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**An investigation of the effects of work and family  
characteristics on work-family balance**

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## **Abstract**

Men and women in the Netherlands seem to be busier than they have ever been. The growing participation of women in the labour market has increased the pressure on the division of tasks in Dutch households. Different work and family characteristics seem to have an influence on the work-family balance (WFB) for both men and women. In this study we will investigate whether certain work and family characteristics influence one's WFB. Hypotheses have been formulated about two work characteristics (work time control and job satisfaction) and two family characteristics (gender and the age of the youngest child). Based on data collected in 2013 (with 1294 respondents) the results show that work time control, job satisfaction and gender indeed influence one's WFB. Only having young children did not lead to a conflict in one's WFB.

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**Keywords:** Work-family balance, work time control, job satisfaction, gender, young children.

## **Introduction**

### **1.1 Introduction**

In the past decades the working patterns of parents have changed substantially in many Western societies (Mills and Täht, 2010). Due to the increase of work demands and the rising number of women who have entered the labour market, families nowadays have the challenge to manage their time and energy over the two domains: work and family (Bianchi, Robinson, and Milkie, 2006, Gauthier, Smeeding, and Furstenberg, 2004, Hochschild, 1997, Roxburgh, 2006; Portegijs, Boelens and Olsthoorn, 2004). In this study we will focus on the Netherlands, and hereby we will investigate the work-family balance (WFB) of Dutch parents.

In comparison to other countries the Dutch labour market is characterized by many relative employee friendly policies, such as regulated business hours and a compensatory protective legislation (Mills and Täht, 2010). Also it is well known that a large share of the labour force works part-time, especially women (Jacobs, 2004, Portegijs et al., 2004). The Netherlands have one of the highest proportions of female part-time workers in Europe, with 73% in 2011 (Van den Brakel, Chkalova, Geerdinck, Mars and Portegijs, 2012, Visser, 2002).

Also, people in the Netherlands today experience the increasing strain of dealing with work and family life. In particular task combiners (people who combine work and care) are occupied for more hours on the average than those who solely focus on one of these tasks. Another example of the increasing strain in the WFB of the Dutch is the increase in dual-earners, and particularly task combiners. In 1998 they constituted 56% of the households, which is an increase of 26 percentage points compared to 1986 (Keuzenkamp and Hooghiemstra, 2000). In 2005 almost 40% of the Dutch between the ages of 20 to 65 combined at least 12 hours per week of paid employment with at least 12 hours per week caring (Breedveld, Broek, van den Haan, de Harms, Huysmans and van Ingen, 2006). Features such as the high percentage of part-time workers, employee-friendly policy and the increase of task-combiners make the Netherlands an interesting country to explore concerning WFB.

Likewise, previous research (Geurts, Taris, Demerouti, Dijkers, and Kompier, 2002) shows that both men and women currently encounter more difficulties in their WFB. Especially when both parents work and have one or more children at home, they have less leisure time (Keuzenkamp and Hooghiemstra, 2000). Interestingly, Eagle and Icenogle, (1997) and Gutek, Searle, and Klepa (1991) proved that work has more influence on family than vice versa.

This study is both socially and scientifically relevant because it gives insight into the way the balance between family and work functions. Concerning the societal relevancy, insight in the underlying factors of WFB may lead to the development of tools and/or measures that could be helpful to solve this problem. With respect to the scientific relevancy, our study endeavours to add some new insights to what existing research has already yielded on WFB. In particular this study will focus on the target group of families with young children. As one can see family and work are inextricably intertwined. In our study we will examine the underlying factors between these two domains. Therefore our study will address the question:

***To what extent do work and family characteristics influence one's work-family balance?***

## **1.2 Structure**

In the next section of this study we will discuss a number of theories related to WFB. To answer the research question mentioned above, four hypotheses have been developed, which will be elaborated in the theoretical framework. After forming the theoretical framework we will discuss our data and the operationalization of our variables in the methods chapter. Next we will test our hypotheses by analyzing the results of a linear regression. In our conclusion we will look back at the results we have found and discuss the possible implications our study has. Furthermore we will mention the limitations of our study and possible ideas for follow-up research in the discussion.

