WORK – FAMILY CONFLICT, A LINGUISTIC AND SOCIOLOGICAL APPROACH TO THE CONCEPT

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Abstract

Most adults face the demands of their professional and personal lives daily, and some of them deal with it successfully, while others have problems in balancing the two domains. As couples with both partners working or single-parent families are a common reality of our times, researchers have noticed that many adults encounter some problems when trying to balance work and family requests. This social fact determined the birth of the "work-family conflict" as a concept, in the beginning in western cultures, and afterwards eastern countries started to use it too.

We intend to analyze in this paper the concept of "work-family conflict" from a linguistic perspective, emphasizing the social context that characterizes it. Furthermore, in the following pages, we will also pay close attention to other significant words or phrases from the same lexical field.

Key words: *concept*, *terminology*, *lexical field*, *work-family conflict*, *expression*

Résumé

La plupart des adultes font face aux exigences de leur vie professionnelle et personnelle quotidienne, certains avec succès, d'autres se confrontant avec des problèmes d'équilibre entre les deux domaines. Comme les couples dont les deux conjoints travaillent ou les familles monoparentales sont une réalité commune de notre temps, les chercheurs ont remarqué que de nombreux adultes rencontrent des difficultés en essayant de concilier le travail et les exigences de la famille. Ce fait social détermine la naissance du «conflit travail-famille» en tant que concept, initialement dans les cultures occidentales et ensuite dans les pays de l'Est qui ont commencé à l'utiliser eux-aussi.

Dans cet article, nous avons l'intention d'analyser le concept de «conflit travail-famille» à partir d'un point de vue linguistique, mettant en évidence son contexte social spécifique. Par la suite, dans les pages qui suivent, nous allons prendre dûment en considération d'autres termes ou expressions importantes appartenant au même champ lexical.

Mots clés: *concept*, *terminologie*, *champ lexical*, *conflit travail-famille*, *expression*

0. Introduction

"The interdisciplinary character of terminology results from the themes explored, such as identifying the specialized node (core) in the use of the term in different contexts and the role of relations between dictionaries and texts in achieving these objectives. Other issues of interest to both terminology and linguistics regard the study of neologisms or metaphorization of words used in ordinary communication"[1].

When a field of scientific interest is initially studied in a certain geographical

[1] Angela Bidu-Vrănceanu, *Perspectiva lingvistică în terminologie*, in *Limba română: diacronie și sincronie în studiul limbii române*, II", Bucureşti, Editura Universităţii din Bucureşti, 2014, p. 251.

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zone or cultural area, it is quite natural that the main terms that are used derive from specific language. The specific terminology of the domain of professional and personal life harmonization, represented by "all technical terms used in this branch of activity"[2], consists of the Romanian translated version of the specialized terms consecrated in Anglo-Saxon literature.

1. Conceptual analysis

Ever since the beginning of mankind, adults' life was mainly divided between working-breadwinning activities and time spent with family, relatives, children and other persons close to the individual. Nowadays, and especially after the Second World War, the structure of conjugal roles has changed, as the number of working females and mothers is increasing. On the other hand, job demands, professional features, the labor market, require a totally engaged employee, with transferable skills, available for extra work, after the regular program of 8 hours and in touch with his job all the time, if possible, through modern technology (internet or telephone, for example). Changes within the families and changes in the working conditions have led researchers from different domains, such as psychology, sociology, economy or medicine to approach the phenomenon of work-family conflict.

As these changes were specific to Western Europe and USA in the beginning, the first articles in the field were written in English, and therefore the terms frequently used in this domain are of English origin.

Work-family conflict is a concept that tries to define a broader social reality, to which different terms subscribe, all from the same lexical field. Analyzing sociology and organizational psychology papers, the most frequently used words and phrases are: "work-family conflict", "work-family balance", "spillover", "work-family auto enhancing", "work-family facilitation", "work-family enrichment" or "job-home positive interactions".

Work-family conflict was seen as "a form of inter-role conflict in which the role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect"[3]. "Work-family conflict is produced by simultaneous pressures from work and family roles that are mutually incompatible"[4].This phrase was translated into Romanian as "conflictul muncă-familie". The word "conflict" (< Fr., Lat. conflictus "shock, impact") has the general meaning of misunderstanding, clash of interests, disagreement; antagonism, strife, (violent) discussion. Analyzing the Encyclopedic Dictionary we see than in psychology "conflict" is defined as "possible status of a person subject to trends and opposing interests of approximately equal values"[5]. This meaning is the closest to the significance of the "work-family conflict" in sociology.

Another frequently used phrase is "Work-family auto-enhancing", which is considered to represent "the extent to which aspects of the family or work role provide resources to facilitate the performance of the opposite role"[6].

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[2]Academia Română, Institutul de Lingvistică „Iorgu Iordan", *Dicționarul explicativ al limbii române (ediția a II-a revăzută și adăugită)*, Editura Univers Enciclopedic, 2012.

[3] J.H. Greenhaus & N.J. Beutell, *Sources of conflict between work and family roles*, Academy of Management Review, 1985, 10, 76–88.

[4] Idem, *ibidem*.

[5] Marcel Popa, Alexandru Stănciulescu, Gabriel Florin Matei, Anicuța Tudor, Carmen Zgăvărdici, Rodica Chiriacescu, *Dicționar enciclopedic*, Editura Enciclopedică, 1993.

[6] Patricia Voydanoff, *Linkages between the Work-Family Interface and Work, Family and Individual outcomes*, "Journal of Family Issues", 23(1), 2002, p. 138-164.

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"Work-family facilitation" was defined as "the extent to which participation in work (or home) is facilitated by experiences, skills and opportunities gained or developed at home (the place of the work)"[7]. Other researchers define "work-family facilitation" as "the extent to which the individual engaging in a life field (e.g. work or family) brings gains (developmental, emotional, capital or efficiency) that contribute to the better functioning of the other area of life (family or work)"[8].

"Job-home positive interactions describe how one's behavior from a domain is influenced by the positive reactions built in the other field"[9]. In this field another frequently used phrase is "work-family enrichment", considered "the extent to which the experiences from one role improve the life quality of the other role"[10].

"Positive family-work spillover" was considered to represent the "transfer of emotions, skills, behaviors, and values with positive aspects from the original to the receiving domain, having beneficial effects on the receiving area"[11].

"Work/family conflict self-efficacy" is defined as "an individual's belief in her or his ability to manage work-family and family-work conflicts"[12].

2. Discussions and conclusions

Although a lot of factors from both working environment and family sphere can contribute to the appearance of the work-family conflict, we can notice that most of the above mentioned concepts have a positive meaning. Perception of stress concerning working or family responsibilities arises to a great extent from one's predisposition to experience stress. Individuals are different in experiencing and interpreting specific life situations. This is why, for example, some people cope better with pressure, stressful environment or high requests, while others don't have the same ability of coping with such difficulties.

On the other hand, personal preferences and values determine time allocation to profession or personal life. This is a personal decision and sometimes it is taken without enough awareness of the consequences of this choice for other people and even for the person himself\herself.

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