

Research Articles

Work-Oriented Men and Women: Similar Levels of Work-Family Conflict and Guilt yet Different Coping StrategiesCátia Sousa*^a, Katherina Kuschel^b, Ana Brito^a, Gabriela Gonçalves^a

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Abstract

Balancing family and professional roles has become one of the challenges of the twenty-first century. This exploratory study aims to analyse the guilt, losses, aspirations and difficulties associated with work-family interaction and the career centrality of men and women, as well as their strategies to cope with work-family conflict. Using questionnaire and interview data of 73 Portuguese participants (41 men and 32 women), we showed that the women experienced the most guilt and loss and greater difficulties in balancing family and professional life. Yet contrary to the literature, the women in this sample assigned great importance to their career (even higher than men), but they felt that their potential for success at work was constrained due to the family demands. Prioritizing family over work gives work-centered women a sense of sacrifice, loss and guilt.

Keywords: work-family centrality, work-family guilt, work-family conflict, coping strategies, gender

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“Food, love, career, and mothers: the four major guilt groups.”

Cathy Guisewite (n.d.)

Throughout our lives, we all play various roles in society and belong to various groups, with whom we identify and to which we attach importance and meaning (Settles, 2004). We are women, men, parents, friends, children, lawyers, teachers, etc. From a socio-psychological perspective, according to the social identity theory, identity refers to the way individuals see and define themselves (Tajfel & Turner, 1986, 2004; Vasile, 2012). Our social identity is developed through the process of socialization (e.g., influence of family, education, friends, etc.), which in turn will influence the friends we choose, who we marry or live with, and the communities and groups we choose to belong to (Browne, 2013). Thus, individuals act to maintain specific identities when they have strong commitments to them (Burke & Reitzes, 1991). This membership of multiple groups brings diverse benefits in various areas of our lives, such as rewards, well-being, opportunities for social interaction, accumulation of knowledge and skills through different experiences (Barnett & Baruch, 1985; Marks, 1977; Sieber, 1974). However, despite the advantages, having several identities can lead individuals to internal conflicts of

difficult negotiations (e.g., [Settles, 2004](#)). Similarly, the interference of one identity with another can lead to conflict between work and family. In this sense, the simultaneous coexistence of family and professional roles is one of the modern challenges that individuals face in their daily lives.

Based on this presumption, the present study aims to analyse the guilt, losses, aspirations and difficulties that men and women feel in relation to the importance of family and career, as well as the strategies they use to make decisions involving a choice between one sphere and another.

Literature Review

The Work-Family Interface, Social Roles and Feelings of Guilt

Over the past few decades research on the work-family balance has been prolific and guided by the perspective of role stress theory, that is, there is an emphasis on the negative side of the interface between work and family ([Rantanen, Kinnunen, Mauno, & Tillemann, 2011](#)). Recently, a positive approach to achieving a balance between the spheres has arisen in research (e.g., [Frone, 2003](#); [Marks, 1977](#); [Sieber, 1974](#); [Voydanoff, 2005](#); see [Zhang, Xu, Jin, & Ford, 2018](#), for a review). According to [Rantanen et al. \(2011\)](#) the origins of research on the work-family interface began with studies on the multiple roles played by women ([Baruch & Barnett, 1986](#); [Tiedje et al., 1990](#)). In fact, the highest levels of conflict and guilt regarding the balance between professional and family roles have been identified in women (e.g., [Zimmerman, Haddock, Current, & Ziemba, 2003](#)). With the massive entry of women into the labour market and the resulting social changes, women -in addition to the traditional gender role of mother/wife and caregiver of the home and family members- assumed the role of paid worker (e.g., [Gonçalves, Sousa, Santos, Silva, & Korabik, 2018](#)). Thus, although responsibilities for work are shared by male and female in most Western countries, family responsibilities (housework, childcare) remain largely female (e.g., [Ingersoll-Dayton, Neal, & Hammer, 2001](#); [Matias, Andrade, & Fontaine, 2011](#); [OECD, 2012](#)). Men have also begun to be affected by the tension between work and family ([Almeida, 1995](#); [Brod & Kaufman, 1994](#); [Crompton, 1999](#); [Gonçalves et al., 2018](#)).

