

Work-Family Balance, Participation in Family Work and Parental Self-Efficacy in Chilean Workers

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Abstract

The article analyzes differences regarding work-family balance, participation in family work, and parental self-efficacy in workers (N=300) in Chile according to their sex and their status as income providers. Three instruments (Survey Work-Home Interaction-Nijmegen, Questionnaire of Participation in Family Work, and the Parental Evaluation Scale) were applied to workers from public and private organizations. Our results show that participation in family work is positively related to work-family balance, while the latter, in turn, is positively associated with parental self-efficacy. Furthermore, sex and being the main income provider in the household shows differential effects in both participation in family work and perception of parental self-efficacy. These results, we conclude, suggest the persistence of some elements of traditional gender patterns. This underlines the need to examine organizational policies from a gender perspective and to analyze the impact of public policy on organizational practices.

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Introduction

Work and family are two fundamental domains in people's lives. They are characterized by being interdependent, as they influence each other and can pose competing demands (Debeljuh & Jáuregui, 2004; Jiménez & Moyano, 2008). Historically, this tension has been resolved through the sexual division of labour: women's role in society has been linked to household chores and parenting, while men's has been defined by financial provision for the household. In recent decades, this view has changed gradually due to a combination of cultural and structural factors. Among them, we can mention changes in family structure, such as the increasing number of single-parent households, usually headed by a woman; improved access to higher education, which brings more and better opportunities for women in the labour market, and the de-regulation of working conditions (Román, Avendaño & Tomicic, 2004; Jiménez & Moyano, 2008). These changes have promoted change within families as well. For instance, the incorporation of women into the labour market has – more often than not – brought changes into the internal workings of family life. Such changes imply that in many cases men are not the sole providers of their households anymore, whereas women have less availability and/or interest in being full-time mothers and housewives (UC-Adimark, 2013). Thus, the financial supply patterns in households have been redefined and the traditional structuring of social gender relationships has become problematic (Faur, 2006). As Montaña (2010) observes, work and family balance has become a social problem to the extent women have taken on productive activities beyond the household, putting to the test the rigid separation between the home and the workplace. In doing so, they have also highlighted the tensions that may arise between work and family responsibilities.

This article seeks to explore avenues to explain the perceptions men and women have on work-family conflict, assuming that differences in perceptions – or lack of them – may not be parallel to practices that may be more or less egalitarian in gender terms. To that end, we examine two possible accounts for perceptions on work-family conflict: first, the idea that there have been substantive changes in practices that would allow us to assume that “productive” and “reproductive” work are no longer distributed along gender lines; secondly, the idea that these practices have not changed, but – as the literature suggests – men and women may have different thresholds on what they perceive as conflict.

Work and Family: A Gendered Issue?

In order to put our findings in context, it is necessary to point out that the literature often characterizes Chile as a family-oriented (*familista*) country (Staab, 2012). This means the (traditional) family, and women’s role in it, are considered very important for the maintenance of social order. For an important proportion of Chileans, women’s role in the family is still the main referent for female identity. According to the UN Development Programme (*Programa de las Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo*, PNUD in Spanish) Report for 2010, 25% of the respondents spontaneously associated the word “women” with terms like mother, wife, housewife or family (PNUD, 2010, p. 56). This, despite the fact that according to the National Socio-Economical Characterization Survey (*Caracterización Socio Económica Nacional*, CASEN, in Spanish) for 2013, that year an estimated 39% of Chilean households were headed by a woman – which indicates a sharp increase in the number of women taking on the provider role. In the terrain of work and family, statistical data from the Centro de Estudios Públicos (Center for Public Studies, CEP) show that, when considering how to organize work and family in a situation in which there is children of pre-school age,

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48% of the interviewees (both men and women) chose a semi-traditional arrangement – mother works part-time, father works full-time – as the best option. The traditional arrangement – mother stays home, father works full-time – was favored by 31% of the respondents, whereas a minority though the best options involved sharing family responsibilities equally, either by both parents working part-time (9%) or both working full time (8%). Only 1% considered an option in which fathers could reduce their working hours, and mothers engage in full time employment. Nobody considered a non-traditional arrangement that would involve men taking on care responsibilities on a full-time basis (CEP, 2012).

