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## **Managing a sustainable career in the contemporary world of work: personal choices and contextual challenges**

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### **Citation**

Darouei, M. (2020, June 9). *Managing a sustainable career in the contemporary world of work: personal choices and contextual challenges*. Meijers-reeks. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/97595>

Version: Publisher's Version

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**Note:** To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

Cover Page



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**Title:** Managing a sustainable career in the contemporary world of work: personal choices and contextual challenges

**Issue Date:** 2020-06-09

## Work from Home Today for a Better Tomorrow! How Working from Home Influences Work-family Conflict and Employees' Start of the Next Workday\*

### ABSTRACT

Previous research examining the career sustainability of teleworkers has predominantly taken an all-or-nothing approach, where individuals working full-time at home are compared with full-time office workers. Yet, individuals' decision to work from home or at the office varies on a daily basis, thus it may be more appropriate to examine within-individual variation in career sustainability on office versus home days. Drawing on the resource (drain) perspective in work-family spillover theory, we build an intraindividual model that investigates the day-to-day effects of working from home on employees' time pressure, work-family conflict and work-related well-being. A total of 34 professional workers participated in our study and were asked to respond to ten daily morning, ten daily afternoon and ten daily evening surveys, across two consecutive work-weeks. In line with our hypotheses, results indicated that on days when employees worked from home, they experienced less time pressure, and in turn, they reported lower levels of work-family conflict on that particular day. Moreover, we found that experiences of work-family conflict predict individuals' next morning engagement and exhaustion levels and affective states towards the organization they work for. These findings suggest that working from home can support individuals in building a sustainable career. We recommend organizations to encourage a work-from-home protocol aimed at supporting individuals' career sustainability.

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\* An earlier version of this chapter was submitted as "Darouei, M., & Pluut, H. Work from Home Today for a Better Tomorrow! How Flexible Working Influences Employees' Next Workday" to the Annual Meeting of the Academy of Management in Vancouver in 2020.

### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

Today, 32% percent of employees in the EU struggle to fulfill family responsibilities because of pressing job demands (Eurofound, 2018). Striking a balance between work and family is crucial as it has a significant impact on employees' well-being (OECD, 2017). Given the commonality of today's high pressure work environments (Prem, Paškvan, Kubicek, & Korunka, 2018), concerns are being raised about how employees can overcome the detrimental effects of high job demands and achieve a satisfactory work-life balance (De Hauw & Greenhaus, 2015). These concerns have urged organizations to re-evaluate their employment policies and seek alternative forms of working that promote sustainable careers. Indeed, an increasing number of firms have implemented telecommuting arrangements with the hope that employees can better manage their work-home interface, safeguard their well-being (Kalliath & Brough, 2008; Kelliher & Menezese, 2019; Matos, Galinsky, & Bond, 2016) and eventually craft a sustainable career. Telecommuting, often referred to as telework or working from home, is an arrangement that enables employees to perform their job at home during some part of the week and stay connected to the office by means of communication technologies (Allen, Golden, & Shockley, 2015). Yet, is it effective?

Interest in the effectiveness of the working from home practice for employees' work-home interface and well-being is reflected in the academic literature, with a growing body of research on the effects of telework on work-family conflict (Delanoeije, Verbruggen, & Germeyns, 2019; Fiksenbaum, 2014; Yao, Tan, & Ilies, 2017). Work-family conflict is defined as "a form of interrole conflict in which the role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect" (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985, p. 77). Numerous studies have shown a negative association between working from home and work-family conflict (for meta-analytic studies, see Allen, Johnson, Kiburz, & Shockley, 2013, and Gajendran & Harrison, 2007), indicating that the work arrangement can be used as a means to alleviate conflict between the two life domains. The vast majority of such studies, however, have taken a between-individual perspective, where work-family conflict experiences of individuals working frequently at home is compared with those of full-time office workers (Allen et al., 2015). Yet, individuals rarely work from home every day but rather combine working from home days with office days (Biron & van Veldhoven, 2016; Delanoeije et al., 2019). Scholars lack a thorough understanding of what happens on days that employees work from home. As a consequence, organizations and employees run the risk that working from home arrangements are adopted and used without proper management. Thus, we believe that it is an important step forward for research on the effectiveness of the working from home practice to capture day-to-day fluctuations in working from home and study relatively short-term effects.

Against this background, we build an intraindividual model that examines the day-to-day effects of working from home on the work-home interface and work-related employee well-being. Specifically, we focus on work interfering with family as an outcome related to the work-home interface, as previous studies have shown that working from home affects work-to-home conflict more directly than home-to-work conflict (Allen et al., 2015; Delanoeije et al., 2019). We propose that experiences of work-family conflict fluctuate across office days versus working from home days because some days are more resource draining than others. We also propose that time pressure is an important mechanism (i.e., mediator) that explains the relationship between working from home and work-family conflict. We then examine how work-family conflict influences the next workday. Here, we focus on how work-family conflict experiences in the evening relate to employees’ well-being (i.e., work engagement and exhaustion) and emotions towards the organization the next morning. Our full conceptual model is presented in Figure 3.1.

