative experiences.

A comprehensive representation of the work-family experience would recognize both contextual resources and demands. The WHRM contends that both resources and demands affect the work-family interface. Contextual resources help workers to develop personal resources; but at the same time there are role stressors that place demands over the individual’s time and attention and they deplete resources (ten Brummelhuis and Bakker, 2012). The COR’s premise of loss spiral contends that stressors such as role overload instigate the use of resources towards attenuation of the stressful situation. Personal resources in that case are used to help deal with the stressful situation, which impedes the use of resources towards development of other resources (Hobfoll, 2002). In that case, the enrichment process, which is based on the notion of resource development, is negatively affected. Therefore, I hypothesize that role overload will have a negative relationship with employees’ work-family enrichment.

*Hypothesis 7: Role overload is negatively related to work-to-family enrichment.*

## The mediating role of balance self-efficacy

Thus far in this chapter, I have reviewed the theoretical and empirical reasoning for the hypothesized direct relationships between family-supportive culture, perception of implementation of work-family initiatives, role overload and each of work-to-family conflict and enrichment. In the process of reviewing the theories that suggest a direct effect of contextual resources and demands on one’s perception of conflict and enrichment between work and family, I discussed the processes of gain spiral, loss spiral which are synonymous to resource generation and resource depletion (Hobfoll, 1989, 2001, 2002). Gain and loss spirals suggest that resources and demands from the context affect other resources on the path to impacting the work-family interface. According to the WHRM, contextual resources and demands affect personal resources which in turn relate to outcomes in either the work or the family domain (ten Brummelhuis and Bakker, 2012).

According to COR (Hobfoll 1989, 2001. 2002) and its application to the work-home resource based model (ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012), contextual resources are essential in developing personal resources which are then used in managing the work-family interface. The primacy of personal resources and its direct effect on the work-family interface are derived from the level of control that individuals have over personal resources; personal resources are the types of resources that exist within the self, therefore, the individual has control over when and where to use them (Hobfoll, 2001). Based on the notions of resource generation and depletion (Hobfoll, 2001) and the premise that contextual resources and demands relate to personal resources (ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012), I argue that family-supportive culture, perception of implementation of work-family initiatives, and role overload relate to each of work-family conflict and enrichment through the personal resource of balance self-efficacy.

The relationship between contextual resources and self-efficacy can be explained using Bandura’s Social Cognitive Theory and the schematization of the triadic model of behaviour (Bandura, 1986). According to the schematisation of the triadic reciprocal relationship between the environment, one’s cognitive assessment and behaviour (Wood & Bandura, 1989), the assessment of the environment (family-supportive culture, perception of implementation of work-family initiatives, and role overload) relates to one’s cognitive assessment of self-efficacy (balance self-efficacy) which in turn affects behaviour (taking the steps needed to manage work and family) and thus one’s perception of conflict and enrichment between work and family.

Both family-supportive culture and perceptions of implementation of work-family initiatives boost one’s balance self-efficacy. The two resources relate to the interface through signaling; perceptions of family-supportiveness and of implementation of work-family initiatives signal to employees that one’s life outside the work domain matters (Allen, 2001; Ryan & Kossek, 2008). These messages are picked up by the individual who feels more capable (higher balance self-efficacy) at managing the work-family interface. As such, for two individuals who are facing the same family pressures, their levels of self-efficacy in dealing with specific situations will be highly dependent on the kinds of ‘messages’ they are receiving from the organization. For someone who is working in a family supportive organization, her confidence in her own ability to manage the work-family interface is higher than that of someone who perceives a lower level of support for family issues in the organization. An employee who works in an environment where only the primacy of work is recognized, which is a characteristic of low family-supportive culture (Allen, 2001), is less likely to feel able to communicate with his supervisor regarding an urgent family situation. According to social cognitive theory, an individual with low self-efficacy to accomplish a certain task is likely not to engage in the task (Gist & Mitchell, 1992). Therefore, when an employee does not feel able to communicate, the action of communication and negotiation with stakeholders ceases to be an option. As a result, the employee perceives more conflict between work and family because he or she is not able to manage it. Indeed, Matthews, Barnes-Farrell, and Bulger (2010) found that individuals who report higher ability in using flexibility in their work also report lower levels of conflict between work and family.

The relationship between role overload and balance self-efficacy is in the opposite direction than those between family-supportive culture, perception of implementation and balance self-efficacy. While culture and implementation work through messaging to enhance one’s balance self-efficacy, role overload negatively relates to balance self-efficacy. The hypothesized relationship is consistent with the WHRM in that contextual demands relate negatively to personal resources such as balance self-efficacy (ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012). According to COR and the WHRM, the process that unfolds when the employee perceives higher role overload is characterised by a loss spiral. An employee who perceives higher levels of role overload is likely to direct his or her resources towards attenuation of role overload’s threat to job security. Role overload directly threatens valuable resources such job satisfaction and job security (Jones, Chonko, Rangarajan, & Roberts, 2007) and will thus decrease one’s assessment of one’s own balance self-efficacy. That will result in a perception of more conflict and less enrichment between work and family because the individual will be investing his or her own ability to manage work and family towards decreasing the role overload’s threat to performance on the job.

*Hypothesis 8: balance self-efficacy mediates the relationship between (a) role overload (b) family-supportive culture, and (c) implementation of work-family initiatives and work-to-family conflict*

*Hypothesis 9: balance self-efficacy mediates the relationship between (a) role overload (b) family-supportive culture, and (c) implementation of work-family initiatives and work-to-family enrichment*

**H6**

H8a, H9a

**H8c, H9c**

**H8b, H9b**

H7

**H5**

H4

**H2**

**H3**

**H1b**

**H1a**

Role overload

**Perception of implementation of WF initiatives**

Balance Self-efficacy

Work-to-Family conflict

**Family-supportive organizational perception (FSOP)**

Work-to-Family enrichment

**Figure 1: Hypothesized model**

***Note: the hypothesized model encompasses three sets of hypotheses. It looks into the direct relationship between balance self-efficacy and each of conflict and enrichment (H1a, H1b). It then looks into the simple relationships between the three antecedents and each of conflict and enrichment (H2 to H7). The third set of hypotheses looks into the indirect relationships of the antecedents to each of conflict and enrichment through balance self-efficacy (H8, H9)***

# CHAPTER IV

# METHOD

## Sample and procedure

Data were collected at a financial institution operating in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). A link to the survey, which was built using LimeSurvey, was emailed to a management representative. The representative then emailed an invitation to participate in the study to their employees. Two weeks after the original invitation email, a reminder email was sent to the same population of employees. The department was unable to report back to us the specific number of employees the invitation was emailed to; they instead reported the total number of employees at their organization as being 4244. I was not able to confirm if the invitation was actually sent to all the employees. 427 participants responded to the invitation with minimum response rate of 10%. Seven cases were dropped from the analysis because the LimeSurvey system indicated no date for completion and they were missing considerable data on the main variables in this model. Analysis was thus conducted on a sample of 420 participants. Given that multiple regression was used in testing the hypotheses, no further data collection was needed.

In order to avoid issues related to generalizability and overfitting results to a specific sample, Miller and Kunce (1973) indicate that the sample size should include 10 observations for every independent variable. Also, according to Barlett, Kortlik, and Higgins (2001), when data are continuous, a sample of 198 participants is representative of a population of 4000. This sample size is appropriate for a .03 margin error, alpha=.01 and t=2.58.