According to the same survey, 38% of interviewees think that the woman that stays home is a better mother and 50% agrees or strongly agrees with the statement: “If the mother does not work outside the home, children do better at school” (CEP, 2012). Likewise, Contreras, Hurtado and Sara (2012) report that 92% of women and 87% of men in a sample representative at the national level agree with the idea of women taking part-time jobs as the best way to make work and family compatible (Contreras, Hurtado & Sara, 2012, p. 19). In fact, 11.7% of employed women work on a part-time basis, compared to 4.3% of men in the same situation (Dirección del Trabajo, 2014, p.137). This suggests that women do resort to limiting paid working time more often than men, but this is not a strategy of massive use. Of course, the possibility of taking a part-time job, even when desired, is dependent upon having enough income to satisfy household needs with a reduced working day (the normal working day being 45 hours per week in Chile).

In this scenario, Kirchmeyer (2000) considers work-family balance as satisfaction in both domains of life. This implies engaging personal resources, energy, time and

commitment to meet demands, whether at work or regarding family life. There is evidence suggesting that men and women do not face the demands of each domain in the same way in terms of time, level of personal commitment and balance in the satisfaction in each domain. These are all components that could contribute to achieve a better balance between work and family. Data for Chile indicate that most men dedicate significantly less time than women to domestic work, but more hours to paid employment; that there are differences in levels psychological commitment according to sex, and that men and women would have different levels of satisfaction at work and at home, with men presenting a lower level of adjustment on both worlds (Greenhaus, Collins & Shaw, 2003). These differences would be explained by gender expectations that place care responsibilities on women, and economic provision on men. In an alternative hypothesis, Aguirre and Martínez (2006) have argued that there is no difference in the levels of conflict experienced by both sexes, due to a change in gender expectations.

That is, gender differences regarding the perception of work-family conflict would be blurred, according to these authors, as a by-product of the evolution of the traditional male breadwinner-female care provider model into a more egalitarian arrangement. In this new model, both members of a couple would develop a professional career and share their family responsibilities. Nonetheless, the evidence for the case of Chile illustrates that both female integration in work settings and participation of men in domestic work and care still present very different patterns. Women still are in charge of the biggest share of domestic and carework, even when they have a full-time job. Most importantly, being employed does not have a significant impact of men's share of domestic and family responsibilities either (Aguayo, Correa & Cristi, 2011; PNUD, 2010). This would undermine the egalitarian

hypothesis. In a similar vein, Contreras, Hurtado and Sara (2012) found that, despite the marked increase in the number of years of formal education Chilean women have attained during the past decade and the decreasing fertility rate (1.87 in 2013) – both factors frequently associated with an increase in the numbers of women that join the labor force – the country is behind expectations in this matter. In fact, Chile has one of the lowest rates of female participation in the labor market in Latin America: 43.4%, much lower than the continental average of 54% (Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas, 2015). This phenomenon, identified by the authors as *the Chilean exception*, could be explained by the persistence of cultural mandates regarding care and domestic work. Men and women favour the idea that the care of children and the household is a woman's responsibility, and these perceptions would be better predictors (statistically speaking) of enrolment in paid employment for women than socio-demographic variables such as educational levels and age (Contreras, Hurtado & Sara, 2012, p. 14). Thus, women would still prioritize family over work when there is conflict between both domains, whereas men do not.

