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Coping with Work and Family: How do Dual-Earners Interact?

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Running Head: Couple Interactions on Coping with Work-Family

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Abstract

Juggling the demands of both work and family has become increasingly difficult, especially for dual-earner households; nevertheless, families have developed strategies to deal with work-family challenges. This paper uses couple level analyses (APIM models) with 100 dual-earner couples to provide insight about partners' mutual influence on the use of work-family coping strategies. The results show that women's use of coping strategies is more associated with work-family conflict and work-family enrichment than men's coping. In addition, using partner coping, having a positive attitude towards multiple roles, using planning and management skills and avoiding having to cut back on professional responsibilities is associated with better outcomes (more enrichment and less conflict). Surprisingly, the use of childcare facilities is associated with women's conflict and partner effects were only found concerning the use of management and planning skills. These skills, however, have distinct effects for men and women's outcomes: their use by men reduces their own conflict but increases their wives', while their use by women decreases their own conflict and increases their own and their partner's enrichment. These results point to the fact that gender roles continue to be a hallmark of work-family issues. Our design and results point out the need for new interventions that take couple interdependences into account.

Keywords: Dyadic, coping strategies, work-family conflict, work-family enrichment, dual-earners

Coping with Work and Family: How do Dual-Earners Interact?

Being in a dual-earner family means that conciliating work and family roles is a task that needs to be interplayed between the two members of the couple. Previous research on work and family interface has tended to overlook this fact and does not systematically analyse how individuals' emotions, behaviours and attitudes are directly or indirectly affected by their partner's emotions, behaviours and attitudes (Brockwood, Hammer, Neal, & Colton, 2001). In addition, most work-family research has focused on: i) the demands and resources from each role and how they affect a negative (conflict) and positive (enrichment) interaction between work and family roles; ii) work domain variables; and iii) a work-family conflict paradigm (Eby, Casper, Lockwood, Bordeaux, & Brinley, 2005). Studies that have addressed individual as well as couple level effects, that examine coping strategies in response to work-family challenges or even before these challenges are posed and that take gender into consideration are lacking (Eby et al., 2005). This work constitutes an attempt to tackle these gaps by focusing on the specific strategies that dual-earner families use to manage their work and family responsibilities, and how these work-family strategies associate to work-family conflict and work-family enrichment.

Coping and the work-family interface

Classic approaches of coping emphasise the management of a demanding situation. The most widely used and accepted approach to coping defines it as constantly changing one's cognitive and behavioral efforts in order to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as exceeding the resources of the person (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). This approach places great

emphasis on the role of cognitive appraisal in shaping the quality of the individual's emotional response, as well as the ways in which the person copes with the appraised relationship. Therefore, according to Lazarus and Folkman (1984), when confronted with a potential stressor, the individual engages in a primary appraisal process where the situation is assessed as threatening to their well-being; and a secondary appraisal process where individuals assess their ability to effectively cope with stressors. They have also defined two general types of coping: problem-focused coping, where strategies are used to directly address the problem causing stress; and emotion-focused coping; which is aimed at ameliorating the negative emotions associated with the problem (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Problem-focused coping would be making a plan of action or concentrating on the next step. Emotion-focused coping would be engaging in distracting activities, using alcohol or drugs or seeking emotional support (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2004). As categorizing coping in narrow taxonomies as the classic one by Lazarus and Folkman (1984) can be limited, more recently Skinner, Edge, Altman and Sherwood (2003) have proposed the distinction between higher and lower order coping. Higher order coping organizes lower order coping strategies by their function (e.g. Emotion-focused or Problem-focused coping) whereas lower order coping refers to coping that is a recognizable action or behavior (e.g. problem solving, delegation). Skinner et al. (2003) reviewed more than 100 coping categories and recommended the use of five core coping strategies: problem solving, social support, cognitive restructuring, problem avoidance and distraction. Problem solving refers to instrumental action, strategizing, problem solving, planning, effort and cognitive decision making. Seeking support refers to a range of targets for support and reasons for obtaining support. Cognitive restructuring refers to active attempts to change one's view of a stressful situation in

order to see it in a more positive light and include positive thinking and optimism. Problem avoidance includes efforts to stay away from the situation and Distraction refers to active attempts to deal with a stressful situation by engaging in an alternative pleasurable activity, such as hobbies, exercise, watching TV, seeing friends, or reading. As Folkman and Moskowitz (2004) stressed in their summary of the state of the art, coping is a complex, multidimensional process sensitive both to the environment and its demands and resources. Therefore, specific coping studies in the work-family interface are important to be addressed.

Literature on the work-family interface is mainly grounded in two major theoretical approaches. The perspective on *work-family conflict* which has been leading research on this area and assumes that the responsibilities and role demands of work and family are mutually incompatible (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985) and the perspective on *work-family enrichment* which encompasses a positive perspective and assumes that participation in multiple roles provides individuals with greater number of opportunities and resources that can be used to promote better functioning across roles (Grzywacz & Powell, 2006). The former perspective is close to the classical conceptualisations of coping, in terms of how individuals deal with role conflicts and overloads between their work and family responsibilities and is associated with less effective coping. Work-family enrichment, on the other hand, reflects a good balance and psychological functioning across adult roles and should show an association with successful coping. In fact, Mauno, Kinnunen, Rantanen, Feldt and Rantanen (2012) have ascertained work-family enrichment to be a proximal correlate of successful work-family coping.

Closely associated with work-family conflict and enrichment is work-family balance. Though, widely used, the concept of “balance” is rarely defined in specific

terms (Greenhaus & Allen, 2011). Frone (2003) defined work-family balance as including not only low levels of work-family conflict but also high levels of work-family facilitation. Voydanoff (2002), then again, equated work-family balance with work-family fit, defining it as implying a degree of global satisfaction with the work-family interface and a sense that demands and outcomes are balanced in each domain. The former definition (Frone, 2003) can be conceived as a components approach, while the latter is an overall appraisal approach (Grzywacz & Carlson, 2007). On their reflection upon the concept Grzywacz and Carlson (2007) pointed that the component approach consistently explained more variance in work and nonwork outcomes than the general appraisal approach. In this work, therefore we use the vision of Frone (2003) as we suggest that work-family coping strategies will lead to higher levels of balance by decreasing work-family conflict and increasing work-family enrichment.

