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ISSN 1362-0436
Volume 00 Number 00 2018



Spillover and Crossover Effects of Social Support through Work-Family Balance: a Time-Lagged Analysis in Italian Dyads

Journal:	<i>Career Development International</i>
Manuscript ID	CDI-09-2021-0219.R1
Manuscript Type:	Research Paper
Keywords:	spillover-crossover model, coworkers social support, supervisor social support, organizational family-friendly social support, work-family balance, family life satisfaction

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Spillover and Crossover Effects of Social Support through Work-Family Balance: a Time-Lagged Analysis in Italian Dyads

Abstract

Purpose. Building on the Spillover-Crossover Model (Bakker and Demerouti, 2013), this study aimed to examine the processes through which three forms of social support at work (i.e., from coworkers, from supervisor, organizational family-friendly) were positively associated with an individual's level of work-family balance (spillover effect) and, through this latter, with one's partner's family life satisfaction (crossover effect), via the partner's perception of family social support as provided by the incumbent person.

Design/Methodology/Approach. We sampled 369 heterosexual couples using a time-lagged design, surveying forms of social support at work and work-family balance at t1, and family social support and partner's family life satisfaction at t2. Data were analyzed through structural equation modeling.

Findings. Our results showed that coworkers support and organizational family-friendly support positively predicted work-family balance. Furthermore, work-family balance mediated the associations between organizational family-friendly support and coworkers support with instrumental family social support. Moreover, only emotional family social support positively predicted partner's family-life satisfaction.

Originality/Value. We simultaneously examined the direct and indirect associations of three concurrent forms of social support at work with one's work-family balance (spillover effect). Moreover, in line with the Spillover-Crossover model, we adopted a systemic approach and assessed how one's work-family balance is associated with emotional and instrumental family social support as perceived by one's partner, and the latter's family life satisfaction (crossover effect).

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3 **Keywords:** spillover-crossover model; coworkers social support; supervisor social support;
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5 organizational family-friendly social support; work-family balance; emotional family social
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7 support; instrumental family social support; family life satisfaction.
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12 **Paper type:** Research paper.
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Introduction

Combining work and life is a fundamental issue to policymakers, social partners, organizations and individuals. The interface between both life spheres is constantly changing due to several phenomena, such as the ageing population, technological changes and work intensification, higher employment rates (especially for women), changes in family patterns, the increasing number of dual-earner couples, as well the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic (Vaziri et al., 2020). This calls for more scholarly attention to grasp the impact of these emerging phenomena, to provide empirically-founded explanations and to come up with advice for interventions aimed at improving an employee's quality of life, as well as the functioning of their families and the organizations they work for.

From a social sciences standpoint, the work-family interface was traditionally studied in terms of work-family conflict (Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985) and enrichment (Greenhaus and Powell, 2006), with the former being defined as “a form of inter-role conflict in which the role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect” Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985: 77), and the latter as “the extent to which experiences in one role improve the quality of life in the other” (Greenhaus and Powell, 2006: 73). However, nowadays, the roles of men and women both at work and at home have undergone significant changes, and questions have been raised about how workers and their partners can balance between work and family domains. Therefore, a procedure that adopts a more integrative perspective has become compelling, and, in recent years, a more comprehensive method of approach to the work-family interface has caught on, namely *work-family balance* (hereafter, WFB), defined as the “accomplishment of role-related expectations that are negotiated and shared between an individual and his or her role-related partners in the work and family domains” (Grzywacz and Carlson, 2007: 458). Adopting a balance perspective neither means identifying an originating domain with respect to a receiving domain (i.e., work-to-family vs. family-to-work), nor contrasting family and work domains, but rather

