



The impact of job demands on parental burnout through work-to-family conflict.
Can both supervisor and family support buffer this impact?

Master thesis Human Resource Studies
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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to examine to what extent the demands of a job can lead to the relatively new construct parental burnout. It was investigated if this relationship exists through work-to-family conflict. Furthermore, it was examined whether supervisor support can buffer the impact of job demands on work-to-family conflict. Additionally, it was examined whether family support can buffer the impact of work-to-family conflict on parental burnout. A cross-sectional design was used, in which 649 Dutch working parents with at least one child living at home, filled in a questionnaire with questions about managing work-life balance. Multiple regression analyses were used to test the hypotheses. As hypothesized, job demands and work-to-family conflict were positively related, as well as work-to-family conflict and parental burnout. Thus, the relationship between job demands and parental burnout was found to exist via work-to-family conflict. The buffering effect of supervisor support was found as well. Contrary, no buffering effect of family support was found for the impact of work-to-family conflict on parental burnout. However, family support was found to have a direct and negative relationship with parental burnout. Furthermore, the buffering effect of family support was found to exist for only one dimension of parental burnout, namely emotional distancing. Finally, implications and directions for future research are discussed.

Key words: Parental burnout, job demands, work-to-family conflict, supervisor support, family support

Introduction

In the past three decades, work has become more complex and employees are expected to be more flexible and to tolerate continuous changes. Due to a response to globalization and international competition, there has been a significant increase in the downsizing of organizations and employees are solely employed when contributing to the competitiveness of the organization (Cartwright & Holmes, 2006). Hence, changes in the workplace have tended to significantly increase the demands placed on their employees. These demands are pronounced job demands, which are physical, social, or organizational aspects of the job that require sustained physical or mental effort and are therefore associated with certain physiological and psychological costs (Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner & Schaufeli, 2001). In addition to the increased job demands, the number of dual-earner couples, single parent families and workers with eldercare responsibilities has increased more and more (Galinsky, Aumann & Bond, 2009). Consequently, both family and job demands increased and employees are currently facing difficult challenges to meet the demands of both the work and family domain (Mesmer-Magnus & Viswesvaran, 2006). These challenges may lead to a conflict between the work and family domain, which is called work-family conflict. Work-family conflict has been defined as “a form of interrole conflict in which the role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect” (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985, p. 77).

Due to the higher job demands and the emerging conflicts between work and family life, more individuals may now be hampered by negative psychological consequences. Studies have shown that both job demands and work-family conflict have a profound impact on burnout (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Rupert, Stevanovic & Hunley, 2009). Originally, burnout has been recognized as a psychological syndrome arising solely in the work domain (Roskam, Raes & Mikolajczak, 2017). Burnout is usually defined as a three dimensional syndrome of exhaustion, cynicism, and lack of professional efficacy (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001). More recently, the existence of another type of burnout is considered, namely parental burnout. People can burnout from their parental role, as well as they can burnout from their job (Roskam et al., 2017). Furthermore, the three dimensions of an occupational burnout can also be recognized in the case of a parental burnout: emotional exhaustion, emotional distancing from offspring, and diminished parental self-efficacy (Roskam et al., 2017).

Burnout, regardless of the context in which it emerges, has been associated with a number of negative outcomes, like reduced health and life satisfaction (Kozak, Kersten,

Schillmoller & Nienhaus, 2013). Therefore, the consequences of burnout are not solely individually harming, but can also have an impact on organizations and society as a whole, since unhealthy and unhappy employees are less productive (Taris & Schreurs, 2009). Job burnout and its antecedents and consequences have been studied much more than burnout occurring in the parental role (Roskam et al., 2017). Considering that job demands and work-life conflict have been found to be important factors for a burnout to emerge in the work domain, it is interesting to see if demands at work also affect a parental burnout, through the conflict arising between those domains. Furthermore, social support in the work domain has been found to buffer against job burnout (Demerouti et al., 2001). Whether social support might have buffering effects for parental burnout as well will be examined in the present study.

Earlier studies showed that social support plays an important role in helping individuals cope with stress and to reduce its potential negative psychological and physiological consequences (Terry, Rawle & Callan, 1995). Social support has been broadly defined as the receipt of material and psychological resources from valued others within one's social network (Cohen & Wills, 1985). On the one hand, social support can be offered in the work domain, like social support from supervisors (supervisor support). On the other hand, social support can come from the family domain, like a supportive spouse or other family members (family support). Using the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model (Demerouti et al., 2001), it can be argued that supervisor support can buffer the effect of job demands on work-family conflict. In addition to supervisor support, family support may buffer the effect of work-family conflict on parental burnout, which can be explained by the Conservation of Resources model (Hobfoll, 1989).

In sum, this study will examine how job demands may influence parental burnout through work-to-family conflict. Furthermore, the buffering effects of social support in the work (supervisor support) and family (family support) domain will be examined, which leads to the following research question:

“To what extent do job demands influence parental burnout through work-to-family conflict? Furthermore, to what extent can supervisor support buffer the effect of job demands on work-to-family conflict and family support buffer the impact of work-to-family conflict on parental burnout?”

Theoretical framework

The influence of job demands on parental burnout through work-to-family conflict

Job demands have been found to have a strong relationship with job burnout (Demerouti et al., 2001). However, demands do not solely apply to the work domain. Being a parent and taking care of the household can be demanding as well. According to Roskam et al. (2017), parents can be even so exhausted from their parental role, that the term “burnout” is appropriate in this role too. Roskam et al. (2017) found that parental burnout is distinctive from job burnout and therefore the construct burnout exists in different contexts. Furthermore, parental burnout is different from concepts like parental stress or depression. Parental burnout can be defined as a psychological syndrome that appears in the parental context and is tridimensional: 1) emotional exhaustion, 2) emotional distancing from children, and 3) low personal accomplishment. First, emotional exhaustion includes feelings of being overloaded and depleted of one’s physical and emotional resources. Parents are feeling too tired and emotionally drained to take care of their children. Second, emotional distancing from children refers to the situation where parents still provide practical care, but they become less emotionally involved with their children. Resulting in being less sensitive for their children’s feelings. Finally, low personal accomplishment implies that parents are feeling less effective or incompetent in their role as a parent (Roskam et al., 2017).

