

**Work-Family Conflict, Parental Styles and the Quality of Family Gathering  
as Predictors of Adolescent Behavioral Outcomes and Well-Being**

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## **Abstract**

This study presents an integrative model that examines the relationships between parenting style, work-family (WFC) conflict and family encounter, and behavioral problems, risky behavior and wellbeing among adolescents. Examining this comprehensive model is important, given that these three family aspects have been found consequential to adolescents in preventing negative behaviors as well as raising the level of their wellbeing (Offer, 2013; Vieira, Matias, Ferreira, Lopez, & Matos, 2016; Walsh, Harel-Fisch, & Fogel-Grinvald, 2010). In this study, the term family time refers to the encounter of mother and adolescent, either with or without other family members (see Crouter, Head, McHale, & Tucker, 2004).

Research on parenting style and adolescents has focused on the question how each of three parenting styles contributes to adolescent functioning in different areas of life (Dwairy, 2004; Silva, Morgado, & Maroco, 2012; Stan, 2012), a question also addressed in this study. We also investigated the mothers' sense of WFC because it has negative ramifications on mothers within the family, including ramifications on family members (Vieira et al., 2016). Another novelty of this study lies in examining the variable family time as mediator of the relationships between parenting style and WFC and the study outcomes. We also examined the relationships between parenting style and the sense of WFC of the mother and family time to see if they contributed to the quality of the encounter which may lead to the adolescent's involvement in negative behaviors and to a decrease in sense of wellbeing (Crouter et al., 2004; Offer, 2013). Examining the specific contribution of each variable in the study and mediating effects, as well as their joint contribution in a broad model might provide a comprehensive view of the way in which these family aspects contribute to the adolescent's negative behavior and wellbeing.

Investigating the mediating effect of the family time variable in the relationships between parenting styles, WFC and behavior problems, risky behavior and wellbeing of adolescents was suggested by the fact that family time enables a behavioral demonstration of parenting style (Darling & Steinberg, 1993) and consequences of the mother's WFC (Costigan, Cox, & Cauce, 2003; Nomaguchi, 2009), and this encounter affects the adolescent's behavior

(Franko, Thompson, Affenito, Barton, & Striegel-Moore, 2008; Milkie, Nomaguchi, & Denny, 2015) and wellbeing (Offer, 2013). Also, it is possible that when a mother succeeds in conducting high quality family time despite non-positive parenting style and/or high WFC, the adolescent might report positive behavioral functioning and a high level of wellbeing.

In addition to examining a broad model, we suggested a theoretical expansion of the term family time, a term that has aroused great interest among researchers, who mostly investigated two variables: frequency of encounters and the kind of activity taking place in them (e.g., Crouter et al., 2004; Milkie et al., 2015; Snyder, 2007). The kind of activity has been investigated, so far, by relating it to the level of the adolescent's success in verbal tests, involvement in negative behavior and the level of well-being (Crouter et al., 2004; Fulkerson et al., 2006). These studies have led researchers to categorize the activities dichotomously into quality and routine family time, a generalized distinction that is not always accurate (Daly, 2001; DeVault, 2000; Lareau, 2003).

These studies indicate the importance of having conducive family time, but it might be claimed that a research approach that focuses on encounter frequency and kind of activity is incomplete. The current study broadens the conceptualization of the term by examining family time using the two conventional variables while adding the emotional ties created between the child and the mother in the course of the encounter. Based on theories of emotional ties between children and parents (Bowlby, 1979; Kohut, 1984; Winnicott, 1957) and research findings as to the contribution of these ties to the prevention of adolescents' negative behavior (Barnett, Shanahan, Deng, Haskett, & Cox, 2010; Rinaldi & Howe, 2012) and to improving their wellbeing (Crouter & Head, 2002; Henry & Morris, 2012), we suggest that this dimension is highly important.

The research main hypotheses were as following:

- (1) A direct contribution of parenting style to behavior problems, risky behavior and adolescents' well-being would be found: the more the adolescent reports parenting style characterized as authoritative, the less will s/he report involvement in behavior problems and risky behavior, and will report higher wellbeing. The more the adolescent reports parenting

style characterized as authoritarian or permissive, the more will s/he report high involvement in behavior problems and risky behavior and low level of wellbeing.

(2) Work family conflict will contribute directly to the outcome measures. That is, the stronger the WFC reported by the mother, the more will the adolescent report involvement in behavior problems and risky behavior and lower levels of wellbeing.

(3) A correlation will be found between family time measures and the outcome measures; i.e., the more the adolescent reports high frequency of quality activities, the less will s/he report involvement in behavior problems and risky behavior and report a higher level of wellbeing.

