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IS THERE A POTENTIAL WIN FOR COMPANIES WHEN WOMEN ENRICH

THEIR ROLE OF WORKERS THROUGH THE ENRICHMENT OF THEIR

FAMILY LIVES?

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ABSTRACT

While the work-family relation conflict literature has received much attention, there is a lack of empirical evidence towards work-family positive relation. Furthermore, there is a lack of understanding and recognition of possible benefits obtained by skills' development during maternity. This study concludes that a family-work relation has a positive outcome, namely the enrichment. It was evident that there is a potential win when women enrich their role as workers through the enrichment of their family lives. Moreover, this enrichment is perceived by mothers along the development of their children; each age and phase have different challenges and enable different skills' improvement.

The findings support the notion that not all work and family experiences are negative and experiences from the work and home can improve outcomes both inside and outside the workplace.

Keywords: work-family, family-work enrichment, facilitation, enhancement, positive spill-over.

INTRODUCTION

"When women grow, companies grow. They are flexible, multitasking, have spirit of sacrifice and are able to deal with simultaneous crisis at the same time."[1]

Teresa Campos

In the past years, substantial literature on the work-family relation was produced by analysing the conflict perspective that, according to Powel (2006), derives from a scarcity hypothesis that assumes a fixed amount of time and human energy. Proponents of the conflict perspective assume that individuals who participate in multiple roles, work and family, inevitably experience conflict and stress that detract from their quality of life. On the other hand, recognizing the preoccupation with conflict and stress in several recent reviews, researchers have called for a more balanced approach that identifies the positive effects of combining work and family roles (Barnett, 1998; Frone, 2003; Greenhaus & Parasuraman, 1999) and an appeal was raised to investigators to focus also in the positive aspects of work and identify the variables that are important in developing positive states, because the good and the bad sides of life and business can complement each other (Peterson, 2006).

Positive Organizational Behaviour (POB) is, according to Luthans (2002), the "*study and application of positively oriented human resource strengths and psychological capacities that can be measured, developed, and effectively managed for performance improvement in today's workplace*". Wright (2003) adds that POB should also include the exploration of

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[1] *"Quando elas progridem, as empresas prosperam. Elas são flexíveis e multifacetadas, têm espírito de sacrífico e são capazes de lidar com várias crises ao mesmo tempo."*

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happiness and health in employees as viable targets and Zwetsloot and Pot (2004) highlight the importance of employee's health and well-being as an organizational asset.

In this context, work-family relation also leads to a positive perspective in line with positive psychology (Snyder & Lopez, 2002) and the theory of the positive interdependencies between work and family roles has emerged (Grzywacz, 2002).

Thus, other emerging paradigms based on the beneficial effects of being involved in multiple roles appear, where researchers have increased the interest in examining how the involvement in one role positively impacts the other role, particularly in women. Psychological and sociological perspectives suggest that this combination can be psychologically beneficial for adult women (Barnett, 1998; Baruch, Barnett, & Rivers, 1983; Burke & McKeen, 1994) with the existence of positive synergies challenging the conflict associated with family-work relation (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006).Therefore, multiple role theory or role accumulation perspective suggests that multiple roles gave some people more energy and resources than they depleted (Marks, 1977; Sieber, 1974). With this approach, Friedman and Greenhaus (2000) have concluded that family and work are allies and not enemies.

As a result, the enrichment concept arises and can be analysed as a **positive spill over**: experiences in one relation (humour, abilities, values, behaviours) can positively impact the other relation (Crouter, 1984); a **facilitation factor**: engagement in one relation can generate gains that increase the other relation behaviour (Gryzwacz, 2002); and an **enhancement**: additional opportunities to develop skills relevant to management. As Lazarus and Folkman (1984) suggested, the resources are available to meet the demands of different roles.

However, the work-family relation has been mostly studied by the conflicts generated, especially in women. Although the proportion of women in lower and mid-level management positions has increased dramatically over the last 30 years, the proportion of women reaching top management positions has remained relatively small (Powell, 1999) for fear they will quit to marry, have children (Lewis & Park, 1989; Schwartz, 1989), or follow their husbands when they relocate (Markham, Macken, Bonjean, & Corder, 1983; Markham & Pleck, 1986).

Additionally, another type of scenarios like Apple and Facebook's new benefit of offering coverage for their female employees to freeze their eggs to reduce the conflict between work and family are being controversial. Rather than making fundamental changes and paying per woman to freeze their eggs and store them (Egg-freezing a better deal for companies than for women, 2010), possibly with the same expenses having a full-time baby nurse for an initial period of time allowing women to continue their career path, have a baby, and feel completely supported by their organization could be more beneficial. Or these companies could also use resources to build nurseries in their offices and staff them with licensed day-care workers, creating a great place for women mid-career to feel supported. Therefore, it is important to promote the enrichment from work and family relation instead of creating actions to minimize the conflict that can occur by promoting the benefits of parenthood, especially motherhood.