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3 encompassing both family and work domains, and simultaneously incorporating the two dimensions
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5 of conflict and enrichment (Aryee *et al.*, 2005).
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8 Empirical results show that WFB, which is clearly distinct from work-family conflict and
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10 enrichment (Wayne *et al.*, 2017), mirrors a more general evaluation of the whole compatibility
11
12 between work and family roles. Moreover, several studies indicate that WFB can significantly
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14 impact on some important outcomes, such as quality of life (Greenhaus *et al.*, 2003), job and family
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16 satisfaction, and family performance (Carlson *et al.*, 2009), among others. Conversely, other
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18 scholars focused on WFB antecedents, and found evidence for the predictive value of family-
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20 supportive supervision (Greenhaus *et al.*, 2012), coworkers and partner support (Ferguson *et al.*,
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22 2012), etc. However, notwithstanding the appealing scholarly work that has been conducted so far,
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24 it must be noted that, compared to more traditional concepts such as conflict or enrichment,
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26 empirical evidence about WFB is still limited and needs further scholarly attention (Casper *et al.*,
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28 2018).
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33 In recent years, Bakker and Demerouti (2013) advanced the so-called Spillover-Crossover
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35 Model (hereafter, SCM) to provide a comprehensive overview of the antecedents and consequences
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37 of work-family dynamics, and to take into account the partner's perception. As its name suggests, it
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39 revolves around how spillover and crossover processes impact on the dyad's work-family interface.
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41 While *spillover* can be defined as "a within-person, across-domains transmission of strain from one
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43 area of life to another" (Bakker and Demerouti, 2013: 3), *crossover* connects "the reaction of
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45 individuals to the job stress experienced by those with whom they interact regularly" (Westman,
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47 2001: 717). Building on these concepts, the main tenet of SCM is that work-related experiences, in
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49 terms of either job demands or resources, first spill over to the home domain, and then cross over to
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51 one's partner through social interaction. Therefore, Bakker and Demerouti (2013) addressed two
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53 main gaps in the literature: a) the possibility to examine the impact of employees' experiences at
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55 work on the well-being of their partner at home; and b) the examination of work-related causes of
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57 the experiences that cross over from the employee to the partner at home. However,
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3 notwithstanding this scholarly attention, up until now, several assumptions of the SCM still need to
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5 be empirically examined (see e.g., Rodríguez-Muñoz *et al.*, 2014; Schnettler *et al.*, 2020, for some
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7 appealing exceptions).
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10 This study aims to make several contributions to the work-family interface literature. First, it
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12 responds to Bakker and colleagues' call (2009) regarding the need to deepen the use of positive
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14 indicators within the context of SCM, as scholars have traditionally focused on the crossover of
15
16 negative experiences (Steiner and Krings, 2016). In fact, few studies have examined positive
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18 aspects and the exceptions include, among other things, the crossover of marital satisfaction (Liu *et al.*,
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20 2016) and family-life satisfaction (Schnettler *et al.*, 2020).
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23 Second, it extends and refines the SCM by including WFB as an intermediate variable
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25 between work and home domain factors. In fact, originally, the SCM included work-family conflict
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27 and enrichment (Carlson *et al.*, 2019; Xie *et al.*, 2018) as mediators, while the inclusion of WFB
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29 may provide a simpler, yet, at the same time more holistic (i.e., systemic) source through which the
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31 spillover effect may lead to the crossover one. Besides, the associations between WFB and work-
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33 family conflict/enrichment are well established in the literature (Carlson *et al.*, 2009), and Casper *et al.*
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35 (2018) already showed that WFB typically correlates more strongly with job and family
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37 satisfaction in comparison with conflict and enrichment measures, further underpinning the need to
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39 differentiate between these variables. Moreover, in comparison with previous studies that included
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41 operationalizations derived from traditional work-family concepts (e.g., fourfold taxonomy; Aryee
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43 *et al.*, 2005; Lu *et al.*, 2009), we refer to a more holistic conceptualization of WFB (Carlson *et al.*,
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45 2009).
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51 Third, this empirical work differentiates between emotional and instrumental social support,
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53 to grasp between the potential outcomes of alternative kinds of social support in the light of one's
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55 partner's family life satisfaction (i.e., crossover effect), while previous studies have usually used
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57 more generic measures such as quality of marital interactions (Bakker *et al.*, 2012) or focused on
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59 their effects on more traditional variables such as WFC (Kirrane and Buckley, 2004). In addition,
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3 this contribution comprises three different forms of social support at work to disentangle possibly
4 competing spillover effects. This is consistent with research calls stressing the importance of social
5 support for both work-family interface and occupational stress studies (Zhang *et al.*, 2015).
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10 Fourth, to have a more accurate evaluation of the crossover effect, we examine social
11 support and its outcomes through the other party's perspective, that is by means of the partner's
12 perception of the social support provided by the incumbent person, as well as his/her family life
13 satisfaction. Such an approach is consistent with recent calls for adopting a couple perspective when
14 studying the work-family interface (Chen and Ellis, 2021), given that a central tenet of crossover
15 theory is that attitudes and experiences of a couple's members cannot be fully understood in
16 isolation from one another (Booth-LeDoux *et al.*, 2020).
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26 Overall, although recently interest in these specific spillover and crossover effects has been
27 increasing (Steiner and Krings, 2016), only partial empirical evidence has been provided on the
28 relationships between specific job resources and marital functioning (Liu *et al.*, 2016; Xie *et al.*,
29 2018). In particular, the processes through which work-family conflict/enrichment in earlier
30 scholarly work, and WFB now in our current study, are associated with subsequent job and family
31 outcomes have only been partially carried out using a systemic lens (De Beeck *et al.*, 2021), which
32 is the overarching goal of this study. In fact, as Westman (2016) recently argued, spillover
33 researchers have generally ignored the impact of an employee's work experiences on their partner's
34 experiences at home. Conversely crossover researchers have generally neglected to examine the
35 work-related links of an employee's experiences at work on their experiences at home.
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49 From a managerial standpoint, evidence from this study could be beneficial in tailoring
50 specific organizational interventions, targeting those forms of social support at work that improve
51 WFB. Moreover, identifying which kind of social support at home is more helpful for family life
52 satisfaction could be useful for implementing adequate family interventions.
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58 *The Spillover-Crossover Model*
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3 The SCM is based upon the Job Demands-Resources (hereafter, JD-R) model (Bakker and
4 Demerouti, 2007). The JD-R model proposes that although every job has peculiar working
5 conditions, these conditions can be categorized in, first, job demands (i.e., job aspects, like
6 workload, that cost effort through the health impairment process) and, second, job resources (i.e.,
7 job aspects, like autonomy, that help dealing with stressful situations and have a motivational
8 potential). The SCM typically departs from the work domain, focusing on how job resources and
9 job demands affect, through spillover, work-family conflict/enrichment, and then crossover to one's
10 partner's experiences.
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21 As anticipated above, Bakker and Demerouti (2013), through their theoretical model,
22 integrated the literature of two streams of research that were generally analysed separately: *spillover*
23 and *crossover*. Their aim was to offer a better understanding of the processes and dynamics that link
24 family and job domains. The spillover effect comprises a within-person process, i.e., a transmission
25 of positive and/or negative experiences between two different domains (e.g., from work to family)
26 in the same person, and has received considerable research attention in the last decades (Amstad *et*
27 *al.*, 2011). Oppositely, crossover refers to the between-individuals transmission of experiences and
28 related states, for instance, a process through which higher job strain experienced by the incumbent
29 person may lead to heightened strain experienced by his/her partner at home.
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42 So far, crossover has been less examined compared to spillover, not in the least place for
43 methodological reasons (i.e., the joint assessment of variables within dyads comprises a
44 methodological challenge). Crossover may take place by means of three possible mechanisms
45 (Westman, 2011): a) through partners' empathic processes; b) because partners share some common
46 stressors; and c) through an indirect process mediated by the communication and interaction
47 between partners. In particular, Bakker and Demerouti (2013) emphasized the importance of this
48 latter form of indirect crossover, which is examined in this very study.
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58 Earlier scholarly work focused mainly on the transmission of negative crossover, herewith
59 neglecting the dynamics related to positive experiences (Rodríguez-Muñoz *et al.*, 2014). For
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3 instance, Sanz-Vergel *et al.* (2015) found that family-to-work conflict predicted interpersonal
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5 conflicts at work, which, in turn, predicted conflicts with the partner at home, thus showing there
6
7 was also a crossover of interpersonal conflicts at home. More recently, Carlson *et al.* (2019) found
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9 spillover effects of role conflict and role overload, through work-to-family conflict, and crossover
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11 effects, in terms of stress transmission, on the spouse.
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15 Lately, the SCM has been used in an increasing number of studies focusing on positive
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17 dynamics. For example, Snir *et al.* (2014) found that work engagement was positively related to
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19 work-family facilitation, which, in turn, predicted one's own and one's partner's family satisfaction.
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21 Liu *et al.* (2016) showed that husbands' work-family enrichment related to wives' marital
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23 satisfaction through wives' perceptions of increased social support, whereas wives' work-family
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25 enrichment related to husbands' marital satisfaction through husbands' perceptions of decreased
26
27 social undermining.
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31 Bakker and Demerouti (2013) argued that a challenge for future research was, first, to find if
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33 there were alternative ways to capture spillover in a more direct, objective way. We posit that
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35 assessing WFB, instead of conflict/enrichment, is consistent with their call for more scholarly work
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37 in this field. This is also consistent with ten Brummelhuis and Bakker (2012) who posited, when
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39 presenting their *work-home resources model*, that traditional work-family measures may be biased
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41 as they presuppose a causal direction from one domain to the other one. Instead, WFB pertains to
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43 the individual's perception of a equipoise between these two domains, without inferring any pre-
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45 eminence of one over the other. Second, they called for the examination of alternative transmitters
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47 of crossover; the inclusion in the present study of two different forms of social support (i.e.,
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49 emotional and instrumental) responds to this need. Third, they suggested that the examination of
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51 positive processes and resources may be beneficial for further developments (see also
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53 BoothLeDoux *et al.*, 2020); in this study, we focused on positive dynamics in order to address their
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55 concern.
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Spillover and crossover effects

