

Teleworking as a Life-Work Balance

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Introduction

Feminist Economics proposes family units need both monetary salary from market work and cares and services from domestic work. Both inputs will be source of people welfare and therefore they will become in active working population and wealth makers (Picchio, 1992, 2001). On the contrary, Neoclassical Economics creates a “fictitious” division between market and non-market works creating two opposite dimensions: labor life and personal life. Labor life is public and considered by the economy while personal life is private and is out of the economy. But even if the economy does not take into account the domestic work, it exists and it is necessary to take care people, therefore carers (mainly women) have to balance the two kind of works or even leave employment completely after becoming carers (Carmichael *et al*, 2008).

However, organizational studies about life-work balance often analyze the negative relationships between the two kind of works (work-family conflict) instead study the positive relationships between them (work-family enrichment).

This paper tries to see if people that use flexible practices, such as teleworking, have a better work-life balance (Bauregard and Henry, 2009). To contrast the hypotheses we have developed a structural equation model (Figure 2). The results suggest teleworking is positive related with the personal and job enrichment and negative related with the work-family conflict, therefore workers become more and more engaged with both, market and family. This engagement makes them feel more committed with their organisations.

This result could encourage to firms to develop HR flexible practices, such as teleworking, that help people to get a perfect balance between the two kinds of works (market and domestic) so necessary to get a sustainable life.

Work Family balance: Neoclassical vs Feminist Economics

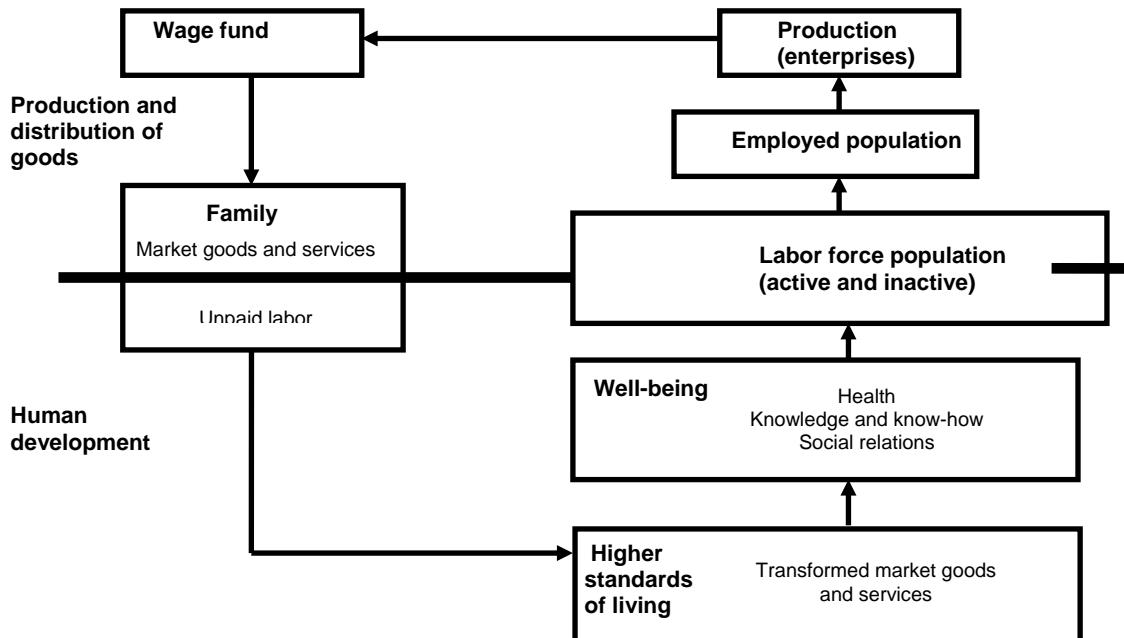
Neoclassical Economics has some dualisms that have androcentric biases as: raison/intuition; public/private; work/leisure, etc... A hierarchy exists in each dualism where first component has more value than second one. At the same time the first and most valued component is related to male and the second and least valued one is related to female.

For Neoclassical Economics only active population are taken into account. They get salaries working in the market (public jobs) in order to get goods and services in the market that families need to get welfare. Domestic and care works (which is performed mainly by women) are ignored and have no economic value, people who make them are not workers. They are in the private place (leisure).