Although an individual’s role of being a parent is different – and performed in another context - from it’s role as being an employee, it appears difficult to accomplish the work and family roles simultaneously (Kossek & Ozeki, 1998). From the role strain perspective it is presumed that responsibilities of those separate domains compete for limited amounts of time, physical energy, and psychological resources (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). High job demands require employees to devote more time, physical energy and/or psychological resources to work, leaving them with fewer resources to dedicate to their family. Thus, employees who are confronted with work overload and emotional demands at work have more problems in combining work with their family life, resulting in more work-to-family conflict (Butler, Grzywacz, Bass, & Linney, 2005; Bakker & Geurts, 2004). Work-to-family conflict occurs when work activities are interfering with family responsibilities (Breugh and Frye, 2008). The conflict can also occur in another direction, namely family-to-work conflict, which happens when family activities interfere with work responsibilities (Allen, Johnson, Kiburz & Shockley, 2013). Since job demands are stressors from the work domain, and work-related antecedents are found to associate with more work-to-family conflict than family-to-work

conflict (Byron, 2005), this study will focus on only one direction of the conflict: work-to-family conflict.

Furthermore, the Conservation of Resources (COR) model proposes that conflicts between work and family lead to stress, because resources are lost in the process of juggling both work and family roles (Grandey & Cropanzano, 1999). The basic principles of COR theory are that individuals are motivated to protect their resources and that people invest in resources in order to protect against resource loss (Hobfoll, 1989). Investing more resources can be explained by coping strategies, such as working harder, which are expected to help individuals to restore a sense of control over their situation (Ito & Brotheridge, 2003). For instance, employees experiencing high job demands might start thinking that they cannot successfully perform the job. Consequently, they necessitate themselves to invest more of their resources into their work role, since they might be afraid of losing their job status (Grandey & Cropanzano, 1999). Their coping strategy is working harder and consequently investing more time and energy (resources) into work, in order to make sure the job status will not be lost (resource loss). However, the limited amount of resources of an individual makes that resources might be lost in another domain. Loss of resources in the other – family – domain can lead to a negative state of being, which may include dissatisfaction, exhaustion and psychological tension (Hobfoll & Shirom, 1993).

Congruent with the COR theory, work-family conflict has been found to influence psychological distress (Frone, Russell & Cooper, 1992). Furthermore, conflicts between the work and family domain have been found to mediate the relationship between demanding work characteristics and indicators of psychological well-being and burnout (Geurts, Rutte, & Peeters, 1999; Janssen, Peeters, deJonge, Houkes & Tummers, 2004; Rupert et al., 2009). Hence, it is suggested that work-to-family conflict is the underlying cause of the relationship between job demands and parental burnout. Summarized, when the demands of work are high, causing work and family domains to come into conflict, resources in the family domain may be lost or threatened and may increase the degree of parental burnout.

Hypothesis 1: Job demands are positively related to parental burnout, which is mediated by work-to-family conflict.

The buffering effect of supervisor support

Social support has been found an essential resource or coping mechanism that helps people diminish the effects of stressors (Anderson, Coffey & Byerly, 2002). Hence, according to the

stress buffering theory, when a situation is perceived as stressful (i.e. high job demands), social support resources can reduce the negative effects of stress (i.e. mental health issues). Drawing on the general social support literature, work-family research has identified social support from supervisors as an important resource that can diminish the negative effects of work and family stressors (O'Driscoll, Poelmans, Spector, Kalliath, Allen, Cooper, Sanchez, 2003; Hammer, Kossek, Yragui, Bodner & Hanson, 2009). Work-related social support, especially received from supervisors, like providing instrumental aid, emotional support or perhaps providing greater flexibility or control over one's situation, may make one's work situation less stressful (Anderson et al., 2002).

The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model of Demerouti et al. (2001) can further clarify the moderating role of supervisor support. According to this model, one of the essential job resources is supervisor support. Job resources refer to those physical, psychological, social, or organizational aspects of the job that (a) are functional in achieving work goals, (b) reduce job demands and the associated physiological and psychological costs, or (c) stimulate personal growth and development (Demerouti et al., 2001). The definition of job resources already clarifies the relationship with job demands; job resources can reduce job demands. Therefore, it can be reasoned that supervisor support, especially supervisor work-family support, can buffer the impact of job demands on work-to-family conflict. Supervisor work-family support is defined as perceptions that the supervisor cares about the employee's work-family well-being, demonstrated by supervisors' helping to resolve work-family conflicts or showing empathy with employee's desire for work-family balance (Hammer, Kossek, Bodner, Anger & Zimmerman, 2011; Thomas & Ganster, 1995).

For instance Kossek, Pichler, Bodner & Hammer (2011) found in their meta-analysis that supervisor work-family support had a direct negative relationship with work-to-family conflict. Supervisors can relieve the conflict between work and family by sharing information and resources, helping employees with work-family issues and offering suggestions for combining work and family (Ray & Miller, 1994). When an organization does not offer specific family-friendly programs or policies, individual supervisors can give people flexibility by informally supporting such options (Anderson et al., 2002). For instance, a positive response to the request to come one hour later since your child is sick, can be seen as family supportive behavior from your supervisor. Research further suggests that supervisor support is critical for the utilization and effectiveness of work-life programs, as it is up to supervisors to implement and manage family-friendly policies in organizations (Allen, Herst, Bruck & Sutton, 2000). Hence, a family supportive supervisor may make work situations less

stressful by discussing family-related problems and being flexible regarding family matters. Moreover, supervisor work-family support has been found to moderate the effect of work stressor's on work-family conflict (Carlson & Perrewe, 1999). In sum, when working parents perceive high job demands, a family supportive supervisor might help reduce the impact on work-to-family conflict.

Hypothesis 2: A family supportive supervisor buffers the impact of job demands on work-to-family conflict, such that the positive relationship is weaker for those with greater family-supportive supervision than for those with less family-supportive supervision.