One of the first studies in the work-family literature that approached coping was Hall's (1972) study of how women cope with conflict. The author theoretically established three main strategies, including 16 specific behaviours that women could potentially use to cope with multiple role demands: i) Structural role redefinition: required changing others' expectations about the appropriate behaviours for someone in that specific position, in other words negotiating with the environment; ii) Personal role redefinition: implied changing attitudes and personal perceptions about the role expectations, in other words making changes in oneself; and iii) Reactive behaviour: implied trying to accomplish all the requirements of a role without changing them. Using interviews, Becker and Moen (1999) identified three types of strategies that dual-earners use to manage work and family demands. The first one was Establishing Limits, which involved reducing the number of hours at work,

working only during weekdays and lowering expectations of career advancements. The second Job vs. Career comprised of one partner investing in a more flexible job, with essentially extrinsic satisfaction; and the other partner investing in a more demanding career, usually associated with more intrinsic satisfaction. Finally, the last category included switching these two strategies across the life course.

Somech and Drach-Zahavy (2007), also through interviews, developed a typology of eight coping strategies to address conflict between work and family roles: i) Good enough at home/work: lowering the performance of family/work responsibilities to a less than perfect level; ii) Super at home/work: insisting on doing all family/work duties singlehandedly and perfectly; iii) Delegation at home/work: managing one's own family/work duties by delegating some responsibilities to others; and iv) Priorities at home/work: arranging family/ work duties in order of priority, and undertaking only those determined high priority. The first and fourth strategies can be seen as problem solving coping, while the second type is more related to problem avoidance and the third to seeking support. An application of this taxonomy to the Finish context has found "prioritizing" not to be a useful coping strategy to achieve work-family balance, however "delegating", "being super" and "being good enough" were found to have a positive influence on individuals work-family balance (Mauno et al., 2012).

With a slightly different approach focusing on sandwiched dual-earner couples who care simultaneously for their children and for aging parents, Neal and Hammer (2007) have qualitatively derived a taxonomy of work-family coping strategies. These strategies are mainly of two types: strategies aiming at increasing resources (e.g. increasing flexibility at work; seeking out support from friends, coworkers and others; planning family activities) and strategies aiming at decreasing

demands (e.g. reducing time for oneself; changing one's attitude, prioritizing work or family). These strategies fit to Voydanoff's work-family interface conceptualization (2008), according to which when there is a lack of congruence between work and family demands and resources (misfit), individual may take action to reduce or eliminate this misfit by using "boundary-spanning strategies" which may be directed at reducing demands or increasing resources.

Previous conceptualizations of coping strategies, though encompassing couple and family demands, resources and strategies, do not clarify how these are negotiated between partners. In addition, all previous studies were grounded in theories of role conflict, and there are fewer studies that relate to a more positive perspective (work-family enrichment); however, Haddock, Ziemba, Zimmerman and Current (2001) used interviews with middle-class dual-earner couples who considered themselves successful in the balance of work and family, and identified 10 main strategies: valuing family, focusing on the relationship, making meaning of their profession, maintaining professional boundaries, being productive at work, giving priority to family leisure, being proud of the condition of dual-employment, living modestly, making decisions in a proactive manner and valuing time. Previous to Haddock's study, Skinner and McCubbin (1987) identified four patterns of coping strategies to manage work and family: i) Maintenance of the family system: use of planning competencies to organise the family life; ii) Support seeking: behaviours directed at finding external support, goods and services and to allocate childcare responsibilities; iii) Changing roles and patterns: behaviours that seek to blend work and family commitments through compromises and amendments; and iv) A positive outlook towards the life-style and reduction of tensions: behaviours directed towards

the satisfaction of personal needs, thereby reducing stress, and behaviours that help maintain an optimistic view of the situation.

More recently, Matias and Fontaine (2014) in a study with dual-earner families found five main coping strategies to manage work and family roles: i) partner coping; ii) positive attitude towards multiple roles; iii) management and planning skills; iv) professional adjustments; and v) institutional support. Partner coping referred to couples giving support to each other and spending time together. This strategy has some similarities to the seeking support dimension of Skinner et al. (2003) taxonomy. Positive attitudes toward multiple roles referred to a positive view about being part of a dual-earner family, similar to Skinner and McCubbin's (1987) dimension of a positive outlook towards life-style which can be viewed as a type of cognitive coping restructure (Skinner et al., 2003). Management and planning skills were associated with a personal way of coping with work-family roles, namely by using planning, segmenting and flexibility skills and refers to a problem solving type of coping (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Skinner et al., 2003). The adjusting of professional responsibilities strategy implies that one of the partners reduces their involvement or time spent working. Finally, the use of institutional support, namely using childcare and free time activities provided by schools or canteens, is the most clear cut instrumental seeking support strategy in the management of work and family roles. The authors showed that dual-earner families rely more on relational based strategies, namely partner coping, holding a positive outlook over work and family and using planning and management skills rather than instrumental support (institutional support). Moreover in order to achieve work-family balance (less work-family conflict and more work-family enrichment), mothers use more individual skills than childless women (Matias & Fontaine, 2014), and women use a

combination of high partner coping, individual skills and a positive outlook more than men (Matias & Fontaine, 2012).

This last empirical approach to work-family coping strategies seems to grant some advantages over previous mentioned ones because it is context-specific (work-family specific coping), it is recent and updated enough to be used with dual-earner families, it encompasses a proactive way of coping and it allows for discrimination between parental and gender groups.