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3 According to the SCM's spillover mechanism, in which job experiences are hypothesized to spill
4 over into the home domain, job resources should enable higher WFB (see also Casper *et al.*, 2018;
5 Wayne *et al.*, 2013) as they release and/or develop additional resources (e.g., abilities) that the
6 individual can fruitfully invest in their life domain. Indeed, several studies showed that job
7 resources can promote higher work efficiency, and allow workers to have more energy, time, and
8 flexibility to fulfil responsibilities in the family domain (Ferguson *et al.*, 2015; Xie *et al.*, 2018).
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17 In this study, we focus on three job resources that pertain to different forms of social support
18 at work, namely, coworkers social support, supervisor social support, and organizational family-
19 friendly social support, and hypothesized that these may be beneficial to foster WFB. Some studies
20 suggest that social support in the workplace, more specifically support provided by one's supervisor
21 and coworkers, has a positive impact on work outcomes (Kim *et al.*, 2017). Ferguson and
22 colleagues (2012) found that coworkers social support was positively related to higher WFB that, in
23 turn, impacted on spouses' family satisfaction. Talukder (2019) found that supervisor support
24 negatively predicted work-family conflict and that is was positively related with work-life balance.
25 Steiner and Krings (2016) argued that social support from supervisor and colleagues may be key
26 factors for an incumbent's work-family enrichment as well as his/her spouse's well-being and
27 overall family functioning.
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42 Social support can also reside at a higher level, i.e., organizational support, and may be also
43 specifically tailored to employees' work-family interface needs (Thompson *et al.*, 1999). In this
44 study, we incorporate organizational family-friendly social support defined as 'the shared
45 assumptions, beliefs, and values regarding the extent to which an organization supports and values
46 the integration of employee's work and family lives' (Thompson *et al.*, 1999, p. 394).
47 Organizational family-friendly social support constitutes a crucial element to enable employees to
48 adequately balance their multiple obligations (Carlson *et al.*, 2009), and earlier research showed
49 significant associations with other variables, including work-family enrichment (Lo Presti and
50 Mauno, 2016) and work-family conflict (Booth-LeDoux *et al.*, 2020).
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3 A higher amount of organizational family-friendly social support enables individuals to feel
4 that their socio-emotional needs are fulfilled in their job role, resulting in a higher performance and
5 better mutual behaviour (Anderson *et al.*, 2002). Overall, people who experience more
6 organizational family-friendly social support, as well as feel more supported by their supervisor and
7 colleagues will be more likely to bring positive resources obtained in the work domain into their
8 family life. Therefore, we hypothesized the following:
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17 H1: WFB is positively predicted by coworkers social support (H1a), supervisor social
18 support (H1b), and organizational family-friendly social support (H1c).
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21 Moreover, experiencing a better WFB is also beneficial for one's family domain (Schnettler
22 *et al.*, 2020). Consistent with the SCM positive spillover hypothesis (Bakker and Demerouti, 2013),
23 we contend that the availability of job resources within one's working organisation can be
24 beneficial to one's family domain as well, through an improved WFB. Based on Grzywacz and
25 Carlson (2007), who referred to a systemic perspective and, in particular, to the significant others'
26 perspectives, we take the expectations of one's partner into account as well, and the negotiation of
27 roles between a subject (incumbent person) and their partner. Consequently, we focus on
28 understanding how the behaviors of the incumbent person are perceived, and what expectations
29 other people (in this case, one's own partner) have from them.
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42 The impact of work-family conflict, being an example of a negative event at work, was
43 already highlighted by Bakker and associates (2009), who found that the incumbent person's work-
44 family conflict was associated with a lower level of social support provided to their partner. In a
45 similar vein, Westman (2016) argued that positive events at work, such as social support at work,
46 may spill over to the home domain and lead to positive interactions, such as social support at home,
47 ultimately leading to positive crossover for the partner. More recently, building on the notion of
48 *resource caravans* (Hobfoll, 2014), Booth-LeDoux *et al.* (2020) stated that being able to effectively
49 balance between work and family on one side, and the degree of family support for the partner on
50 the other side, may be related, as they empirically demonstrated a resource-based transmission from
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3 the organization an employee works for to the organization one's partner works for, through
4 dynamics occurring in the family. Thus, it can be argued that job resources may mobilize and
5 release additional resources that can be used in the family domain, for instance through supportive
6 behaviors to one's partner, both in terms of emotional (i.e., emotional family social support) and
7 instrumental (i.e., instrumental family social support) support. This distinction between different
8 forms of family social support represents a novelty with respect to previous studies which used
9 overall measures or more often focused on emotional support only (Bakker *et al.*, 2009), and is
10 consistent with Steiner and Krings (2016)'s call for differentiating between marital (emotional)
11 support or sharing tasks (i.e., instrumental support). Based on the outline given above, we
12 hypothesized the following:

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26 H2: WFB mediates the association between coworkers social support (H2a), supervisor
27 social support (H2b), and organizational family-friendly social support (H2c), on the one
28 hand, and emotional family social support, on the other hand.

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32 H3: WFB mediates the association between coworkers social support (H3a), supervisor
33 social support (H3b), and organizational family-friendly social support (H3c), on the one
34 hand, and instrumental family social support, on the other hand.

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40 In the context of studies investigating the intertwining of one's job and family domain, Van
41 Steenbergen *et al.* (2014) showed that husbands' work-family enrichment fostered their wives'
42 marital satisfaction, as they perceived their husband's behavior more positively. This crossover
43 effect indicated the partner's sensitivity to others' experiences of work-family enrichment. Xie *et al.*
44 (2018) reported that individuals' proactive personality had implications for their spouses' marital
45 satisfaction, through the direct crossover of marital satisfaction between both partners. More
46 recently, Li *et al.* (2021) carried out a meta-analysis and found that a role sender's positive social
47 behaviors, such as providing social support, was predicted by the role sender's work stressors, and
48 that these social behaviors, such as providing social support, were associated with the role
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receiver's family satisfaction. Overall, literature in this field suggests that support perceptions play crucial roles in how people feel in their romantic relationships (Liu *et al.*, 2016).

Following Liu *et al.* (2016), who found that the perceptions of the partner's behaviors are a relevant mechanism explaining the intertwining between work and family (both at an intra- and inter-individual level), and herewith extended the available evidence about WFB (which generally focused on an intra-individual level), we want to better understand how an individual's level of WFB can translate into one's partner's life and family satisfaction, through the partner's perception of family support as provided by the incumbent person. Our approach is consistent with Steiner and Krings (2016) who argued that positive and negative crossover are two distinct concepts, that positive crossover is a relatively less studied process, and that it can occur more frequently through positive marital interactions. Therefore, we examine a crossover effect that comprises a mechanism through which the dynamics related to the subject's work domain influence their partner's family life satisfaction and hypothesized the following:

H4: The relationship between WFB and partner's family life satisfaction will be mediated by emotional family social support (H4a) and instrumental family social support (H4b).

Method

Participants and procedure

Seven hundred and twelve Italian employees, voluntarily recruited via a convenience sampling strategy in Fall 2019, filled out a paper-and-pencil self-report questionnaire that was delivered and gathered by trained researchers (Time 1). The questionnaire's first page contained the study's aims, instructions for participation, and a data treatment statement complying with current Italian laws. After about four months¹, participants received a second CAWI questionnaire (Time 2) via e-mail, consisting of two parts, and were invited to fill it out: the first part was for the incumbent person (just like for the first questionnaire), while the second part was to be filled out by his/her partner.

¹ This time lag was chosen to reduce common-method variance bias, to provide sufficient time for change in the t2 dependent variables, and, at the same time, to reduce the risks for potential higher attrition rates.