## **Theoretical Framework**

### **2.1 Introduction**

In order to correctly investigate WFB in this study, we will use the definition of Clark (2000). Clark (2000, p. 349) defines WFB as “satisfaction and good functioning at work and at home with a minimum of role conflict”.

According to Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) there are multiple ways in which one’s WFB can be influenced. In their research a distinction has been made between time-based and strain-based conflict. Time-based (WFB) conflict occurs when multiple roles (someone has a job, but is also a mother or father) have to compete for the limited time a person has. There are two forms of time-based conflict: firstly, attendance in one role makes it (physically) impossible to fulfill expectations in another role. Secondly, due to pressure in one role preoccupation may arise even though one is (physically) attempting to fulfill another role.

Strain-based (WFB) conflict describes the situation wherein strain in one role causes problems in another role. The roles in which one has to act are incompatible because strain caused in one role makes it undoable to meet the demands of another role.

In their research Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) furthermore claim that both work characteristics like work schedules, work orientation and family characteristics like having young children all lead to a less positive WFB. Therefore we will compare findings from previous research about two work and two family characteristics that influence time or strain based conflict and that have an influence on one’s WFB. These characteristics are: work time control, job satisfaction, gender and the age of the youngest child.

## **2.2 Work time control**

The first work characteristic we will discuss is work time control. According to Clark's research (2001) work time control is the extent to which one can regulate one's own work schedule. In 2004 39% of the Dutch employees had the possibility to regulate their own working hours, in contrast to only 26% in 1994 (Peters et al, 2007). It seems that more Dutch employees can regulate their own schedule, so we may assume that more work time control leads to a higher WFB. However, there are in fact multiple studies that suggest that there are negative consequences for one's WFB concerning work time control. Peters et al (2007) did not only find advantages of work time control, but also found that work time control and flexible working hours tend to increase the amount of work employees take home, because they often feel obliged to do something extra for their employer, since they feel work time control to be a favour that needs to be reciprocated. Van der Lippe and Roeters (2010) also found that employees have the feeling their work is never done and that the boundary between family and work is vague, thus disrupting their WFB.

However, a great amount of previous research suggests that work time control entails more positive aspects for employees. According to Clark (2001) work time control lowers feelings of stress and makes the employees feel more satisfied with their job and family life. Subsequently, work time control gives employees a buffer: they can complete extra work assignments when their children are at school or playing sports (Van der Lippe and Roeters, 2010). Other studies suggest that more work time control provides employees with more time to spend with their families and take care of their children (Tausig and Fenwick, 2001; Christensen and Staines, 1990; Peters et al, 2007).

Despite the fact that some scientific studies conclude that work time control leads to less positive WFB, the majority of literature indicates that more work time control leads to a better WFB (Clark, 2001; Christensen and Staines, 1990; Butler et al, 2009). This leads us to the following hypothesis:

***Hypothesis 1: The more work time control individuals report, the better their WFB will be.***

## **2.3 Job satisfaction**

The second work characteristic we will discuss is job satisfaction. According to Clark (2001) job satisfaction can be seen as the extent to which someone can control aspects of their own job. Clark (2001) stated that job satisfaction would lead to higher WFB.

In all scientific literature there are generally two ways in which job satisfaction is defined. The first way is the general opinion an employee has with reference to his or her job. The second way is a pattern of attitudes an employee has with regard to several aspects of his or her job. These aspects are for example: colleagues, pay, supervisory support and job autonomy (Spector, 1997). This first definition of job satisfaction will be the guideline in this research.

Previous research on the influence of job satisfaction on WFB is unambiguous. Thompson et al (1999) and Clark (2001) stated that workplace or job satisfaction leads to a more general satisfaction and eventually to less conflict regarding someone's WFB. Hosking and Western (2008) explained that more supportive workplaces eventually would lead to more satisfaction at the workplace itself as well as in the family life. Grandey and Cropanzano (1999) stated that distress in one domain (in this case the work domain) has negative consequences for the other. This means that low job satisfaction leads to a low WFB because distress in the work domain causes inter-role conflict between work and family. Other research shows that people who have a high job satisfaction do not see their work as a problem for their family life. Due to their high job satisfaction competing time demands do not play a negative role between work and family.