The buffering effect of family support

The previously discussed COR model posits that resources that adequately meet work demands are critical to prevent burnout. Such resources may be related to work life (e.g., autonomy, support), family life (e.g., intimate relationships, support), or personal attributes (e.g., self esteem) (Rupert et al., 2009). Family resources appear to be as important as work resources in reducing workplace stress and burnout (Leiter, 1990). Consistent with this model, Rupert et al. (2009) showed that family support was significant and negatively related to emotional exhaustion. In addition, in the study of Baruch-Feldman, Brondolo, Ben-Dayan and Schwartz (2002), family support was significantly negatively associated with job burnout.

Likewise the effect of family support on job burnout, parents who are burned out by their parental role may also benefit from resources like family support. Despite the few research on parental burnout, it can be interpreted that family support might be even more effective for reducing parental burnout. Family members may be sympathetic to demands at work (emotional support), but they are unable to provide tangible help that would assist in resolving those demands (instrumental support) (Halbesleben, 2006). However, they are able to provide tangible help with family demands, like taking care of the children or the household when its needed, which might reduce the impact of work-to-family conflict on parental burnout. If a working parent experiences work-to-family conflict, his/her work takes time or energy from the family domain, resulting in an appeal to the resources in this domain. The demands in the family domain can be reduced by family members, which may lead to fewer chances the working parent will become overloaded. In addition to the tangible help, studies often found a link between family support and increased psychological well-being (Walen & Lachman, 2000; Lakey & Orehek, 2011). Hence, emotional support of family members can enhance the psychological well-being of a parent who is perceiving work-family

conflict. In sum, a supportive family might decrease family demands and increase psychological well-being, resulting a lower degree of parental burnout.

Hypothesis 3: A supportive family buffers the impact of work-to-family conflict on parental burnout, such that the positive relationship is weaker for those with greater family support than for those with less family support.

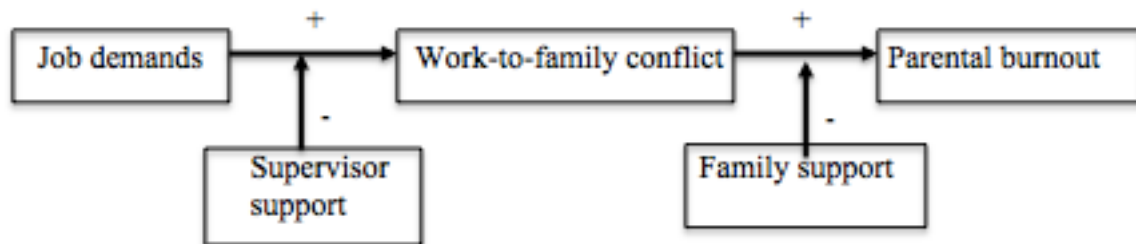


Figure 1: Conceptual model

Method

Research design

This study has a quantitative cross-sectional research design. The data used in this study are part of a larger international investigation on combining work and private life, with the working parent as the level of analysis. This study only used data collected in the Netherlands and therefore the questionnaire was provided in Dutch.

Sample

In total 677 questionnaires were returned and all answers were put together in a data file. Afterwards, respondents who did not have children living at home and respondents who worked less than 12 hours a week were excluded. Therefore, the total number of questionnaires used in the measures of this study was 649. The respondents were working in 16 different sectors, including the option 'other'. Most of the respondents were working in the sectors healthcare, education and business and technical services/communication. The sample consisted of 39,8% men respondents and 60,2% women respondents. The average age of the sample was 44.77 years (s.d. = 8,47). The mean amount of children living at home was 1.93 (s.d. = 0,83) and the average age of their youngest child was 11.24 (s.d. = 7,31) and of their oldest child 13.48 years (s.d. = 7,32). In the sample, 29,2% of the respondents was a supervisor. The actual amount of working hours was on average 34.70 (s.d. = 10,70).

Instruments

Job demands were measured with a short Dutch version of The Swedish Demand-Control-Support Questionnaire (Sanne, Torp, Mykletun & Dahl, 2005). Three of the job demands items were used: "How often in the last year did you have to work very hard?" "How often in the last year did you have to work very fast?" and "How often in the last year did your job require too great a work effort?" (1 = never, 5 = very often). In order to test the assumed underlying structure of the job demands scale, an exploratory factor analysis was conducted. Based on the Kaiser's criterion, which indicates that eigenvalues above 1 can be regarded as different factors, the number of factors desired in the research is one for job demands. Additionally, the Cattell's scree plot also shows that the number of factors is one. Therefore, it can be concluded that the construct validity of the items was good; all items regarding job demands measure the same construct. The internal consistency reliability of the scale was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha, to test if it would be justified to continue with a

job demands scale consisting of all three items. Cronbach's alpha of the scale was 0.786, which is acceptable internal consistency reliability.

Work-to-family conflict was evaluated with six of the twelve items developed by Carlson, Kacmar and Williams (2000). All twelve items together measure work-family conflict, both work-to-family and family-to-work. Since only work-to-family conflict is in the interest of this study, the six items on family-to-work conflict were deleted. The scale consisting of six items assesses to what extent work negatively influenced the home situation or family activities. Example items are "The time I must devote to my job keeps me from participating in household responsibilities and activities" and "I am often so emotionally drained when I get home from work that it prevents me from contributing to my family" (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). Based on the eigenvalues and the Cattell's scree plot, the number of underlying factors of work-to-family support was two. However, this study does not elaborate on the effects of the different dimensions separately, therefore a sum score was made of all six items. Finally, a reliability analysis was performed to test the internal consistency of the work-to-family conflict items and showed that the Cronbach's alpha of the scale was 0.804, which is good.

Parental burnout was measured using a 22-item questionnaire developed by Roskam et al. (2017). For instance "I can no longer show my children how much I love them" and "I feel emotionally drained by my parental role". The answer scale of these items was as following: 1 = never, 2 = a few times a year or less, 3 = once a month or less, 4 = a few times a month, 5 = once a week, 6 = a few times a week, 7 = every day. Based on the eigenvalues, parental burnout could consist of four factors. However, based on the Cattell's scree plot test, the fourth factor was not of additional value. Therefore, the amount of factors is three. This was also expected based on the research of Roskam et al. (2017), namely emotional exhaustion, emotional distancing from offspring, and diminished parental self-efficacy. First, in the main analysis, this study focused on parental burnout as an overall construct consisting of the 22 items together. Additionally, the effects on the three different dimensions separately were examined to see if the effects were different. Cronbach's alpha of the overall scale was 0.913, which suggests very good internal consistency reliability for the scale in this sample.