From a qualitative viewpoint, Royo (2011) has suggested that women elaborate their identity in the family starting from their traditional role as mothers/carers, but men still privilege paid work. This is particularly evident regarding childcare: even though men declare to want higher levels of involvement in raising their children, this has not altered significantly the amount of time men and women dedicate to carework on a regular basis¹ (Aguayo, Correa & Cristi, 2011). From a gender equality perspective, when there are children in the household, both parents should work together to achieve a common goal, which is the

¹ The literature scarcely presents data about caring for elderly, disabled or chronically ill people, but the available data suggest that female participation is almost exclusive.

parenting of their offspring. It is at this point where parental responsibility comes into play. The concept considers three main components: commitment (face-to-face interaction time with the child), accessibility (being physically and psychologically present to meet the child's needs), and responsibility (assuming the tasks of care and welfare daily) (Paterna & Martínez, 2009). On this point, it can be noted that men's and women's perceptions on parental responsibility are changing (compared to previous generations) and it is now commonly accepted that men should join their wives or partners in tasks associated with the parenting of their children. However, it is still in the collective imagination that women bear the primary responsibility responsible for domestic and carework and, as we have mentioned earlier, they do dedicate much more time than men to such tasks, regardless of whether they have a paid employment or not (PNUD, 2010; Aguayo, Correa & Cristi, 2011).

Regarding parenting, the concept of parental self-efficacy refers to personal beliefs about one's abilities to manage to be a “good” father or mother. On this point, the literature suggests that parents who believe in their own abilities generally feel more satisfied and able to do what is necessary to persevere and achieve a certain task. Confidence of one's own parental skills includes having realistic expectations and being able to perceive oneself as a competent parent (Kendall & Bloomfield, 2005; Farkas-Klein, 2008). Taking into account what being a father/mother implies — with all the demands and responsibilities involved — it is clear that the task of balancing work and family becomes even more difficult when parenting is added to the picture.

Studies show that emotional distress caused by the difficulty to make compatible the demands and responsibilities of work and family are related to problems between parents and children and more frequent negative behavior in the latter (Jansen, Mohren, Van Amelsvoort,

Janssen, & Kant, 2010; Valk & Srinivasan, 2011). Jones and Prinz (2005) argue that, regardless of gender, people who experience stress at work have hostile interactions within their family nucleus, responding to their children's behavior in a more punitive way. In addition, research suggests that those who are physically and emotionally exhausted from work tend to be less sensitive, participative and supportive with their children (Losoncz & Bortolotto, 2009; Miner-Rubino, Settles, & Stewart, 2009). This is directly related to parental self-efficacy, understood as an important factor in influencing the gamut of strategies parents use in order to raise their children, the efforts made to adapt themselves to the various situations that might arise and the perseverance shown when facing obstacles (Jones & Prinz, 2005).

In this context, the conflict that can occur when trying to reconcile work and family has a significantly negative correlation with the perceived quality of interaction with children and the perceived parental self-efficacy. In other words, high levels of work-family conflict are associated with perceptions assessing the quality of interaction with children as poorer, and one's parental self-efficacy as lower, than those who do not report work-family conflict. Therefore, when having high levels of conflict between the two domains, the quality of interaction between parents and children will be affected, and the level of self-efficacy experienced by the former will decrease (Gali, Weisel & Tzuk, 2007; Lau, 2009).

Debeljuh and Jáuregui (2004) point out that in addition to personal circumstances (like having children) and social factors (such as gender), companies have an impact on their own on the way men and women balance family and work responsibilities. Today, some of the strategies commonly implemented by companies that could make a difference are: maternity leave that exceeds the minimum period established by law; going beyond the legal

cap for replacement salaries during maternity leave, allowing fathers to take leave to care for offspring, days off from work for family reasons (marriage, birth, death, house move, etc.) and flexible schedules, among others (SERNAM, 2011). In terms of flexible working hours, in a study carried out by Chung and Tijdens (2009) in 21 European countries, it was concluded that flexible working hours have several positive effects on companies. Among such effects, they mention: increased productivity and competitiveness, reduced costs, improved customer service, increased capacity of the company to recruit and retain staff, increased ability to manage change and adapt to it, improvements in communications, lower absenteeism and reduced staff turnover (Chung & Tijdens, 2009). For the case of Chile, Bosch, Cano, Riumalló and Tarud (2014) found that measures such as flexible working hours are considered very important by workers, but scarcely implemented by organizations. Therefore, it is important for a company to know and implement policies and strategies that turn out to be relevant for both workers' lives and their productivity.

