

# Analysis of the Work-family Conflict in Small Companies in the South Colombian Region: The Differential Perception between Men and Women

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**Abstract** – The present investigation was carried out with the objective of measuring the perception of the work-family conflict, experienced by men and women, in the organizations of the Surcolombiana region. In this sense, the deductive method was used, in a quantitative and descriptive study, since it was attempted to determine the level of perception of the variable in question, for which the Survey Work-Home Interaction-Nijmegen scale was used (SWING) for work-family conflict, validated internationally, on a sample of 397 people. The analysis of the information and the relationship of variables was carried out with the SPSS 25 software. In this regard, it was found that in general all the collaborators present high levels of work-family conflict; however, it is evident that women who work in organizations experience higher levels of work-family conflict, compared to men.

**Keywords** – work-family conflict, small businesses, gender.

## 1. Introduction

Human talent in organizations constitutes a strategic factor that, in most cases, determines its position in the market in which it operates. This aspect is especially important today when it is becoming increasingly difficult to distinguish the limit between the workspace and the personal activities of the collaborator. This is due to the fact that phenomena such as working at home or telecommuting have been increasing considerably.

From these situations, the phenomenon of work-family conflict has been established as a landmark of study, from academia to organizations. Indeed, the dynamics of organizations and the management styles practiced by their leaders determine the levels of work-family conflict experienced.

Wang and Walumbwa [1], Munir et al. [2], Tang et al. [3] and Hammond et al. [4] found strong links between transformational leadership style and work-family conflict in different organizational contexts. In the particular case of the study by Hammond et al. [4], the authors found a negative relationship between transformational leadership and work-family conflict, and suggested that such relationship is not necessarily direct, but may be mediated by other variables such as management support, job autonomy, work and good treatment.

On the other hand, although to a lesser extent, there are studies that have evaluated the levels of work-family conflicts experienced by working women or have identified the factors that generate this conflict [5], [6], [7], [8], [9].

For the above reasons, it is necessary to measure the level of work-family conflict experienced by employees of small organizations in the Surcolombiana region, especially because existing studies and literature are mostly based on analyzing the phenomenon in large companies and in developed countries, and very little in the context of

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small businesses in underdeveloped countries. Likewise, it is proposed to discriminate by gender (men and women) in order to establish differences in this regard.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Work-Family Conflict

The work-family conflict, hereinafter WFC, is essentially a conflict of work and family roles because they are incompatible with each other [10]. The WFC is a bidirectional phenomenon that occurs when people, in this case company employees, have problems fulfilling their family role due to work obligations that work demands of them. This same situation can happen in the opposite direction when people cannot fulfill their work commitments in companies as a result of family activities and duties [11], [12].

The WFC can be presented in three different situations: The first corresponds to the WFC based on time due to the pressure exerted by the time factor, that is, time is limited and, consequently, the time dedicated to a sphere must be subtracted to the other. Time spent with family is inevitably reduced to work, and vice versa. The second type is stress-based WFC in which stress experienced in one domain conditions a person's performance in the other, in other words, stress experienced at work can negatively predispose people to their home activities, and vice versa. Finally, there is the WFC based on behavior because people can have unwanted behavior in one field with respect to another, that is, in the family field they adopt behaviors that are frowned upon there but valued and accepted at work. Basically, the behaviors can crop up in the wrong place [13].

The postulates and studies on the WFC maintain that it can appear in two ways [14], [15]; in the first case, there may be an interference of the labor sphere over the family sphere that corresponds to problems of people in assuming the obligations they have in the family framework due to the work commitments acquired - TIF -; the second occurs when family obligations interfere with the fulfillment of work commitments - FIT - [16]. Some researchers suggest that the interference of work in the family is a predominant phenomenon in organizations, above the interference that the family may have in work commitments [17], [18]. Due to the above, for the present investigation only the interferences that work commitments can cause on the family environment will be taken into account.

### 2.2. WFC in Working Women

The entry of women into the labor market has been the object of study, especially due to the challenge that constitutes the balance in the distribution of time between the work environment, domestic tasks, and leisure. Especially when the social model assigns roles based on sex and has stereotypes that reinforce the sexual division of labor, establishing the female activities that make up domestic work [19].

The asymmetry in housework between men and women constitutes one of the aspects that requires the most time from working women, which is why it seems to stimulate role conflict [19]. Consequently, some authors consider that domestic psychosocial factors would have greater effects on the health of women, while psychosocial factors at work affect men to a greater extent [20]. Especially, if they belong to socially poor contexts, characterized by little understanding and tolerance of the spouse and little social support [21].

Aspects such as taking children to and from school, taking them to medical appointments, helping them with homework, attending parent meetings are obligations that require time, especially in situations of working women who are single mothers with a low level of education, becoming factors that generate work-family conflict [22].