Each participant was given the opportunity to participate in a draw for an iPod, and $0.50 per completed survey was given to a charity of choice on behalf of the organization. Key demographics statistics indicate that 42% of the sample is female; 73% are married, and 60% have 1 or more children at home; the average age is 35 years.

## Measures

### Balance Self-Efficacy

The balance self-efficacy scale was developed for the purpose of this study. It incorporates the five aspects of Valcour’s (2007) ‘satisfaction with balance between work and life’ including (a) division of time; (b) division of attention; (c) fitting work and personal life; (d) balancing the needs of work and personal life; (e) performing well on the job and in home-related duties. In addition, it incorporates the concepts of negotiating with stakeholders and meeting their expectations, which are central to the new conceptualization of the work-family interface (Carlson, Grzywacz and Zivnuska, 2009). Each item was framed to reflect the centrality of the individual and his or her own capability. Participants were thus asked to indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree with the statements: “I can successfully divide my time and personal or family life”; “I can successfully divide my attention between work and home”; “I am confident that I can successfully fit my work life and personal or family life together”; “I am able to negotiate and accomplish what is expected of me at work and in my family”; “I can successfully balance the needs of my job with those of my personal or family life”; “ I am able to accomplish the expectations that my supervisors and my family have for me” and “I can successfully perform my job well and yet be able to perform home-related duties adequately”. Response options ranged from 1 to 7, with 1 being ‘strongly disagree’ and 7 being ‘strongly agree’.

Previous literature suggested that balance self-efficacy comprises one general factor that captures one’s sense of ability to navigate the responsibilities between work and family. Given that the two main scales that I used to adapt the balance self-efficacy measure capture the work-family interface both as an overall sense of balance (Carlson et al., 2009) or satisfaction with balance (Vaclour, 2007) I expected balance self-efficacy to reflect one factor. To test this proposition I conducted an exploratory factor analysis using principal component analysis as an extraction method. According to Meyers, Guamst and Guarino (2006), the sample size is adequate for conducting factor analysis; the authors advise collecting 140 data points for 7 items (a ratio of 200 participants for every 10 items). The correlation matrix of the 7 balance self-efficacy items, the scree plot and the component matrix, indicate a one-factor measure. Correlations ranged from .65 to .85; the factor loadings ranged from .80 to .94. The scree plot also confirmed a one-factor measure. The scale’s Cronbach’s alpha was .95.

### Family-supportive culture

Work-family culture was measured using the 14-item Family Supportiveness Organizational Perception scale (FSOP) (Allen, 2001). Respondents were asked to report the extent to which they agree that each statement represents the philosophy of their organization; they were prompted to remember that “these are not [their] own personal beliefs, but pertain to what [they] believe is the philosophy of [the] organization”. Sample items include “Work should be the primary priority in a person’s life” (reverse coded); and “Expressing involvement and interest in non-work matters is viewed as healthy”. Response options ranged from ‘Strongly disagree’ (coded as 1) to ‘strongly agree’ (coded as 5); higher scores indicate more supportive culture. This scale’s Cronbach’s alpha was .83.

### Perception of implementation of work-family initiatives

A nine-item scale was developed for the purpose of this study. Items were derived from the literature’s conceptualization of implementation (Kelly et al., 2008; Ryan & Kossek, 2008). Participants were asked to report the extent to which they agree that each of the following statements represent the practice at their organization. “Initiatives” were defined consistently with Kelly et al. (2008) as “deliberate organizational changes - in policies, practices and culture - that are meant to support employees; lives outside of work and help them create a balance between work and personal life”. Sample items include “Updates on work-life balance initiatives are included in communication reports to employees” and “The organization provides the necessary technology to enable employees to work off-site”. Response options ranged from ‘Strongly disagree’ (Coded as 1) to ‘Strongly agree’ (Coded as 5). Higher scores indicate higher visibility of implementation. This scale’s Cronbach’s alpha was .95.

### Role Overload

 Role Overload was measured using a three-item scale that was developed by Bulino and Turnley (2005) based on items by Schaubroeck, Cotton, and Jennings (1989) and Beehr, Walsh, and Taber (1976). I used the same structure and response options that were adapted by Bulino and Turnley (2005) with the three items consisting of “The amount of work I am expected to do is too great”, “I never seem to have enough time to get everything done at work”, and “It often seems like I have too much work for one person to do”. Items were assessed using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) with higher scores indicating more perceived overload. Cronbach’s alpha for the scale in this study was 0.75

### Work-family conflict

Work-family conflict was measured using the work-family negative spillover scale of Gryzwacz and Marks (2000). The scale consisted of eight items, with four items that measure work-to-family negative spillover and four items that measure family-to-work negative spillover. Respondents were asked to report how often they experienced each of the following in the past year. Response options ranged from ‘Never’ (coded as 1) to ‘All of the time’ (coded as 5). Sample items for work-to-family negative spillover include: “Your job makes you feel too tired to do the things that need attention at home” and “Job worries or problems distract you when you are at home”. The Cronbach’s alpha for this scale was .85. Sample items for family-to-work negative spillover include “personal or family worries and problems distract you when you are at work” and “Responsibilities at home reduce the effort you can devote to your job”. The scale’s Cronbach’s alpha was .81.

### Work-family enrichment

Work-family enrichment was measured using the work-family positive spillover scale of Gryzwacz and Marks (2000). The scale consisted of eight items, with four items that measure work-to-family positive spillover and four items that measure family-to-work positive spillover. Respondents were asked to report how often they experienced each of the following in the past year. Response options ranged from ‘Never’ (coded as 1) to ‘All of the time’ (coded as 5). Sample items for work-to-family positive spillover include: “the things you do at work make you a more interesting person at home” and “the skills you use on your job are useful for things you have to do at home”. Cronbach’s alpha for work-to-family enrichment was .74. Sample items for family-to-work positive spillover include “the love and respect you get at home makes you feel confident about yourself at work” and “providing for what is needed at home makes you work harder at your job” Cronbach’s alpha for this scale was .68.

### Control variables

The following variables were included in the models as control variables: marital status, gender, age, and the number of children living at home. Those are variables that were found to affect the relationship between work and family (Frone et al., 1992). They also provide proxies of the family role which is not included in the examined antecedents and, of course, cannot be completely disregarded when the interaction between work and family is being evaluated. Negative affectivity is also being controlled for in the statistical models; controlling for negative affectivity is a means to offset the possible erroneous effect of trait affectivity on relationships between variables in organizational research (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). Moreover, affectivity is particularly important in the study of the work-family experiences as research found that affectivity accounted for a significant variance in the work-family interface (Michel & Clark, 2009). Thus the strength of the effect sizes and the levels of significance are only observed after negative affectivity is taken into consideration.

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# CHAPTER V

# ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

## Analysis

Multiple regression using PROCESS in SPSS was used to test the hypotheses. Multiple regression fits the purpose of this thesis to learn about the relationships of multiple independent variables with the outcome in question. PROCESS uses Ordinary Least Square regression to examine relationships between variables; it also uses bootstrapping techniques to test for mediation by estimating the indirect, direct and total effects (Hayes, 2009). Hayes (2013) shows that the use of SEM does not offer advantage over the application of a series of OLS regressions. As will be further presented in the analysis section (See Table 6), the reliabilities of the observed variables that are included in the model range from .74 to .95, thus there is not a considerable threat of measurement error to “bias the estimates or lower power” when OLS regression is used (Hayes, 2013). In that case, and as Kline (2010) argues, if a method such as regression analysis is sufficient in testing hypotheses, there is no reason to refer to other methods such as Structural Equation Modeling (SEM).