These and other studies (Clark, 2001; Sigterman, 2012; Thompson et al, 1999) show that when someone has greater job satisfaction he or she will have a better WFB. This leads us to the following hypothesis:

***Hypothesis 2: The more job satisfaction individuals report, the better their WFB will be.***

## **2.4 Gender**

The first family characteristic we will discuss and that may possibly influence one's WFB is gender. Due to the increasing number of women in the labour force (Peters et al, 2007; van der Lippe, 2003; Roeters et al, 2012), men are gradually taking care of more domestic tasks and will probably also experience how it is to deal with the two major domains in life; work and family (Pleck, 1989). Wohl (1989) expected that the attitudes of men concerning work and family would soon approach those of women. Hence he supposed that the gender differences in WFB would diminish. In line with these assumptions previous research found no significant gender differences in WFB (Eagle et al., 1997, Frone et al., 1992 and Kinnunen et al., 2004).

More recently, Hosking and Western (2008) proved that the WFB for women is even better than for men. They argue that men experience more WFB disruption because they have problems with adjusting their family life schedule (including taking care of their children) around their work schedules. Also the research of Duxbury et al., (1994) among employed parents in the Netherlands and the United Kingdom, showed that women have a better WFB than men.

A possible explanation could be the still existing gender norm that it is more acceptable for women to adjust their work participation to their family demands than is the case for men. Consequently women adjust their work schedules more often than men do (Becker and Moen, 1999, Bielby, 1992, England and Farkas, 1986, Gornick and Meyers, 2009, Lewis, 2009, Williams, 2001). This may enable them to manage their WFB better than men. On the other hand, the average contribution of men to the domestic duties has only increased slightly (Baxter, 2009; Casper and Bianchi, 2002; Craig and Bittman, 2008). Although their increased time devoted to the household and notably to childcare, women still spend two to three times more time with their children than men do (Baxter, 2009; Casper and Bianchi, 2002; Craig and Bittman, 2008). Also, the research of Breedveld and Van den Broek (2001), Craig et., al (2011), Lundberg and Frankenhaeuser (1999), Pleck (1985) and Portegijs et al., (2006) demonstrates that women bear a greater responsibility for the care of their children and domestic tasks than men do. In addition, men do not manifest themselves markedly when it comes to doing household task.

In spite of the emancipation of women during the last decades, the societal norms about work and family remain different for both sexes (Groenendijk, 1998; Neve, 1995). There is a slight difference in the value that Dutch men and women attach to paid employment. Men find paid employment more important than women because it contributes to the society and it indicates social status (Van den Brakel et al., 2012). The differences are greater with respect to career aspirations. Men indicate almost 2,5 times more than women that they would like to be a supervisor (Van den Brakel et al., 2012).

Although the opportunities for women with respect to education and work have improved during the last century, and that the majority of the Dutch currently find that both partners should divide the domestic tasks equally, it turns out that few of them succeed in realizing this desire (Van den Brakel et al., 2012; Neve, 1995). Furthermore, most of them do not have serious plans to change this inequity. The ideal of an equal division clashes with the notion that many people have, that in their relationship the women still attach more

importance to the unpaid work and men to paid work. Therefore, men are still predominantly the breadwinner and women take care of the family (Bielby, 1992, Van den Brakel et al., 2012; Mills et al., 2008; Neve, 1995).

Van Hooff et al (2010) tried to explain gender differences in WFB by making use of a “gender role framework”. According to this framework there will be a negative WFB when women take on more masculine tasks (such as working) and when men take on more feminine tasks (such as taking care of children). In order to clarify the gender differences in WFB Becker (1985) devised the trade hypothesis. Hereby is assumed that the task division in a household is defined by negotiations between partners about who provides the family income and who takes care of the household. As a consequence of this hypothesis, an unfair distribution combined with a job will result in more pressure on women than on men, and therefore more stress. Many other studies too show that women experience more difficulties in managing their WFB than men (Cinamon and Rich, 2002; Duxbury et al., 1994, Gutek et al, 1991; Eagle et al, 1997; Grosswald, 2003; Mills and Täht, 2010; Williams and Alliger, 1994).