THE PROBLEM

Slowdown of population growth, decrease of population volumes, population aging process, as a result of fertility declining and increasing in life expectancy, reflects the main lines that describe the demographic trends of Portugal in the last years (INE, 2013). Moreover, the

average size of households have declined significantly over the last 50 years, from 3,8 people per household in 1960 to 2,6 persons in 2011 as a result of a change in fertility rates. Nowadays, women are having fewer children and at a later stage in their life comparing with the past. Between 1960 and 2012 there was an increase in the average age of being a mother, from 25 to 29,5 years respectively (Delgado & Wall, 2014), the family's structure has changed (more single parents and step parents than in the past) and the number of marriages has decreased while the number of divorces is increasing (INE, 2013).

According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and development (OECD) Work-Life Balance Index Portugal's fertility rate is the lowest in the OECD, which has important implications for the changing face of future Portuguese society (OECD, 2015).

In Europe, the reconciliation of work, family and private life is recognized as a priority for achieving gender equality, increasing women's participation in the labour market and promoting the sharing of caring responsibilities between women and men (European Commission, 2011). Nevertheless, even with several policies and measures for the advancement of gender equality, women still remain the main caregivers. In accordance with the report *Progress of the World's Women 2015-2016: Transforming Economies, Realizing Rights*, released by United Nations Women, nowadays women between the ages of 25 to 44 spend three times longer than men in childcare per day and four times more with unpaid work, showing a significant asymmetry between men and women in time allocation and why women work far longer hours than men.

In Portugal, women are more than the half of the workforce but do not progress in career as one would expect: a) there is a big difference between the operational functions and

intermediate positions. Men and women are entering the workforce at the same rate but their numbers become increasingly unequal as they move up the corporate ladder, 55% and 45% are occupied by women, respectively, with the board members where only 29% are women; b) in the PSI 20 companies, only 9% have management positions and no one has the president role and c) women's wages are lower comparing with men, with a gap of 15 percent, and the differences increase with higher levels of qualification. As a result, this limits women's prospects to a balanced working and family life.

However, according to a resolution promulgated by *Conselho de Ministros*, and like in Europe, the Portuguese Government is concerned with this issue by promoting the importance of women and the national goal and commitment is to increase the number of women on corporate boards of directors by 30% until 2018.

Some authors (Catalyst, 1996; Davidson & Fielden, 1999; Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Swiss & Walker, 1993) describe women managers as being always worried between managerial and personal roles and frequently feeling guilty and tired, questioning their competence in both family and work under the assumption that it is impossible to simultaneously be good at both spheres. Therefore issues associated with work-family relationship are relevant and increasingly important both in the national and international context.

The relatively high number of women in management positions leaving their organizations is growing, while the age at which most men and women are at the peak of their careers coincides with the age most women begin to have children thus facing a tough decision: advance in their careers or start a family. According to Cabrera (2009) the departure of women from work happens because they are rejecting the rules of the traditional career model

that must be followed in order to make it to the top in most organizations. In evaluating the pros (benefits) and cons (costs) of investing in a traditional career, many women, especially mothers, consider the cost of progressing on a higher career level being too high (Grady & McCarthy, 2008). The work structures, mainly with inflexible tasks and schedules, and the organizational culture are still based on the traditional vision of the ideal worker who does not allow for non-work responsibilities to affect their commitment to the job. Moreover, the lack of opportunities in training, promotions and positions targeted for rapid advancement are still pointed as a reason why women are not chosen to top management (Lewis & Park, 1989; Schwartz, 1989; Markham, Macken, Bonjean, & Corder, 1983; Markham & Pleck, 1986) but if the retention of valued talent is recognised as a priority and organizations strive to brand themselves as an employer of choice (Anderson, Vinnicombe & Singh, 2010) why are we not giving women a chance? Is there a big potential talent loss when women have to give up for their careers in order to be with their family? And more interestingly, is there a potential win for companies when women enrich their role of workers through the enrichment of their family lives?

METHODOLOGY

Sample and procedures

For this work project a snowball sampling (Patton, 2002) was used for data collection, with 15 informants (parents and non-parents, married and not married, male and female) participating in the study. They were selected by having kids or not and having a job which enables them to achieve top management positions, as for this analysis to the highest

responsibilities and opportunities to achieve top management an increased job involvement is expected and the impact in family-work relation is also more relevant (Voydanoff, 1988). All informants are Portuguese, working for different companies, with an average age of 44, ranging from 32 to 51. The sample included managers, directors and company partners and the participants' average tenure is 16,5 years (SD= 7,7), ranging from a minimum of 8 years to 33 years. Informants have diverse academic backgrounds: about two fifth with degrees in education (40%), one fifth in management and mathematics areas (20%) while the remaining are from design, military, psychology and administrative areas.