PROCESS offers an additional advantage as it incorporates bootstrapping techniques for testing mediation with no need to refer to Baron and Kenny’s three-step approach (Hayes, 2013). The main limitation of the three-step approach is that it does not estimate the indirect effect between an independent variable and a dependent variable, but it rather infers it by testing a series of hypotheses (Hayes, 2009). According to Baron and Kenny (1986), the first step in mediation analysis is in confirming a direct relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable (prerequisite); the second step, examines a direct relationship between the independent variable and the mediator; in the third step, the mediation is *inferred* when the effect size and/or the significance level of the relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable are attenuated to come closer to zero when the mediator is included. In most cases, this inference is followed up with a Sobel test which then estimates the indirect effect (Sobel, 1982). Despite its wide use, the Sobel test comes with its own limitations (Hayes, 2009). The Sobel test imposes an often-violated assumption of a normal distribution on the mediation effect; the method of choice should be bootstrapping (Hayes, 2009). Bootstrapping is proven to have more power in predicting mediation than the Sobel test (Cheung & Lau, 2008). Bootstrapping can be done independently from the causal steps approach (Hayes, 2009) and it frees mediation testing from the prerequisite of a relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable. Advances in the behavioural sciences suggest that two variables might be solely related through a third variable; therefore, when initial analysis does not detect a relationship between the independent and the dependent variables, possibility of mediation is not negated. The independent and dependent variables can still relate indirectly through a third variable. PROCESS allows for such effect to be detected (Hayes, 2013).

## Results

Results of the bivariate correlations (zero-ordered correlations) are presented in Table 6. Pearson correlations-relationships between two variables- (r) are reported. Those results allow us to examine how the different variables in the model co-vary; both the values and the signs of correlations are important. If two independent variables are correlated with a Pearson *r* value that is larger than │.7│, then concerns for multicollinearity might be present and further testing is warranted (Meyers, Ganst, & Guarino, 2006). Pearson *r* values between the independent variables range between │.135│ and │.347│thus no further testing for multicollinearity was conducted. The highest correlation between two independent variables is between family-supportive organizational perception and overload, which is r=- 347 (at *p<*.001). The absolute value of that correlation is smaller than the value indicated by Meyers, Ganst, and Guarino (2006) of r=.7 as a manifestation of a multicollinearity problem.

### Regression Analysis

Preacher and Hayes (2008) model of simple mediation was run separately for conflict and enrichment. With PROCESS, the direct and indirect effect can only be extracted by running the model multiple times and indicating a different independent variable for every time the model is run (Hayes, 2013). By indicating a specific independent variable, the model will specifically extract the direct, indirect and total effect of that variable on the outcome. Other variables are still included in the model. Coefficients and significance levels are still reported for all other variables; however, they are treated as co-variates (Hayes, 2013). Tables 7 and 8 present the regression and mediation results. Figure 2 presents the supported hypotheses.

Hypotheses 1a and 1b proposed that balance self-efficacy will relate negatively to work-to-family conflict and positively to work-to-family enrichment indicating that individuals with higher confidence in their ability to manage the work-family interface will report lower conflict and higher enrichment between work and family. Consistent with these two hypotheses, as shown in Table 7 and Table 8, results indicate a negative relationship between balance self-efficacy (β= -.22 , *p*< .001) and a positive relationship between balance self-efficacy and enrichment (β= .10, *p*< .01).

Hypotheses 2, 3, and 4 examine the simple (non-mediated) relationships between the antecedents and work-to-family conflict (i.e. total effect). Hypothesis 2 which suggested that family supportive culture relates negatively to work-family conflict was not supported (β= .18, *ns*). Hypothesis 4 which suggested that role overload and work-family conflict are positively related was supported. After controlling for gender, age, marital status, children and negative affectivity, overload related positively with conflict (β= .18, *p*< .001). Results also indicate that hypothesis 3 was supported; implementation relates negatively with conflict (β= -.19, *p*< .001). Results thus indicate that hypothesis 3 and 4 were supported; hypothesis 2 was not supported.

Hypotheses 5, 6, and 7 examine the simple (non-mediated) relationships between the antecedents and work-to-family enrichment. Hypothesis 6 was supported; results indicate that after controlling for gender, age, marital status, children and negative affectivity, implementation related positively to enrichment (β= .22, *p*<.001). Hypothesis 5 which suggested a positive relationship between culture and enrichment was not supported (β= .07, *ns*). Hypothesis 7 suggested a negative relationship between role overload and enrichment; results show no support for hypothesis 7 (β= .07, *ns*). Results thus indicate that hypotheses 5 and 7 were not supported; hypothesis 6 was supported.

Hypothesis 8 suggested that balance self-efficacy mediates the relationship between family-supportive culture, perception of implementation of work-family initiatives, and role overload with work-to-family conflict. Hypothesis 8 was partially supported. Hypothesis 8a suggested that balance self-efficacy mediates the relationship between overload and conflict. After controlling for age, gender, children, marital status and negative affectivity, overload related negatively to balance self-efficacy (β=-.20, *p<*.05); however, the indirect effect to conflict was not significant as shown in the bootstrapping confidence intervals (95% CI = [-.003, .094]). Those results lend no support for hypothesis 8a.

Hypothesis 8b suggested that balance self-efficacy mediates the relationship between family-supportive culture and work-to-family conflict. Family-supportive culture related positively to balance self-efficacy (β=.3, *p<*.01); the mediation model suggests a significant indirect effect of family-supportive culture on conflict through balance self-efficacy (95% CI = [-.12, -.02]). Taken together, results indicate that balance self-efficacy mediates the relationship between culture and conflict. Hypothesis 8b was thus supported. Hypothesis 8c, which suggested that balance self-efficacy will mediate the relationship between implementation of work-family initiatives and work-to-family conflict, was supported. In the model that specifies balance self-efficacy as an outcome, implementation of work-family initiatives related positively to balance self-efficacy (β=.27, *p<*.001). The bootstrapping tests indicated a significant indirect effect of implementation on conflict through balance self-efficacy (95% CI = [-.10, -.03]).

Hypotheses 9a, 9b, and 9c proposed that balance self-efficacy mediates the relationship of family-supportive culture, implementation of work-family initiatives, and role overload with work-to-family enrichment. Hypothesis 9a suggested that balance self-efficacy mediates the relationship between overload and work-to-family enrichment; results of the bootstrapping tests support the hypothesis (95% CI = [-.054,- .001]). Hypothesis 9b was also supported indicating an indirect relationship between culture and enrichment; the indirect effect of family-supportive culture on work-to-family enrichment through balance self-efficacy was significant as indicated by the bootstrapping results (95% CI = [.009, .071]. Similarly hypothesis 9c was supported, indicating that implementation of work-family initiatives positively related to enrichment through balance self-efficacy (95% CI = [.008, .06]).

Relationships between gender and work-family conflict and enrichment were not hypothesized. It is, however, worth noting that the results related to the relationship of gender with the outcomes were not consistent with previous research. By examining the correlations table, we can see that gender (which was coded as female=1 and male=0) is significantly and negatively correlated with work-to-family conflict (r=-.14, p<.01). Also, gender is positively correlated with work-to-family enrichment (r=.13, p<.01). In the regression models, gender was positively and significantly related to enrichment with a coefficient of .26 significant at p<.001; gender related to work-to-family conflict with a coefficient of -.14 significant at p<.05; the relationship between gender and balance self-efficacy was not significant.