Women are also more sensitive to the emotional state of others and more vulnerable to guilt compared to men ([McElwain & Korabik, 2005](#); [Zahn-Waxler & Kochanska, 1988](#)). While for the woman the feeling of guilt arises in association with the inability to provide care and financial support simultaneously, for the man this feeling comes from the fact that he cannot support the family financially ([Di Leonardo, 1987](#); [Turner & Stets, 2005](#)). This means that guilt is not felt in the same way by both genders, nor in relation to the same circumstances ([Vermot, 2015](#)). This is due in part to the contrastive social representations of the attributes and personal characteristics, interests, competences and motivations of men and women, within the scope of work and the family. To men have been attributed the roles of responsibility in the public domain, of "breadwinning", competitiveness and strength, and, to women, roles in the private domain of care, based on more emotional and relational characteristics ([Gonçalves et al., 2018](#); [Monteiro, Agostinho, & Daniel, 2015](#)).

Male and Female Role Distribution in Portugal

During the 1960s and 1970s, the women's entry into the professional sphere in Portugal ([Wall, Aboim, & Cunha 2010](#)) and in spheres considered to be typically male, led to a gradual change in gender roles and to the abandonment of the traditional model to a dual employment model in which both, men and women are employed. However, Portuguese women work at home for an additional 1 hour and 45 minutes a day more than men, and, in total paid and unpaid work, Portuguese women continue to work an additional 1 hour and 13 minutes per day

compared to men (Comissão para a cidadania e igualdade de género [CIG], 2017). These changes have increased the challenges faced by women, including an overload between work, home and children (Garey, 1999; Wall et al., 2010).

A study carried out with a sample of 228 Portuguese showed that there were no significant differences between genders with respect to work-family guilt and family-work guilt (Gonçalves et al., 2018). Therefore, this distribution of roles can be influenced by several variables, such as cultural context, family, education, or the centrality of work-family.

Work-Family Centrality

The centrality of work and family is associated with a value judgment about the relative importance of the role work versus the role family (Carr, Boyar, & Gregory, 2008). People tend to invest more time and energy in roles on which they are more focused, since these roles have significant implications for their well-being and self-esteem (Simon, 1992; Xie, Shi, & Ma, 2017). In this way, people highly focused on work believe that it is the central activity of their lives, and invest more effort, time and energy in it than in the family. Conversely, those who are more family-centred prioritize all activities related to the family, since the family role is much more significant in their lives (Xie et al., 2017). To Greenhaus, Peng, and Allen (2012) men and women construct their identities differently. Given that gender roles define the norms, behaviours and activities appropriate to each gender (Eagly, 1987), they are expected to influence the way that both genders construct and interpret different social roles, as well as the emphasis they put on each one of them (Greenhaus et al., 2012; Powell & Mainiero, 1992). And how is that choice made? For Kirchmeyer (2006), the choice concerns the way in which individuals' career decisions pay off later. Traditionally family roles are considered to restrict women's access to career opportunities, impose geographical constraints and encourage them to take jobs that facilitate work-family balance (Hull & Nelson, 2000; McBrier, 2003; Shauman & Xie, 1996). Moreover, data from Eurostat in 2015, indicate that the majority of Portuguese women working part-time do so only because they are unable to work full-time, i.e., they work part-time involuntarily (around 12.5%) (Eurostat, 2015). On the other hand, for men who still play the role of "breadwinner", family responsibilities may encourage them to look for opportunities that enable to raise their incomes (Eby & Russell, 2000; Kirchmeyer, 2006), which in Portugal are also higher than those of women (16.7% differential in the monthly basic remuneration) (CIG, 2017). In fact, the challenge of combining paid work with the role of being a parent is often framed as a gender problem; that is, as a problem for mothers (Cooklin et al., 2016). This issue is visible, for example, with regard to the enjoyment of parental leave. In the case of Portugal, for every 100 children born in 2015, 85.4% of women took parental leave and only 27.5% of men shared that license (CIG, 2017). However, it is nevertheless clear that in both genders the family exerts a strong weight, either because of the need to provide support in terms of affection and love, or in terms of comfort, quality of life and basic needs. The family, as a rule, is considered a pillar in the life of each individual. Family can be defined as "a group of people who are interested in one another due to dependence, obligation or duty, love, caring, or cooperation" (Rothausen, 1999, p. 819). It is therefore reasonable to deduce that their importance and their weight will lead to increased difficulties in the choices that men and women, fathers and mothers, have to make on a daily basis. Several studies have shown that high work-family centrality is positively associated with the work-family conflict (Carr et al., 2008; Zhang, Li, Wei, & Yang, 2011). However, given the demographic, economic and social changes that have been taking place in recent years, particularly within the family and the professional environment, it is legitimate to ask: Is the family role most central to wom-