To understand the potential talent loss that companies face when they don't give women opportunities to balance their family life and careers, an inductive approach was adopted and the precepts of grounded theorizing were followed. Semi-structured interviews with open-ended format were used as data collection technique. Data analysis was dynamic, proceeding in successive iterations of data collection and analysis as predicated by the approach. An introduction of the project was given in the beginning of the interview and specific questions to answer were not provided. There were some topics and as the process progressed the discussion leaded to different approaches. The original script covered the following major subjects: a personal introduction ("Who? Where? Number of kids?" for characterization), then the goal was to discuss work-family conflicts in terms of opportunities, competencies, gender discrimination and behaviour and, last and most important, the work-family enrichment and its relation with improved performance at work. The 15 individual interviews were conducted face to face, in the participants' work sites or their homes, with a duration between 30 and 60 minutes and were recorded and transcribed verbatim for subsequent in-

depth analysis. The final number of interviews resulted from the growing difficulty associated with the extraction of new information, meaning that a state of theoretical/category saturation (O'Reilly, Paper, & Marx, 2012) was attained: no significantly new categories were being obtained from the final interviews.

Data analysis

The interviews were analysed by developing a direct interpretation of data to higher levels of generalization and abstraction, in a nonlinear and iterative fashion, following the principles of grounded theorizing. This methodological approach allows different processes like data collection, data analysis and the development of theoretical sensitivity occurred in a non-segmented fashion, enriching and influencing one another (Mirabeau & Maguire, forthcoming). As recommended in the literature (Gioia, Corley, & Hamilton, 2012) the study progressed in three steps: grouping direct quotes into first-order concepts, organizing concepts into second-order themes and defining themes into a wide dimension explaining existent relationships. Therefore, it started with constant comparison where data are simultaneously coded and analysed (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) allowing the identification according to commonalities of first-order concepts. Then, in a second analytical step, those first-order concepts were grouped into major second-order themes and, to conclude the methodology process, the second-order themes were structured into theoretical categories, more general and conceptually broader and more abstract, via axial coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

This continuous and sequential process was used to generate aggregate dimensions representing the synergies behind enrichment: facilitation, positive spill over and

enhancement processes. Along the process of collecting and analysing data, and after gaining familiarity with the patterns it became evident that this theme has implications in society, management and families.

FINDINGS

Three classes of synergies

First-order concepts were grouped as indicated in the left-side column of Figure 1, which details the direct themes emerging from the interviews. After identifying and grouping first-order concepts there was an aggregation into six major second-order themes, resulting from the interpretations of direct themes. As explained before, through the increase of familiarity of data, three final aggregate dimensions were identified. Those final aggregate dimensions provided an abstractly but also comprehensive summary of the data, presented in Figure 1 that shows the three interpretive orders, namely the first-order concepts, second-order themes, and the final conceptually deeper aggregate dimensions (appendix 1 provides illustrations of interview data, direct evidence from which it was possible to draw second-order themes). These final categories, according with the grounded theory, represent three synergies: (1) facilitation, (2) positive spill over and (3) enhancement.
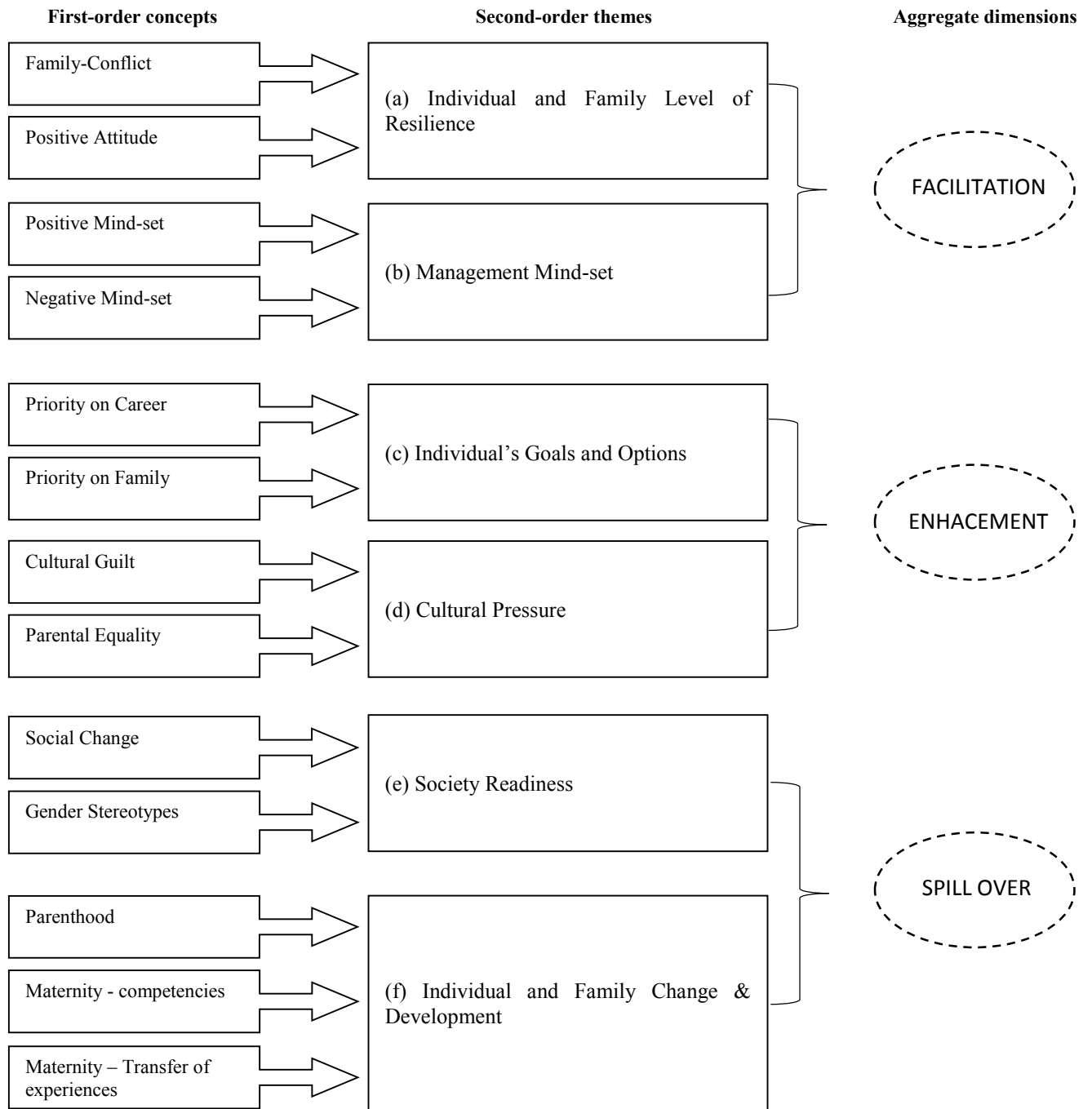
Figure 1 – Model of enrichment construction