**Table 5: Summary of hypotheses**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Hypothesis** | **support** |
| H1 | Balance self-efficacy is negatively related to (a) work-to-family conflict (b) positively related to work-to-family enrichment  | Yes |
| H2 | Family-supportive culture (FSOP) is negatively related to work-to-family conflict  | No |
| H3 | Perception of implementation of work-family initiatives is negatively related to work-to-family conflict | Yes |
| H4 | Role overload is positively related to work-to-family conflict | Yes |
| H5 | Family-supportive culture (FSOP) is positively related to work-to-family enrichment  | No |
| H6 | Perception of implementation of work-family initiatives is positively related to work-to-family enrichment | Yes |
| H7 | Role overload is negatively related to work-to-family enrichment | No |
| H8 | Balance self-efficacy mediates the relationship between (a) role overload (b) FSOP, (c) perception of implementation and work-to-family conflict | Partially8b & 8c  |
| H9 | Balance self-efficacy mediates the relationship between (a) overload (b) FSOP, (c) perception of implementation and work-to-family enrichment | Yes |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | **Table 6: Correlations, descriptive statistics and reliabilities**  |
|   |  |  |  |  |  | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** | **6** | **7** | **8** | **9** | **10** | **11** | **12** | **13** |
|  |   | *N* | Mean | s.d. | Ovrld | FSOP | Implemt | BSlfEffc | WFC | FWC | WFE | FWE | Gender | Age | Marri-ed | Children | Neg. Affct |
|  | ***Main variables*** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **1** | Role Overload | 403 | 3.16 | 0.88 | (0.75) |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **2** | FSOP | 402 | 2.89 | 0.62 | -.347\*\* | (0.83) |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **3** | Implementation | 391 | 2.84 | 1.00 | -.135\*\* | .134\*\* | (0.96) |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **4** | Balance Self-Efficacy | 420 | 5.40 | 1.38 | -.281\*\* | .258\*\* | .271\*\* | (0.95) |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **5** | Work-family conflict  | 420 | 2.90 | 0.84 | .360\*\* | -.254\*\* | -.284\*\* | -.579\*\* | (0.85) |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **6** | Family-work conflict | 420 | 2.12 | 0.74 | .122\* | -.118\* | -.017 | -.357\*\* | .455\*\* | (0.81) |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **7** | Work-family enrichment | 415 | 3.40 | 0.81 | .000 | .059 | .286\*\* | .238\*\* | -.103\* | -.030 | (0.74) |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **8** | Family-work enrichment | 417 | 3.78 | 0.79 | .020 | .082 | .016 | .186\*\* | -.043 | -.124\* | .421\*\* | (0.68) |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | ***Control variables*** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **9** | Gender | 412 | 0.42 |  | -.108\* | .018 | .001 | .059 | -.141\*\* | .001 | .134\*\* | .103\* | — |  |  |  |  |
| **10** | Age | 415 | 35.06 | 8.34 | -.060 | .100\* | .022 | .095 | -.071 | -.160\*\* | .056 | -.001 | -.177\*\* | — |  |  |  |
| **11** | Married | 420 | 0.76 |  | -.027 | .095 | .039 | .077 | -.009 | -.109\* | .052 | .108\* | -.163\*\* | .270\*\* | — |  |  |
| **12** | Children | 404 | 1.25 | 1.20 | .020 | -.029 | .054 | .087 | -.024 | -.087 | .038 | -.057 | -.071 | .461\*\* | .369\*\* | — |  |
| **13** | NegAffct | 414 | 1.96 | 0.84 | .284\*\* | -.228\*\* | -.039 | -.364\*\* | .465\*\* | .375\*\* | -.068 | -.129\*\* | -.041 | -.170\*\* | -.146\*\* | -.051 | (0.91) |
|   | Total *N* | 420 |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| *Note.* FSOP refers to the "Family Supportive Organizational Perception" which measures family supportive culture in the organizaiton. Gender was coded as 1=female and 0=male. Age was measured by asking participants to report their year of birth; age was then calculated by subtracting the year of birth from the year when data was collected. Married was coded as 1=married and 0=other status. Children is a numerical variable ranging from 0 to indicate no children at home to 4 to indicate 4 or more children at home. 42% of the respondents are female; 76% are married. Reliabilities are examined using the Cronbach's Alpha values which appear diagonally in the table between parentheses where applicable. Significance is at the following levels: \*\*\**p<*.001 \*\* *p <*.01 *\*p<*.05 |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Table 7: Regression and mediation results for work-to-family conflict**  |  |  |  |
| Variable  | B | SE | t | p |  |
| *Balance self-efficacy as the dependent variable* |  |  |  |  |
| constant  |  | 5.17 | .61 | 8.49 | .0000 |  |
| Implementation of work-family initiatives |  | .27 | .06 | 4.07 | .0001 |  |
| Role Overload |  | -.20 | .08 | -.2.49 | .013 |  |
| FSOP |  | .30 | .11 | 2.67 | .007 |  |
| Gender |  | .05 | .13 | .39 | .70 |  |
| Age |  | .00 | .00 | .33 | .74 |  |
| Marital status |  | .11 | .16 | .65 | .52 |  |
| Number of children |  | .06 | .06 | .93 | .35 |  |
| Negative Affectivity  |  | -.54 | .08 | -6.41 | .000 |  |
| **R2** | **0.27** |  |  |  | **0** |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| *Dependent variable model with work-to-family conflict as the dependent variable*  |  |
| *Total effect sizes* |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Variable  | B | SE | t | p |  |
| constant  |  | 2.60 | .33 | 7.83 | .000 |  |
| Implementation of work-family initiatives |  | -.19 | .04 | -.5.29 | .000 |  |
| Role Overload |  | .18 | .04 | 4.26 | .000 |  |
| FSOP |  | -.09 | .06 | -1.5 | .13 |  |
| Gender |  | -.14 | .07 | -1.97 | .05 |  |
| Age |  | -.00 | .00 | -.80 | .42 |  |
| Marital status |  | .09 | .09 | 1.03 | .30 |  |
| Number of children |  | .01 | .03 | .23 | .82 |  |
| Negative Affectivity  |  | .34 | .05 | 7.37 | .000 |  |
| **R2** | **.34** |  |  |  | **.000** |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| *Direct effect sizes* |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Variable  | B | SE | t | p |  |
| constant  |  | 3.71 | .33 | 11.11 | .000 |  |
| Balance self-efficacy |  | -.22 | .03 | -8.07 | .000 |  |
| Implementation of work-family initiatives |  | -.13 | .03 | -3.89 | .000 |  |
| Role Overload |  | .14 | .04 | 3.53 | .001 |  |
| FSOP |  | -.03 | .05 | -.47 | .64 |  |
| Gender |  | -.13 | .07 | -.1.97 | .05 |  |
| Age |  | -.00 | .00 | -.73 | .47 |  |
| Marital status |  | .12 | .08 | 1.40 | .16 |  |
| Number of children |  | .02 | .03 | .66 | .51 |  |
| Negative Affectivity  |  | .22 | .04 | 4.9 | .000 |  |
| **R2** | **.45** |  |  |  | **.000** |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| *Indirect effect sizes* | Indirect effect size  |  | Boot SE | Boot LLCI | Boot ULCI |
| FSOP | -.06 |  |  | .03 | -.12 | -0.016 |
| Perception of implementation of work-family initiatives | -.06 |  |  | .02 | -.10 | -0.03 |
| Role overload | .04 |  |  | .02 | -.00 | 0.09 |
| **Table 8: Regression and mediation results for work-to-family enrichment** |  |  |  |
| ***Dependent variable model with work-to-family enrichment as the dependent variable***  |  |
| ***Total effect sizes*** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Variable  | B | SE | t | p |  |  |
| constant  |  | 1.98 | .38 | 5.16 | .000 |  |  |
| Perception of implementation of work-family initiatives |  | .22 | .04 | 5.29 | .000 |  |  |
| Role Overload |  | .07 | .05 | 1.32 | .19 |  |  |
| FSOP |  | .07 | .07 | .97 | .33 |  |  |
| Gender |  | .26 | .08 | 3.14 | .002 |  |  |
| Age |  | .01 | .01 | 1.66 | .10 |  |  |
| Marital status |  | .13 | .10 | 1.3 | .20 |  |  |
| Number of children |  | .00 | .04 | .07 | .94 |  |  |
| Negative Affectivity  |  | -.08 | .05 | -1.45 | .15 |  |  |
| **R2** | **.13** |  |  |  | **.000** |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| *Direct effect sizes* |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Variable  | B | SE | t | p |  |  |
| constant  |  | 1.45 | .41 | 3.51 | .001 |  |  |
| Balance self-efficacy |  | .10 | .03 | 3.14 | .002 |  |  |
| Perception of Implementation of work-family initiatives |  | .19 | .04 | 4.53 | .000 |  |  |
| Role Overload |  | .09 | .05 | 1.76 | .08 |  |  |
| FSOP |  | .03 | .07 | .5 | .62 |  |  |
| Gender |  | .25 | .08 | 3.1 | .002 |  |  |
| Age |  | .00 | .00 | 1.61 | .11 |  |  |
| Marital status |  | .12 | .10 | 1.16 | .25 |  |  |
| Number of children |  | -.003 | .04 | -.09 | .93 |  |  |
| Negative Affectivity  |  | -.02 | .06 | -.39 | .7 |  |  |
| **R2** | **.15** |  |  |  | **.000** |  |  |
|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| *Indirect effect sizes* | Indirect effect size  |  | Boot SE | Boot LLCI | Boot ULCI |  |
| FSOP | .03 |  |  | .02 | .009 | 0.071 |  |
| Perception of implementation of work-family initiatives | .03 |  |  | .01 | .008 | 0.06 |  |
| Role overload | -.02 |  |  | .01 | -.054 | -0.001 |  |