The most important contribution from Feminist Economics is these dualisms are removed. Feminist economics proposes people need several activities to get human

welfare and all of them have to be taken into account by economics with the same value (Beneria, 1982). Not only production activities but social reproduction ones. The result is the extended circular flow of income formulated by Picchio (Fig 1)

Figure 1. Extended circular flow of income diagram



Source: Picchio (2001)

Neoclassical Economics only studies the space of production and distribution of goods while Feminist Economics includes the space of human development as an economic issue. Unlike in the case of traditional circular flow, extended flow does not consider households as harmonious institutions. On the contrary, the inclusion of unpaid work in the analysis makes the situation of households more complex, as their members must now implicitly or explicitly negotiate and decide upon their own division of labor. In other words, the supply of paid work is regulated by the negotiation that takes place within households on the distribution of unpaid work among household members according to sex and generation (Picchio, 2001). The most important in this diagram is that market goods and services and domestic work are completely interdependent as well as people who get them. If there were no hierarchical division that the Neoclassical Economics causes, whoever it was who did it would have the same value, therefore there would be no conflict and there would be no problematic balance.

Hypotheses

In this paper clearly defend the perspective offered by feminist economics so that the solution to the conflict would be determined by the recognition of the value of care and domestic work on the economy on a footing of equality with the jobs market. But we know that this process can be long and difficult, so we advocate to act in both fields: market economics and feminist economics. The binding of both perspectives can be

found in the concept of "enrichment" (Baral and Bhargava, 2009) that attempts to show how the use of certain organizational practices cause, not only reducing the potential conflict but also an enrichment in both spaces , personal and professional, as defined by the market economics. On a personal level you will get a better quality of life and in the workplace will ensure greater job satisfaction which in turn will increase the commitment to the organization, (Beauregard and Henry 2009) result that the advocates of the Market Economics need to promote such practices. So the main hypothesis in this research is that the use of new forms of work, such as teleworking, reconciles both works for an enrichment in both spaces, the space of production and distribution of goods and development human space.

Studies continue to advocate telework as a means to facilitate reconciliation (Peters *et al* 2008) even when reporting negative effects such isolation (Golden *et al*, 2008). Perez and Galvez (2009) found mixed results, but his conclusion was positive. Although sometimes its success may depend on other factors such as the support of top management (Peters *et al*, 2009).

Previous studies have found that teleworking has a positive effect on work-family enrichment and negative on work-family conflict (Raghuram and Wiesenfel, 2004; Breaugh and Frye, 2008). Based on the literature review we propose the following hypothesis:

- H1. The use of telework is positively related to work-family enrichment.
- H2. The use of telework is positively related to work-family enrichment.
- H3. The use of telework is negatively related to work-family conflict.

The literature review also revealed the existence of a positive relationship between the enrichment of workers, job satisfaction and organizational commitment. For example, McNally *et al* (2010a, 2010b) and Baral and Bhargava (2010) found a positive relationship between work-family enrichment and job satisfaction. McNall *et al* (2010b) found that work-family enrichment is positively related to organizational commitment, while also observe a positive relationship between work-family enrichment and job satisfaction (McNall *et al.*, 2010a). Therefore we propose the following hypotheses:

- H4. The work-family enrichment is positively related to job satisfaction.
- H5. The work-family enrichment is positively related to organizational commitment.
- H6. The family-work enrichment is positively related to job satisfaction.
- H7. The family-work enrichment is positively related to organizational commitment.

Laperre *et al* (2008) found that people who work in family-responsible work environments experiencing low levels of work-family conflict, so that this conflict reduction will lead to greater job satisfaction. Frye and Breaugh (2004) found that the use of family-friendly policies, the number of hours of work a week and management support were good predictors of work-family conflict. Cabrera (2013) found the work-family conflict was negative related to the job satisfaction, acting as mediator between job demands and job satisfaction.

Furthermore, they found that the family work conflict is related to job satisfaction and family. Accordingly, we propose the following hypothesis:

- H8. The work-family conflict is negatively related to job satisfaction.
- H9. The work-family conflict is negatively related to organizational commitment.