en? Will work continue to be a priority for men? How has the family conditioned career priorities and aspirations? What are the strategies and criteria that impact when deciding between family and career?

These are some of the questions we seek to answer in this study. Although the literature on the work-family theme is extensive, few studies have explored this question in a Portuguese sample of employees, at least to our knowledge.

Method

In order to analyse the guilt, losses, aspirations and difficulties that men and women feel about the importance of family and career, as well as the strategies they use to decide between both spheres, 73 interviews were conducted based on a semi-structured script composed of open and closed questions (Likert scale). Inclusion criteria were defined as: individuals over 18 years old, any gender, employed, with and without children. Interviews were collected using the snowball technique during April and June of 2017. The application of the interviews was authorized by the Scientific Committee of the University of Algarve, which regulates the procedures and ethical standards of academic projects. The interviews were conducted with the informed consent of the individuals, who were assured of the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses. The interviews took place in an individual, informal atmosphere and were guided by a neutral stance and impartiality. If it was necessary to clarify the participants' perceptions or experiences, the interviewers asked complementary questions. Interview application took 15 to 20 minutes. No compensation was offered to participants.

Measurements and Open Questions

In addition to the collection of demographic characteristics, the interviews included open and closed questions. Responses to the closed questions were given on a 7-point Likert scale. These included two items to assess the level of guilt involving work vs family priorities: "To what extent do you feel guilty for giving priority to family/work leaving work/family to the background?" (1-not at all guilty to 7-extremely guilty); Two items to assess work-family interference: "To what extent do you feel that your family/professional commitments and goals condition your career/family life aspirations?" (1-not at all, to 7-very much) and two items to assess the feeling of loss: "How do you position yourself in relation to what you feel you are missing out on in your work/family life?" (1-I have not lost anything at all, to 7-I have lost a lot). These questions were inspired by the work of [Gonçalves et al. \(2018\)](#). The importance of the career was assessed through the three-item career centrality scale of [Sweet, Sarkisian, Matz-Costa, and Pitt-Catsouphes \(2016\)](#), which includes questions such as: item1 "I like too much of my career / profession to give it up", evaluated on a Likert scale of 7 points. The scale showed a Cronbach's alpha of 0.80. For an analysis of the importance of the family, the respondents completed the sentence "For me the family is", indicating three words that represent their definition of family and the open question: "When you think about family, which members belong to it?". The remaining open-ended questions sought to identify the main difficulties and strategies for reconciling work and family, and choices of emotional management techniques used in each sphere to compensate for perceived failings in the other (see [Table 1](#)).