In this framework, this paper aims to establish whether there are differences in levels of work-family balance, family co-responsibility and parental self-efficacy in workers (at the professional level) in public and private organizations, considering the possible differences between men and women, in order to provide a basis to help promoting work-family conciliation policies that include a gender equality perspective.

Method

Participants

Using purposive sampling we selected 150 workers from private organizations and 150 workers from the public sector (n=300). There was an equal gender distribution of 75

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men and 75 women in each sector. Age ranged between 19 and 72 years, with an average age of 38 years. Out of the total number of workers, 30% were single with children, 62.7% were married, 7% divorced and 0.3% widowed. As for the educational level, 0.7% of participants completed primary education, 9.3% secondary education complete and 86.7% hold technical and/or university degrees. In terms of employment hierarchy, 78% of respondents were employees, 17% were in middle rank job positions and 2% were in management positions. Regarding the number of offspring, 93.7% of respondents reported to have between 1-3 children, while 6.3% reported having 4 or more children.

Instruments

Survey Work-Home Interaction-Nijmegen (SWING). This instrument consists of 22 Likert-type items, divided into 4 sub-scales: Negative work-family interaction; Negative family-work interaction; Positive work-family interaction and Positive family-work interaction. This questionnaire has adequate psychometric properties, with good internal consistency, with values between 0.77 and 0.89 (Moreno, Sanz, Rodríguez & Geurts, 2009).

Questionnaire of Participation in Family Work. Bartau, Etxebarria and Maganto (2003) used this questionnaire to measure family co-responsibility. This questionnaire consists of 22 items listing housework chores, with answers varying from 0-2, depending on the frequency domestic chores are carried out (0 = never, 1 = sometimes, 2 = always). These items focus on measuring the following types of tasks: execution of "my things", the "tasks by others", the "accessory tasks" and the "fundamental tasks". An index of individual participation is built from these dimensions, considering that each one of the tasks possesses a different importance in family co-responsibility.

Parental Evaluation Scale (PES). This is a self-administered questionnaire, designed to assess satisfaction and feelings of self-efficacy regarding parenting. Initially, the scale was composed of 20 items – which were checked in a population of Chilean women – obtaining an adequate internal consistency. Factorial analysis indicated two factors explaining 63% of variance. The final version of the PES considers 10 items and gives a global score of the maternal self-efficacy, obtaining an internal consistency of 0.85 (Farkas-Klein, 2008).

Procedure

Various meetings with private and public institutions were conducted between January and July 2014. The application of the set of self-administered questionnaires was supervised by experts in the workplace. The average time required to answer the survey was 20 minutes. Prior to the application, a form of informed consent was explained and given to each one of the participants.

Analysis Plan

We carried out descriptive and correlational analyses among the variables of the study, as well as 2 x 2 factorial analyses of variance (ANOVA) with the variables depending on the sex and on the provider status of the participants.

Results

In order to analyze the distribution of each of the studied variables, Table 1 shows averages and standard deviations of each variable: participation in family work, work-family balance and parental self-efficacy.