Work-family coping effectiveness

Besides analysing the strategies that individuals engage in to deal with multiple role responsibilities, an important motivation for studying coping is the belief that certain ways of coping are more or less effective in promoting emotional well-being (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2004). In a very recent empirical study about the stability of coping strategies and patterns, Nielsen and Knardahl (2014) found that self-blame, behavioural disengagement, substance use and denial increased the levels of psychological distress, while active coping, use of instrumental and emotional support, planning, positive reframing and acceptance decreases psychological distress. Similarly, problem-focused coping (planning, decision making and task oriented actions), tends to be associated with positive effects (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2004), while emotional-focused coping lessened work-related wellbeing (Rantanen, Mauno, Kinnunen, & Rantanen, 2011) and is associated with poor mental health (Penley, Tomaka & Wiebe, 2002). However, the adaptive qualities of coping processes also need to be evaluated in the specific context in which they occur. Problem-focused coping is associated with lower levels of family to work conflict

and with higher levels of family to work enrichment (Rotondo & Kincaid, 2008), however, it is less effective in decreasing work to family conflicts (Andreassi, 2011; Rotondo & Kincaid, 2008). An explanation proposed to this lack of association is that problem focused coping is more adaptive when situations are amenable to change. In fact, individuals may have a greater control and opportunity for positive change in the family domain than in the work environment (Rantanen et al., 2011; Rotondo & Kincaid, 2008), as work environments are less tolerant of change for the purpose of accommodating family needs (Rotondo & Kincaid, 2008). Indeed, coping with role overload by restructuring family roles was a more manageable strategy to reduce stress than restructuring work roles (Higgins, Duxbury, & Lyons, 2010). In these situations, emotion-focused coping (emotional support, avoidance coping) could be preferable (Somech & Drach-Zahavy, 2007). Nevertheless, this type of coping tend to increase work-family and family-work conflicts (Andreassi, 2011; Rotondo, Carlson, & Kincaid, 2003; Somech & Drach-Zahavy, 2007). A possible explanation for these mixed results is that emotion-focused coping strategies may have some positive short-term effects despite being maladaptive in the long-run as such strategies only change the negative feelings about the situation, but do not remove the actual cause of the problem (Nielsen & Knardhal, 2014). Positive thinking and cognitive reappraisals may have a positive impact on outcomes as they imply acceptance of the situation and a positive reinterpretation. In fact, cognitive restructuring was found to have a buffering effect on the influence of role overload and role conflict on physical symptoms and emotional effects (Paden & Buehler, 1995); a positive effect on enrichment (Stanko, 2009) and a positive effect on satisfaction with multiple roles (Hall, 1972).

As for other typologies of coping, “Super at work” was associated with reduced conflicts in both directions (work to family and family to work) (Somech & Drach-Zahavy, 2007) and with increased enrichment (Mauno et al., 2012); “Delegating at home” associates with decreased work to family conflict (Somech & Drach-Zahavy, 2007) and with increased enrichment (Mauno et al., 2012); “Prioritising at home” was associated with decreased conflict (Mauno et al., 2012; Somech & Drach-Zahavy, 2007). “Prioritising at work” was found to both decrease and increase family to work conflict (Somech & Drach-Zahavy, 2007 and Mauno et al., 2012, respectively). Coping by restructuring work or family roles has also been associated with less role overload (Higgins et al., 2010).

These results seem to show that adapting general typologies of coping to the work-family interface yields mixed results (Somech & Drach-Zahavy, 2007). In fact, even problem-focused coping which is expected to be the most effective shows distinct effects, depending on characteristics of the appraised stressful encounter (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2004). Hence, studies that use coping strategies specific to the work-family interface seem more suitable.

We therefore expect that work-family coping strategies such as partner coping, positive attitudes towards multiple roles, management and planning skills, professional adjustments and institutional support will negatively associate with work-family and family-work conflict (H1a). The 5 type of strategies will be positively associated with work-family and family-work enrichment (H1b).

Crossover effects between couples on work-family outcomes

As the work-family interface in dual-earners should be seen as a couple task, the strategies used by one member of the couple to reduce work-family conflict or promote work-family enrichment may affect the strategies used by his/her partner. Nevertheless, similar to how the impact of coping strategies on conflict and enrichment has scarcely been studied (Eby et al., 2005; Voydanoff, 2008), the crossover impact of coping with work and family has not yet been looked into either.

Crossover effects involve the transmission of stress, strain, well-being or other emotion from one member of a dyad to another (e.g., Demerouti, Bakker & Schaufeli, 2005; Hammer, Allen & Grisby, 1997; Westman & Etzion, 2005). Though Westman (2001) argued that crossover effects may relate to positive as well as negative effects, the majority of research is focused on the crossover of stress and strain (Bakker, Demerouti, & Burke, 2009). Thus, crossover effects on burnout; depression; anxiety; withdrawal behaviors; job induced tension, occupational stress but also of relationship and family satisfaction have been found (Bakker et al., 2009; Mathews, Del Priore, Acitelli & Barnes-Farrell 2006; Parasuraman, Greenhaus & Granrose, 1992; Westman & Etzion, 1995). Regarding work-family coping, Brockwood et al. (2001) found that a greater use of a family's accommodations (reduced participation in the family to provide more flexibility in other life roles) by one's spouse negatively affected own family satisfaction for both men and women. However, partner's work and family accommodations did not have an effect on job satisfaction for either gender. These findings point that if the work-family coping strategy entails cutting back on family time, it will probably lead to family dissatisfaction.