FIRST SYNERGY: FACILITATION

Two initial categories were extracted from the interviews: Individual and Family Level of

Resilience and Management Mind-set.

(a) Individual and Family Level of Resilience. The first evidence emerging from the interviews is the growing conflict when a woman becomes a mother. Less time availability, less concentration, less flexibility, family problems affecting work and the constraints in women's personal life are some examples identified by both women and men interviewed. An argument can be made that multiple roles provide women with more chances to be unsuccessful and, consequently, to feel badly about themselves, and this may create additional sources of stress. This corresponds to the first-order concept family work conflict. Simultaneously, it was identified that, despite those types of existing conflicts, it is possible to manage them in order to not minimize but deal with them in a successful way (First-order concept positive attitude). For instance, an interviewee said that she has less availability to stay in the workplace, but at the same time "during those six hours you can develop the same work that you usually do in eight because you have the ability to do and you want to do in order to be with your kids". There are new situations that require more but "I was mother, wife, worker and student and never failed at anything. What you have to know is how to manage your day and your obligations."

On the other hand, personal's attitude and mentality impacts the way the new reality is seen; the same situations (and in this case the conflict) can be analysed as being positive or negative and consequently control theirs result and performance at work and family roles. If the attitude is positive, nothing can stop both personal and professional achievements. "There are people who have a star with a power that with our without kids, pregnant or not, it seems that nothing is impossible for them." In this case, the conflict that emerges from the maternity is directly influenced by the woman attitude towards her new role and, as a result, family

resilience as "a dynamic process encompassing positive adaptation within the context of significant adversity" in the family (Luthar et al. 2000, p. 543) is fundamental since interviewees that were able to manage both family and work dimensions had long-term effects on her development and roles.

(b) Management Mind-set. The way companies and, most importantly, management teams are dealing with the maternity directly impacts nowadays reality. It is mentioned by many interviewees that in Portugal there are no Human Resources policies that allow a mother balancing work and family without giving up of anything. Many leaders identify mothers as being good workers and with competencies that a woman without kids does not have but at the same time they see this role as a weakness and a barrier to develop important projects. "If you want to develop something with a woman who was mother recently I feel that it is more complicated because she is not focused only in the work" or "Preference is given to those who have no children or work until late, someone who has more availability" are examples of leaders and workers' opinions towards working with mothers or mothers-to-be. This was coded as the first-order concept Negative Mind-set. On the other hand, the analysis also confirms the importance of changing companies' policies by making daily work obligations more flexible and compatible with the mother's role and a different perspective was coded as Positive Mind-set. "Nowadays I think it is important and mandatory to create a combination between the needs of a business and the needs of the family life". This positive mind-set is about how managers have begun to see no problem in having a working mother. On the contrary, they identified benefits and different behaviours when working with those women: "Mothers' endurance is bigger in tolerance, conflict management and style of speaking. They don't stress when they see the first obstacle" and "People without children could be technically

better probably due to the fact that they have more time to learn but many of these people are less sensitive to each other problems, have less negotiation power and a different attitude towards team leadership".