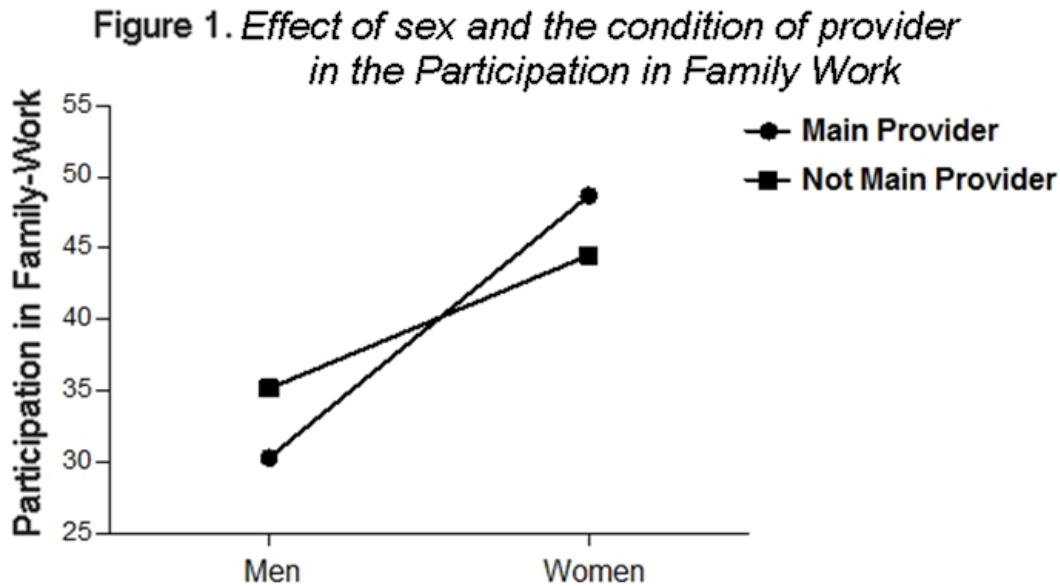
Table 1: Distribution of Participation in the Family Work, Work-Family Balance and Parental Self-efficacy

Variable	N	Mean	DE
Participation in Family Work	106	39.1	13.8
Work-Family Balance	300	45.7	9.8
Parental Self-efficacy	300	82.4	17.6

To analyze the relation among these variables, we used the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient, obtaining positive and significant -although low- associations among the variables. Particularly, we observed that the participation in the family work was related positively only with the work-family balance ($r=0.210, p<0.001$). At the same time, the latter was associated positively with the parental self-efficacy ($r=0.356, p<0.001$). In addition, when gender was considered, it was observed that the positive relation between the participation in family work and work-family balance only remained without variation (and was strengthened) for men ($r=0.421, p<0.001$), whereas for women that relation did not reach the level of significance ($r=0.051, p=0.534$).

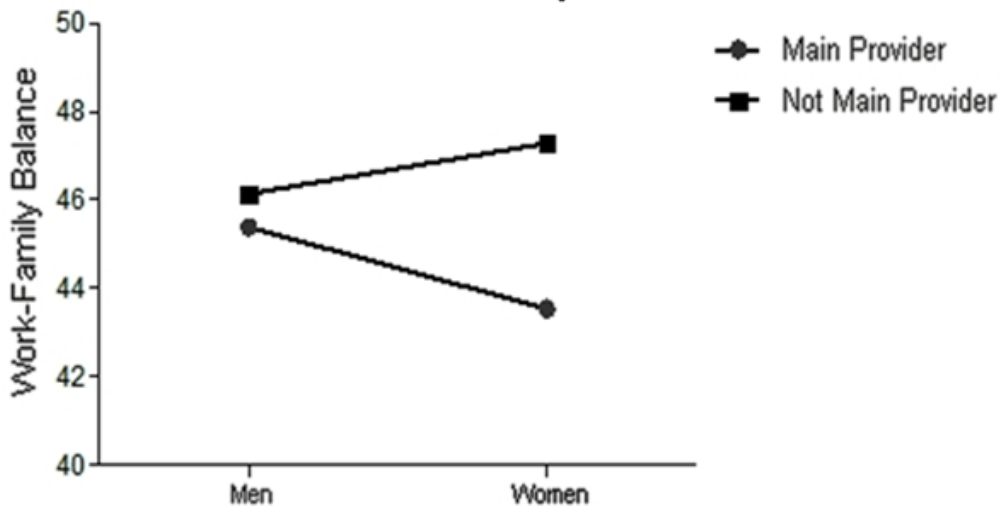
In order to evaluate the effects of the sex and the condition of being or not being the main financial provider on the participation in the family work, work-family balance and

parental self-efficacy, we carried out a factorial 2 x 2 ANOVA for each of the variables. Figure 1 shows the factorial ANOVA regarding the participation in family work. A significant main effect of the sex, $F(1, 281)=88.43, p<0.001$ was observed, indicating that the average participation in family work is significantly higher for women ($M=46.16, DE=11.79$) than for men ($M=31.81, DE=12.08$), while the main provider status did not reach the level of significance $F(1,281)=0.053, p=0.818$. However, we noticed an important interaction effect between the sex and the condition of being or not being the main home provider regarding the participation in family work $F(1, 281)=9.40, p=0.032$, showing that the effect of being the main provider on the participation in housework is different in men and women. Thus, women who are main providers tend to do a bigger share of housework, while men who are main providers tend to do less.