Table 1

Open Questions and Analysis Subcategories

Questions	Subcategory
Importance of Family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Definition of family • Members that belong to the family
Difficulties and strategies regarding the choice between work and family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulties of conciliation of the family and professional sphere • Criteria and strategies for the decision (choosing one sphere for the other)
Emotional management choice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dealing emotionally with failure in one domain

Participants

The sample was composed of 73 Portuguese participants, 32 females (43.8%) and 41 males (56.2%), aged between 22 and 52 years ($M = 36.46$; $SD = 6.35$). About half of the participants had a university degree (52.1%, $n = 38$), the remainder had secondary education (35.6%, $n = 26$) and basic education (12.3%, $n = 9$). About 94% of the respondents were married or lived in common law and 86.3% ($n = 63$) had children. Regarding their professional activity, most participants worked in the service sector (38.4%, $n = 28$) or in the trading sector (21.9%, $n = 16$). The rest worked in transport and construction (12.3%, $n = 9$), education and research (11%, $n = 8$), health (8.2%, $n = 6$), banking and insurance (4.1%, $n = 3$) and public administration (2.7%, $n = 2$) sectors.

Data Analysis

The closed-response questions were analysed through the mean and t-tests were performed to verify differences between genders (using SPSS v. 22). The qualitative analysis of the open answers was performed using a content analysis methodology (Bardin, 1997; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Moraes, 1999; Stemler, 2001) which involves defining categories of analysis and comprises three stages: pre-analysis, formation of categories and discussion of the data (Bardin, 1997). The pre-analysis stage, which involves the exhaustive reading of the interviews, was based on an open codification that was performed by each author independently. In the second stage, the open codification was discussed and the categories were defined, which allowed the main units of analysis to be determined as follows: 1) guilt feeling; 2) work-family interference; 3) feeling of loss; 4) career and family importance; 5) difficulties and strategies regarding the choice between work and family; and 6) emotional management of choice. In the third and final stage, the content of the interviews and the discussion of the data were interpreted.

Results

The mean scores, standard deviations, measures of skewness and kurtosis and correlations among study variables are shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Variables Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	SKE	KUR	1	2	3	4	5	6
			(<i>SE</i> = 0.29)	(<i>SE</i> = 0.57)						
1. F-W Guilt	2.23	1.41	1	0.24	–					
2. W-F Guilt	4.47	1.88	-0.57	-0.61	0.24*	–				
3. FIW	3.03	1.93	0.43	-1.06	0.40**	0.38**	–			
4. WIF	3.57	1.79	-0.01	-1.01	0.44**	0.57**	0.30*	–		
5. Work Loss	2.52	1.40	0.66	-0.43	0.49**	0.30*	0.61**	0.27*	–	
6. Family Loss	3.11	1.55	0.34	-0.66	0.19	0.48**	0.22	0.61**	0.27*	–
7. Career Centrality	4.02	1.64	0.32	-0.78	0.20	-0.21	0.05	0.07	0.18	-0.02

Note. F-W Guilt = Family-Work Guilt; W-F Guilt = Work-Family Guilt; FIW = Family interference in Work; WIF = Work interference in Family; SKE – Skewness; KUR – Kurtosis.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

It is possible to observe that the variable work-family guilt (WF guilt) was the one with the highest mean ($M = 4.47$, $SD = 1.88$) and the family-work guilt (FW guilt) had a lower mean ($M = 2.23$; $SD = 1.41$). Measures of skewness and kurtosis (skewness from -0.57 to 0.66 and kurtosis from -1.06 to 0.24) showed that the items were normally distributed, with all below 2 and -2 respectively (Bentler & Wu, 2002; Curran, West, & Finch, 1996; Finney & DiStefano, 2006; West, Finch, & Curran, 1995). Regarding the correlations, most of the variables were correlated, with the exception of the career centrality. The family loss variable wasn't only correlated with F-W guilt and with the variable Family interference in Work (FIW). The results of quantitative analysis and qualitative content analysis will be discussed, according to gender differences (see Table 3).

Table 3

Differences According Gender

Variable	Women		Men		<i>t</i> (71)	<i>p</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>		
F-W Guilt	2.53	1.54	2.00	1.22	1.640	.105
W-F Guilt	5.00	1.50	3.780	2.04	2.830	.006
WIF	3.62	1.47	3.41	1.98	0.500	.619
FIW	3.90	2.05	2.19	1.41	4.206	< .001
Work Loss	2.96	1.13	2.09	1.13	2.780	.007
Family Loss	3.12	1.36	3.09	1.68	0.075	.940
Career Centrality	4.04	1.84	3.94	1.56	0.246	.806

Note. F-W Guilt = Family-Work Guilt; W-F Guilt = Work-Family Guilt; FIW = Family interference in Work; WIF = Work interference in Family.