Gender and work-family in context

Gender issues are seen as a hallmark in the work-family arena because the strong participation of women in the labour market has not been accompanied by an egalitarian division of tasks in the family sphere. In fact, in the Portuguese context, though men and women share the work domain, in terms of participation in the family sphere the division of household chores is still markedly traditional (Fontaine, Andrade, Matias, Gato, & Mendonça, 2007; Perista, 2007), and is intensified after the birth of children (Katz-Wiese, Priess & Hyde, 2010). Studies consistently show that being a parent increases difficulties in work-family balance (Grzywacz & Marks, 2000; Kinnunen & Mauno, 1998), although it also has a positive effect over work-family enrichment (Kinnunen Feldt, Geurts, & Pulkkinen, 2006). In addition to this unbalanced division, the representation and attitudes of women and men's roles in the work and family spheres are also traditional (Crompton & Lyonette, 2008; Matias, Andrade & Fontaine, 2012). This is true for most western societies including Portugal, where the role of women is perceived as cumulative: it is desirable for women to be professionally active and independent, but they are also expected to be available for their family at all times and to take care of the children (for a review see Matias et al., 2012). These contradictory attitudes regarding women's roles put them at a higher risk of overburdening themselves in their attempt to fulfil societal expectations. On this regards, Dijkers, Geurts, Kinnunen, Kompier, and Taris (2007) found that women work harder at home when their husbands had higher workloads, independently of being a dual-earner or a male breadwinner family. Regarding child care arrangements and organizational support Portuguese families have limited access of both. On the one hand, the provision of childcare (and eldercare) services are perceived to be insufficient to cover family needs, they are expensive and have schedules that do not fit work-schedules (Torres, Silva,

Monteiro, & Cabrita, 2005; Wall, 2005). On the other hand, employer support is manifestly scarce, unlike other societies, work–life balance in Portugal is not explicitly presented in organizations’ documents or policies (Sümer, Smithson, Guerreiro, & Granlund, 2008) and family friendly measures are mainly dependent on the informal decision of the supervisor (Santos, 2010). This lack of institutional and organizational support for work–family, allied with a gendered division of family work and the fulltime employment pattern of women in Portugal, heightens the challenge of balancing work and family responsibilities for Portuguese dual-earners and therefore Portuguese couples tend to rely a good deal on their own resources to balance work–family responsibilities (Matias & Fontaine, 2012).

Taking stock on these gender aspects we expect that women will make a higher use of work-family coping strategies than men (H2), and that this use will be associated with men outcomes more (partner effects) than the opposite (H3).

Following Mathews et al. (2006) recommendation, when the focus of work–family research is on dyadic relationships, APIM is an encouraging methodology. Therefore in the current work, APIM models regarding the interdependence of coping strategies on work-family related outcomes will be tested.

METHOD

Participants and Procedure

To participate in the study, individuals had to be part of a dual-earner family, both partners had to be employed for at least 15 hours per week, and they also had to live together with at least one child younger than 18 years of age. The sample for this study was composed of 100 Portuguese dual-earner couples (200 individuals) with a

mean age of 36 years old, the majority were married (95% married and 5% live in civil union) with a mean relationship duration of 15 years and 39.4% had one child; 52.5% had two children and 8.1% had 3 or more children. Couples were distributed among three levels of socio-economic status¹: 42.4% (low), 25.3% (medium) and 32.3% (high). On average, the men worked 61 hours per week, including overtime, travel time and commuting while women worked 57 hours.

The sample was collected between November 2010 and April 2011 through Internet mailing lists, in person during training courses and in workplaces. The field activity of the workplaces was also diverse (pharmaceutical, textile, logistics and distribution, trade, manufactures, etc.). At the start of the project, the researcher explained the goals of the study and gave the questionnaires to those who met the criteria for inclusion and agreed to collaborate, assuring confidentiality. When only one of the couple members were approached, he/she was asked to take home a questionnaire in a sealed envelope to his/her partner and were instructed to complete the surveys separately. This procedure may have introduced some auto-selectivity as couples with more conflict in their relationships will be underrepresented on the final sample. The questionnaires were delivered to the researcher or to an assigned administrative employee of the company in a sealed envelope at a particular date. Couples' questionnaires were afterwards matched through an alphanumeric code that each individual filled in their own questionnaire.

Measures:

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¹ Socio-Economic Status was calculated using indicators of individual income, education level and professional occupation.

Work-Family Conciliation Strategies Scale: This scale is composed of five sub-scales corresponding to strategies to deal with multiple role responsibilities: Partner Coping, Positive Attitudes towards Multiple Roles, Management and Planning Skills, Professional Adjustments and Institutional Support (Matias & Fontaine, 2014). Partner Coping refers to a partner's emotional and instrumental support regarding work–family balance and also, setting aside specific time for the couple's relationship. It is composed of 10 items; ($\alpha = .87$) sample item: 'The decisions about our family and about our personal and professional lives are taken together'; 'We ensure that both are involved in the care of our children'. Positive Attitudes towards Multiple Roles includes six items referring to a positive outlook regarding the dual-earner situation of the family and also regarding the fact that the individual occupies several roles. It reflects an optimistic attitude towards the work–family arrangement ($\alpha = .74$); sample item: 'Having both work and family responsibilities gives me a clearer idea of what is really important to me'; 'It is better for our relationship if we are both employed outside the home'. The third factor, Management and Planning Skills, is composed of six items and is an individualised strategy associated with the use of personal characteristics to deal with work–family responsibilities such as being flexible, planning and managing time and also segmenting work and family ($\alpha = .69$) (sample items: 'I do not take family problems into work'; 'I am flexible in different family and work situations.'). A strategy of Professional Adjustments implies individuals or partners cutting back on their work time investment, work hours or work responsibilities. It also has six items ($\alpha = .73$); sample items: 'I have moved to a job with less responsibility'; 'My partner moved to a job with more flexibility'. Institutional Support includes three items related to the use and quality of childcare and free time facilities or canteens ($\alpha = .79$). The scale

has been used previously with dual-earner couples and showed good validity and good factorial stability through confirmatory factor analyses: the five factor model had a good fit to the data. Nevertheless, the first three factors of the scale showed high correlations among them, suggesting a more relational approach to conciliation while the other two factors (professional adjustments and institutional support) were found to be essentially instrumental (e.g., childcare support, cutting back on work hours). Nevertheless, a comparison between the model with five independent factors and a model with a higher order factor² revealed a residual difference between the two, sustaining therefore that these three factors (Partner Coping, Positive Attitudes toward Multiple Roles and Planning and Management Skills) could be regarded as independent or as an indicator of a global relational strategy.