H4

**H6**

H9a

**H8c, H9c**

**H8b, H9b**

**H3**

**H1b**

**H1a**

Role overload

**Perception of implementation of WF initiatives**

Balance Self-efficacy

Work-to-Family conflict

**Family-supportive organizational perception (FSOP)**

Work-to-Family enrichment

# Figure 2: Supported hypotheses in the model

# *Noted hypotheses are supported. Dotted lines represent the relationships that were not significant in the model*

# CHAPTER VI

# CONCLUSION, DISCUSSION, AND LIMITATIONS

This thesis was set to investigate the relationships between three factors in the organization's context that can affect how an employee perceives the intersection between work and family (or work-family conflict and enrichment). The three factors are family-supportive culture, implementation of work-family initiatives and role overload; I measured those from the employees’ perspective. I introduced balance self-efficacy, which is one's belief in their own ability to manage resources, demands and stakeholders from the work and family domains, and examined the variable as a mediator between the context (i.e., culture, implementation and role overload) and each of work-family conflict and enrichment. This thesis was driven by research calls to a) examine the links between contextual elements, such as culture and overload, with work-family conflict and enrichment (Kelly et al., 2008); b) investigate antecedents of enrichment (Siu et al., 2010); and c) centralize the individual in the work-family literature (Kossek, Baltes, & Matthews, 2012). I therefore focused on investigating balance self-efficacy as a mediator variable.

This thesis provided an opportunity for me to explore the notion of self-efficacy in the work-family literature and introduce the new construct and measure of balance self-efficacy. I used premises from the social cognitive theory to understand whether one's perception of their ability to manage work and family relates to how they perceive conflict and enrichment between work and family. I also used premises from the Conservation of Resources theory and the Work-Home Resource Model to investigate the relationships between contextual resources, contextual demands, balance self-efficacy, and the work-family interface.

Moreover, in this thesis I empirically examined employees’ perception of implementation of work-family initiatives. This examination is important because implementation can be a barrier to inclusion and as a signaling mechanism of employers' support (Ryan & Kossek, 2008); however, examination of whether employees’ perception of that implementation relates to the work-family interface hasn’t been previously done. Results in this thesis indicated that perception of implementation of work-family initiatives related more strongly than family-supportive culture with conflict and enrichment.

Hypotheses were tested in a sample of 420 participants who are employed in a financial institution in the United Arab Emirates. The context allowed me to depart from previous research that focused on North American and European context (Powell, Fransesco & Ling, 2009; Mokomane, 2014). Analysis was conducted using PROCESS and I was thus able to test direct and mediated relationships.

Results indicated that some contextual factors relate differently to conflict and enrichment. Overload relates directly to conflict, but it relates only indirectly to enrichment through decreased balance self-efficacy.

Another highlight of the results is the non-significant relationship between family-supportive culture and each of conflict and enrichment. Those non-significant relationships are countered by stronger and significant relationships between implementation of work-family initiatives and each of conflict and enrichment. These results could be an indication that the visibility of the implementation steps taken by the organization could be critical in signaling family-support to employees. That might be true specifically if the family-supportive culture that the organization is working towards has not yet reached a level where it can impact one’s perception of how work and family experiences fit together. In this thesis, the perception of implementation measure captured the variability in employees’ perceptions of the context.

Lastly, results indicate that overload and family-supportive culture do not relate significantly to work-family enrichment; however, they do relate indirectly through balance self-efficacy. Those results highlight the relevance of personal resources, such as balance self-efficacy, in understanding how the context affects one's experience in managing work and family. The results align with the proposition suggested by the Work Home Resource Model which suggests that contextual resources and demands from one domain spill over the other domain by first affecting the individual’s personal resources (ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012).

## Balance self-efficacy:

In this thesis, I presented and examined the construct of balance self-efficacy as a mediator between three antecedents (family-supportive culture, implementation of work-family initiatives, role overload) and each of conflict and enrichment. The inclusion of self-efficacy measures in work-family studies has been limited; only a handful of studies have so far examined one’s self-efficacy in dealing with conflict between work and family (Cinnamon, 2006; Hennessey & Lent, 2006; Butler et al., 2004). Self-efficacy that is specific to the task of managing work and family is important because it captures one’s confidence in managing work and family. Furthermore, as we know from the social cognitive theory, engaging in an action is preceded by a cognitive assessment of one’s ability to perform that action (Bandura, 1977). As such, if one believes that one’s ability to negotiate with stakeholders is low, then one is likely not to engage in that negotiation. As results indicate in this thesis, balance self-efficacy has implications for how employees perceive the level of conflict and enrichment between work and family. Increased balance self-efficacy relates to decreased conflict and to increased enrichment between work and family.