In contrast, there are protective factors that, in the case of women, help reduce work-family conflict, among these was found social support, where the support of the husband, domestic service and help from relatives stand out [21].

## 3. Methodology

The methodology of the study was composed of three aspects: in the first aspect the scope of the research is addressed, in the second the population and the sample are determined, finally the third relates the scale and the applied instrument.

### 3.1. Scope of the Investigation

In the present study, the deductive method was used because a theory was taken as a framework for understanding the phenomenon. The research carried out was of a descriptive nature that, as stated by Hernández et al. [23], sought the purpose of describing the characteristics of the phenomenon studied. In this case, the research addressed the description of the work-family conflict variable in men and women. This is how the behavior of the variable was determined, both for men and women.

### 3.2. Population and Sample

The study was developed in twenty-six companies and organizations from different economic sectors, among which services, finance and transformation stand out. For the above, a formal invitation was made to the companies through written and electronic communication, where the objectives of the investigation were explained, and the confidentiality of the information was guaranteed. In total, 397 surveys were applied directly to the employees, men and women, of the organizations that voluntarily agreed to be part of the research. The sample was made up of 57.5% men and 42.5% women.

### 3.3. Instruments and Operationalization

The process of collecting the information related to the development of the study was carried out with the application of a questionnaire with the measurement scale. Before applying it in organizations, a pilot test of the instrument was carried out. The reliability of the measurement scale used as an information collection instrument was evaluated using the Cronbach's Alpha indicator.

In this case, the variable corresponded to the level of work-family conflict experienced by the collaborators (men and women). The instrument used to measure this variable was the Survey Work-Home Interaction-Nijmegen (SWING) [24]. The scale in question has antecedents that allow its validation and adaptation to the Castilian language [25] and to the Latin American cultural context [26]. In that order, based on the objective of this study related to estimating the interference of the work environment in the family, discriminated by gender, only the negative work-family interaction subscale was taken into account, which contains eight items. An example of the items contained in the subscale is: "I have to cancel plans with my partner/family/friends due to work commitments". For the eight items, the collaborators indicated their perception on a four-point Likert-type scale, where one (1) means never and four (4) means always (See Table 1.). Regarding the validity of the subscale, previous studies such as the one by Romeo et al. [26] presented adequate alpha reliability indices. For the present investigation, the reliability level for the work-family conflict scale was good,  $\alpha = 0.87$ .

Table 1. Questionnaire variables

1. He is irritable at home because his work is very tiring.
2. It is difficult for you to attend to your domestic obligations because you are constantly thinking about your work.
3. You have to cancel plans with your partner/family/friends due to work commitments.
4. Your work schedule makes it difficult for you to attend to your household obligations.
5. You do not have enough energy to do leisure activities with your partner/family/friends due to your work.
6. You have to work so much that you don't have time for your hobbies (preferred pastimes).
7. Your work obligations make it difficult for you to relax at home.
8. Your job takes away time that you would have liked to spend with your partner/family/Friends.

## 4. Results and Discussion

### 4.1. Correlation and Confidence Indices

Table 2. describes the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient levels of each of the items proposed for measuring work-family conflict, indicating that the answers given to each of the items are reliable. Likewise, the correlation of the items against the variable was analyzed, finding a good level of correlation in the eight items.

Table 2. Correlation and reliability

Item	Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha
1	0,665	0,88
2	0,743	0,90
3	0,589	0,85
4	0,781	0,86
5	0,499	0,85
6	0,822	0,87
7	0,765	0,84
8	0,559	0,86

### 4.2. Descriptive Analysis

Figure 1. shows that women experienced higher levels of irritation at home because their work is considered exhausting. This can be attributed to the fact that, generally in this context, women come home to carry out some domestic activities.

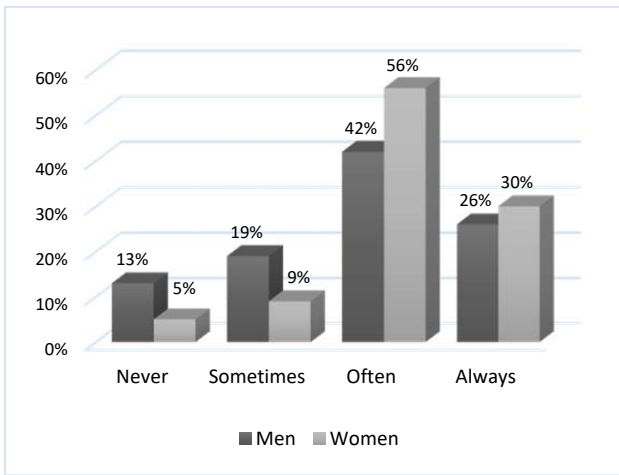


Figure 1. You are irritable at home because your work is very tiring

In relation to Figure 2., the perception that work concerns do not affect their domestic obligations stands out among most men. On the other hand, the majority of women stated that sometimes their domestic chores are altered by concerns at work.