Supervisor support was assessed by the Family Supportive Supervisor Behavior Short-Form (FSSB, Hammer, Kossek, Bodner & Crain, 2013). Four items of this questionnaire were used, which were focused on supervisor support in combining work and family, so supervisor work-family support. Example items are "My supervisor makes me feel comfortable talking to him/her about my conflicts between work and non-work" and "My supervisor works

effectively with employees to creatively solve conflicts between work and non-work” (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). To test the underlying structure of the supervisor support scale, another exploratory factor analysis was conducted. Subsequently, regarding the eigenvalues and the Cattell’s scree plot test, the items of supervisor support were all loading on one factor. Therefore, the construct validity of the scale was good, since all items measure the same construct. Cronbach’s alpha was 0.842, which indicated good internal consistency reliability.

Family support was measured by six items of Shockley and Allen (2013). Example items are “When I’m frustrated by my work, someone in my family tries to understand” and “If my job gets very demanding, someone in my family will take on extra household responsibilities”, with a scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. Exploratory factor analysis indicated family support to consist of two factors. However, this study does not elaborate on the effects of the different dimensions separately. Therefore, family support was also measured as one scale consisting of six items. Cronbach’s alpha was 0.779, which is acceptable.

Finally, *control variables* were included to assess whether there was spuriousness. The control variables were gender, age, work hours, marital status and the number of children living at home. Gender was measured by the item: “What is your gender?” with the options male or female. To measure age, the calculation 2017 minus year of birth was executed, since the item asked was: “What is your birth year?”. Work hours was measured with the item: “How many hours a week do you actually work?”. The respondent had to write down the average number of hours a week, rounded to full hours. Marital status was measured by the item “What is your marital status?”, in which people could answer either ‘married/cohabitating’ or ‘single/divorced’. Finally, the number of children was measured using the question: “How many children do you have living at home?”

Procedure

Data for this research were collected in The Netherlands. In order to gain useful data for this study, students who followed the course “Research in Human Resource Studies” and three graduating master students of Human Resource Studies at Tilburg University collected the questionnaires. All students collected data among working parents within their own network. They used stratified sampling within different age ranges of the children: 0-6, 6-12, 12-18 and >18 years old. The questionnaires were filled in by parents with one or more children living at home, who work for at least 12 hours a week and who have a supervisor. Furthermore, only

one parent per couple was asked to fill in the questionnaire. The questionnaires, which were handed out hardcopy, contained an introduction letter. In this letter, anonymity was guaranteed. In addition to the questionnaire and introduction letter, a verification and informed consent form was received and filled in by respondents in order to verify themselves as existing persons and to sign up for participation in future research, when interested.

Analysis

While applying a missing value analysis, the missing values for job demands, family support and work-to-family conflict were estimated and the data was imputed. However, for supervisor support and parental burnout, the Little's MCAR test turned out to be significant and data imputation was not reliable. Therefore, the mean scores of supervisor support and parental burnout were computed by the rule that at least 50% of the values should be valid in order to have a mean score.

The hypotheses in this study were tested using a hierarchical multiple regression in PROCESS model 21 of Hayes. In hypothesis 1, regarding the effect of job demands on parental burnout can be explained through work-to-family conflict, job demands is the independent variable, parental burnout is the dependent variable and work-to-family conflict is the mediator variable. In order to confirm the significance of the mediation, it must be showed that while the mediator work-to-family conflict is caused by the independent variable job demands and is a cause of the dependent variable parental burnout, the independent variable loses its significance when the mediator is included in the model (Baron & Kenny method).

To test the second hypothesis that supervisor support moderates the relationship between job demands and work-to-family conflict, another variable was added to the model, namely supervisor support. The independent variable is job demands, the dependent variable is work-to-family conflict and the moderator is supervisor support. Those variables were all entered in model 21 in PROCESS.

Finally, to test the third hypothesis that family support moderates the relationship between work-to-family conflict and parental burnout, family support was also included in PROCESS model 21 as the interaction effect between family support and work-to-family conflict on parental burnout.

Results

Descriptive statistics

Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics for the variables used in this study. The mean (*M*), the standard deviations (*SD*) and the correlations for each variable are presented. There is a positive significant relationship between work-to-family conflict and parental burnout ($r = .24, p < .001$) and between job demands and work-to-family conflict ($r = .36, p < .001$). Moreover, a significant negative correlation between job demands and supervisor support ($r = -.19, p < .001$), between supervisor support and work-to-family conflict ($r = -.35, p < .001$) and between supervisor support and parental burnout ($r = -.15, p < .001$) were found. There is also a significant negative relationship between family support and parental burnout ($r = -.24, p < .001$). The control variable gender correlated to parental burnout ($r = -.12, p < .001$), which suggests that men experience more parental burnout than women do. Finally, the control variable number of children living at home correlated to parental burnout ($r = .12, p < .001$).

Since some correlations with control variables were found, MANOVA's were performed to examine if groups were significantly different. Results can be found in Appendix A. Results showed that male and female respondents are significantly different on both parental burnout and work-to-family conflict. Male participants showed on average significantly higher levels of parental burnout than female participants (mean male = 1,81 and mean female = 1,64). Moreover, male respondents worked on average significantly more hours than female respondents (mean male = 43,21 and mean female = 29,07). In contrast, female participants showed on average significantly higher levels of work-to-family conflict than male participants (mean male = 2.41 and mean female = 2.50).