There are two ways in which this thesis has added to previous research. First, the self-efficacy measure that I developed goes beyond one’s efficacy in dealing with conflict as in the case of the scales of Butler et al. (2004) and Cinnamon (2006). Balance self-efficacy taps into one’s efficacy to manage work and family simultaneously. Thus, the measure does not focus on one’s efficacy only in dealing with conflict; rather it focuses on one’s efficacy in managing resources, demands, and stakeholders. Conceptually, I based the development of the construct on advancements in the work-life balance literature that look at an overarching state of satisfaction with and balance between work and family (e.g., Valcour, 2007). Those advancements followed the development of previous work-family conflict management self-efficacy scales. Moreover, I identified specific tasks that the individual engages in when managing work and family in general and not necessarily in a conflict situation. Some examples include division of time, division of energy and communication with stakeholders. Identification of those tasks from previous literature focused the scales on action items and away from general assessment of one’s ability to manage family (or work) responsibilities (Hennessey & Lent, 2008).

My results indicate that balance self-efficacy relates to both conflict and enrichment. Those results imply that balance self-efficacy is not only a resilience resource that is referred to in moments of conflict (Cinamon, 2006), but it also is an enriching resource that allows the individual to view work and family as enriching. Results also imply that balance self-efficacy is affected by how the individual views the context in which he or she is working. For example, results indicate that individuals who report higher levels of family-supportive culture also report higher levels of balance self-efficacy.

The thesis also departs from previous research that focuses on general self-efficacy. It is important to highlight this distinction because balance self-efficacy examines the individual’s ability to engage in tasks that are specific to managing work and family. According to Bandura (1977), self-efficacy is a situation-specific characteristic; therefore, understanding one’s general self-efficacy is not necessarily indicative of how he or she will behave in a specific situation. Moreover, Bandura (2011) strongly challenges the concept of general self-efficacy as a stable trait. He argues that the idea of self-efficacy is strictly tied to certain situations and incorporates the premise that human behavior is conditional; thus self-efficacy cannot be manifested equally across situations and participants have to be thinking of a desired end when reporting on their sense of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997, 2011). When collecting data about general self-efficacy, researchers are not directing the individuals to think of a certain situation. For example, Chen, Gully, and Eden (2001) instruct participants to think of goals in a “wide variety of achievement” and of performance “across different tasks and situations” (p. 79). While researchers might not be imposing a desired end when collecting data (i.e., directing participants to think of their confidence given a specific context) the participants might be imposing their own context and will be thinking of a desired end that is not as general as the researcher desired.

To add to the above, domain-specific self-efficacy is promising in the work-family literature because it is a malleable characteristic (Gist & Mitchell, 1992), which means that it can change and thus positively affect the work-family experience. Similar to other domains, such as use of technology (Compeau & Higgins, 1995) and exercising (McAuley, 1993), interventions that are specifically targeted towards increasing one’s self-efficacy in managing work and family can be developed when research advances our knowledge on self-efficacy in the work-family domain.

## Perception of implementation of work-family initiatives

In this thesis I examined family-supportive culture and the implementation of work-family initiatives as antecedents of work-family conflict and work-family enrichment. Results indicate that employees’ perception of implementation of work-family initiatives relate directly and indirectly through balance self-efficacy to both work-to-family conflict and enrichment. Family-supportive culture, on the other hand, does not relate to either conflict or enrichment; results indicate that FSOP could relate to conflict and enrichment indirectly by affecting balance self-efficacy.

Results imply that the actual steps that are taken by the organization to implement work-family programs send a strong message to employees about organizational family-support. A family-supportive culture might not be at a level that would allow it to have a direct relationship with how the employee perceives the interaction between work and family.

The results in this study do not dismiss the effect of culture on the work-family interface. However, they show that the relationship is not direct but rather mediated through balance self-efficacy. Work-family researchers have discussed how a supportive culture can signal support to employees (e.g. Allen, 2001); I found a positive relationship between supportive-culture and balance self-efficacy indicating that the ‘signaling’ process translates to increased self-efficacy to manage work and family. That increased balance self-efficacy in turn relates to each of conflict and enrichment.

## Work-family enrichment

The work-family literature is grounded in work-family conflict (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1986). Predominantly, researchers have focused on conflict between work and family (Feldman & Hall, 2013). The focus on enrichment in work-family research is more recent and researchers are calling for an examination of the antecedents of enrichment (Siu et al., 2010). This thesis contributes to research by empirically examining antecedents of enrichment.

Results indicate that the same set of variables relates differently to enrichment than conflict. Overload relates directly to conflict; the indirect relationship of overload with conflict through balance self-efficacy is not significant. On the other hand, overload does not relate directly to enrichment; the variable relates indirectly to enrichment through decreased balance self-efficacy. These results indicate that conflict and enrichment are not merely two sides of the same coin. Variables do not simply have opposite relationships with conflict and enrichment; rather, they have different relationships with each of the two outcomes. Thus, previous research on the relationships between antecedents and conflict cannot necessarily be extended to enrichment; research must test these relationships empirically (Kelly et al., 2008) as was done in this thesis.

The results also suggest that enrichment should not be examined in isolation from role stressors. The work-family literature is divided between studies that have a negative outlook on the work-family experiences- thus construe the relationship between work and family as conflict- and those that have a positive outlook on the work-family experiences- and thus construe the relationship between work and family as enriching (Chen & Powell, 2012). Because of that division, studies examining enrichment are strictly looking at positive antecedents of enrichment. For example, Wayne, Grzywacz, Carlson et al. (2008) identify resources as antecedents to enrichment and propose a theoretical model that suggests that contextual and personal resources contribute to enrichment. Greenhaus and Powell (2006) also focus strictly on the types of resources (e.g. self-esteem, supervisor support) that enable enrichment between work and family.

As can be seen from the results in this thesis, role stressors (overload) can inhibit the development of personal resources (balance self-efficacy) and then negatively affect enrichment. A holistic view of the work-family experiences would look at both resources and demands and their effect on one’s evaluation of the work-family interface. The results in this thesis echo recent empirical and conceptual research in the work-family field that examine both demands and resources as affecting the work-family experience (Bakker, ten Brummelhuis, Prins, et al., 2011). Enrichment can be construed as the process of resource generation; however, demands would still negatively relate to it, if not directly then through the deployment of personal resources such as balance self-efficacy (ten Brummelhuis and Bakker, 2012).

## Gender and work-family among expatriates

I included gender in the models as a control variable. Hypotheses about the relationships between gender and the outcomes were not formulated. However, it is worth noting those results and their implications.

Previous studies have examined the relationships between gender and the work-family interface. It is thought that females are more likely to encounter conflict between the two domains (Fu & Shaffer, 2001) because of the persistence of the stereotypical gender roles at home. Indeed, Fu and Shaffer (2001) found that women experience more conflict from family to work than men do. The researchers concluded that participation in the labour market seems not to have freed women from their main role of care-giving at home; therefore, their male counterparts still assume the role of the main breadwinner in the family (Fu & Shaffer, 2001). For the reasons just stated, gender was controlled for in this current study.

Relationships between gender and work-family conflict and enrichment were not hypothesized. However, as was noted in the results section, results pertaining to the relationship of gender with each of work-to-family conflict and enrichment are not consistent with previous research. As per the correlation table, gender (coded as female=1) relates negatively with conflict and positively with enrichment. The regression coefficients also suggest that gender is related positively with enrichment and negatively with conflict. These results suggest that female employees are reporting less conflict and more enrichment between work and family. Also, gender is not significantly related to balance self-efficacy, which suggests that there are no gender differences in the levels of balance self-efficacy that could have been acquired from the organizational context.

