

Work–Family Conflict and Marital Satisfaction: Capitalization as a Dyadic Moderator in Romantic Relationships

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic and associated confinement measures intensified tensions across multiple domains of daily life, particularly at the intersection between work and family. The expansion of teleworking and prolonged cohabitation created conditions in which couples were required to manage stress within the relational context, frequently relying on their partner as a primary source of emotional regulation. In adulthood, romantic partners play a central role in shaping each other's emotional experiences, especially under conditions of sustained stress. One interpersonal strategy particularly relevant in this context is capitalization, defined as the tendency to respond in an enthusiastic and constructive manner to a partner's positive events. Despite its association with relational well-being, important gaps remain in the literature, including the limited number of studies examining its role in the context of work-family tensions and the predominance of individual-level approaches that fail to account for the interdependence inherent in close relationships.

This study examines whether capitalization moderates the association between work-family conflict and marital satisfaction from a dyadic perspective. A non-experimental, cross-sectional, and correlational design was employed, with a sample of 120 cohabiting heterosexual couples, all with at least one child in common. The mean age was 42.3 years ($SD = 8.9$), and the average length of cohabitation was 12.9 years ($SD = 9.9$). Measures included the Work–Family Conflict Scale (ECT-F), the Perceived Responses to Capitalization Attempts Scale (PRCAS), and the Marital Satisfaction Scale (ESM). Data were analyzed using a dyadic moderation model based on the Actor–Partner Interdependence Model, simultaneously estimating actor and partner effects through restricted maximum likelihood estimation.

Results indicate that work-family conflict is negatively associated with marital satisfaction. Capitalization showed a partial moderating effect, acting as a protective resource when stress originates within the individual, but displaying a more complex pattern when stress is perceived as originating from the partner. No significant gender differences were observed. Overall, findings highlight the

importance of understanding emotion regulation as an interpersonal and interdependent process, contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of couple functioning in post-confinement contexts and offering relevant implications for research and interventions aimed at relational well-being.

Keywords: Work–Family Conflict, Marital Satisfaction, Capitalization, Dyadic Processes, Relational Well-Being

Lorem Ipsum