Work-Family Conflict: This scale is composed of six items, three assessing work-to-family-conflict (WFC, $\alpha = .60$), and three assessing family-to-work-conflict (FWC, $\alpha = .65$). Items cover conflicting demands associated with time and strain (sample item: “My work prevents me from spending time with my family”).

Work-Family Enrichment: This scale is composed of six items, three assessing work-to-family enrichment (WFE, $\alpha = .78$) and three assessing family-to-work enrichment (FWE, $\alpha = .76$). Items cover resource gains between work and family; sample item: “My involvement in my family helps me acquire skills and this helps me be a better worker”. Work-family conflict and enrichment scales have been used previously in the context of Famwork project (2005) and encompass selected

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² The model with two independent factors and an higher order factor also showed good fit to the data: $\chi^2/df = 1.22$; CFI = .91, RMSEA = .04, SRMR = .08. A comparison between this two models was performed using the *Akaike Information Criteria* - AIC (the lower the value the better) (Arbuckle, 2009), however the difference between the two was residual (AIC= 697,79 for the five independent factors vs AIC=696,61 for the higher order model).

items from Carlson, Kacmar and Williams (2000) and Carlson, Kacmar, Wayne and Grzywacz (2006)

Items from all subscales were assessed on a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*not at all applicable*) to 6 (*completely applicable*).

Background Variables: Respondents reported their gender, number and age of children, individual income, educational level and professional occupation.

Data Analytic Approach

The Actor–Partner Interdependence Model (APIM) is a model of dyadic relationships that integrates a conceptual view of interdependence in a two-person relationship, and has been proposed in the study of families and close relationships (Cook & Kenny, 2005; Kenny, Kashy, & Cook, 2006). A consequence of interdependence is that observations of two individuals are linked or correlated, making the observations non-independent. The non-independence of observations violates common assumptions of traditional statistical procedures like ANOVA and multiple regressions; it is therefore necessary to treat the dyad as a unit of analysis with the appropriate statistical techniques for measuring and testing it. The APIM enables this by simultaneously estimating the effect that a respondent's independent variable (in our case coping strategies) has both their own dependent variable (actor effect) and another respondent's dependent variable (partner effect). APIMs were fit using structural equation modeling (SEM) with maximum likelihood estimation (AMOS 18 software; Arbuckle, 2010). While SEM allows simultaneous testing of relationships between sets of variables and comparison of the magnitudes of competing regression paths, APIM allows for the estimation of both individual

(intrapersonal) and dyadic (interpersonal) factors, thus enabling an examination of the influence of one person's predictor variables on his/her own outcomes (actor effects), as well as on the other partner's outcomes (partner effects). In the APIM, actor effects are estimated controlling for partner effects, partner effects are estimated controlling for actor effects, and errors of measurement in observed variables are allowed to covary across dyads members, thereby accounting for dyadic nonindependence by minimizing biases in the estimation of effects (Kenny et al., 2006). To achieve an identifiable model and follow APIM procedures, men were identified as actor 1 and partner 1 and women as actor 2 and partner 2. Because there was only a limited amount of missing data for each variable and this missing data were random, in the case of missing values, variable means were imputed at the individual level. As recommended, the data were organised using a dyad structure (each record corresponded to a dyad, including individual scores on each variable as well as their partner's scores on each variable).

We used a nested model comparison procedure to examine differences in strength between mens' and womens' effects, in which these effects were constrained to be equal after testing the model with unconstrained paths. Within the APIM framework, these equality constraints allow testing for significant differences in the strength of both actor and partner effects, through the examination of chi-square difference test significance (Gonzalez & Griffins, 2001).

Due to the sample size and the number of parameters to be estimated, all variables were modelled as observed variables. To convert each scale into an observed variable, we took the weighted average of scores (derived from CFAs previously tested) for all items on the scale.

RESULTS

Preliminary analyses: Gender differences and interdependences

Preliminary analyses to establish statistical interdependence between the members of the couple on the independent and dependent variables were performed using correlations. Using paired sample T-Tests we established dyad/gender differences. Results can be found in Table 1.

Insert Table 1 about here

Men reported more professional adjustments than women, and women reported more FWC than men. Moreover, as the variable mean reveals couples tended to use more partner coping, planning and management skills, institutional support and a positive outlook regarding work-family roles than adjusting to professional responsibilities in order to manage work-family responsibilities. Correlations between partners' responses on the predictor and outcome variables showed that actors' strategies to manage work and family roles were correlated with their partner's strategies; except for the use of management and planning skills, where there was no correlation. Moreover, partner coping and institutional support were strongly related variables, whereas positive attitudes and professional adjustments were correlated at a medium range. Regarding the dependent variables, the FWC was moderately correlated while the remaining three showed weak associations between partners.

APIM for the effect of coping strategies on WFC, FWC, WFE and FWE

At first, the APIM was fitted with the five coping strategies used by husbands and wives as predictors of the WFC and FWC for both men and women. A covariance between the residuals of all four outcomes was modelled. Another APIM was fitted using again the five coping strategies for men and women as independent variables and the WFE and FWE as outcomes; a covariance between residuals of these four outcomes was also modelled. Standardised path coefficients are reported on Table 2.

Insert Table 2 about here

The association between the five coping strategies and conflict was not clear cut as we predicted on our hypothesis 1a and therefore it was partially supported. Partner coping and management and planning skills were (as expected) negatively linked to women's family to work conflict. Management and planning skills was also negatively associated with men and women work to family conflict. Nevertheless, holding a positive outlook regarding multiple roles was positively associated with wife's work to family conflict and using institutional support was also positively associated with women's family to work conflict (contrary to our prediction).