(4) A positive correlation will be found between authoritative parenting style and family time measures, frequency of shared activity and emotional ties in the course of the activity, and a negative correlation will be found between authoritarian and permissive parenting styles and family time measures.

(5) A negative correlation will be found between WFC and family time measures, shared activity frequency and emotional ties in the course of activity.

(6) In addition to the relationship between parenting style and outcome measures, we hypothesized that family time would mediate between these measures. That is, when the parenting style is characterized as authoritative, the family time will be characterized by high frequency of quality activity and warm emotional ties, followed by the adolescent's low involvement in negative behaviors and a high level of well-being. In contrast, when the parenting style is characterized as authoritarian or permissive, family time will be characterized by a low level of quality activity and a low level of warm emotional ties, followed by a high level of involvement in negative behavior, and a low level of wellbeing.

(7) In addition to the direct relationship between the sense of WFC and the outcome measures, we hypothesized that family time will mediate the relationships between these measures. That is, the lower the mother's level of WFC, the more will family time be characterized by a high frequency of quality activity and warm emotional ties, followed by low involvement in negative behaviors and an increased level of the adolescent's wellbeing.

Participants in the study were 253 working mothers and their adolescent children aged 15 to 18. We focused on working mothers because research findings indicate that WFC is stronger among mothers (Crompton, Brockmann, & Lyonette, 2005; Harkness, 2008; Kan & Gerhsuny, 2010). Mothers see themselves as mainly responsible for raising the children (Craig & Mullan, 2010; Fisher, Egerton, Gershuny, & Robinson, 2007) and they spend more time with the children and conduct more family activities (Bianchi, Robinson, & Milkie, 2006; Craig & Mullan, 2010; Robinson, 2002) which contribute to the children's well-being (Offer, 2013).

We focused on adolescents because during adolescence there is a significant rise in participation in risky behaviors (Currie et al., 2004; Michael & Ben-Zur, 2007; Muuss & Porton, 1998); parents still play a major role for adolescents (Hammen & Rudolph, 2003; Larson & Ham, 1993; Milkie et al., 2015); and having joint encounters with parents is difficult because in addition to parental working hours, the adolescent is also occupied frequently in the afternoons (Hoffman & Sandberg, 2001). Finally, most research on the effect of the mother's work on her children focuses on young children, and there is a need to expand the research to adolescents (Milkie et al., 2015).

Participants in the study responded to a questionnaire dealing with three dimensions of the family encounter: frequency of the joint activity, kind of activity and level of the emotional ties created in the course of the activity. The first two dimensions of the questionnaire were based on the international health questionnaire (HBSC, Harel-Fisch et al., 2011), which forms a part of a multi-national research of the World Health Organization (HBSC-WHO). The questionnaire examines the frequency of conducting each of eight common activities. Factor analysis created a distinction between two kinds of activities: activities of being and activities of doing (Fromm, 1976). Being activities are characterized by creating a common space, they offer more opportunities for expressing elements of emotion and feeling empathy, for creating open communication and a richer interpersonal encounter than in activities of doing. In doing activities the very involvement in the activity is the source of satisfaction, but the interpersonal encounter also can find expression in this activity. The distinctions we have offered regarding the division of activities comprise a continuum.

To family time we added an index, especially constructed for this study, reflecting the emotional ties during family time. This index is based on theories of child-parent relationships (Bowlby, 1979; Kohut, 1984; Winnicott, 1957), on the field of adolescent-parent relationships, among them family coherence and emotional ties between adolescents and their mothers (e.g., Child and Family Center, 2001; Hoogstra, 2005). In addition, we conducted three focus groups, in each 5 to 7 adolescents participated, and we administered preliminary questionnaires to about 200 adolescents. The final version of the questionnaire included 6 statements expressing the measure of emotional closeness between the parent and the adolescent, as experienced by the adolescent .

Subsequently, participants responded to 5 additional questionnaires: 1. A questionnaire that reveals the parenting style of the mother as perceived by the child, featuring three styles: authoritative, authoritarian and permissive (Buri, 1991); 2. Problematic behavior questionnaire that examines the adolescent's involvement in behavior problems: bullying and pestering, use of violence, boycotting and involvement with cyber bullying (HBSC, Harel-Fisch et al., 2011); 3. Risky behavior questionnaire, measuring the adolescent's involvement in risky behaviors: cigarette smoking, a nargila smoking ( Hookah), drug abuse, driving without a license, purchase and abuse of alcoholic drinks (HBSC, Harel-Fisch et al., 2011); 4. Wellbeing questionnaire (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985). Mothers responded to a WFC questionnaire (Wayne, Musisca, & Fleenor, 2004) that was adapted to Israel by (Cinamon & Rich, 2004), as well as to a demographic background questionnaire.