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3 The two questionnaires were coupled through the e-mail address that the respondents wrote on each
4 questionnaire. In total, 369 questionnaires were returned at Time 2 (attrition rate = 48.17%).
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8 As for the incumbent persons, 217 (58.8%) were men, and their mean age was 46.67 years
9 (SD = 9.54). Their average number of children was 1.58 (SD = .86). 54 (14.6%) of the respondents
10 had an up to junior high school degree, 179 (48.5%) had a high school degree, and 136 (36.9%) had
11 a university degree or above. Three hundred and nineteen participants (86.4%) had a permanent
12 employment contract, while 50 (13.6%) had a fixed-term/temporary contract. Average
13 organizational tenure was 17.33 years (SD = 9.86). Ninety-one (24.7%) were blue-collar workers,
14 204 (55.3%) were white-collars, while 71 of the respondents (19.2%) were managers (three missing
15 values). Finally, two workers (0.5%) were employed in the primary sector, 121 (32.8%) in the
16 secondary one, while 242 (65.6%) worked in the tertiary one (four missing values). Their average
17 total tenure in their entire career was 23.04 years (SD = 9.75).
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31 As for the incumbent person's partner subsample, their mean age was 46.40 years (SD =
32 10.60). Thirty-one of the partners (8.4%) had an up to junior high school degree, 186 (50.4%) had a
33 high school degree, and 151 (40.9%) had a university degree or above (one missing value). Two
34 hundred and sixty-four of them (71.5%) were currently unemployed.
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40 We checked whether those who only filled out the Time 1 questionnaire differed
41 significantly from those who filled out both questionnaires. Those who only filled out the Time 1
42 questionnaire were significantly older ($t = 3.54, p < .001$), were working for a longer time in their
43 entire career ($t = 2.4, p = .01$), and had lower organizational tenure ($t = -2.98, p = .003$). Moreover
44 the only-Time 1 sample included more women ($\chi^2 = 28.51, p < .001$), higher educated individuals
45 ($\chi^2 = 29.07, p < .001$), and less blue-collar workers ($\chi^2 = 38.55, p < .001$).
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54 *Measures*

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56 *Coworkers social support* was assessed with three items from Lo Presti and Mauno (2016; e.g., Can
57 you ask your colleagues for help if necessary?; Cronbach's alpha was .80. Responses were collected
58 with a 5-point rating scale ranging from 1 = never to 5 = always.
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3 *Supervisor social support* was assessed with three items (Carlson *et al.*, 2006; Lo Presti and Mauno,
4 2016; e.g., I know I can count on my supervisor when I need to). Cronbach's alpha was .91.

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6 Responses were collected with a 5-point rating scale ranging from 1 = never to 5 = always.

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10 *Organizational family-friendly social support* (Lo Presti *et al.*, 2017; Thompson *et al.*, 1999) refers
11 to the perceived easiness and supportiveness of balancing work and family within the organization
12 and was measured with nine items (e.g., "Higher management in this organization encourages
13 supervisors to be sensitive to employees' family and personal concerns"). Cronbach alpha's was
14 .84. Participants used a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = completely false to 5 = completely
15 true.
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23 *Work-family balance* (Carlson *et al.*, 2009; Landolfi and Lo Presti, 2020) was assessed with six
24 items (e.g., "I am able to accomplish the expectations that my supervisors and my family have for
25 me") with a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = completely disagree to 5 = completely agree. This
26 measure intended to detect how much a person is able to meet role-related expectations in both the
27 work and family spheres. Cronbach's alpha was .92.
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35 *Emotional family social support* was assessed through six items (e.g., "Members of my family are
36 interested in my job) from the shortened version (Lo Presti *et al.*, 2016) of the Family Support
37 Inventory by King *et al.* (1995) and refers to the perceived amount of *emotional* support provided
38 by the incumbent person as perceived by his/her partner. Participants used a 5-point Likert scale
39 ranging from 1 = completely false to 5 = completely true. Cronbach's alpha was .77.
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47 *Instrumental family social support* was assessed via six items (e.g., "My family leaves too much of
48 the daily details of running the house to me") from the shortened version (Lo Presti *et al.*, 2016) of
49 the Family Support Inventory by King *et al.* (1995) and refers to the perceived amount of
50 *instrumental* social support provided by the incumbent person as perceived by their partner.
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54 Participants used a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = completely false to 5 = completely true.

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58 Cronbach's alpha was .83.
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3 *Partner's Family life satisfaction* (Kobau *et al.*, 2010; Lo Presti *et al.*, 2020) refers to the extent to
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5 which the incumbent person's partner is satisfied with his/her own family life, and was assessed
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7 through five items (e.g., "In most ways my family life is close to my ideal") with a 7-point Likert
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9 scale ranging from 1 = completely disagree to 7 = completely agree. Cronbach's alpha was .92.