The final problem we want to study and often referred to as a direct consequence of a bad balance is workers leave jobs and therefore the loss of talent in business. Rode *et al*. (2007) found that work-family conflict was negatively related to job satisfaction and job

satisfaction was negatively related to intention to quit the workers. Accordingly, we propose a final hypothesis:

H10. Job satisfaction is positively related to organizational commitment.

Research Design and Data Collection

In order to test the research hypotheses we posed a structural equation model as shown in Figure 2. The information was collected through a questionnaire addressed to the employees from a sample of Spanish enterprises which have been awarded in the "Flexible Firm Awards", organized by the firm CValor in the 2002-2013 period. The sample also includes firms certified as "Family responsible firms (EFR)". The questionnaire was designed and mailed during the second semester of 2012. The final number of valid questionnaires was 322.

Results

Scales and variables of the study

Teleworking is a dummy variable where 1 represents that the worker makes use of telework and 0 does not. The latent variable is formed by a single variable that matches the observed variable.

We used seven control variables: care tasks responsibilities, being a woman, having dependent people (adults), having dependent children, age, living in an urban environment (as opposed to living in a rural setting) and job level is a variable of 7 points with 7 management position and 1 job in bottom level.

Quantitative validation allowed us to identify the dimensionality of the scales and to show the validity that the use of those scales has in the characterization of the W-F enrichment, job satisfaction and organizational commitment. In order to detect which indicators are susceptible to be deleted, reliability and dimensionality of the scales were analysed. In order to analyse intern consistency of the scale we use the statistic Cronbach alpha and the correlation item-total (Chandler and Lyon, 2001). With the statistic Cronbach alpha we guarantee the scale reliability if the value of this indicator is higher than 0.8 (Grande and Abascal, 2003); although in the analysis with an exploratory character, a value higher than 0.6 is considered acceptable (Miquel *et al.*, 1996). The scales used were:

Scale enrichment: scale made up of 18 items (for example: My involvement in my job helps me understand different points of view and that helped me be a better member of my family) with Cronbach $\alpha = 0.961$. All the indicators reach a value higher than 0.3, required minimum. The factor analysis indicates two dimensions, W-F enrichment W-F (9 items) and F-W enrichment (9 items), with an explained accumulated variance of 78.06%.

Scale W-F conflict: scale made up of 4 items (for example: *The quantity of time required by my job makes it difficult to fulfil my family responsibilities*) with Cronbach $\alpha = 0.926$. All the indicators reach a value higher than 0.3, required minimum. The factor analysis shows only one dimension, *W-F conflict*, with an explained accumulated variance of 81.75%.

Scale satisfaction: scale made up by 5 items (for example: *The job I do in my firm has sense to me*) with Cronbach $\alpha = 0.869$. All the indicators reach a value higher than .3, required minimum. Once the exploratory study has been made, we come up with a model with one dimension, *job satisfaction*, with an explained accumulated variance of 68.18%.

Scale organizational commitment: scale made up of 8 items (for example: *I would be very happy to stay in this firm the rest of my professional career*) with Cronbach $\alpha = 0.955$. All the indicators reach a value higher than 0.3, required minimum. Once the exploratory study has been made, we come up with a model with one dimension, organizational commitment, with an explained accumulated variance of 74.13%.

Level of care and domestic responsibilities

Care tasks responsibilities were used as a control variable (7 points) where 1 was "no participation" and 7 was "total participation". Most of the studies used demographic data as a proxy for measuring domestic responsibilities, such as sex, marital status, number of children, etc.. accepting the stereotypes that are derived from the roles associated with these situations (Lambert *et al*, 2008). In this study we wanted to know more precisely how much each person feels responsible for each of the jobs: market work and domestic work, demographic variables besides. After an explanation of both concepts we asked his/her level of involvement in his/her household.