Our hypothesis 1b was confirmed as a more clear picture was found regarding the association with enrichment: the use of partner coping, holding a positive attitude towards multiple roles and using management and planning skills was positively linked to enrichment levels. Making professional adjustments and the use of institutional support did not have an association, either positive or negative, with enrichment.

Our second hypothesis was confirmed as we found that wives' FWC conflict was associated with three of the possible five coping strategies and their WFC with three (two actors and one partner), whereas men's WFC and FWC were associated

with just one strategy each (actor effect). In regard to enrichment, there was a more balanced picture: WFE was only associated with one coping strategy and FWE with two coping strategies, including one partner effect on husbands' FWE. Finally, our third hypothesis was not confirmed because we found partner effects only for one coping strategy: men's use of management and planning skills was linked to wives' WFC and wives' management and planning was linked to husbands' FWE. Partner effects were therefore found for both men and women's outcomes and were less common than the actor effects.

The model for family to work enrichment had the highest explained variance (35% for women and 37% for men), followed by family to work conflict (30% for women and 24% for men), work to family enrichment (26% for men and 20% for women) and work to family conflict (17% for women and 16% for men)

In the next step, we aimed to test the equivalence of the model (invariance) between genders (Table 3). A chi-square difference test was used to evaluate the invariance of the particular parameters; that is a lack of the significant chi-square differences between two models (one unconstrained and another constrained) indicates that the examined parameters were invariant across groups. If there is non-invariance between the groups, then the critical ratio of differences should be inspected in order to identify which parameters have been the sources for non-invariance (Maroco, 2010).

Model equivalence was tested regarding regression coefficients. The unconstrained model (saturated APIM model) where all parameters are set free (Model 1) was compared to a model where actor paths are constrained to be equal between men and women (Model 2) and to a model where partner paths are

constrained to be equal (Model 3). This procedure was performed for both WFC/FWC and WFE/FWE outcomes.

Insert Table 3 about here

As can be seen in table 3, actor coefficients for the WFC and FWC model were not invariant as the chi-square difference test was significant (Model 2). Thus, our next goal was to identify which parameters or path coefficients were non invariant between groups, and therefore the inspection of the critical ratios showed that one actor effect was not invariant between gender: institutional support_{actor} → FWC_{actor} (Men- $B = -.12$; $SE = .07$; $\beta = -.20$; $p = .102$; Women- $B = .20$; $SE = .07$; $\beta = .33$; $p = .007$). A model with this factorial pathway set to be free (Model 2.1) was tested, suggesting now that the model was well fitted to the data. Regarding partner effects, invariance was again not found (Model 3) and the parameter leading to this non invariance was: management and planning skills_{actor} → WFC_{partner} (WFC_{Men}- $B = -.23$; $SE = .14$; $\beta = -.19$; $p = .086$; WFC_{Women} - $B = .28$; $SE = .24$; $\beta = .20$; $p = .041$). Again, another model with this factorial pathway set to be free (Model 3.1) was tested. The remained parameters were found invariant.

This testing allowed us to establish that the wives' use of institutional support associated with their own levels of FWC, but not with their husbands; while the use of management and planning skills by men was positively linked with women's WFC, the opposite did not occur.

Regarding the enrichment outcomes, the analysis of invariance showed that the model was equivalent between men and women for the actor [$\chi^2_{(10)} = 8.35$; $p =$

.595; CFI = 1.00; RMSEA = .00] as well as for the partner effects [$\chi^2_{(10)} = 11.69$; $p = .307$; CFI = 1.00; RMSEA = .04].

DISCUSSION

Studies devoted to the way dual-earners balance work and family have shown gender to be crucial (for a review see Bianchi & Milkie, 2010). Not only, egalitarian and more traditional attitudes regarding gender coexist, but also empirical studies have shown that work and family interrelate in quite distinctive ways for men and for women (Bianchi & Milkie, 2010; Matias et al., 2012; Maume, 2006). For instance, the performance of familial tasks trigger more family to work conflict for men; however for women, men's performance of familial tasks triggers more positive relations between work and family roles, and women's performance of household chores attenuates their levels of work to family conflict (Matias & Fontaine, 2011). These and other results lend the foundation to the reason for analysis of gender differences on the interplay between men and women regarding work and family roles. In addition, work-family research has not consistently addressed how coping strategies affect work-family balance: less than 1% of work-family research is devoted to coping mechanisms (Eby et al., 2005), and less than 5% uses couple-level data (Casper et al., 2007). The neglect of coping and couple-level effects in work-family research is surprising, since one of the major issues that individuals and families face in today's society is how to manage work and family roles and achieve a satisfactory balance. This paper aimed therefore to analyse: i) how work and family coping strategies associated with work-family conflict and enrichment; ii) how couples interact in the enactment of these strategies; and iii) to establish the role of

partner's coping strategies on work-family conflict and on work-family enrichment. Our main findings reinforce the need to address gender issues on the work-family interface as we substantiate next.

Gender aspects on coping with the work-family interface

According to Byron (2005), coping styles tend to have a similar relationship with both directions of conflict, and our results have yet to establish a clear distinction between the coping strategies and the direction of conflict. In fact, regarding our first hypotheses it was not clear cut whether the work-family coping strategies that we assessed were negatively related to conflict levels for women: women's levels of conflict are indeed negatively associated with their own use of management and planning skills and with the use of partner coping (in accordance with previous research by Rotondo & Kincaid, 2008), but having a positive outlook towards multiple roles or using institutional support is not negatively but positively associated with WFC.