12 *Data analysis*

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14 Missing values (.005% of all expected cells for Time 1 scales, .003% for the Time 2 ones) for
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16 continuous variables were replaced through the Expectation Maximization method (SPSS 21;
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18 Schlomer *et al.*, 2010). Next to the above-reported Cronbach's alphas, zero-order correlations were
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20 used to examine associations between variables.
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24 Structural equation modelling analyses (Lisrel 9.3) using Robust Maximum Likelihood
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26 estimation method were used to evaluate the measurement and structural models concerning the
27
28 study variables under interest and their associations. Fit indices that minimized the likelihood of
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30 Type I and Type II errors (Hu and Bentler, 1999) were selected. In particular, these included the
31
32 chi-square test (χ^2), the comparative fit index (CFI), the non-normed fit index (NNFI), the
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34 standardized root mean residual (SRMR), and the root mean square error of approximation
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36 (RMSEA; with 95% confidence interval lower and upper limits, hereafter 95% CI [LL, UL]). More
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38 specifically, while a significant χ^2 can indicate a poorly fitting model, yet, as this test is affected by
39
40 sample size, it is not reliable when used in larger samples. Therefore, we added the above-
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42 mentioned alternative fit indices. Criteria for the goodness of these fit indices can range from less
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44 (CFI, NNFI \geq .90; SRMR, RMSEA \leq .10) to more conservative criteria (CFI, NNFI \geq .95; SRMR,
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46 RMSEA \leq .08; Hu and Bentler, 1999), but we argue that models' goodness of fit evaluation should
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48 include evidence from all fit index sources for subsequent acceptance or rejection (Meade *et al.*,
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50 2008).
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56 **Results**

58 *Descriptive findings*

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60 Table I depicts all study variables' descriptive statistics and zero-order correlations.

[INSERT TABLE I ABOUT HERE]

Coworkers social support ($r = .23, p < .001$), supervisor social support ($r = .17, p = .001$), and organizational family-friendly social support ($r = .35, p < .001$) correlated positively with WFB. Moreover, WFB appeared to be positively related to instrumental family social support as perceived by one's partner ($r = .28, p < .001$). Finally, both emotional ($r = .44, p < .001$) and instrumental ($r = .17, p = .001$) family social support, as experienced by the partner, correlated positively with partner's family life satisfaction.

Direct and indirect effects

Before examining our hypothesized direct and indirect effects through testing a structural model, two measurement models were estimated: a model with all the items loading on the same latent variable, and a model with the items loading on their respective latent variables (e.g., coworkers social support, WFB, etc.). The first model's goodness of fit indices ($\chi^2 = 5773.85, df = 665, CFI = .30, NNFI = .26, SRMR = .20, RMSEA = .151$ 95% CI [.148, .155]) were far worse than the second model's ones ($\chi^2 = 1598.23, df = 665, CFI = .87, NNFI = .86, SRMR = .14, RMSEA = .065$ 95% CI [.060, .068]), herewith providing adequate support for the variables' distinctiveness.

Subsequently, a structural model was tested based on the hypothesized relationships (see Figure 1), and showed satisfactory goodness of fit indices ($\chi^2 = 1266.05, df = 655, CFI = .92, NNFI = .91, SRMR = .08, RMSEA = .053$ 95% CI [.049, .057]). As for direct effects, WFB was positively predicted by coworkers social support ($\beta = .22, p < .001$) and organizational family-friendly social support ($\beta = .40, p < .001$). WFB appeared to only positively predict instrumental family social support ($\beta = .33, p < .001$), while emotional family social support was the only factor that positively predicted partner's family-life satisfaction ($\beta = .54, p < .001$). As for indirect effects, WFB mediated the effect of organizational family-friendly social support on instrumental family social support ($\beta = .135, 95\% \text{ CI } .132, .138, p < .001$). Moreover the effect of coworkers social support on instrumental family social support ($\beta = .074, 95\% \text{ CI } .072, .076, p < .001$) was mediated by WFB.

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3 Finally, as for the explained outcome variables' variance, the predictors in our research model
4 explained a significant amount of variance in WFB (19.1%), instrumental family social support
5 11.2%), and partner's family life satisfaction (29.7%), while the predictive value for emotional
6 family social support was 0%.

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12 [INSERT FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE]

13 14 15 **Discussion and Conclusions**

16
17 In this study, using the SCM (Bakker and Demerouti, 2013) as a theoretical framework, we aimed
18 to examine the processes through which three forms of social support at work can be positively
19 associated to an individual's level of WFB and, through this latter, can translate into one's partner's
20 family life satisfaction, via the partner's perception of family social support as provided by the
21 incumbent person. In detail, we simultaneously investigated spillover and crossover effects of
22 positive indicators within the context of the SCM, including WFB as an intermediate construct
23 between the job and family domain.

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33 This study contributed to the work-family literature in different ways, by examining: a) the
34 spillover effects of three forms of work-related social support, being positive indicators (i.e., job
35 resources) within the context of SCM; b) the role of WFB as an intermediate construct and its
36 potential crossover effect with reference to the partner; c) the role of emotional and instrumental
37 family social support as proxy variables for social support, as well as between coworkers',
38 supervisor's, and organizational family-friendly social support, in order to potentially differentiate
39 between different alternative kinds of social support; and d) the impact of social support on one's
40 partner's family life satisfaction, by studying the construct through the other's party perspective,
41 that is the partner's perception of the social support provided by the incumbent person.

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54 As for the potential predictive role of job resources, we found that both coworkers and
55 organizational family-friendly social support appeared to be significant predictors of WFB, with
56 organizational family-friendly social support having the strongest predictive value. This outcome is
57 in line with the work by Ronda *et al.* (2016) who used a sample from different European countries.