Likewise, to analyze the effects of the sex and the main provider status on the work-family balance, a second 2x2 factorial ANOVA was performed. Figure 2 shows the results of the analysis regarding work-family balance. No significant main nor interaction effects were found, $F_{sex}(1, 281)=0.082, p=0.775$; $F_{provider}(1, 281)=3.42, p =0.065$; $F_{interaction}(1, 281)=1.53, p=0.217$.

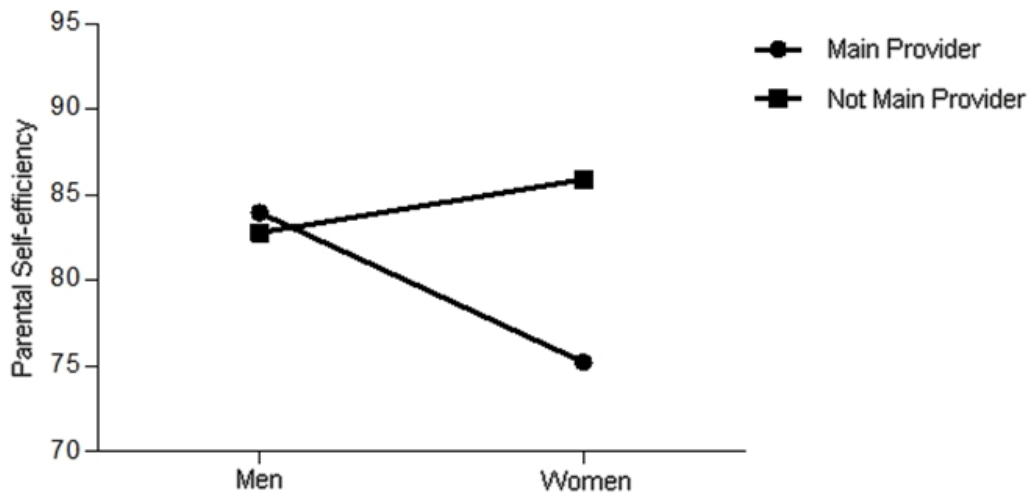
Figure 2. Effect of sex and the condition of provider in the Work-Family Balance



With the purpose of analyzing the effect of the sex and the main provider status on the parental self-efficacy, a third 2 x 2 factorial ANOVA was conducted. Figure 3 shows the results of the analysis. A significant main effect of the main provider status was observed on parental self-efficacy $F(1, 281)=4.89, p=0.028$, indicating that the average of parental self-efficacy is significantly higher on participants that are not main providers