Table 1

Means, standard deviations and correlations

	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.
1. Parental burnout	644	1,712	,639										
2. Job demands	649	3,425	,776	,050									
3. Work-to-family conflict	649	2,463	,628	,238**	,363**								
4. Supervisor support	641	3,375	,773	-,145**	-,188**	-,349**							
5. Family support	649	3,507	,675	-,237**	-,017	-,128**	,143**						
6. Gender	649	60,2%		-,124**	,059	,060	,030	,013					
7. Marital status	649	8,2%		,045	-,006	,025	-,020	-,227**	,047				
8. Work hours	639	34,70	10,695	,075	,131**	,144**	-,096*	,021	-,649*	-,003			
9. Age	597	44,774	8,465	,042	-,031	-,046	,024	-,005	-,058	,068	,026		
10. Children	648	1,93	,833	,121**	,011	,056	-,020	-,045	,019	-,048	,032	-,006	

Note. * $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$

N = sample size after pairwise exclusion of missing values

Gender: 0 = male and 1 = female

Marital status: 0 = married/cohabitating and 1 = single/divorced

Children = number of children living at home

Model and hypothesis

A hierarchical multiple regression analysis was performed to test the hypotheses of this study. First, the model assumptions of multiple regression were checked. There was a linear relationship and there was no multicollinearity, since the independent variables were not highly correlated. However, the histograms showed signs of skewness for parental burnout items and thus the normality assumptions could not be met for this variable. More specifically, the parental burnout items showed to be positively skewed, which means that most of the respondents scored low on the parental burnout items. Therefore, log transformation was done to make the parental burnout variable less skewed and afterwards the regression analyses were still performed.

To test the three hypotheses in this study, PROCESS model 21 of Hayes was applied. Hypothesis 1 stated that job demands are positively related to parental burnout, which is mediated by work-to-family conflict. The results are presented in Table 2. The results show a positive significant relationship between job demands and work-to-family conflict ($\beta = .25$, $p < .001$) and a positive significant relationship between work-to-family conflict and parental burnout ($\beta = .28$, $p < .001$) thus, hypothesis 1 was confirmed.

The results of testing hypothesis 2 are presented in Table 3. Hypothesis 2 stated that a family supportive supervisor buffers the impact of job demands on work-to-family conflict, such that the positive relationship is weaker for those with greater family-supportive supervision than for those with less family-supportive supervision. Firstly, control variables were entered in model 0, explaining 7% of the variance in work-to-family conflict. Gender ($\beta = .26$, $p < .001$) and the amount of work hours ($\beta = .33$, $p < .001$) had a significant effect on work-to-family conflict.

By using the PROCESS macro in SPSS, Model 2 in Table 3 is tested, which is the interaction model. Variables in this model were automatically centered. The results indicated that both job demands ($\beta = .20$, $p < .001$) and supervisor support ($\beta = -.21$, $p < .001$) had a significant relationship with work-to-family conflict. Referring to the significance of the interaction term within this model ($\beta = -.09$, $p = .040$), the results provided support for the moderating effect of supervisor support. Elaborating on these results, the conditional effects of job demands on work-to-family conflict at different levels of supervisor support are shown in Table 4. It can be concluded that at high levels of supervisor support, the relationship between job demands and work-to-family conflict is weaker ($\beta = .13$, $p < .001$) than at low levels of supervisor support ($\beta = .27$, $p < .001$). Hence, the results support hypothesis 2.

Finally, hypothesis 3 stated that a supportive family buffers the impact of work-to-family conflict on parental burnout, such that the positive relationship is weaker for those with greater family support than for those with less family support. The results regarding this hypothesis can be found in Table 5. First, the control variables in model 0 explained 5% of the variance in parental burnout. Both gender ($\beta = -.19, p < .001$) and the number of children living at home ($\beta = .15, p < .001$) turned out to significantly explain variance in parental burnout. The third hypothesis was not confirmed, since the interaction effect was not significant ($\beta = -.12, p = .106$). However, a direct significant effect of family support on parental burnout was found ($\beta = -.16, p < .001$). A path model of all results can be found in Appendix B.

Additionally, the analyses were done for the three different dimensions of parental burnout (emotional exhaustion, emotional distancing and low personal accomplishment) in order to examine if the results were somewhat different on those dimensions. Two noticeable results worth mentioning were found. First, the interaction effect of family support on the relationship between work-to-family conflict and emotional distancing turned out to be significant ($\beta = -.18, p = .044$). For the other two dimensions, the interaction effect of family support was not significant. Therefore, it can be concluded that family support buffers the impact of work-to-family conflict on only one dimension of parental burnout, namely emotional distancing. The conditional effects of work-to-family conflict on emotional distancing at low, average and high levels of family support can be found in Appendix C. The table shows that at high levels of family support, the relationship between work-to-family conflict and emotional distancing is weaker ($\beta = .19, p = .004$) compared to low levels of family support ($\beta = .44, p < .001$).

Furthermore, despite the relatively strong and significant relationship between work-to-family conflict and parental burnout overall ($\beta = .24, p < .001$), one of the dimensions was not significantly related to work-to-family conflict. Work-to-family conflict was not significantly related to low personal accomplishment ($\beta = .12, p = .110$). However, work-to-family conflict was related to emotional exhaustion ($\beta = .27, p < .001$) and most strongly to emotional distancing ($\beta = .31, p < .001$). Three path models with results concerning the three dimensions can be found in Appendix D.

Table 2

Regression analysis predicting work-to-family and parental burnout

	Work-to-family conflict			Parental burnout		
	B	SE	β	B	SE	β
1 Gender	.239**	.062	.188**	-.074**	.016	-.254**
2 Marital status	.048	.083	.022	.028	.020	.054
3 Work hours	.013**	.003	.221**	-.002*	.001	-.129*
4 Age	-.003	.002	-.036	.001	.001	.031
5 Children	.024	.028	.032	.024**	.007	.141**
6 Job demands	.202**	.032	.250**	-.008	.008	-.042
7 Work-to-family conflict				.064**	.010	.277**
R^2	.230**			.117**		
F	24.338			10.834		

Note. * $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$

Gender: 0 = male, 1 = female

Marital status: 0 = married/cohabiting, 1 = single/divorced

Table 3

Hierarchical multiple regression analysis predicting work-to-family conflict

	Work-to-family conflict						
	Model 0			Model 1			Model 2
	B	SE	β	B	SE	β	β
Constant	1.667**			2.013**			1.999**
<u>Control variables</u>							
Gender	.330**	.067	.259**	.239**	.062	.188**	.226**
Marital status	.040	.090	.018	.048	.083	.022	.053
Work hours	.019**	.003	.326**	.013**	.003	.221**	.012**
Age	-.003	.003	-.039	-.003	.003	-.036	-.003
Children	.031	.030	.042	.024	.028	.032	
<u>Job demands</u>							
				.202**	.031	.250**	.200**
<u>Supervisor support</u>							
				-.228**	.030	-.281**	-.213**
<u>Interaction</u>							
Job demands X							-.088*
Supervisor support							
R ²	.070			.230			.234
F	8.746**			24.338**			22.969**