The theoretical model was examined by means of structural equation analysis (Arbuckle, 2010). Findings indicate that an authoritarian parenting style is related to high involvement with behavior problems, and a permissive parenting style is related to high involvement with behavior problems and risky behavior. No relation was found between the authoritative parenting style and these behaviors. A positive relation was found between authoritative parenting style and well-being of adolescents, but not between that index and authoritarian and permissive parenting styles. In contrast to expectations, WFC was not found to be directly connected to outcome measures.

The direct relations between family time and the outcome measures indicate that a high frequency of common being activities (talking, watching television, eating, going to places and visiting friends or relatives) contributed to low involvement in risky behavior, while positive emotional ties in the course of the shared activity contributed to low involvement with behavior problems. The two indices, frequency of being activities and the level of emotional ties in the course of the activity, contributed to the wellbeing of adolescents. The relationship between doing activities (walking, doing sport and playing) and the outcome measures in the model was not significant.

Family time measures were also related to parenting style and WFC. As assumed, a positive correlation was found between authoritative parenting style and frequency of being activities and emotional ties in shared activity. In addition, a negative correlation was found between authoritarian parenting style and emotional ties in shared activities, but no correlation was found between this parenting style and frequency of being activities. Also, no relationships were found between permissive parenting style and family time measures. A negative correlation was found, as expected, between WFC and the two measures of the family encounter: the stronger the mother's sense of WFC, the lower the frequency of being activities and the level of emotional ties in the course of the shared activity.

Mediation findings reveal that the frequency of being activities fully mediates the relation between authoritative parenting style and risky behavior. That is, when the parenting style is characterized as authoritative, the adolescent reports higher frequency of being activities followed by lower levels of involvement in risky behavior. However, the level of emotional ties in the course of the shared activity fully mediates the relation between this parenting style and behavior problems. That is, when the parenting style is characterized as authoritative, the adolescent reports higher levels of emotional ties in the course of shared activity followed by lower levels of involvement in behavior problems. The level of emotional ties partially mediates the relationship between authoritative parenting style and well-being. When the parenting style is characterized as authoritative, the adolescent tends to report a high level of wellbeing. This wellbeing level is explained by good emotional ties and not only by the parenting style. Family

time did not mediate the relationship between permissive parenting style and outcome measures.

Results show that WFC contributed to explaining behavior problems, risky behavior and wellbeing of adolescents, only through the mediation of family time measures. The frequency of being activities mediated the relation between WFC and risky behavior, while the level of emotional ties mediated between WFC and wellbeing. Thus, when the mother reported high WFC, the adolescent reported low frequency of being activity, followed by a high level of involvement in risky behavior. In addition, when WFC was high, the adolescent reported a low level of emotional ties with the mother in the course of the shared activity, followed by high involvement in behavior problems.

Findings of the study suggest benefits of expanding the theoretical approach to the concept of family time, in a way that includes the emotional ties between the adolescent and the mother in the course of the shared activity. This variable was found to be an essential variable in family time research. Hence, while discussing the quality of family time, not only the frequency and kind of activity should be considered as in the past, but also the emotional ties between the parent and the adolescent in the course of the activity need be addressed. In addition, the study results inform that the frequency of being activities and the emotional ties between the adolescent and the mother in the course of the shared activity offer a unique contribution to the adolescent, and, therefore, it is important to examine them at the same time. However, we found that the frequency of doing activities did not contribute to explaining the outcome measures.

Furthermore, we can deduce from the study results that family time is an important variable that may contribute to reducing involvement in negative behaviors and to improving the adolescents' level of wellbeing. The study findings also deepen our understanding of the unique contribution of each family time measure to the adolescent in regard to the mother's experience of WFC and her parenting style. The outcomes of this study offer an additional contribution to the literature by emphasizing the need for deeper understanding of the interrelations between behavior problems and risky behavior. The common assumption



according to the development stage model (Kandel, 1975, 1982, 1991) and researchers (e.g., Jimenez et al., 2012) is that involvement in behavior problems leads to risky behavior. The outcomes of this study show that each kind of behavior has different antecedents. It can be assumed, therefore, that these are two kinds of behavior that are essentially different. Hence, further research is needed to investigate the antecedents for these behaviors in different populations and in younger children, in order to understand what these behaviors have in common, and what is unique to each one of them