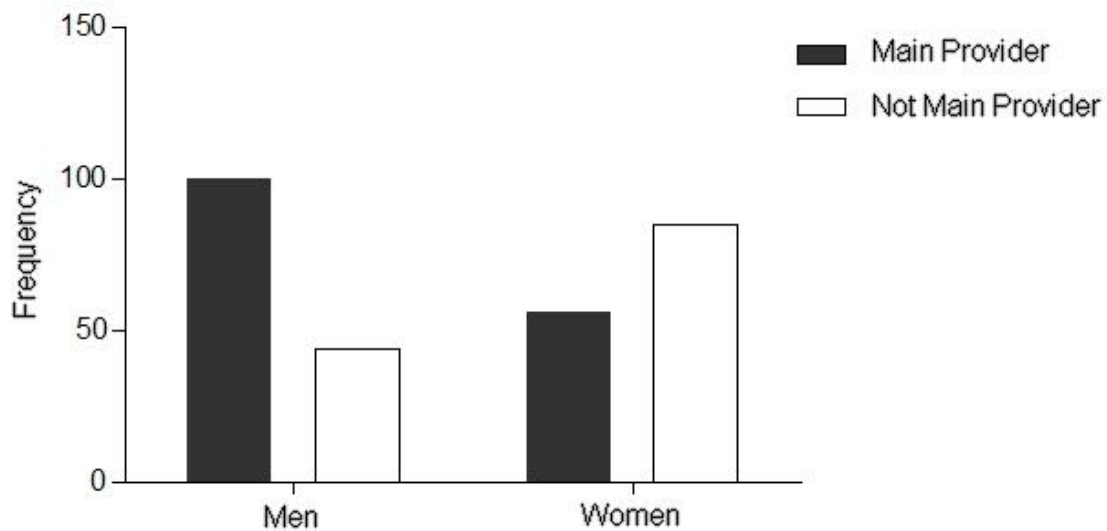
($M=84.84$, $DE=15.95$) in comparison with the ones that define themselves as breadwinners ($M=80.83$, $DE=18.59$), while the sex did not show a significant main effect, $F(1, 281)=1.71$, $p=0.192$. However, a significant interaction effect was found between sex and the home provider status on the parental self-efficacy $F(1, 281)=7.59$, $p=0.006$, indicating that the effect of being main provider is different depending on the sex of the individual.

Figure 3. Effect of sex and the condition of provider in Parental Self-efficacy



Finally, the sex and the main provider status do not only imply effects on family work participation and parental self-efficacy, but both variables were also significantly associated ($\chi^2=25.41, p<0.01$). However, as shown in Figure 4, the number of women who are main providers is considerably lower than the number of men assuming such a role.

Figure 4. Relation between sex and the condition of provider



Discussion

Our results confirm that, in spite of the changes experienced by Chilean families (with a growing number of women entering the labor market), women still have a significantly higher average of participation in family work than men. This, added to the conclusions of other studies mentioned earlier in this article, lead us to consider that the “egalitarian” gender hypothesis advanced by Aguirre and Martínez (2006) would be of limited usefulness in helping explain results in our sample. In this context, it is worth pointing out that the main

provider status did not reach the level of significance; however, there was a significant interaction effect between the sex and the condition of being or not being the main household provider in determining levels of participation in family work. This suggests the existence of differences between men and women. In relation to this point, qualitative research on the matter suggests that, indeed, women and men conceive of (and relate to) domestic work in a different way. The importance attributed to the performance of domestic tasks also varies by gender (Royo, 2011; Valdés, 2009). For women, the meaning of being in paid employment is elaborated in opposition to the meaning of the domestic domain and carework (which suggests the latter is still central in the female role, even when it comes to people that do not identify themselves with the traditional sexual division of labor). This would work the other way round in men (Royo, 2011). In this regard, the fact that women do more domestic work than men, no matter whether they are employed or not, reinforces the idea that it is still seen as a female responsibility and, therefore, it would require greater involvement, regardless of their breadwinner status. In short, while for women assuming the role of provider adds itself to their responsibilities regarding domestic work and care, in the case of men this is not necessarily the case. For men, greater participation in domestic work is frequently associated to the lack of another person (usually a woman) that could perform these chores (Valdés, 2009). This suggests that the thresholds of what women and men consider conflict or tension between work and family responsibilities could be different, since priorities still seem to be gendered.

It was also observed that there is no significant effect between sex and the main provider status on work-family balance. This could be explained by the gendered division of labor and the distinct responsibilities assigned for each sex regarding housework and paid

employment: it is possible to hypothesize that given the differences concerning the way each sex conceive of work and family, men and women could also perceive in an dissimilar way what they consider as “their” duties in each sphere. This would have an impact on the degree to which they feel they fulfill or not these duties, and this perception would not depend on the provider status (which in the case of women often means to assume a double role, PNUD 2011). Research carried out by Kornich and Eger (2014) in 30 OECD countries (including Chile) reported that expectations on what can be considered equal or balanced (or even "fair") in terms of dividing domestic tasks depends on both the social context and gender: in more egalitarian gender environments, where the importance of domestic tasks is more salient, men who assume a greater participation in domestic work tend to believe that the division is not fair for them. This contrasts with countries like Chile, where the role of women as carers is not questioned and the role of provider is often just added on top. Kornich and Eger found a positive effect of a full time work on the levels of family satisfaction for men, but not for women (Kornich & Eger 2014, p. 21).