Feelings of Guilt

After the analysis of the answers, it was possible to observe that the women felt more guilty of giving priority to the family, leaving work in the background ($M = 2.53$, $SD = 1.54$), as well as feeling guilty for giving priority to work ($M = 5$; $SD = 1.50$). However, only in the feeling of work-family guilt did these differences appear statistically significant ($t(71) = 2.83$, $p = .006$). It was also possible to verify that the feeling of guilt was greater in the subcategory "giving priority to work leaving the family in the background" in both genders.

Work Interference in Family (WIF) and Family Interference in Work (FIW)

Regarding the family's constrain effect in terms of career aspirations, the women felt more conditioned by both the family ($M = 3.90$, $SD = 2.05$) and by work ($M = 3.62$, $SD = 1.47$) than the men. Statistically, gender differences were only significant in the subcategory "family commitments and goals condition career aspirations" ($t(71) = 4.206$, $p < .001$).

Feeling of Loss

Also in relation to the feeling of loss, it is the female gender that considered that the most had been lost, both in family life ($M = 3.12$, $SD = 1.36$) and in terms of professional life ($M = 2.96$, $SD = 1.53$). In the latter case there were some statistically significant differences between genders ($t(71) = 2.78$, $p = .007$).

Career Importance

Concerning the centrality of the career, the women had higher mean values ($M = 4.04$, $SD = 1.84$) than the men ($M = 3.94$, $SD = 1.56$), though these were not statistically significant. [Figure 1](#) offers a synthesis of the main variables measured on the studied women and men.

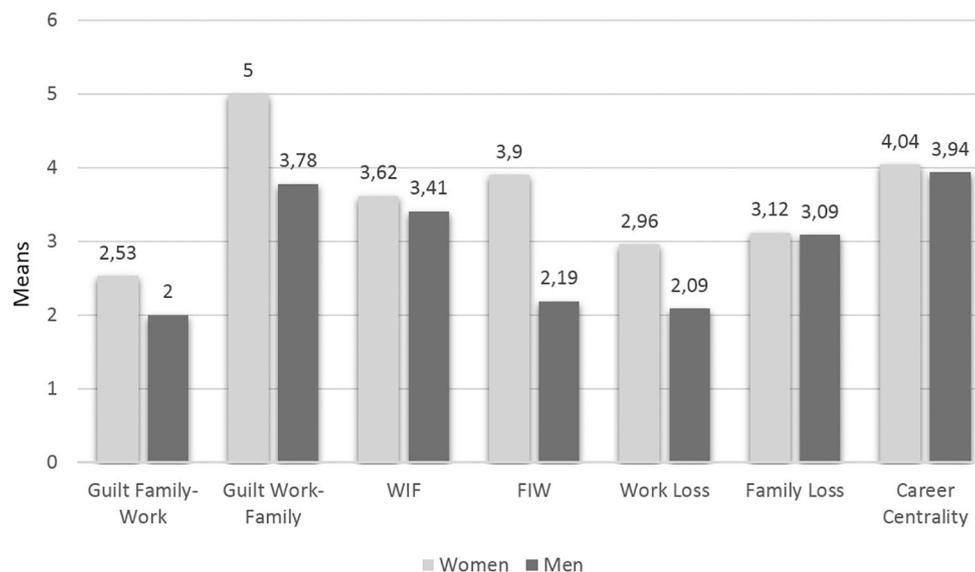


Figure 1. Comparing Genders.

Family Importance

In response to the question "When you think of family, who do you think of?", about 20 participants included their children and spouse and 19 included their ascendants, descendants and spouses. About 20 of them pointed to their extended family (parents, grandparents, siblings, uncles, nephews, in-laws, children, brothers-in-law, etc.) and only 4 included, in addition to the extended family, their friends. Of the participants without children, 5 indicated their household, 2 indicated the extended family, 2 considered, in addition to the larger family nucleus, their girlfriend, and 1 also considered their friends as family members.