The difference between male and female employees is in how the work experiences spill over the family domain; females reported less conflict and more enrichment than their male counterparts. Those results are not consistent with previous research; they suggest that gender role expectations might not be as pronounced in the current sample as in previously examined samples. That is likely because the studied sample consists of expatriates, thus both women and men are residents of the country either because they are employed or are accompanying an employed spouse. This employment structure might give different meaning to role salience in two possible ways. First, it could be that working women are likely to have a non-working partner who joined them in their current expatriate work mission, or that both partners assume equal responsibility for bread-winning among expatriates. Further information is needed to accurately explain the differentials on gender in this study; however, research on women’s adaptation during international assignments can give us some insights. Though research on the role of gender in affecting the expatriates’ adjustment experience is not conclusive (Lazarova, Westman, & Shaffer, 2010), there is evidence that female expatriates adjust better than their male counterparts in international assignments, particularly in the area of creating and maintaining relationships (Haslberger, 2010). Indeed, social support, specifically if it were from colleagues, positively affects one’s perception of the work-family experience (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006). Therefore women may report more enrichment and less conflict between work and family. The social support from colleagues in the workplace or from friends may be channeled as a resource towards less conflict and more enrichment between work and family.

## Limitations

The results that are presented in this thesis should be interpreted while taking the below limitations into consideration.

First, the data are cross-sectional in that they were collected at a single point in time and thus cannot imply causation. Cross-sectional data allow testing for relationships between different variables but are not ideal for inferring causality. Nevertheless, the mediation relationships that were examined in this thesis are strongly rooted in theoretical reasoning. The theoretical foundation of the tested hypotheses is rooted in previous research and established theories that depict the relationships between contextual resources and personal resources and also between resources and the work-family interface. Mediation can be confirmed given a longitudinal design.

Second, the data were collected from employees, which might cause common method bias. Given the study aimed at understanding support at the organization and the implementation of the work-family initiatives from employees’ perspectives, it was important to collect the data from the employees’ perspective. The outcome variables are also meant to capture the employees’ experiences and their own evaluation of how their work and family domains are interacting. Collecting the data from objective sources is important, but it would describe a different phenomenon. Knowing that collecting data from employees might have implications on common method bias, the study design phase integrated the following steps that are recommended by Podsakoff, MacKensie, and Podsakoff (2003).

*Counterbalancing question order* (Podsdakof el al., 2003; p. 888). Data were collected online. When the questionnaire was being built, the questions related to the outcomes (conflict and enrichment) were placed at the beginning of the survey to prevent the respondents from picking up any cues related to the possible relationships that are being tested in the study. The work-family conflict and enrichment scales were followed with the balance self-efficacy scales. Psychological separation between those two constructs was sought by providing a two-paragraph introduction to the balance self-efficacy items prompting the individuals to ‘estimate [their] own ability” and to think of their own confidence in successfully performing each of the tasks. Methodological separation was also sought by having different Likert scales for the questions. Both scales of balance self-efficacy and work-family conflict/enrichment were Likert scales; however, the answer options for balance self-efficacy ranged from 1 to 7 (strongly disagree to strongly agree) while the answer options for work-family ranged from 1 to 5 (never to all the time). The antecedent variables were not included until later and were separated from the balance self-efficacy and work-family questions by scales that are not included in the conceptual model.

*Protecting respondent anonymity and reducing evaluation apprehension* (Podsakoff et al., 2003; p.888). Respondents were promised anonymity at the beginning of the survey in the information letter in order to reduce social desirability. For respondents who wished to participate in the draw for the prize, they were instructed to click on a link that would take them to another survey to collect their decision to participate in the draw and personal contact information. The draw survey was designed in a way that does not allow matching respondents’ information to their responses. That survey design was explained to the respondents. Information that could have been deemed by the respondent to be identifiers such as position, department name and organization’s name were included in the last page of the survey.

Negative affectivity was controlled for in this study as a way to control for potential common method bias. As explained by Podsakoff et al. (2003), this method does assume that the common method bias is caused by emotionality and treats negative affectivity as a ‘surrogate’ for common method biases.

## Issues of generalizability:

The data for this thesis were collected in a single organization. Such a setting has its own advantages and disadvantages. Collecting data in a single organization can limit the variance of some of the measures, such as culture in particular. It is worth noting, however, that previous studies examining family-supportive cultures (FSOP) have only collected data from employees in one organization (e.g. Odle-Dusseau et al., 2012; Wayne et al., 2013).

Collecting data in one organization allowed access to information related to specific work-life policies and actual measures taken by the organization in advancing work-family initiatives. The organization reports that it is strategically interested in advancing a supportive culture and specific policies to foster that support are in place. In that way, the context is controlled for and the responses of the participants are indeed shades of their own perceptions.

The question remains whether or not the findings are generalizable to other countries or cultural contexts. The experiences of expatriates hold similarities to other working populations. As far as a working adult’s life is concerned, the similarities are held in one’s responsibility to undertake a work role while maintaining non-work responsibilities. Having said that, it is worth noting that models developed to map out the relationships between demands and resources and their effect on the work-family interface have largely been drawn from Western contexts. Thus, testing the relationships in a specific context such as UAE is needed empirically. The peculiarities can be drawn from the unique labour market that is mainly composed of expatriates. Expatriate population is peculiar in the way they live their work-family experiences. For example, role overload might be overly pronounced among expatriates who are often faced with extreme job demands when on the mission and are thus likely to spend less time with family (Shaffer & Harrison, 1998). Thus work-family conflict might indeed be an issue for them more so than enrichment at this phase in their lives. (Note that the variables in the model explained much higher variance in conflict than in enrichment).

## Future research

Future studies that are listed in this thesis aim to advance our understanding of balance self-efficacy and its antecedents. I suggest an intervention to explore whether training programs can be adopted to increase people’s beliefs in their abilities to manage work and family. I also suggest a multi-disciplinary study to use public discourse in informing our knowledge about the nature of the work-family interface.

### Increasing balance self-efficacy: an intervention study

This thesis highlighted the relationship between balance self-efficacy and each of conflict and enrichment; it also suggested that balance self-efficacy mediates the relationships between perception of contextual factors (such as implementation of work-family initiatives and role overload) and the work-family interface. Future studies are needed to better understand ways in which balance self-efficacy can be built and to unfold over time the phenomenon of development of self-efficacy and its positive spillover into the work-family interface.

An intervention study is designed to explore ways in which to positively manipulate balance self-efficacy. The purpose is twofold; first to examine training intervention as an antecedent to balance self-efficacy; second, to longitudinally capture the development of balance self-efficacy and its effect on the work-family interface over time. The intervention study aims at building on the premise that the individual should be at the center of the work-family research (Kossek, Baltes & Matthews, 2011) and is in line with this thesis to look for ways to empower the individual and increase employees’ resourcefulness.

The suggested training program is based on the *self-authoring* method that is gaining prominence in education research as a tool to improve students’ performance (Baxter, 2001; Pizzolato, 2003). Self-authoring is based on the theory of the evolving self (Kegan, 1982). Kegan’s Constructive-Development Theory postulates that the individual is the total of cognitive, affective, interpersonal and intrapersonal selves (Helsing & Howell, 2014) that are open to development and integration through the self-authoring mind, which is capable of continuous learning of the context (Kegan, 1994). That theoretical lens will allow us to look at the work-family interface as a state emanating from the individual and requiring personal psychological development. That addresses a research call to look at work and family not as two distinct domains that need integration, but two roles of one individual who already is an integrated being- one “whole person” (Feldman & Hall, 2013; p.91). The intervention aims to devise a program that will empower the individual to forge better synergy between work and family by consciously learning about each domain.