Regarding enrichment, our findings also confirm past research that holding a positive attitude towards multiple roles (cognitive reappraisal) increases enrichment levels (Stanko, 2009) and add value to the strategy of management and planning skills in its association with enrichment. In sum, women seem to be better off if they perceive themselves as self-sufficient, they do not need external support and do not count on their partner's individual skills. Strengthening this conclusion is the fact that the use of planning and management skills is a strategy that is negatively associated with conflict and positively associated with FWE, when used by women. This result is also consistent with past research (Kirchmeyer & Cohen, 1999; Rotondo & Kincaid, 2008).

Our unexpected findings, namely the result regarding the effect of childcare facilities seems counterintuitive, however considering the context where these dual-earners act may help us interpret this result: as childcare facilities are commonly perceived as not adapted to family needs (Torres et al; Wall, 2005), their use, although necessary may add to strain. Furthermore, these results may also suggest that the use of this external resource is threatening women's assumed responsibility for childcare, leading them to feel more conflict between roles. This finding is in accordance with the representation of women's role found in the Portuguese and other societies. On the one hand, the usefulness of child care support to families seems unquestionable (Wall, 2005); but on the other, the role of women as mothers is still perceived to be irreplaceable (Aboim, 2007; Crespi & Fontaine, 2012). In order to keep an active participation in the work role, families have to use institutional support; however, this usage may be perceived as a less than ideal solution. Our finding regarding men's management and planning skills over wives' WFC, although unexpected and contradicting our third hypothesis, can also be interpreted in light of this framework. We found that the more men use their own competences of management and planning to cope with work-family responsibilities, the more women will perceive their work as interfering with their family. In fact, it seems that Portuguese women assume the main responsibility of keeping their work and family life balanced, thus when men "help out" in the management of these responsibilities women's gender identity may become threatened. Similar findings in the same society have shown that the performance of housework by Portuguese women (in dual earner families) leads to a diminished sense of FWC (Matias & Fontaine, 2011). Both of these results were the ones found to be non-invariant between men and women by the formal test of invariance.

This gender framework is further reinforced by our confirmation of hypothesis 2, that women's work-family interface is associated with more coping strategies than men's. Gender differences in coping behaviours occur from the differences in roles that men and women assume in society and from the number and kind of stressful situations that men and women typically encounter (Tamres, Janicki, & Helgeson, 2002). As the balance of work and family roles still poses more demands and higher stress for women, they use more strategies and their use of them is more relevant (Maume, 2006).

The finding that men's use of professional adjustments associates with more FWC can be interpreted in light of this gender explanation: since men are not expected to adjust their career prospects, when they reduce their professional investment their perception of family interfering with work may be heightened. This result is aligned with Matias and Fontaine's (2012) study, where individuals with a work-family profile marked by higher levels of professional adjustments had higher levels of FWC and WFC. Nevertheless, as this is a correlational study, it may also be that because these men perceive their family as interfering with their work that their strategy to reduce conflict is to cut back on their work investment.

Our results suggest that, although the attempt to balance work and family is fundamentally a dyadic task, if adjustments are to be made, women are still the ones expected to do them and most of our findings can be understood using a gender role ideology approach. Despite the strong involvement of women in the labour force and despite gender equality policies, representations of women's and men's roles still shape work-family dynamics. Especially, regarding motherhood. In fact, our result concerning the detrimental effect of institutional support illustrates that when it comes to raising children, women are believed (and believe) to be irreplaceable. In

accordance with the doing-gender perspective, the motivation to display one's gender is stronger when people deviate from their gender roles in some aspect (West & Zimmerman, 1987) and these ideologies are activated when gender identity becomes more salient such as after marriage or parenthood. This study suggests therefore that couple's interplay of coping strategies is more complex than the initial analysis predicted. Though, there is a set of strategies that are negatively associated with conflict and positively associated with enrichment, namely the use of partner coping and having a positive outlook regarding the dual-earner situation of the family, other strategies do not have such a clear-cut positive or negative association and are dependent on gender.

Practical Implications and Limitations

Partner coping showed a negative link to FWC and a positive one to FWE. To have higher levels of WFE, however, the most important coping strategy is to have a positive outlook regarding multiple roles. These results are consistent with past research which found that seeking support (close to dyadic coping) and cognitive restructuring (close to positive outlook regarding multiple roles) predicted more enrichment and less conflict (Stanko, 2009).

The evidence that relational-based strategies were more effective than instrumental-based should not lead us to consider that only emotional aspects matter for coping. Current available resources are probably not matching dual-earners needs, and as part of a weak and familial welfare state, care is conceived as a family's responsibility. Moreover, organisations do not have strong policies or incentives to help families balance multiple roles, and most of the initiatives are mistrusted by the employees. To ease the task of balancing multiple roles, measures

should include working in close collaboration with companies to help them understand the advantages of family-friendly programmes and the best way to implement them. The benefits for companies of implementing family-friendly programmes are well-documented (see Kossek, 2005), although this is not a common practice in southern European countries (Santos, 2010). The training of human-resource managers and clarifying with CEOs the advantages of these programmes are still needed steps. However, organisational support is not limited to human resource policies, it includes readjusting job conditions and structures of work (work hours and control over work), as well as organisational cultures and norms (Kossek, Baltes, & Mathews, 2011). Another line of intervention relates to conveying new messages regarding men and women's roles in the family and helping families to find the most suitable support for their situation.

The role of emotional-based strategies and the role of partner effects on the coping process point intervention in another direction, namely, the reinforcement of couple-based coping strategies. In this regard, an example of an intervention programme was developed by Bodenmann and Shantinath (2004) and tested by Schaer, Bodenmann and Klink (2008). This programme aimed to improve the relationship quality of individual and dyadic competences (communication, problem-solving coping). Another direction would be to improve the attitude toward multiple roles, highlighting its benefits to the dual-earner family, workforce and society. This attitude improvement could be performed at the workplace, in clinical and community settings and also in the media (see van Steenbergen, Ellemers, Haslam & Urlings, 2008). Finally, improvement of individual-based competences, namely planning and management skills is already a focus of many training programmes

developed by companies. The suggestion would be to expand the focus from professional tasks to familial and role balance tasks.