As can be seen above much research demonstrates that there is a difference in WFB between men and women. Although the increasing time that men devote to domestic duties, women still put considerably more time into these duties. Since women nowadays still put the most time into household tasks in combination with their work requirements, we assume that they will have a worse WFB than men. Therefore our hypothesis will be:

***Hypothesis 3: Women will have a lower WFB compared to men***

## **2.5 Having young children**

Besides the aforementioned factors which influence one's WFB, having young children also seems to have a significant impact on the work family balance (Bedeian et al., 1988, Mennino, 2002, Rubin and Brayfield, 2005, Perry-Jenkins et al., 2007, Roeters et al., 2012). Many studies have found that having young children lead to a decrease in overall relationship quality (Glenn and McLanahan, 1982; Hill, 1998; Waite and Lilard, 1991).

When children become teenagers and go to high school (the majority of children in the Netherlands do so around the age of 12), their number of school hours increase. This enables parents to spend less time for the care of their children (Crouter et al., 2001; Giordano,2003). It is also well known that young children need more care than older children and therefore



parents should reserve more time for a young child (Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985).

In the contemporary Western societies, and notably in the Netherlands, there is a strong norm that parents should reserve a lot of time for the upbringing of their children (Van den Brakel et al., 2012). They find it necessary to invest in their children, because (time) investments are fundamental for a child's development (Amato et al., 2007; Arendell, 2000; Bianchi, 2000; Daly, 2001; DeVault, 2000; Hays, 1996).

In the study of Portegijs et al., (2006) the majority of the parents indicated that it would be better for their children to be cared for by their own parents. This study demonstrates that the majority of Dutch parents (61% of households with children aged 12 years and younger) do not make use of (in)formal child care, and the ones who do have an average of merely 2 days of external child care a week. Earlier research of Deutsch (1999) and Carriero et al., (2009) also showed that Dutch parents attach a great deal of importance to exclusive parental care, and in particular for infants.

With respect to older children, Craig (2006) stated that parents find it important that teenagers get more autonomy and flexibility during these years of life, which therefore decreases the time that parents spend with their children. The fact that young children need more child care than older ones, in conjunction with the importance that Dutch parents attach to invest a lot of time in raising their own children, leads us to assume that it will be beneficial for their WFB when their children are older. Therefore our fourth hypothesis is:

***Hypothesis 4: The older one's children are, the better their WFB will be.***

## **Methodology**

### **3.1 Design and Procedure**

Data from this study have been obtained from a cross-national study called 'Families 24/7' (Verhoef et al, 2014). The target group of this study consisted of working parents with children between 0 and 12 years, living in Finland, Great Britain or the Netherlands.

In order to recruit respondents, invitations were sent to unions, employees and child care organizations by email or letter to promote the study. The data was collected between November 2012 and January 2013 by means of a web-survey. The initial survey was prepared in the English language and subsequently translated into Dutch and Finnish. Some already existing surveys contained questions which were subsequently used for this study. Therefore

the existing translations from the national surveys were used. Back-translation was employed for the questions without existing translation.

The total sample of the survey consisted of 1,294 respondents. But because only the Netherlands was selected for this research our sample consisted of 373 Dutch respondents. Due to the selection of our variables this was reduced to 315 (56 respondents did not answer the questions about work time control and 2 respondents did not answer the question about their jobs). Therefore final sample was reduced to 296 respondents during the construction and adjustment of the research variables, due to the fact that the answering categories “don’t know” and “other” were altered into missing values.

### **3.2 Dependent variable**

The dependent variable *WFB* is measured with six statements from the survey. Respondents could answer the statements with a five-point-Likert-scale from (1) ‘Strongly disagree’ to (5) ‘Strongly agree’. The statements mainly stated that respondents could not function at home as they would like due to work problems. For example: “My work keeps me from my family more than I would like”, “ I have to miss family activities due to the amount of time I must spend on work responsibilities” and “Due to all the pressures at work, sometimes when I come home I am too stressed to do the things I enjoy.”