From this perspective, the fact that the average of perceived parental self-efficacy was significantly higher in those participants who were not the main providers –compared to those who did assume financial provision as their main role– could be anticipated, since the role of provider usually means to dedicate more time and energy to paid employment. Whereas domestic work can be postponed, done while kids are sleeping or even paid for, parental work is less flexible. It must be noted that participation in family work is only related positively with family-work balance, while the latter is the variable that is associated positively to parental self-efficacy. Therefore, there is no necessary relation between the perception of fairness regarding distribution of domestic work and the perception of being a good mother

or father, but the perception of parental self-efficacy will be related to the degree in which paid work is seen as interfering –or not– with parenting.

However, considering the gender differences mentioned above, it would also have been reasonable to expect differences between men and women on this point: women who are main providers should report lower levels of parental self-efficacy. This, given the fact that social expectations are higher for motherhood (i.e., to be a “bad mother” meets more disapproval from society than being a “bad father”). Thus, since a higher involvement is expected from mothers (in relation to what is expected of fathers) regarding carework and emotional engagement with children, a woman who must assume the provider role —and that probably has to deal with an important part of the family work also — it is more likely to perceive herself as less competent with respect to parental work. She must divide her energy in order to provide *and* to care in a context in which women are still seen as bearing the main responsibility for raising children (PNUD, 2010). Even though men are increasingly demanding closeness and more significant emotional ties with their children, they continue to have, mainly, a subsidiary role (they “help”) in domestic tasks that are associated with child care, such as bathing, cooking for them or taking care of them when they are sick (Aguayo, Correa & Cristi, 2011; Valdés, 2009). Young men seem to be giving less importance to paid employment and the breadwinner identity as the basis of their parental role. However, in practice, the demands of energy and time regarding parenting tasks are still almost entirely placed on women, especially in those situations that may openly conflict with work duties because they require immediate and undivided attention –for example, when children are sick or have an accident.

In that context, the relatively wider gamut of female roles versus the relative hegemony of traditional male roles could help to understand why women can naturalize the double role more easily than men, as the literature suggests. That is, while today women's caregiving role does not lose importance when they assume the breadwinning role—whether as main provider or in conjunction with another income—the entry of men into the private world occurs via the adoption of a close, emotionally rewarding paternity, rather than through an increase of their participation in family or domestic work. This points towards the persistence of gender inequality patterns: changes in the parental model for men does not necessarily lead to a more equal division of the time, energy and attention that must be dedicated to ensure the adequate running of the household. In fact, it still leaves the less pleasant tasks in female hands.

In this context, it is crucial that policies that tend to promote work-family balance, whether they are public or from organizations, do not reinforce the traditional gender roles. That is, they should not be conceived as “policies for women”. It is also very important to gather information about the coping strategies used by working men and women to promote work-family balance, as a challenge for future research. We believe that is quite possible that combinations of everyday work and family care practices that are very different for men and women show similar results in terms of satisfaction with family life and work-family balance, as a result of the persistent naturalization of male and female roles. Even though there have been major changes in recent years, the unequal distribution of domestic and care work among the sexes remains a main challenge for gender equality. In this context, a major challenge for research on work-family conflict would be to further explore the hypothesis according to which men and women have different thresholds and priorities on this matter,

so what they perceive as “conflict” may differ. In the Chilean case, our own work and other data suggest that the egalitarian hypothesis is of little or no use and –considering the limitations of the instruments utilized– more research is need on organizational policies and practices and how men and women consider them triggers for conflict or not. We believe this could open a new avenue for research.

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