Note. * $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$

Gender: 0 = male, 1 = female

Marital status: 0 = married/cohabiting, 1 = single/divorced

Table 4

Moderation analysis: Conditional effects of job demands on work-to-family conflict at different levels of supervisor support

	SE B	β
Low supervisor support (1 sd below M)	.045	.267**
Average supervisor support (M)	.032	.200**
High supervisor support (1 sd above M)	.046	.134**

Table 5

Hierarchical multiple regression analysis predicting parental burnout

	Parental burnout						
	Model 0			Model 1			Model 2
	B	SE	β	B	SE	β	β
Constant	.196**	.047		.240**	.056		.230**
<u>Control variables</u>							
Gender	-.056**	.016	-.191**	-.069**	.015	-.234**	-.239**
Marital status	.030	.021	.059	.004	.020	.008	.020
Work hours	-.001	.001	-.051	-.002	.001	-.114	-.105
Age	.000	.001	.021	.001	.001	-.036	.003
Children	.026**	.007	.153**	.023	.007	.131**	.090*
 <u>Work-to-family</u>							
				.055**	.009	.238**	.243**
 <u>Family support</u>							
				-.040**	.008	-.193**	-.161**
 <u>Interaction</u>							
Work-to-family X							-.119
Family support							
R ²	.050			.149			.154
F	6.101**			14.385**			10.325**

Note. * $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$

Gender: 0 = male, 1 = female

Marital status: 0 = married/cohabiting, 1 = single/divorced

Discussion and conclusion

The aim of this research was to gain more knowledge concerning the relatively new construct parental burnout. More specifically, this research examined whether the demands of a job are related to parental burnout and if support of a supervisor and/or family can prevent people from a parental burnout. Additionally, these relationships with regard to the different dimensions of parental burnout were examined.

Results confirmed the existence of an indirect relationship between job demands and parental burnout through work-to-family conflict. Working parents who perceive more job demands will experience more work-to-family conflict, which can be logically explained by the role strain perspective; the family and work domains compete for limited amounts of time, physical energy, and psychological resources (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). More demands in the work domain can lead to more conflicts between the two domains. In addition to the relationship between job demands and work-to-family conflict, results showed that parents who perceive more work-to-family conflict experience a higher degree of parental burnout. As explained by the COR model (Grandey & Cropanzano, 1999), when work and family domains come into conflict, resources in the family domain become lost or threatened and consequently, the degree of parental burnout can increase.

Quite remarkable is that the results of this study did not show a significant relationship between job demands and parental burnout. Unless the indirect effect via work-to-family conflict, no direct effect was found. This can be explained by the existence of other, exogenous variables. For instance, another mediator, which ensures an indirect negative effect between job demands and parental burnout, might play a role. Furthermore, by moderated mediation, it is also possible that the direct effect might change as a function of the moderator(s) (Edwards & Lambert, 2007). Thus, the buffer effect of supervisor support (and possible other moderators) might have had an impact on the direct effect as well.

Furthermore, the positive relationship between job demands and work-to-family conflict is weaker for working parents with greater family-supportive supervision than for those with less family-supportive supervision. Since supervisor support is one of the job resources indicated in the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model of Demerouti et al. (2001) and job resources are considered to reduce job demands and the associated physiological and psychological costs, this finding can be logically explained by the JD-R model.

Finally, the third hypothesis concerning the interaction effect of family support on the relationship between work-to-family conflict and parental burnout was not supported. It was found that the more support from family, the less parental burnout seems to occur. So, when a

working parent perceives to have more family support, this will lead to a lower degree of parental burnout. This can be logically explained. If family members provide more emotional and tangible help by the tasks at home, i.e. taking care of the children and the household, the demands at home will be lowered. Lower demands in the family domain, will reduce the chances for burnout in that domain. Thus, this works the same as in the job domain, where more demands were often found to be related to a higher degree of job burnout (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Rupert et al., 2009). However, the findings show that support of family members cannot buffer for the impact of work demands that are interfering with family responsibilities on parental burnout.

By performing additional analysis, it was found that family support can buffer the impact of work-to-family conflict on one of the three dimensions of parental burnout, namely emotional distancing, but not on emotional exhaustion or low personal accomplishment. At high levels of family support, the impact of work-to-family conflict on emotional distancing was weaker compared to low levels of family support. Emotional distancing refers to the situation where parents still provide practical care, but they become less emotionally involved with their children (Roskam et al., 2017). In the case of emotional distancing, it might be easier for family members to help a parent stay emotionally involved by having conversations about it. For instance emotional exhaustion, which refers to the situation in which parents are feeling too tired and emotionally drained to take care of their children, might be harder to change by a family member since this problem probably arises more due to external factors (Maslach et al., 2001).

Furthermore, work-to-family conflict was related to emotional exhaustion and emotional distancing, but to low personal accomplishment. Earlier research also found that work-family conflict was only related to the other two dimensions of a job burnout, not low personal accomplishment (Jawahar, Stone & Kisamore, 2007). Low personal accomplishment in the case of a parental burnout implies that parents are feeling less effective or incompetent in their role as a parent (Roskam et al., 2017). This might be more distinctive from the work domain than the other two dimensions, which are more related to the resources like energy and time described in the aforementioned COR model.

An additional interesting finding is that male respondents experience on average more parental burnout, whereas female respondents experience more work-to-family conflict. These results seem to be contradicting to the finding that higher levels of work-to-family conflict leads to higher levels of parental burnout. It can be the case that women are generally more resistant to family demands, whereas men are generally more resistant to the demands

of a job, which has also been found by the meta-analytic study of Byron (2005). However, more factors might influence why levels of work-to-family conflict and parental burnout differ for men en women within this sample, like the work status of the partner or personality differences. This study does not focus on the differences with regard to gender, only using it as control variable, but it might be interesting for future research to investigate the differences between men en women in relation to work-to-family conflict and parental burnout.