From the six statements we constructed a mean scale. To make sure a high score means a high balance we have reversed the answering scale. The scale we made is reliable (Cronbach’s alpha = .784) and only respondents who answered at least three of the six propositions were taken into account for our research.

### **3.3 Independent variables**

The first independent variable is *work time control*. For this variable one question is used: “how are your working time arrangements set?” Respondents could answer this question with four answering possibilities: (1) Low work time control (they are set by the company) to (4) High work time control (my working hours are entirely determined by myself. A high score (4) on this question means high work time control.

The second independent variable is *job satisfaction*. For this variable one question is used: “How satisfied are you with your current job?” Respondents had a four point scale answering possibility: from (1) Very satisfied to (4) Very dissatisfied. Because a high

satisfaction in this case means a low score we have reversed the answering categories, so a high score means high job satisfaction.

The third independent variable is *gender*. For this variable one dummy variable was made where men score “1” and women “0”.

The fourth independent variable is *children*. For this variable one question was used: “The age of your child or children living at home, the answer of this question is the age of the child in years. Respondents could answer this question for multiple children but only the youngest child of the respondent was taken into account for our research.

### **3.4 Control variables**

In this study we control for age and education (of the respondent), job sector and weekly working hours, because we expect that these variables have an influence on the perception about one’s WFB.

We have chosen age because one’s opinion about his or her WFB may change when someone gets older. We have chosen education because we think that there is a difference in opinions about WFB between levels of education (higher educated people will probably attach more value to work). We have chosen job sector because we think that people who work public jobs (nurses, waitresses etc.) have to work longer and more often outside regular working hours so their perception about WFB may be different from people who work in the private sector. The last control variable is weekly worked hours because we expect that people who work more hours a week have a different perception about WFB. The first control variable is *age*; this variable is measured in years.

The second control variable is *education*. This variable had eight answering categories. For this variable we made a dummy variable; high education (Higher professional education and University) has the value “1”; the other levels of education have the value “0”.

The third control variable is *job sector*. This variable had six answering categories which were changed into a dummy variable: private sector “1” versus the other answering categories “0”.

The fourth control variable is *weekly worked hours*. This variable is measured in worked hours per week. The question in the survey was: “: How many hours do you normally work a week (in your main job), including any paid or unpaid overtime? (Regardless of your contracted hours)”.

The fifth control variable is *number of children at home*. The question for this variable was: “How many children live at home with you”, where the answer stands for the number of children that live at home.

### 3.5 Analysis of the data

In this study we will investigate whether work time control, job satisfaction, gender and having young children are associated with someone’s WFB. Hereby we will control for: age and education of the respondent, job sector and weekly worked hours. The results of this analysis will be presented later in our result section.

At first we made a table with descriptive statistics of the dependent, independent and control variables. To do this we computed the mean, standard deviation and the range for each individual variable. These results are shown in Table 1. To test our hypotheses we will use a linear regression analysis.

*Table 1.* Range, mean and standard deviation of the research variables (N=296).

	Range	M	SD
<i>Dependent variables</i>			
WFB	1-5	3.55	.69
<i>Independent variables</i>			
Work time control	1-4	2.41	1.03
Job satisfaction	1-4	3.20	.60
Male	0/1	.1486	-
Child’s age	0-12	2.63	2.62
<i>Control variables</i>			
Age	22-53	35.95	5.35
Education	0/1	2.73	-
Private	0/1	.4493	-
Weekly worked hours	5-70	30.78	8.93
Number of Children at home	1-8	1.92	.911

Source: Verhoef et al, 2014.

## Results

In this section the results of our study will be discussed. On the basis of Table 2 we will confirm or reject the hypotheses.

*Work time control and WFB.* In both model 1 and model 3 of Table 2, work time control appears to have a significant influence on one's WFB (model 1:  $b=.073$ ,  $P=.083/2$ , model 3:  $b=.097$ ,  $P=.092/2$ ). We have stated that more work time control leads to a better WFB, so according to our results hypothesis one can be confirmed.