The specific training program will be modeled around Peterson’s self-authoring suite. Peterson’s model is based on a three-stage writing module that encourages individuals to think about their past, present and future. It incorporates an assessment of values and beliefs to guide the individual to learn more about what they did in the past, how they managed work and family and what should work for them in the future. Participants will engage in thoughtful writing exercises to describe life events that are related to managing work and family; the writing will focus on past and present occurrences. We will then have participants engage in writing future (goal-oriented) narratives that will give them a chance to think of the way they would envision managing work and family in the future. Participants will then use the future-oriented writing exercise to develop a specific action plan of how they want to manage work and family. The purpose of the training is to examine whether self-authoring increases one’s balance self-efficacy and stress indicators. Stress will be assessed using biological measures including galvanic skin resistance and salivary cortisol.

### Resources, demands and enrichment

This thesis highlighted some differences in the relationships of antecedents with each of conflict and enrichment. It also highlighted the necessity not to isolate the enrichment experience from contextual demands.

Despite the fact that enrichment is a construct that is highly rooted in positive psychology and is a result of resource generation, future research should take into consideration that development of resources does not happen in isolation from their depletion; the processes of resource generation and depletion can intertwine (ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012). Thus in examining the antecedents of enrichment, it will be worth pursuing the effect of demands and role stressors. As in this thesis, role overload did not relate directly to enrichment but it did relate indirectly through balance self-efficacy.

Moving forward, there is a need to meta-analytically examine the relationships between the antecedents of conflict and enrichment. The main purpose of the meta-analysis is to understand whether different types of resources relate to enrichment and conflict differently. As researchers compile empirical evidence, a meta-analysis that looks at both enrichment and conflict as outcomes should follow. The meta-analysis will allow us to empirically examine the divergence and convergence validity of enrichment.

### Understanding the work-family interface: examining the public’s view of the work-family experience

In this thesis I focused on two aspects of the work-family interface, conflict and enrichment. Frone (2003) views conflict and enrichment as two elements of an overarching concept called balance. His view of balance is challenged by other researchers who have found that balance is more than conflict and enrichment (Carlson, Grzywacz, & Zivnuska, 2009) and others who argue that balance is about a general sense of satisfaction with how one leads their work and personal lives (Valcour, 2007). Academic research is calling for studies that help define the concept of balance, whether in relation to conflict and enrichment or independently of the two concepts.

However, the academic quest to define balance seems to have been outrun by the use of the term balance in media outlets. In the press, among human resources professionals and the general working population, the word might be taking on a life of its own. In order to further refine the concept of balance, a future study needs to be designed for the purpose of analyzing the language used in the popular press to describe work-life balance. The purpose is to investigate the discourse in the media and the media language as a starting point to refine the construct of balance. The study uses methodologies applied in corpus linguistics. Corpus linguistics tools will allow us to analyze the use of the term balance in the media and define what the word is and is not for the public. Findings from analyzing language used in media articles will then be juxtaposed with current definitions of balance in the literature. The objective is to refine the construct and examine whether current academic definitions converge with the public’s opinion of what balance means to them.

### Summary and Implications

 In this thesis, I aimed to highlight the individual’s role in shaping the experiences between work and family by investigating self-efficacy in the work-family literature. Studies on self-efficacy pertaining to the management of work and family experiences are very limited (e.g. Butler et al., 2004; Cinamon, 2006). Recent developments in the literature have redefined the relationships between work and family beyond conflict. With a need to now redefine work-family self-efficacy, I introduced the construct and measure of balance self-efficacy. Using a resource-view of the work-family experience (ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012), I examined balance self-efficacy as a mediator for the relationship of two organizational resources (family-supportive culture and perception of implementation of work-family initiatives), one contextual demand (role overload) with work-family conflict and enrichment. By examining mediated relationships, I responded to research calls to investigate the mechanisms through which contextual factors relate to work-family conflict and enrichment.

Given the level of malleability, the study of self-efficacy in the work-family literature should be closely examined. Researchers in the field are highlighting the necessity to empower and give control back to the individuals in work-family research (Kossek, Matthews, & Baltes, 2011). Those research calls are taking place in a time when the boundaries between work and family have blurred (Chesley, 2006) and the changing nature of jobs in knowledge economies are requiring individuals to craft their jobs and take control over their sense of engagement in the workplace (Bakker, 2010).

The inclusion of self-efficacy in the work-family literature discourse will allow us to focus on the control that employees have over structuring their days, making career decisions, and making family decisions. Self-efficacy will allow us to talk about the relationships between work and family in terms of abilities and actions.

As shown in this thesis, belief in one’s own ability to manage work and family is related to the reported level of conflict and enrichment between work and family. Moreover, balance self-efficacy seems to mediate the effect of contextual factors on the work-family experience. Those findings have several implications. First, in assessing the effectiveness of work-family resources, researchers and practitioners need to assess how those resources are affecting individual’s beliefs in his or her ability to manage work and family. The individual decides each day how to divide resources between work and non-work responsibilities; therefore, organizational resources should be directed towards increasing that sense of ability. Second, the particularity of self-efficacy is in its malleability (Gist & Mitchell, 1992). While behavioral research in general has benefitted from understanding the links between motivation to complete a task with self-efficacy (e.g. Compeau & Higgins, 1995), this is not yet the case in the work-family literature. The malleability of self-efficacy can initiate workplace interventions that would allow individuals to increase their sense of ability to manage work and family. Further investigation of the construct will help us understand the areas in which personal ability lies.

I also focused on assessing employees’ perceptions of the steps taken by their organization to implement work-family initiatives. This focus helps operationalize the organization’s steps to advance work-family initiatives. Results indicate that how employees perceive the implementation steps will affect the employees’ assessment of conflict and enrichment between work and family. Similar to how work-family policies signal a message of family-support to employees (Ryan & Kossek, 2008), implementation steps such as providing updates on work-life balance initiatives, creating accountability for advancement of work-family initiatives, and holding educational information sessions for managers and employees communicate the employers’ commitment to employees to attain work-life balance. Organizations are thus encouraged to closely examine the steps related to communicating updates on work-family initiatives. The measure reported here examined steps related to communicating updates on work-life balance initiatives, creating a role to ensure that work-life balance initiatives are advanced in the organization, providing the necessary technology to enable employees to work off-site when needed, providing information sessions separately to managers and employees, allowing all employees to have similar access to work-life balance policies, allowing managers some lenience in considering individual needs, and documenting and disseminating work-life balance policies. Therefore, in implementing work-family policies, organizations can choose to simply make work-family policies available; however, the results of my research suggest that the more that implementation is made visible to employees, the more it will reflect positively on employees’ work-family experiences.

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1. I only examine work-to-family relationships. As such, when the structure ‘work-family’ is used in this thesis, it is referring to work-to-family. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Note that Ryan and Kossek (2008) also identify supervisor support as one implementation attribute. I did not include it in my measure because supervisor support can be particular to specific supervisor-subordinate relationships and does not reflect a formal attribute of policies, which is my focus in this thesis. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)