Table 1. Level of participation in market work and domestic work

	Market work	Domestic work	Balance mark-domestic	N
TOTAL	6.01	5.3	0.71	277
Women	5.93	5.73***	0.20***	153
Men	6.10	4.77***	1.32***	123
Living with a partner	6.03	5.31	0.71	217
Living alone	5.91	5.22	0.69	58
Partner full time job	5.97	5.43*	0.54	171
Partner part time job	6.14	5.14*	1.00	21
Partner without job	6.32	4.64*	1.68	25
Children	5.96	5.19	0.76	170
No children	6.08	5.46	0.62	105
1 child under 6 years	5.98	5.2**	0.78**	59
2 o more children under 6 year	5.81	5.85**	-0.04**	26
Adult dependents	6.04	5.18	0.86	78
No adult dependents	5.98	5.34	0.64	196
Teleworking	6.08	5.07**	1.00*	112
No teleworking	5.98	5.45**	0.51*	164
Part time job	5.40***	5.34	0.06*	35
Full time job	6.10***	5.29	0.80*	242
YES would be willing to telework	5.85*	5.53*	0.33**	144
NO would be willing to telework	6.62*	5.48*	1.14**	21
Indifferent	6.08*	4.84*	1.24**	37

* p<0.1; ** p<0.01; *** p<0.001

Table 1 shows the results of ANOVA analysis. For the whole sample the average rating obtained in market work (6.01) is higher than those obtained in domestic work (5.3). Whit only one exception: "people with two o more children under 6 years". Market work is not significantly related to any demographic variable, nor with teleworking or not, so it was not included in the structural equation model. On the contrary domestic work is associated with a greater number of variables, both demographic and labor. Higher scores were observed among women (5.73) than for men (4.77). The employment status of the couple is also important. People assume greater care responsibility if the partner has a full time job (5.43) and less responsibility if the partner is unemployed (4.64). Having children under 6 years is also significant.

And as for the labor variables, domestic work is related to teleworking and with being willing to do.

Effect of teleworking on job satisfaction and organizational commitment through enrichment and conflict

The proposed model is a Structural Equations Model which tries to measure the effect of use of teleworking on enrichment (W-F and F-W) and W-F conflict on satisfaction and organizational commitment. The representation of this model is shown in Figure 1. The statistics and goodness of fit indexes are presented in Table 1, and as it can be seen, they fulfil the levels of acceptance recommended by Schumacker and Lomax (1996), so that they properly define the proposed relations.

Table 1. Statistics and goodness of fit indexes of the structural equations model

Estimated model	g.l.	χ^2 S-B	RMSEA	SRMR	GFI	AGFI	NFI	CFI
	789	1813,99	0,087	0,076	0,589	0,529	0,676	0,744
Recommended level of acceptance		Lower than a 0,1	Lower than 0,08	Close to 0,9	Close to 0,9	Close to 0,9	Close to 1	

As we can see in the figure 1, regarding the relationship between the use of teleworking and its relationship with the enrichment, results obtained show that the greater use of teleworking work-family enrichment the greater work-family enrichment (0.42) and also greater F-W enrichment (0.32) confirming hypotheses H1 and H2. But we could not confirm the hypothesis H3 that related telework with W-F conflict.

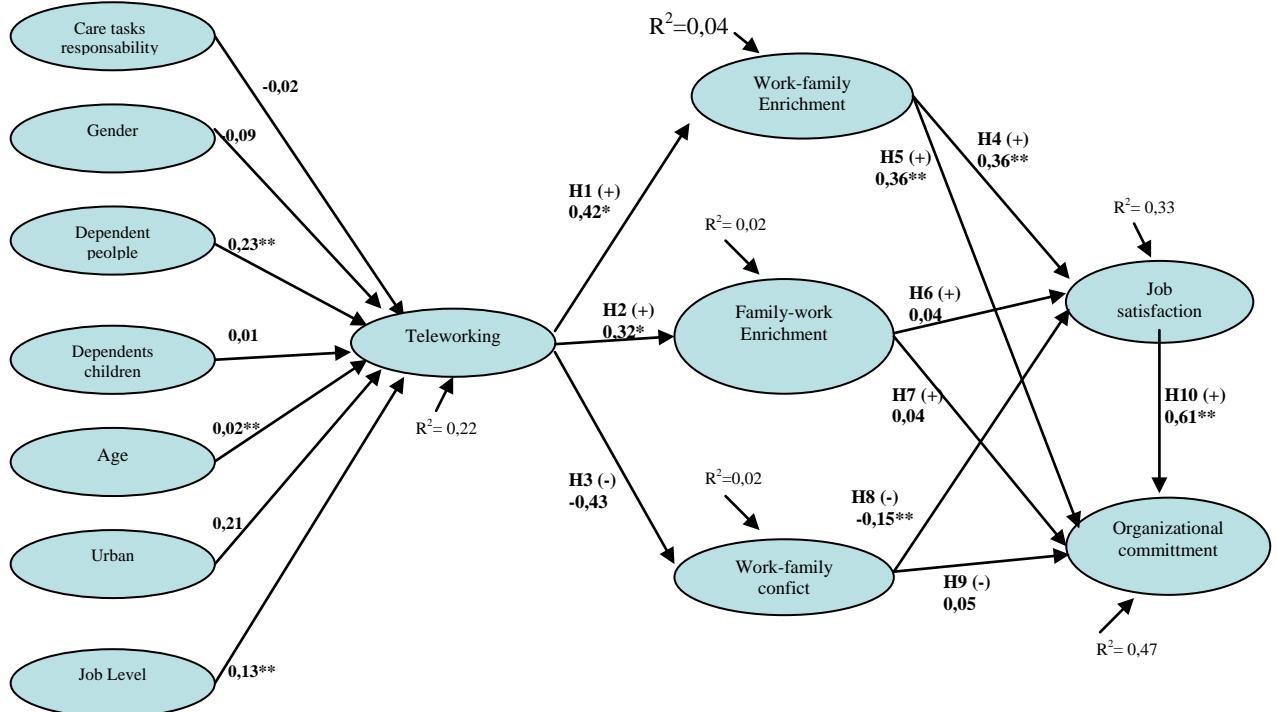
With respect to W-F enrichment with job satisfaction and organizational commitment, it can be observed that the higher the W-F enrichment the greater the employee satisfaction (0.36) and also a greater organizational commitment (0.36), what allows us to accept hypothesis H4 and H5.