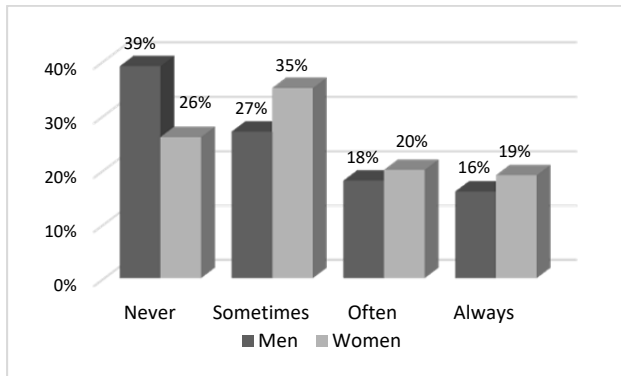


Figure 2. You find it difficult to attend to your domestic obligations because you are constantly thinking about your work

Compared to Figure 3., it is striking that in general men and women have had to cancel family and personal plans due to work commitments. However, men are the collaborators who have had to cancel personal and family commitments the most.

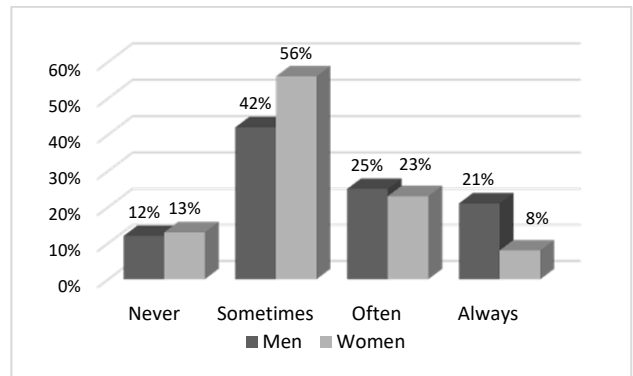


Figure 3. You have to cancel plans with your partner/family/friends due to work commitments

In relation to work schedules and their interference in attending to domestic obligations, men have had problems on certain occasions, while women more frequently present problems in their domestic tasks due to the work schedules they must comply with (See Figure 4.).

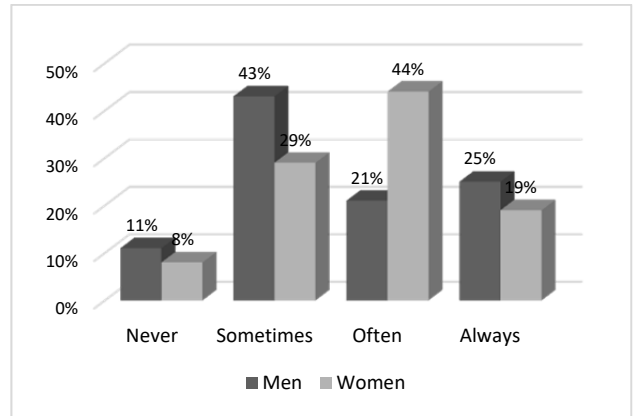


Figure 4. Your work schedule makes it difficult for you to attend to your domestic obligations

Figure 5. shows that the collaborators, mostly men, sometimes feel that they do not have the energy, after their workday, to attend to their tasks or personal or family relationships. However, it is the women who frequently experience this situation.

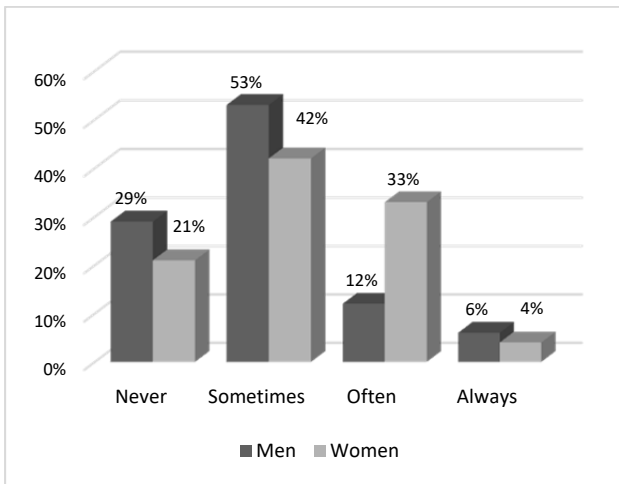


Figure 5. You do not have enough energy to do leisure activities with your partner/family/friends due to your work

Figure 6. shows, as in the previous cases, that men recognize that sometimes they have had time to practice their favorite hobbies; however, it is the women who state that this phenomenon is a constant in their family and personal lives.