Limitations and future research

Although this research contributes to the knowledge of parental burnout, it has several limitations. First, the results are conducted by using a questionnaire consisting of 203 items. Since it took most of the respondents about thirty minutes to fill out the questionnaire, respondent-fatigue probably occurred. This might have had a negative influence on the reliability of the research, because later in the questionnaire, respondents may become more fatigued. The questions on parental burnout were asked at the end of the questionnaire and those questions also contained more missing values. For future research it is suggested to shorten the questionnaire in order to overcome respondent fatigue later in the questionnaire.

Another limitation is that the questionnaire contained only self-reporting items, which can cause a social desirability bias, since respondents tend to underreport socially undesirable activities and overreport socially desirable ones (Krumpal, 2013). A desire to comply with others and one's own expectations and norms, may make it hard to admit that you do not fully meet these expectations and norms. This is generally the case with questions regarding parenting and raising children (Karavasilis, Doyle & Markiewicz, 2003). Consequently, the responses on parental burnout items might show a more optimistic picture compared to reality. As expected, responses in this study showed that the majority of respondents scored rather low on the parental burnout scale. To overcome this limitation, using another research design for measuring parental burnout might be interesting for future research, like asking children questions about their parents in order to measure parental burnout.

Furthermore, giving social desirable answers may be more applicable to women than to men with regard to parental burnout, since women are regarded as children's natural caregivers (Haas & Hwang, 2008). This might also explain the aforementioned differences in gender with regard to parental burnout; men perceived on average a higher parental burnout than women. For future research it can be interesting to investigate these gender differences more extensively.

Additionally, the cross-sectional design of the study limits the ability to draw valid conclusions about possible causality, since all variables are measured simultaneously (Levin, 2006). While work-to-family conflict may logically lead to a higher degree of parental burnout, the opposite might be the case; the experience of more parental burnout symptoms might also have an influence on an individual's perceptions of his/her work-to-family conflict. In order to get more insight in the causality of the relationships, future research should use a longitudinal research design.

Moreover, there was some ambiguity regarding the questions on family support. First, some questions were asked in which a spouse and other family members were described as two groups. Contrary, in the questions concerning family support, spouse and family members were all described as family members. Some of the respondents gave feedback on these questions, since they did not know if they should include their spouse concerning the answers here. This might have had an impact on the relationships found in this study; the interaction between work-to-family conflict and family support is probably more applicable to a spouse, since he/she is the other family member mostly available for the children and is an important source of relieving stress (Carlson & Perrewé, 1999). Consequently, the buffering effect of family support on the relationship between work-to-family conflict and parental burnout could have been found if all respondents interpreted family support correctly, but this cannot be said with certainty. However, for future research, it is important to make sure there is no confusion about the questions.

Finally, future research should investigate the antecedents of the different dimensions of parental burnout more extensively, since this study found some differences regarding the three dimensions. The explanations for those differences are still just speculations and should be further investigated in order to make conclusions with regard to the reasons why some of the effects are different for the three dimensions.

Conclusion and practical implications

Since almost all hypotheses in this study were confirmed, there are some important implications for practice. Higher job demands can lead to more work-to-family conflict and more work-to-family conflict can lead to higher levels of parental burnout. Furthermore, the support of a supervisor can be helpful in buffering the impact of job demands on people's work-to-family conflict. Therefore, organizations should try to make their supervisors aware of their important supportive role for employees' work-life balance, since they can reduce the undesirable effects of perceived job demands. The demands itself should not be too high

either, since the consequences for work-to-family conflict and parental burnout should be taken into account. Finally, support received from family members can be of importance in order to reduce levels of parental burnout. Hence, working parents should be looking or asking for family support and family members should be aware of the beneficial effect of giving support as well.

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Appendix A

Multivariate analyses for gender on parental burnout, work-to-family conflict and work hours

Dependent variable	Df	Df error	F	Gender	Means	p-value
Parental burnout	1	632	10.994	Male	1.814	< .001
				Female	1.643	
Work-to-family conflict	1	632	2.556	Male	2.418	.045
				Female	2.499	
Work hours	1	632	457.887	Male	43.21	< .001
				Female	29.08	

Appendix B

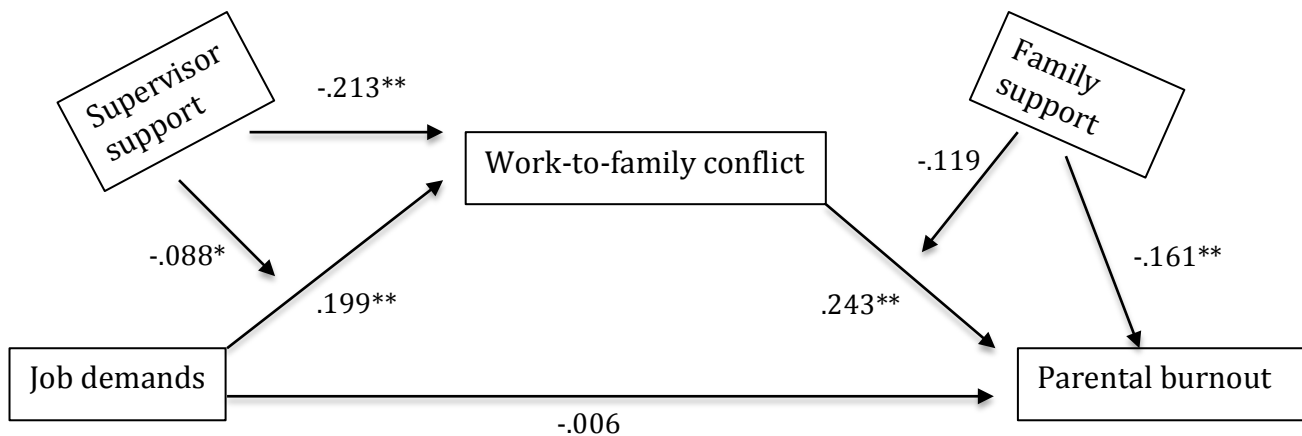


Figure 1 Path model with outcome variable parental burnout

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$

Appendix C

Moderation analysis: Conditional effects of work-to-family conflict on emotional distancing at different levels of family support