There were 36 different words related to the question "For me, the family is...". The words associated with the family with the highest frequency of response were "love" ($n = 55$), "union" ($n = 23$), "friendship" ($n = 10$), "support" ($n = 8$), "company" ($n = 6$) and "safety" ($n = 5$).

Difficulties and Strategies Regarding the Choice Between Work and Family

The main difficulties the women faced in relation to work-family reconciliation were related to time management and lack of quality time for the family, especially for those who have children ($n = 27$).

"My main difficulties are managing time (picking up/taking my child to school, lack of time to help with homework, taking him to extra school activities). I miss quality time for the family, sometimes the opportunities pass and the children grow very fast. Family and work are very important. But if being a mother is a great personal achievement, being a good professional is something that fulfils me a lot. The two spheres complement each other and do not survive one without the other". (I2, woman, 41 years old, 1 child)

"The fast pace of work makes us feel responsible for the functions that we accept on the professional level... the family suffers physical and psychological stress because of the requirement to work long hours". (I12, woman, 32 years old, 2 children)

"My greatest difficulty is to reconcile schedules/deadlines and fatigue. Unfortunately, a woman has to choose [prioritise] her family and children." (I26, woman, 34 years old, 1 child)

With regard to the men, most stated that they did not experience many difficulties in reconciling work and family, and the main difficulties identified mainly related to time and work schedules ($n = 35$), often involving irregular shift work ($n = 28$).

"I have no difficulties, because there is flexibility and coordination between both". (I35, man 29 years old, no children)

"My difficulties are related to family time because I work in rotating shifts. If you are called at the last minute to work, I'll go because there are bills to pay". (I45, man, 36 years old, 2 children)

In terms of strategies and decision-making criteria, most female respondents ($n = 29$) mentioned setting priorities for time management and the search for balance between both spheres (though the family always comes first):

"I definitely choose the family above work... but the capitalist society in which we live "forced us to enslave ourselves" for a wage that is not worth the time spent, etc." (I12, woman, 32 years old, 2 children)

"I try to prioritize my children and their needs, always seeking flexibility in working hours". (FI32, woman, 32 years old, 2 children)

With regard to strategies, the men sought to reconcile schedules by defining their priorities, according to the importance of the activities. Although most ($n = 38$) claimed that family was a priority, the professional and monetary side seemed to exert more influence.

"It is usually not necessary because there is reconciliation. However, if there was any kind of choice I would opt for my family". (I35, man, 29 years old, no children)

"The strategy is going to work to give a better life to my family and to allow for some comfort". (I45, man, 36 years old, 2 children)

"I think well before deciding and then I prioritize the family or the work. But I almost always choose work because I need the money". (I47, man, 34 years old, 2 children)

Emotional Management of Choice

Although they claimed to prefer the family, in terms of emotions most women ($n = 30$) felt guilty, with a heavy conscience, trying to believe that they had made the right choice or the only possible choice.

"It is often difficult to make a choice, as professional achievement for me is very important and rewarding. One should try to balance both, not neglecting work or family". (I2, woman, 41 years old, 1 child)

"To begin with I have some difficulty, after it is decided it is necessary to give my best whether in the professional or in the familiar field". (I8, woman, 34 years old, 1 child)

"Everything will depend on the importance of each commitment, but first, I would give up a professional commitment". (I12, woman, 32 years old, 2 children)

"This decision is made with awareness..." (I17, woman, 45 years old, 2 children)

"I feel guilty sometimes and try to manage. I have a six-month-old baby that needs me a lot, from now on it will be harder to make that choice". (I26, woman, 34 years old, one child)

"I convince myself that I made the right choice or the only possible choice". (I28, woman, 47 years old, one child)

For the men, emotional management seemed to be facilitated by the help and support they received from the family ($n = 41$), always seeking to compensate the family later and not thinking about what had been lost/missed out.