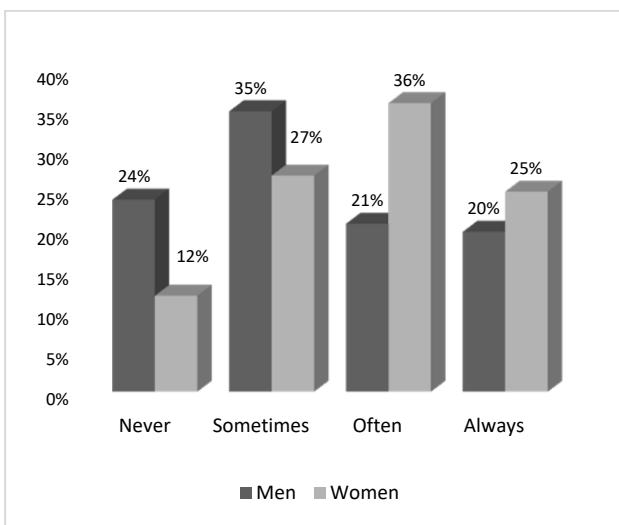


Figure 6. You have to work so much that you don't have time for your hobbies (preferred pastimes)

Figure 7. shows the wide perception that work worries do not affect or rarely affect the tranquility of the home or the personal life of the collaborators. Compared to the latter, women are the ones who register the most that on some occasions they are affected at home.

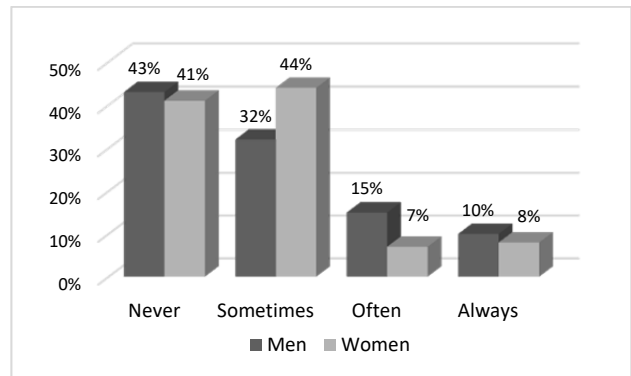


Figure 7. Your work obligations make it difficult for you to relax at home

Finally, Figure 8. shows, in general, a large percentage of employees who have experienced time spent at work, time they would have preferred to spend with their family or friends. Women are the ones who express the greatest perception.

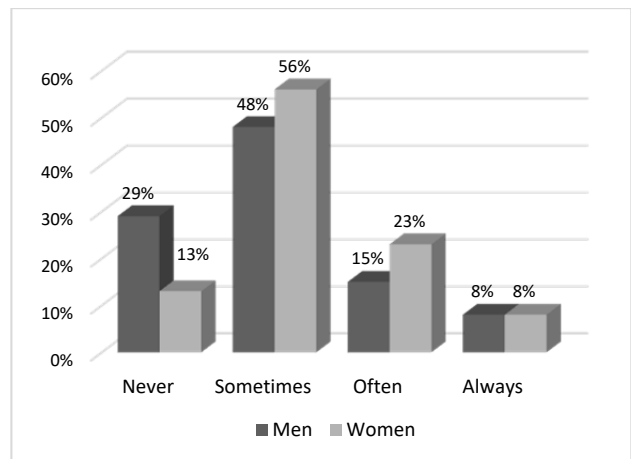


Figure 8. Your job takes away time that you would have liked to spend with your partner/family/friends

## 5. Conclusions

This study proposed to measure the level of work-family conflict experienced by employees of small businesses in the Surcolombiana region, discriminated by gender between men and women. In that order, the Survey Work-Home Interaction-Nijmegen (SWING) scale by Geurts et al. [20], of which 397 questionnaires were applied to employees of twenty-six organizations.

In this regard, the sample was made up of 57.5% men and 42.5% women, and a reliability level of the instrument measured by Cronbach's Alpha of 0.87 was obtained. Regarding the results, it was obtained that, in general, the level of Work-Family Conflict experienced by the collaborators was high with an average of 3.57. Also, that women are the ones who say they have problems with the incompatibility between time and work performed at work and family. In general, it is the collaborators who affirm

that they are frequently affected by the schedules, shifts, intensity of work and work concerns, which end up sacrificing family time, tranquility and dedication to household chores and obligations.

On the other hand, it can be inferred that there are few protective factors for people, especially women, who experience high levels of conflict.

Thus, it can be deduced that in the small companies of the Surcolombiana region, dynamics are not designed and implemented from the orientation of the leader or superior of the organizations, that allow combating these perceptions of conflicts generated by the imbalance between work and family.

Likewise, it seems that the treatment of collaborators hardly discriminates positively between men and women, so the latter end up experiencing higher levels of conflict, especially in a society that concerns women with household chores and obligations.

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