*Job satisfaction and WFB.* In both model 1 (where only our work characteristics and control variables were taken into account) and model 3 (our complete model) of Table 2, job satisfaction appears to have a significant influence on one's WFB ( $b= .312$ ,  $P<.005$ ,  $b= .311$ ,  $P<.005$ ). In line with our second hypothesis the variables are positively related. Therefore we may infer that employees who report more job satisfaction have a better WFB than their counterparts with less job satisfaction. Thus our second hypothesis can be confirmed.

*Gender and WFB.* According to our hypothesis gender does have a significant influence on one's WFB. Both model 2 and model 3 of Table 2 indicate that there is a significant relationship ( $b=.360$ ,  $P=.005$ ,  $b=.343$ ,  $P=.005$ ). This means that women have a significant lower WFB than men and that our third hypothesis may be confirmed.

*Young Children and WFB.* We explored the relationship between the age of the youngest child in the family and one's WFB. In neither of the two models of Table 2 did the age of the youngest child in the family significantly influence one's WFB. Hence, we may conclude that the age of the youngest child in the family does not have a significant influence on one's WFB. Accordingly we cannot confirm our fourth hypothesis

Table 2. Linear regression of the effects of work and family related characteristics on WFB (N=296).

	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3		
	B	std. error	sig.	B	std. error	sig	B	std. error	sig
<i>Independent variables</i>									
Work time control	.073	.042	.083				.070	.042	.092
Job satisfaction	.312	.065	.000				.311	.065	.000
Male				.360	.126	.005	.344	.122	.005
Age child				-.021	.019	.283	-.013	.019	.478
<i>Control variables</i>									
Age respondent	-.007	.008	.360	.000	.010	.969	-.006	.010	.521
High educated	-.113	.095	.238	-.113	.095	.237	-.079	.097	.416
Private work sector	.079	.079	.315	.049	.080	.539	.052	.079	.507
Working hours	-.010	.005	.040	-.014	.005	.008	-.016	.005	.002
Nr. Children at home	-.075	.045	.097	-.056	.045	.214	-.070	.045	.115
<i>Constant</i>	3.132	.334	.000	4.136	.324	.000	3.268	.367	.000
<i>R<sup>2</sup></i>	.119			.063			.146		

## Conclusion and Discussion

Many people have encountered problems in the reconciliation of their work and family life during the last decades. (Bianchi et. al., 2006, Gauthier et al., 2004, Hochschild, 1997, Roxburgh, 2006). Since a large number of women have entered the labour market, and the work demands on employees have substantially increased, many families today have difficulties to find a way in which to reconcile their work and family obligations (Bianchi, Robinson, and Milkie, 2006, Gauthier, Smeeding, and Furstenberg, 2004, Hochschild, 1997, Roxburgh, 2006, Portegijs, Boelens and Olsthoorn, 2004). In this study, in which we have investigated the influence of work and family characteristics on one's WFB, the research question we have addressed, is: to what extent do work and family characteristics influence one's work-family balance? We have made use of a cross-national study, "Families 24/7" of Verhoef et al., 2014.

Firstly we considered two work characteristics related to WFB: work time control and job satisfaction. We expected that more work time control and more job satisfaction would lead to a better WFB. Subsequently we proceeded to examine two family characteristics related to WFB, namely gender and the having of young children. These hypotheses predicted that women would have a worse WFB than men and that one's WFB would improve with the increasing age of the youngest child.

Following our results we can infer that work time control does have a significant influence on one's WFB. This result is in line with the assumptions of Clark (2001) and Peters et al, (2007), that work time control would increase one's satisfaction in job and family life, and that work time control provides more opportunities to spend time for taking care of the family. Evidently, work time control does enable employees to find a balance between work and family life.

With respect to our second hypothesis, we find that job satisfaction has a strong influence on one's WFB. This confirms our expectation that employees with more job satisfaction have a better WFB. This result is also in line with the assumption of Thompson et al., (1999) and Clark (2001) who argued that job satisfaction leads to more general satisfaction and less conflict in WFB.