Synergy 1: Facilitation. Individual and Family Level of Resilience and Management Mind-set are essential conditions for work–family Facilitation. The extent to which individuals' participation in one life domain (e.g., work) is made easier by the skills, experiences, and opportunities gained by their participating in another domain (Gryzwacz, 2002) is directly affected by the link between the way mothers see and deal with the conflict and the way companies see the benefits of having those mothers in their staff. Women with children interviewed in this qualitative study stated that their motherhood role provided them with psychological resources that improved their work performance. If the companies invest management practices to support those women, they can achieve satisfaction, confidence, self-esteem and a mature perspective that helped them deal with work-related issues. This eventually led to a general life satisfaction as well as to a positive sense of self-worth and self-esteem (Ruderman et al. 2002, p.381). According to Rhode and Kellerman (2006), given that managerial women are typically highly competent and are committed to success, it is likely that expanded opportunities offer them more benefits. In summary, an individual's participation in the family domain facilitates his/her participation in the work domain and this seems to be dependent on the synergies created by individual and family levels of resilience, on one side, and management mind-set on the other side.

A different duo of categories emerging from data referred to Individual's Goals and Options and also Cultural Pressure.

(c) Individual's Goals and Options. The differences in goals and the different options that each mother takes are also mentioned as the reason why many women do not invest in their careers. Some interviewees expressed the opinion that some women have the family and the kids as their priorities and so investing in their worker role is not important. "There is also the situation where women with good skills prefer not to occupy top positions because they want to spend more time with their children". For some mothers, however, these new role "Does not undermine me at all because my kids are my top priority on a personal level and at the same time I still have my career, where I want to be the best as I can". So, they have different objectives at their personal and professional levels and they are able to feel realized in both dimensions by making a good balance between them "I disagree with the fact that someone has to give up. I never give up professionally. Instead, I have to manage in order to not harm my personal life."

(d) Cultural Pressure. The cultural guilt and parental equality are factors that in this study result in cultural pressure. Todays' society still considers children should be with their mother and women tend to feel guilty for spending time at work instead of with their children. Culturally, women are care-givers and it is considered that they have to stay at home with their children while the man needs to develop his career. But the pressure on the parental equality and the appearance and willing of the father to be present in their children' life is leading to a cultural change where people began to think "Mother is mother. And why father is not father?" or "My children are so well with me as with their mother" and this has started

to have a positive impact in the way that both woman and man, mother and father, assume and share their parental responsibilities, showing also an evolution in women's needs and desires.

Synergy 2: Enhancement. Sieber (1974) states that "employees involved in multiple roles could gain four types of rewards derived from role accumulation: role privileges, overall status security, resources for status enhancement and role performance relates and enrichment of the personality and ego gratification". For that reason, additional opportunities to develop skills for both men and women are relevant to management. Thus, it is important to take into account the goals and options of each woman as a mother and a worker and, simultaneously, the cultural pressure should allow men of being fathers and mothers of being workers without a sense of guilt associated. Results suggest that enhancement (additional opportunities to develop skills relevant to management) seems to be dependent on the synergy between the family (individual's goals and options- how important is it to pursue a career) and the culture (how both women and men are perceived for sharing parental responsibilities and investing in a career).

THIRD SYNERGY: POSITIVE SPILL OVER

The last pair of categories developed from data collected was Society Readiness and Individual and Family Change & Development

(e) Society Readiness. Both social change and the gender stereotypes combine in the need of a society readiness for the change. "There were certain stigmas that were being eliminated. In my opinion, in terms of attitudes the society is being more open than in the past" so currently there are more fathers ensuring their kids' activities and playing a more active role in the family. For instance, the law concerning maternity leave has changed in Portugal and

now the father is able to stay at home with the new-born instead of the mother. Slowly, fathers are taking advantage of this "I know two examples where during the first month the baby was with the mother and the rest of the maternity/paternity leave was with the father" The society mind set is changing and "People begin to see that women on top management positions make extraordinary things." Younger generations are now different from older generations and they start to consider gender equity as the norm, with a bigger division of tasks at home allowing for a correct balance between women's work-family relation. Furthermore, gender characteristics are seeing as an added-value for companies to thrive in a way that they add different characteristics "A woman always bring a feminine sensibility that creates a different point of view in the teams… the woman also creates change and brings humanism to the services". It was also noted that since women are discriminated "They have to invest more in their work's results and show what they are able to do. A woman has to do more to stand out in the job market".