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3 Moreover, our results are also consistent with previous evidence showing a positive relationship
4 between social support and WFB (Ferguson *et al.*, 2012) and suggest that organizational family-
5 friendly social support can indeed contribute to counterbalance the perception of incompatibility
6 between family and work roles. So it can be argued that, in order to balance work and family roles,
7 it is important that managers and other important stakeholders in the organization are sensitive for
8 and supportive with regards employees' needs (Carlson *et al.*, 2009; Lo Presti and Mauno, 2016).
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10 Future studies should include alternative determinants in order to examine their concurrent
11 predictive power in order to find out which additional job resources can promote WFB (Carlson *et*
12 *al.*, 2019).
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24 Building on the SCM positive spillover hypothesis (Bakker and Demerouti, 2013) and
25 responding to Li *et al.* (2021) who urged for the inclusion of work-life balance in crossover studies,
26 we incorporated WFB in our research, which appeared to mediate the effect of organizational
27 family-friendly social support on instrumental family social support. However, in our study we did
28 not find support for an effect on emotional family social support. This is a very important outcome
29 as it seems that the perceived easiness and supportiveness for WFB that is provided by one's
30 employer is particularly valuable. More specifically, organizational family-friendly social support
31 as well as coworkers' social support enable the focal person to provide more instrumental family
32 social support to one's partner in return. So, it appears that the sensitivity towards work-family
33 issues, by managerial parties involved as well as social support provided by coworkers, can be
34 reflected in a higher propensity to provide instrumental family social support via the perception of a
35 higher balance between work and family demands. Moreover, it should be noted that WFB did
36 neither predict emotional family social support (at least, as perceived by one's partner). Therefore,
37 we call for future studies aimed at examining alternative predictors or moderators within the realm
38 of SCM, and/or to include work-family conflict and enrichment as additional concurrent mediators,
39 to better understand what factors are especially important in the light of providing emotional social
40 support; for instance, it could be hypothesized that some dispositional variables (e.g., empathy,
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3 affectivity) could be helpful in disentangling those boundary conditions where WFB can positively
4
5 impact emotional family support.
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8 In regards to our third and fourth study contribution, we differentiated between emotional
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10 and instrumental family social support, moreover examining them through the eyes of the
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12 incumbent person's partner. These variables showed a moderate inter-correlation, proving that their
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14 differentiated examination is worthwhile; moreover, we found that only emotional family social
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16 support predicted one's partner's family life satisfaction. However, only instrumental family social
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18 support was significantly predicted by work-family balance, herewith partially supporting our
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20 crossover hypothesis. Definitely, the examination of the predictive role of family social support still
21
22 deserves further empirical examination as evidence is often ambiguous, as shown for instance by
23
24 Kirrane and Buckley (2004) who found that instrumental family support was positively related to
25
26 work-family interference, or by Wayne *et al.* (2006) who found that family emotional support was
27
28 only positively related with family-to-work enrichment and not with work-to-family enrichment,
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30 while family instrumental support showed no predictive power at all.
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35 In sum, we found partial support for the assumptions of SCM. As for work-related
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37 antecedents of WFB, organizational family-friendly and coworkers social support were significant
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39 predictors. WFB mediated the associations between organizational family-friendly and coworkers
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41 social support with instrumental family social support. Based on these outcomes, we may conclude
42
43 that employees that perceive a higher balance between work and family, thanks to their
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45 organization's and coworkers' supportiveness, are more prone to provide their family with more
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47 instrumental support. Surprisingly, WFB did not (positively) predict emotional family social
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49 support, so the provision of this kind of support seems independent from experiencing a sound
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51 balance between work and family. However, one's partner's life satisfaction was (positively)
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53 predicted by emotional social support, while instrumental family social support did not appear to be
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55 a significant predictor.
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60 *Study limitations*

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3 There are some limitations to consider when interpreting our results. The first to be mentioned
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5 concerns the convenience sampling procedure adopted for our data collection. Thus, our sample
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7 cannot be considered representative of all kinds of couples (especially homosexual ones), which
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9 prevents us from making strong inferences of generalizability to the wider population. Moreover,
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11 most of the partners were unemployed so our results may vary among dual-earner couples for
12
13 whom family support could be more important. In addition, although the provided instructions for
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15 our data collection required each partner to complete the questionnaire separately, we were unable
16
17 to monitor whether these instructions were respected. Also, we collected our data through two time
18
19 intervals although, given the complexity of the SCM, a four-wave design (or, better, a cross-lagged
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21 one) should be preferable to test for a full sequential mediation model. At the same time, we would
22
23 like to note that the risk for a higher attrition rate is likely to increase with additional measurements.
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25 Also to reduce the risk for a high attrition rate, we adopted a time lag which is shorter than the
26
27 average value (i.e., six months) in work-family research (Allen *et al.*, 2019). Despite this measure,
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29 our study suffered from a higher than expected attrition rate which may have partially biased our
30
31 results. In particular, our final sample consisted of younger individuals more likely to have a white-
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33 collar job. Future studies should find alternative ways in order to reduce the attrition rate (e.g.,
34
35 incentives for participation) and to obtain a more heterogeneous and balanced sample.
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42 As regards avenues for future studies, we call for more scholarly work wherein both
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44 alternative job demands and resources in the work-family domains (Steiner and Krings, 2016) are
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46 taken into account. Also, future empirical studies might include other-reported data, for instance
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48 gathered through colleagues' or supervisors' reports. Additionally, future scholarly work should
49
50 consider wider conceptualizations of the construct work-life balance given that non-work time can
51
52 include other aspects beyond family life such as leisure, volunteering work and so on (Casper *et al.*,
53
54 2018; Kalliath and Brough, 2008), as well as include measures such as the incumbent person's
55
56 perception of the family support provided by their partner as a possible indicator of a family
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58 resource that could be investigated as a predictor of work-family balance.
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3 Furthermore, with regard to the study hypotheses, as we focused on the work-to-family
4 direction, the spillover and crossover effects from family to the work sector could also be taken into
5 consideration in future research (Steiner and Krings, 2016). In fact, it may be useful and appropriate
6 to examine whether the negative and/or positive experiences in the family domain might spillover
7 and crossover to the work domain of both the incumbent person and/or his/her partner (Booth-
8 LeDoux *et al.*, 2020).