A possible gender difference in WFB is tested in our third hypothesis. In line with our prediction and the earlier research (Cinamon and Rich, 2002, Duxbury et al., 1994, Gutek et al, 1991; Eagle et al, 1997; Grosswald, 2003, Mills and Täht, 2010, Williams and Alliger,

1994) women indeed do encounter more difficulties in managing their WFB than men. It may be that women, next to their work, take care of the bulk of the domestic tasks, whereas men have less domestic responsibilities. Consequently the combination problems may be felt especially by women. It also could be that women find it harder than men to relax and to switch off their work mind-set during their family activities.

The last hypothesis about young children cannot be confirmed. In our study the age of the youngest child at home does not have a significant influence on one's WFB. This is remarkable considering previous research (Glenn and McLanahan, 1982; Hill, 1998; Waite and Lillard, 1991), which proved that the presence of young children in the family often leads to lower overall relationship quality.

With the results we can answer the research question: it cannot unequivocally be stated that the work and family characteristics, that we have investigated, have a clear impact on one's WFB. Job satisfaction and gender do appear to have a significant impact on one's WFB, whereas work time control and the age of the youngest child do not significantly influence one's WFB.

Strong and interesting points of our study are; unlike many previous studies, that our study has focused on families with young children, and the data collection took place quite recently (2012, 2013), so the results may give a proper indication of the situation at present.

It is important to mention that the results may be affected by limitations in our data. Firstly, the results on which this study has been based, comprises a very small number of respondents. Ultimately, there are merely 296 people included in the analyses. Secondly, the questionnaire consists of only one measurement point (cross-sectional dataset). Therefore it is clear for only one context what the effects are of work and family characteristics on one's WFB. Hence it is not possible to discern a trend. Due to the current crisis employees may be forced to accept less pleasant tasks, jobs and work shifts. This could have negative consequences for their job satisfaction and work time control, which in turn could impair their WFB. Therefore a trend would be interesting. Thirdly, in comparison to figures from the CBS (2013) the average education level of our respondents, with an average age of 35, is far higher than the average education level of a Dutch person between the ages of 25 and 45. This means that highly educated people are overrepresented. In addition, our sample contained far more women than men. As one can see, women do encounter more difficulties in their WFB and therefore this overrepresentation does not allow us to get a complete picture of the real situation with respect to WFB. A study with more respondents, more measurement points



spread over years (longitudinal research) and with a more equal distribution of the education level and gender, would probably give a better picture of the effects of work and family characteristics on one's WFB. Longitudinal research is especially important with regard to WFB, because people are constantly adjusting their work and family activities in order to attain a more satisfactory and durable balance in the long run. For example for the short term one could come to an agreement with one's partner that they will divide the domestic tasks in such a way that the partner takes on the bulk of the responsibilities for these tasks, while in the long run one looks for another job that offers more favourable conditions for the WFB.

Future research could investigate whether there are differences between different countries with regards to WFB. Recall that the Dutch society is characterised by a large share of part time workers (Van den Brakel et al., 2012), which makes it easier for many employees to reconcile their work and family life. Perhaps this is the reason that so many people in the Netherlands have chosen to work part-time. It would also be interesting to test more work and family variables in relation to WFB, as many other studies have done (Greenhaus and Powel, 2006, Hosking and Western, 2008, Thompson et al., 1999). Examples are the influence of supervisor support, flexible working hours, job insecurity, telecommuting, WFB of one's partner, time spent with other family members and the division of tasks in the household. For instance flexible working hours and telecommuting could enable employees to find more time for the care of their families and in turn contributes to a better WFB. Likewise, research that will explore potential differences in time based WFB and strain based WFB, would be very interesting.

In order to narrow the gender difference in WFB, policy could focus on encouraging a more egalitarian division of domestic tasks within families. This may reduce the double burden of women (Van Hooff et al., 2010). Increasing job satisfaction could be achieved when employers inquire into the benefits, wishes, interests, criticisms and downsides of the work situation of the employees, and subsequently develop and implement policy accordingly. As earlier research indicated, a negative WFB could be detrimental to one's health (Van Hooff, Geurts, Taris, Komper, Dijkers et al., 2005). Therefore it is of major importance that employers in their policies take into account the reconciliation of work and family life of their employees.

Overall, while our study provides some additional insight into several work and family characteristics related to WFB, there are many other factors that need to be considered in order to understand what could affect one's WFB.

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