In the relationships between F-W enrichment and job satisfaction (H6) and organizational commitment (H7), the obtained relations are not statistical significant, therefore we cannot confirm that there is a relation between those variables, so we should reject hypothesis H6 and H7.

We can also confirm hypothesis H8. W-F conflict is negatively correlated with job satisfaction (-0.15) although H9 is rejected. Finally H10 is confirmed, the greater job satisfaction the greater organizational commitment (0.61)

As for the control variables, three variables increase the likelihood of teleworking: Having dependent people; Age and Job level. Contrary to what we expected, the level of responsibility for domestic and care work has not proven to be a significant variable nor have dependent children. Significant variables are related to age. Logically the probability of having dependent adults and a higher job level increases with age. Could this mean that these issues relate more to the older people?

Figure 2. Model of analysis



Conclusions

In this paper we argue that a perfect life-work balance can be achieved if we accept that domestic and care works are as necessary for the welfare of the people, as the market job. To support this idea Feminist Economics introduces the Extended Circular Flow of Income where the space of human development is considered as necessary as the space of production and distribution of goods. So the main hypothesis in this research is that the use of new forms of work, such as teleworking, reconciles both works for an enrichment in both spaces, the space of production and distribution of goods and development human space.

In this paper we have proposed an integral model (SQM) in which we relate the use of teleworking with job satisfaction and organizational commitment, measured through enrichment and conflict. The main novelty of this study is that we have introduced as a control variable the level of responsibility for housework and care and not only demographic variables that are often used as proxy of these tasks.

The results indicate that the use of telework increases job satisfaction and organizational commitment through work-family enrichment increase while a decrease of work-family conflict. Moreover we observed as demographic and labor variables that increase demand of teleworking are related to age. Older age, higher job level and have dependent adults increases the likelihood that people want to telework.

Our conclusion is that to achieve a perfect life-work balance is necessary to act in two ways. First, we have to accept that domestic work is as necessary as market work to get a sustainable life as Feminist Economics argues (Beneria, 1982). Secondly, the firms have to find human resources flexible practices that will be profitable in both senses, giving workers satisfaction in their personal lives and job satisfaction to improve organizational commitment (Jones *et al.*, 2008; Baral and Bhargava 2010).

International and managerial implications

It seems unnecessary to argue the international implications of this subject, speaking of welfare of the people in their daily lives. While we need to recognize that culture and the welfare state in each country may facilitate or hinder the life-work balance. More important is to talk about the managerial implications of this study. This result could encourage to firms to develop HR flexible practices, such as teleworking, that help people to get a perfect balance between the two kinds of works (market and domestic) so necessary to get a sustainable life.

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