Turning now to the overall explained variance these coping strategies help explain a significant amount of variance for both genders and for both conflict and enrichment, nevertheless the explained variance is higher for the family to work direction than for the work to family direction. The scale assessing coping strategies covers the main resources that families use to balance roles and these are mainly partner and individual-based resources (for a discussion see Matias & Fontaine, 2014); therefore it is not surprising that positive and negative interferences from family to work are better understood by the use of these resources than the interferences from work to family.

Nevertheless, in order to obtain a more complete view of the work-family interface, this data should be complemented with information concerning the use of organisational and work related strategies. Another limitation of this work is the sample used which, for its characteristics (dual-earner parents with moderate levels of education), may limit the generalisability of the results. In this regard, the need to have both partners information, in order to perform a dyadic level analysis, reduces access to couples with more conflicting relationships. Furthermore, the cross-sectional nature of the study does not allow us to rule out reverse causality and it may be that work to family conflict and enrichment results in the use of work family coping strategies; nevertheless the set of work-family coping strategies used encompass routine course of action put forth in a more preventive than reactive manner. Future research should, nonetheless, examine work-family coping in larger more diverse samples, using longitudinal and multi-method designs and consider

possible moderating and mediating mechanisms by which coping strategies affect work-family linkages.

Aside from these limitations, however, we must ascertain that this study is innovative in considering the role of specific strategies that couples use to manage work and family responsibilities, and it evaluates the effectiveness of these strategies in terms of mutually reducing work-family conflict and enhancing work-family enrichment. Moreover, both individual and couple level effects are considered, though individual strategies played a stronger role than partner strategies, we consistently established that women's approach to work-family conciliation is still determinant.

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Table 1.

Correlations and Paired Sample T – Test Between Men's and Women's Variables

Variable	Correlation (<i>r</i>)		Male partner	Female partner	<i>Df</i>	<i>t</i>
Work-Family Conflict	.20*	<i>M</i>	3.44	3.17	92	1.84
		(<i>SD</i>)	(1.09)	(1.18)		
Family-Work Conflict	.34**	<i>M</i>	2.19	2.48	92	-2.39*
		(<i>SD</i>)	(1.01)	(1.06)		
Work-Family Enrichment	.29**	<i>M</i>	4.20	4.30	92	-.65
		(<i>SD</i>)	(1.21)	(1.32)		
Family-Work Enrichment	.28**	<i>M</i>	4.54	4.72	92	-1.48
		(<i>SD</i>)	(1.04)	(0.96)		
Partner Coping	.62***	<i>M</i>	4.93	4.91	92	.27
		(<i>SD</i>)	(0.70)	(0.76)		
Management and Planning Skills	.10	<i>M</i>	4.10	4.19	93	-.76
		(<i>SD</i>)	(0.81)	(0.90)		
Positive Attitudes toward Multiple Roles	.36***	<i>M</i>	4.67	4.73	97	-.60
		(<i>SD</i>)	(0.79)	(0.84)		

Table 2.

APIM standardized estimates of actor and partner effects of W-F conciliation strategies on WFC, FWC, WFE and FWE

Variable	<i>WFC husband</i>		<i>WFC wife</i>		<i>FWC husband</i>		<i>FWC wife</i>		<i>WFE husband</i>		<i>WFE wife</i>		<i>FWE husband</i>		<i>FWE wife</i>	
	<i>(R² = .157)</i>		<i>(R² = .172)</i>		<i>(R² = .238)</i>		<i>(R² = .301)</i>		<i>(R² = .264)</i>		<i>(R² = .202)</i>		<i>(R² = .371)</i>		<i>(R² = .352)</i>	
	<i>Actor effects</i>	<i>Partner effects</i>	<i>Actor effects</i>	<i>Partner effects</i>	<i>Actor effects</i>	<i>Partner effects</i>	<i>Actor effects</i>	<i>Partner effects</i>	<i>Actor effects</i>	<i>Partner effects</i>	<i>Actor effects</i>	<i>Partner effects</i>	<i>Actor effects</i>	<i>Partner effects</i>	<i>Actor effects</i>	<i>Partner effects</i>
Partner Coping Positive Attitudes tow. Multiple Roles Management and Planning Skills Professional Adjustments Institutional Support	.006	-.041	-.209	-.062	-.120	-.135	-.356**	.136	.012	.008	.067	.071	.132	.051	.296*	-.046
	.023	-.036	.318**	.007	.038	.048	.182	-.107	.430***	.037	.314***	-.144	.368***	.020	.182	-.028
	-.271**	-.194	-.270*	.195*	-.042	-.094	-.292**	-.074	.134	.048	.088	-.090	.144	.206**	.266**	-.093
	.051	-.052	.188	.039	.256*	.153	.142	.040	.091	-.018	-.063	-.055	.091	-.018	-.063	-.055
	.195	-.164	-.054	.118	-.204	.200	.325**	-.100	.050	-.031	.134	-.171	.050	-.031	.134	-.171

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

Table 3.

APIM Invariance Analyses Between Gender (for WFC and FWC Outcomes)

Models	χ^2	gl	χ^2/gl	p	CFI	$RMSEA$	<i>Comparison</i>
1. Unconstrained (saturated model)	.000	0	0	-	1.000	.000	-
2. Constrained Actor Coefficients	23.66	10	2.27	.01	.96	.12	2 vs. 1
2.1. Set 1 actor path free: institutional support → FWC	12.67	9	1.41	.18	.99	.06	2.1 vs. 1
3. Constrained Partner Coefficients	22.47	10	2.25	.01	.96	.11	3 vs. 1
3.1. Set 1 partner path free: Management & Planning Skills → WFC	13.31	9	1.48	.15	.99	.07	3.1. vs.1