(f) Individual and Family Change & Development. The paternity creates additional competencies and skills that no other experience can create. The transfer of competencies is both seen in mothers and fathers "In terms of behaviour you can clearly see the differences between a fathers versus a non-father. For me it is the same association between a woman with kids versus a woman without kids" and "Teams flow better when they are managed by someone who has children. In that type of situations they are more flexible, tolerant, having a different approach to conflict management, etc." So there is an acknowledgement from individuals and leaders of the competencies created with the paternity experience. This development is often witnessed in mothers, which are more capable of identify it than men, due to the fact that women have specific gender characteristics that helps them in their role

as a mother. Those characteristics are boosted by maternity and the challenges derived from having a child "Since the moment that I had my child I created the ability to do many things at the same time, my organization and concentration skills increased, I have a bigger ability to multitasking", "By being a mother we learn things that no workshop can teach us". Another dimension is the connection between experiences at home and experiences at work. Many interviewees have mentioned their ability to transfer knowledge and feelings between the two dimensions: "The children can give you different competencies at work according to their age and development" and "There are some situations at work that make me think about the small problems that I have at home and devaluate them" are examples of interviewees experiences in this matter. Additionally, women re-think all their lives and attitudes "You learn how separate what is important, what is urgent and what is emergent", "We (mothers) ended up by giving priority to what is a priority and eliminating what is superfluous. We create new ways of working."

Synergy 3: Positive Spill Over. Edwards and Rothbard (2000) suggested that the spill over of values, skills, and behaviours learned in one role might influence other roles. In this case there are evidences from that; if the society is ready to accept the changes and development of individuals, the conditions for success across both dimensions (family and work) are created. Real and genuine power comes from women and men working together and using their experience and gender diversity to solve problems and accelerate business. For that reason it is important to have teams with men and women, having or not kids. However, the results suggest that this positive spill over between work and family is dependent on the synergy created by the actual development of families and individuals and the society readiness to witness and integrate these examples.

DISCUSSION

By analysing how people see women with and without kids, and, most importantly, how mothers see themselves in the society and work place, three relevant dimensions can be identified and related with work's main question: family, company/work and society. Only with the identified synergies (1) facilitation, (2) positive spill over and (3) enhancement is possible to create conditions for the enrichment generated by the maternity experience.

The approach of this relation (work-family) has moved from conflict through seeking balance to integration (Burke, 2004). While balance indicates an equal split of time between the two domains, integration focuses on a sense of satisfaction in both work and non-work areas. In addition, this should be the future motivation where work and family are integrated and individual priorities and choices are prioritized (Rapoport, Bailyn, Fletcher & Pruitt, 2002). In the companies' domain, flexible scheduling at work that allows employees to deal with work and family needs can increase mothers' performance (Friedman & Greenhaus, 2000; Grzywack & Butler, 2005) by not compromising company's results: women recognize when they need to be present for important meetings or important issues, but also when they aren´t needed in the workplace they can get more work done from home (Reynolds, 2001).

The society and companies start to recognize that roles played by women in their personal lives offer psychological benefits, emotional advice and support, practice at multitasking, relevant background, opportunities to enrich interpersonal skills and leadership practice that develop efficacy in the organization role. Moreover, multiple role commitment is positively related to life satisfaction, self-esteem and self-acceptance (Ruderman et al., 2002). For that reason it is important to create policies that aim at promoting female's participation in social and economic life by changing the traditional stereotype background where parenting issues

are considered a primary responsibility and obligation of women and creating a solid base for gender division and sharing of family responsibilities. For instance, the European Quality of Life Survey (EQLS) of 2011, shows the beginning of that change; there is a general trend of decrease in the difference of average number of hours dedicated to house work (cooking, cleaning, shopping, etc.) per week between men and women from eight hours in 2007 to five hours in 2011. This was due to an increase of the number of hours that women are in their work place. Additionally, the inclusion of men in the family life tends to be more by taking care of children than by their participation in housework (Dermott, 2008; Doucet, 2004; Hobson, 2002; Marinho, 2011; Modak & Palazzo, 2002; Wall, Aboim, & Marinho, 2010). To summarize, this study confirms the theory of enrichment in the women's role as workers due to the improvement of their family lives by presenting enrichment as an exercise of synergies created at the individual, organizational, and societal level. The implications of this research to the work enrichment theory seem straightforward. It is important to retain those women by ensuring their sense of engagement both personally and professionally. Today's high-achieving women need self-sufficiency, independence, new tasks and different challenges.