"If I had to choose, I knew that my family would understand because they support my decisions. Emotionally, perhaps, I felt like I was missing out on my commitments". (I35, man, 29 years old, no children)

"Fortunately, as I have a very close family, we have always managed to find a solution and compensate later. Because I have a good relationship with my colleagues, sometimes I can change the shifts, if necessary". (I45, man, 36 years old, 2 children)

"I manage it well because my family always supports me". (I47, man, 34 years old, 2 children)

In [Figure 2](#), it is possible to see a synthesis of the main results of this study.

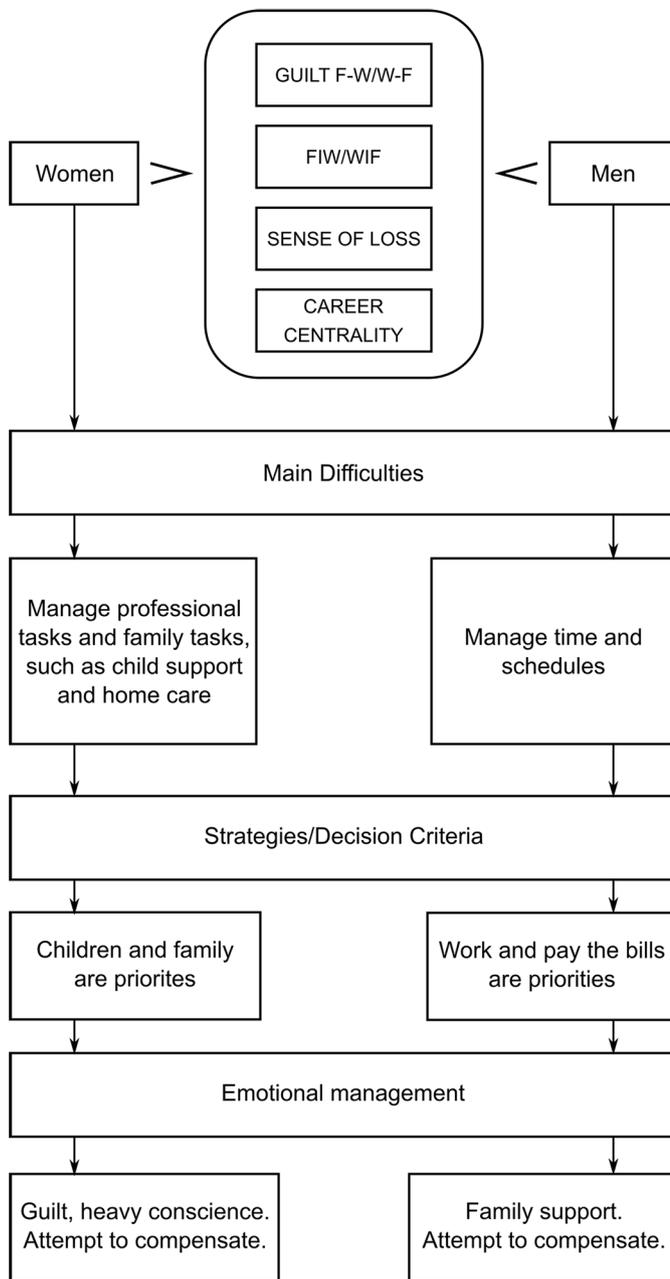


Figure 2. Main findings.

Discussion

This study sought to uncover the main gender differences in the perceived importance of work-family balance. The results reveal some differences between the studied men and women. Based on the literature, it is possible to verify that the women are the group with the greatest difficulties in reconciling the professional and family spheres. The professional demands of today's labour market are too time-consuming and energy intensive, and the women, who are more emotionally sensitive, feel guilty for not being able to keep up with the family as much as they would like. It was also possible to observe a greater concern on the part of women in response to