16 *Practical implications*

17
18 Despite its limitations, this study contributes to the work-family literature and might provide
19 significant suggestions for potential practical interventions. Our results showed that a greater WFB
20 can be improved by enhancing coworkers social support and, above all, by means of a supportive
21 culture in the workplace, as findings highlighted the important roles coworkers and organizational
22 family-friendly social support play in improving employees' abilities to balance family and work
23 domains (Brough and O'Driscoll, 2010).

24
25 From an organizational point of view, interventions aimed at fostering coworkers and
26 organizational family-friendly social support should be promoted, through the creation of a
27 facilitating work environment. It is important that all parties involved, in particular one's coworkers
28 and management, are made aware of this issue and that they are enabled to build up competencies in
29 this regard. Hammer *et al.* (2016) provided several suggestions to improve work-family balance:
30 introducing flexible work-arrangements, implementing training interventions regarding work-life
31 balance for supervisors and employees, applying work redesign initiatives to increase schedule
32 control, establishing family-friendly services and benefits (e.g., kindergarten). Although these
33 interventions can have an impact on different issues, such as job control, organizational climate and
34 culture, time flexibility, support from supervisors and coworkers, etc., they generally signal to
35 employees that the organization is orienting itself towards a more family-friendly approach, hence
36 promoting their perception of organizational family-friendly social support.

Moreover, as our study showed, a higher amount of WFB may also relate positively to instrumental family social support. Therefore, we argue that apart from organizational interventions, individual interventions, or interventions focused on couples, could be considered as well as a means to foster an individual's WFB, and thus enhance the probabilities of fostering the exchange of instrumental family social support among partners. Finally, as one's partner's family life satisfaction was positively predicted by emotional family social support, individual and couple interventions are also important strategies that may help to improve the family satisfaction of both partners. In this regard, less scholarly work on couple- and family-level interventions aimed at improving, or related to, work-family balance has been executed in comparison with organizational-level ones. One notable example is the study by Schaer *et al.* (2008) that, through an intervention labelled "Couples Coping Enhancement Training", fostered communication and dyadic coping skills at a dyadic level. In a similar vein, Heskiou and McCarthy (2021) developed an intervention titled "Resource Transfer Training" through which they increased development-based and affect-based enrichments from work to family. These interventions share some common aspects, such as an emphasis on communication skills, emotions' sharing and acceptance, social support training, conflict management skills, and self-reflection and we would like to invite all parties involved to increase efforts focusing on these aspects.

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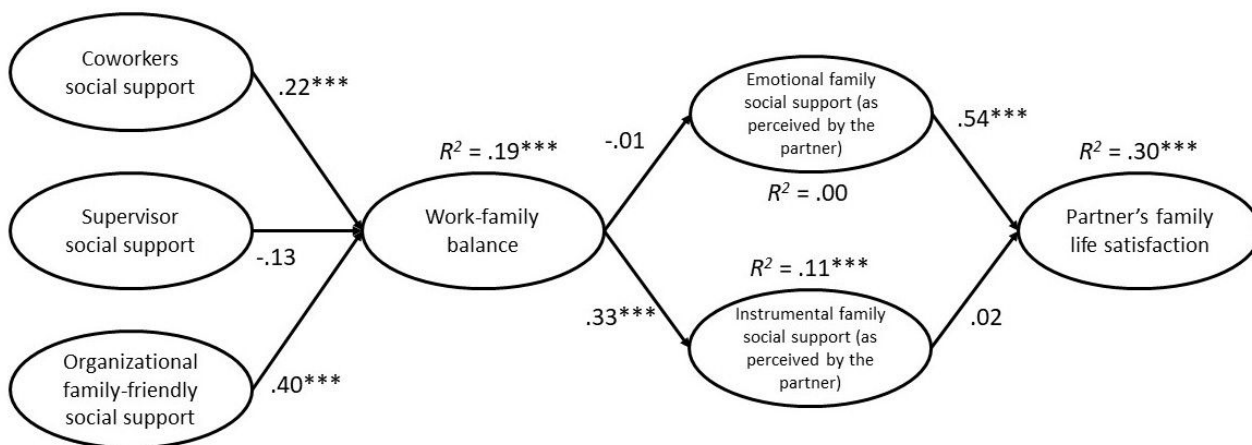
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Table I. Study variables' descriptive statistics and zero-order correlations.

	M (SD)	1	2	3	4	5	6
1) Coworkers social support	3.93 (.82)						
2) Supervisor social support	4.02 (.89)	.42***					
3) Organizational family-friendly social support	3.36 (.75)	.22***	.46***				
4) Work-family balance	3.90 (.72)	.23***	.17**	.35***			
5) Emotional family social support (partner)	3.95 (.69)	-.05	-.02	-.03	.03		
6) Instrumental family social support (partner)	3.58 (.97)	-.08	-.13**	.08	.28***	.35***	
7) Partner's family life satisfaction	5.63 (1.01)	-.06	-.11*	-.08	-.02	.44***	.17**

Note: *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$. * $p < .05$.



Note: $*** p < .001$.

Figure 1. Structural model

Development International

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