Implications

This work opens several implications for the enrichment development's management. It is imperative to increase the number and the diversity of studies approaching the positive potential from the work and family relation instead of focusing on the negative conflict that may arise. The Companies' management, society, and the family are the biggest driver conditions to allow the enrichment creation. Companies may contribute to the retention of talents by stimulating initiatives that support work-family integration in women, recognizing

the positive value that women bring to companies, especially mothers, since nowadays the differences between mother and no-mother are recognized but not exploited. The society and also the mothers themselves should reject the pressure towards the "old mother role" and promote the father participation as care-givers as well as in a domestic role. The mother should not re-think her position in the family and work in order to be able to perform in both domains without compromising their goals. In this way, the family must provide help in order to reduce women's domestic and family workload.

The results confirmed previous findings as Carlson et al. (2006) and Greenhaus and Powell (2006) have argued: employees do perceive a positive connection between work and family in a way that work can enrich family and that family can enrich work. Complementarily, this analysis, also supported by the same authors, makes clear that the influence of family-to-work enrichment is stronger than the opposite. This means that family provides several resources to enrich work and, if the society and companies are not aware of this positive relation, they are losing talent.

Limitations and boundary conditions

A number of limitations explain the range of application for this research. The subjectivity of the data can lead to challenges and difficulties in establishing reliability and validity of approaches and information. It is difficult to detect or to prevent researcher-induced bias due to the lack of accuracy and interview techniques. Due to its extremely qualitative nature, the results can be difficult to present in an effective and functional way. Furthermore, this methodological method introduces limitations to generalization, namely because self-awareness has limits and could be potentially biased and incomplete (Taylor, Wang & Yujie, 2012).

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this work was to develop the conventional understanding of women's unique characteristics and consequently mother discrimination, by showing what is the potential win when women enrich their role of workers through the enrichment of their family lives.

A tremendous amount of research, energy and effort has gone into the issue of gender equality and discrimination and also to the conflict that maternity creates, but there are some studies about work-family enrichment. Researchers and employers have assumed a "win-lose" relationship between work and family and focused on work-family conflict, based on the belief that individuals have limited time and resources to allocate to their many life roles.

Our businesses, societies and families need to be able to take full advantage from those mothers and allow them to perform both roles without constrains, by assuming a "win-win" relation. The present study contributes to the literature on work and family by showing that companies are losing if not taking benefit from those new or improved skills and aims at changing mentalities towards this issue. Furthermore, the results demonstrate that enrichment occurs through a multi-level process with synergies occurring at the individual, organizational and societal levels to promote facilitation, enhancement, and positive spill-over processes.

APPENDIX 1

Representative data of 2nd-order themes[2]

2nd-order Themes		Representative 1st-order evidence
INDIVIDUAL AND FAMILY LEVEL OF RESILIENCE	**Family-Conflict**	– "I have less availability to work late." – "Between mom and dad, there is always one that spend more time with their children. Therefore there is automatically an availability conflict." – "I see a negative change. For example the new mother are not focus on her work because she has others new preoccupations, she has a new baby." – "A different concern arises for who is mother or becomes a mother. They have to ensure other timings that didn't have to ensure before." – "Before of having kids I was more flexible. In other words, after being a mother my flexibility still exists but it depends in my kids. Mostly in terms of schedules." – "There are times to give more to the family, times to give more to the work, and times to balance both." – "As the time goes by you are going and you need to put brakes on your work. It is normal and important for the welfare of your baby." – ""Requires from my personal life." – "If you don't have kids, you will be able to be more focus in your work and you will end up to achieve more goals."
	Positive attitude	– "It doesn't affect my role as a mother. It takes me time to do my role as a mother. But it is always an added value because I have less time but I can organize myself to reach everywhere." – "In my opinion the two dimensions (work and family) are completely compatible. I was mother, wife, worker and student and never failed at anything. What you have to know is how to manage your day and your obligations. What you have to know, and what is important, is to learn how to manage your day-to-day routines and duties." – "There are people who have a star with a power that with our without kids, pregnant or not, it seems that nothing is impossible for them." – "In my career I was mother twice and nothing stopped me from working and being a mother at the same time. I had only to make a better management of my time and make some choices in my routines." – "The situations can always be positive or negative. Sometimes the constraints are such that we cannot see the positive side and only the negative one. But in my opinion I would say that at the limit all things are good and positive and it is up to us value them as good or bad."
MANAGEMENT MIND-SET	**Positive mind-set**	– "If everything were more flexible for a mother (allowing tasks to be done at work) maybe it is a good way to allow them (mothers) to balance work and kids." – "People without children could be technically better probably due to the fact that they have more time to learn but many of these people are less sensitive to each other problems, have less negotiation power and a different attitude towards team leadership." – "Nowadays I think it is important and mandatory to create a combination between the needs of a business and the needs of the family life." – "Mothers' endurance is bigger in tolerance, conflict management and style of speaking. They don't stress when they see the first obstacle…It's a question of being more practical."

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[2] More detailed analysis and quotes on the work project appendix.