questions about family and domestic tasks. The men, although they considered the family very important, showed less concern in terms of housework and child support, only stressing that their difficulties were related to time and schedules. A greater connection of the woman to the domestic tasks was evident compared to the men, which agrees with the literature (e.g., [Ingersoll-Dayton et al., 2001](#); [Matias et al., 2011](#); [OECD, 2012](#)). That is, although a change of mentalities and a search for an equitable distribution of tasks is beginning to take place, the women continue to "assume" this responsibility and this concern ([Watts, 2009](#)). This double journey has implications that result in a greater sense of loss for women regarding professional life, especially in relation to their career aspirations. The women presented higher mean values in career centrality compared to the men, which means that, despite the challenges of family life, work and career are very important and rewarding. However, women feel that their family ends up constraining their aspirations in terms of the opportunity for progression. The men, while less career-centred, more readily abdicate the family sphere for work ([Hearn, 1999](#); [Watts, 2009](#)), keeping in place the old expectation that the man should support his family and the woman should choose the family and the children. Thus, the men may feel that failure on the family side is excusable, and they are supported in this feeling by their families, as they are contributing to an increase in the family's well-being by paying the household bills. Probably, this cognitive argument serves as a strategy for reducing stress and feelings of guilt ([Kubany & Watson, 2003](#)).

Limitations and Future Research Opportunities

As limitations we can point, for example, the type of data collection. Although snowball sampling is appropriate for the qualitative analysis, the generalization of the results is limited. Similarly, the participants' strategies to overcome difficulties (i.e., time management and prioritization) were succinct descriptions and did not allow a more in-depth analysis. A categorization strategy to cope with WF conflict, WF guilt, and stress need further examination.

In summary, this study has shown that gender roles, as rule-makers and behavioral conditioners ([Eagly, 1987](#); [Hiller & Baudin, 2016](#); [Ogletree, Fancher, & Gill, 2014](#)), continue to exert a strong influence on the work-family interface and on the emphasis that is placed on each of the spheres ([Greenhaus et al., 2012](#); [Powell & Mainiero, 1992](#)). The women continue to assume the roles of mothers/wives, although they now have to factor them into the role of working women, with whom they also identify ([Meyerson & Scully, 2003](#)). In turn, the men assume their role as breadwinners, and this is one of the ways they find to justify their more limited role as a father / husband.

Conclusion

With the massive entry of women into the labour market, households with dual-employed couples have become a norm in many countries (e.g., [Xie et al., 2017](#)) and the challenges of the work-family division thus become prominent. Consequently, as work and family are the main pillars of the lives of many individuals, it becomes fundamental to explore the problematic associated with both spheres. The cross-cultural studies will allow us to deepen understanding of the weight of cultural characteristics in gender roles, in the definition of family and in the centrality of both spheres, allowing a comparison (e.g., feminine cultures vs. masculine cultures or collectivist cultures vs. individualistic cultures, [Hofstede, 2001](#)). Also, the issue of motherhood and the resulting guilt may be a focus to adopt. According to [Donath \(2017\)](#), the guilt and regret of being a "mother" has been a taboo subject, and as such, they need further investigation. According to the author, the social pressure imposed on

women to be mothers often entails feelings of guilt and regret and this is a reality that has been denied and neglected. In this same perspective, the choice of not having children can also be the subject of further analysis. Other studies may focus on the analysis of unrealistic expectations regarding professional and family roles (e.g., Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Many of the studies on the work-family theme have focused mainly on the feminine gender and the role of "mother". More research on the masculine gender and the role of "father" should be carried out, trying to identify the main difficulties and challenges the men experience as a result of pressure to devote more time to the family sphere. In this regard, it should be noted that many women are the only source of income for the household and the family, a fact which calls into question the typical model of the male breadwinner (e.g., Lewis, 2001) and has implications for the traditional definition of gender roles, leading to feelings of guilt and shame (e.g., April & Soomar, 2013).

This study has allowed us to identify some of the issues associated with gender differences in the importance attributed to the work-family centrality. These results point to a path that must be built in or reinforced by organizations by introducing family-friendly policies and practices, aimed at reducing the conflict and guilt of their workers' work and family lives, thus increasing their well-being, satisfaction and balance.

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Competing Interests

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