	SE B	β
Low family support (1 sd below M)	.045	.435**
Average family support (M)	.032	.312**
High family support (1 sd above M)	.046	.189**

Appendix D

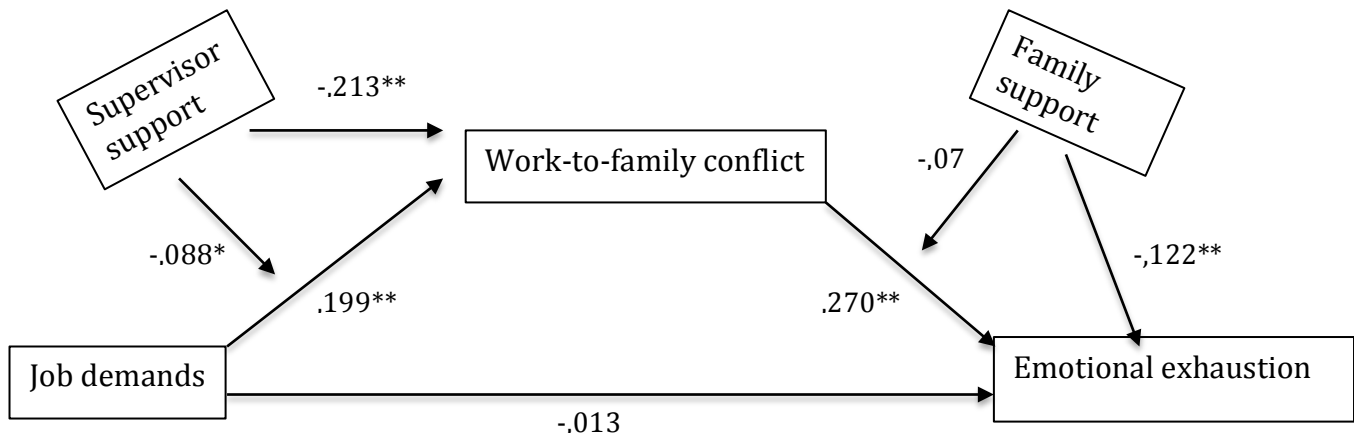


Figure 2 Path model with outcome variable emotional exhaustion

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$

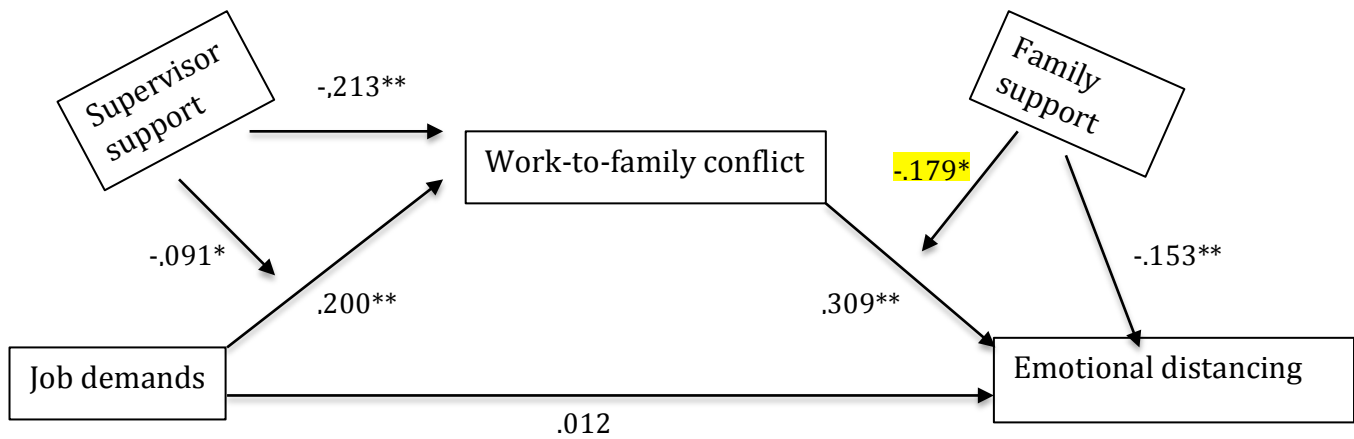


Figure 3 Path model with outcome variable emotional distancing

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$

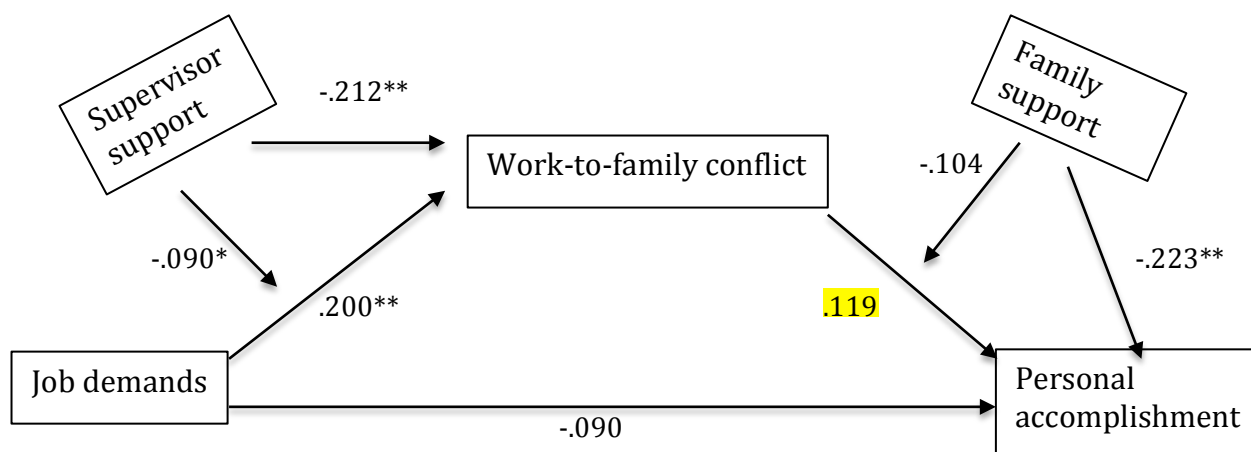


Figure 4 Path model with outcome variable personal accomplishment

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$