2nd-order Themes		Representative 1st-order evidence
	Negative mind-set	– "Preference is given to those who have no children or work until late, someone who has more availability." – "There is also a handicap of one day the woman may be a mother and that person who you could count to work is now like a black hole (in terms of work time) in which over a period you can't count." – "If you want to develop something with a woman who was mother recently I feel that it is more complicated because she is not focused only in the work"
INDIVIDUAL'S GOALS AND OPTIONS	**Priority on Career**	– "She changed her life logistics thus she was able to adapt their work and personal routine with their kids' routine." – "Does not undermine me at all because my kids are my top priority on a personal level and at the same time I still have my career, where I want to be the best as I can" – "I disagree with the fact that someone has to give up. I never give up professionally. Instead, I had to manage in order to not harm my personal and professional life." – "I think it is easier to make a career by being a later mother than the opposite, when you are mother very young. In other words, you should invest first in your career and then take the jump to the next level."
	Priority on Family	– "After becoming a mother, a woman, cannot have as priority the investment in her career." – "Sometimes there is a re-thinking in their (mothers) priorities. Women don't exclude the career development but the investment is different, before was 100% and after is 70%." – "There is a big difference between the number of undergraduate women and men. But then, in the companies, it happens exactly the opposite and this is a curious phenomenon." – "Sometimes there are women with good skills that prefer not to occupy top management positions. Instead, they want to spend more time with their children."
CULTURAL PRESSURE	**Cultural guilt**	– "Because mother is mother. When you fall you'll call for your mother and not for your father. So then yes, there are differences." – "It was not my case, but sometimes, the mother might also feel a bit guilty to come home and the baby is already sleeping. This keeps her away from the normal baby/kids activities." – "From the social point of view, and I think that it has influence in women's actions, the woman assumes for itself that culturally she has to take all parental responsibilities." – "Culturally, women are caregivers, whether their children or elders." – "The woman in society has to look for the children when they are sick and has also to take care of they when it is about divorce matters." – "Nowadays is still present that it is the woman who has to give up of her career in behalf of the man."
	Parental Equality	– "Mother is mother. And why father is not father?" – "My children are so well with me as with their mother."
SOCIETY READINESS	**Social Change**	– "I know two examples where during the first month the baby was with the mother and the rest of the maternity/paternity leave was with the father." – "When I went with my first child to swimming classes there were much more mothers than fathers. Today there are more fathers. A change has started do happen." – "Women are changing society's mind set. People begin to see that women on top can make extraordinary things." – "Nowadays the man already has a completely different attitude at home. There is a bigger division of tasks, normally fifty-fifty" – "Over time this situation is changing. Younger people have a different state of mind towards women." – "In the past, the man went work and the woman stayed at home. Today, with the woman's emancipation things are changing. Father and mother are both essential and they must be present in their kids' life."

2nd-order Themes		Representative 1st-order evidence
	Gender Stereotypes	– "Men have black and white, women have black, white, grey, dark grey, light, etc." – "Woman also creates change and brings humanism to the services." – "When you have to ask for effort and dedication women are much more available than men." – "When you start to see the weight of women's management in the companies it will be noted the difference in business." – "A woman always bring a feminine sensibility that creates a different point of view in teams." – "They have to invest more in their work's results and show what they are able to do. A woman has to do more to stand out in the job market."
INDIVIDUAL AND FAMILY CHANGE & DEVELOPMENT	**Parenthood**	– "In terms of behaviour you can clearly see the differences between a fathers versus a non-father. For me it is the same association between a woman with kids versus a woman without kids." – "The children can give you different competencies at work according to their age and development." – "When you have a child everything is re-thinking." – "I think we have [people with children] more spirit of sacrifice, more coordination, we give more and ask less." – "Teams flow better when they are managed by someone who has children. In that type of situations they are more flexible, tolerant, having a different approach to conflict management, etc." – "I develop the ability to better understand the different problems of each individual."
	Maternity - competencies	– "By being a mother we learn things that no workshop can teach us." – "Since the moment that I had my child I created the ability to do many things at the same time, my organization and concentration skills increased, I have a bigger ability to multitasking." – "In fact there were many changes in my life, but then those changed are all enriching because I was able to learn other things." – "The work on the affection changed me as a person." – "Being a mother made me more demanding on human respect issues." – "You learn how separate what is important, what is urgent and what is emergent" – "Being a mother is a role that we have and we should realize." – "After being mother I became more responsible at all levels, more humane, tolerant and aware to others' problems."
	Maternity – Transfer of experience	– "It is easier the challenge at work than at home." – "Being a mother is a very enriching experience." – "There are some situations at work that make me think about the small problems that I have at home and devaluate them." – "We (mothers) ended up by giving priority to what is a priority and eliminating what is superfluous. We create new ways of working." – "I think the condition of being a mother also helps in the condition of being a good professional." – "When she faces that her child has a big problem, the mother gets stronger. Much stronger for all the challenges of life, because that is the biggest challenge of their lives."