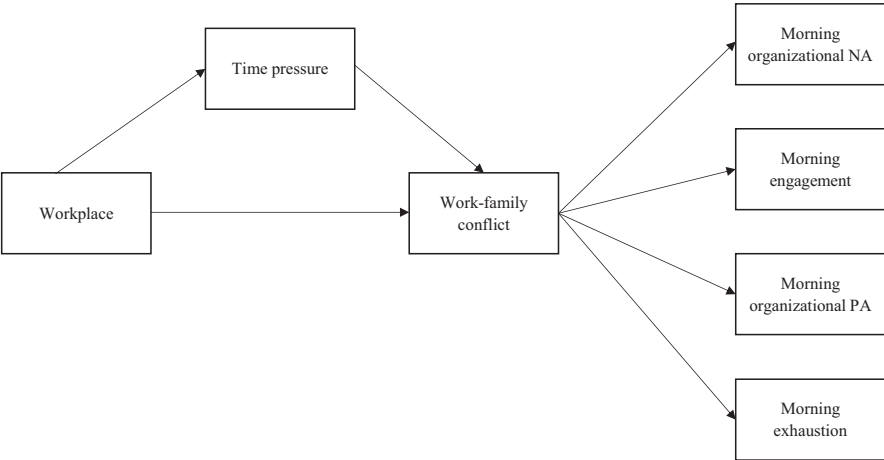


Figure 3.1 | Overall conceptual model

3.2 THEORETICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE CURRENT STUDY

Recent research recommends scholars to move away from a cross-sectional (i.e., between-person) approach towards a more episodic approach, to gain a better understanding of the implications of working from home (Allen et al., 2015; Anderson, Kaplan, & Vega, 2015; Kelliher & Menezese, 2019; Maertz & Boyar, 2011; Vega, Anderson, & Kaplan, 2015). We posit that the working from home practice offered by an organization can be conceptualized as rather stable but employees’ use of this practice is volatile. Hence, we conceptualize working from home at the intraindividual level and examine its effects on work-family conflict and work-related well-being on a day-to-day basis.

In building our conceptual model, we draw on the resource (drain) perspective in work-family spillover theory (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000). Resources, such as, time, and energy are limited and once used in one domain become unavailable for other life domains (Eckenrode & Gore, 1990). Thus, on a demanding workday, employees' personal resources are more likely to be drained, leaving them with fewer resources in the family domain (Ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012). Time-based and strain-based work-family conflicts refer to situations in which work consumes time and energy, respectively, that cannot be spent at home (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). Interestingly, individuals' work-family conflict experiences are likely to vary daily as a result of day-to-day fluctuations in job demands (Ilies et al., 2007; Pluut, Ilies, Curşeu, & Liu, 2018). A commonly experienced job demand that causes work-family conflict is time pressure (Brosch & Binneweis, 2018; De Carlo et al., 2019), indicating that time is a scarce personal resource for employees. Employees' daily work environment (i.e., in the office or at home) may influence the drain of this resource such that time pressure as a job demand fluctuates across days. We take a resource drain perspective and examine how working from home is related to a key precursor of work-family conflict, namely time pressure.

We further use the resource loss spiral principle of conservation of resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll, 1989; Hobfoll, Halbesleben, Neveu, & Westman, 2018) to propose that the resource drain associated with work-family conflict may extend to the next workday. Once resources are lost, individuals become more vulnerable to further resource loss and may find themselves in a resource loss spiral. Researchers have examined the long-lasting impact of resource loss as well as the role that resources play on the shorter term, such as across days or weeks (Airila et al., 2014; Demerouti, Bakker, & Gevers, 2015; Donald et al. 2016). We propose that work-family conflict (which refers to a situation in which resources are depleted) influences how employees feel about their upcoming workday. Specifically, we examine how experiences of work-family conflict in the evening influence work-related well-being the next morning. In examining work-related well-being, we follow a recent line of research that integrates positive and negative perspectives on well-being in the workplace (Fujimoto, Ferdous, Sekiguchi, & Sugianto, 2016; Van den Tooren & Rutte, 2016; Zacher, Schmitt, Jimmieson, & Rudolph, 2018) by focusing in this study on work engagement, emotional exhaustion, and positive and negative affect towards the organization.

### 3.3 HYPOTHESES

Individuals experience work-to-family conflict when demands from work deplete personal resources (e.g., time and energy) and consequently hamper performance at home (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000; Ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012). On days when employees work from home instead of

at the office, they may find execution of their work role less demanding (e.g., less interruptions). Indeed, a vast body of research has shown that telecommuting is negatively related to work role stress (Allen et al., 2015; Gajendran & Harrison, 2007) and work exhaustion (Allen et al., 2015; Sardeshmukh, Sharma, & Golden, 2012). In line with work-family spillover theory, this would imply that working from home reduces the likelihood of experiencing negative spillover from work to family because employees are left with more resources that can be used to actively participate in the family role. While working from home may blur the boundaries between work and family and hence result in work-family conflict (see Schieman & Young, 2010), from a resource (drain) perspective, it should reduce work-family conflict. Indeed, the majority of studies on the relationship between telecommuting and work-family conflict shows a negative association between the two constructs (see Allen et al., 2013, and Gajendran & Harrison, 2007, for meta-analyses). Although most research on the relationship between working from home and work-family conflict has employed a between-individual approach, recent intraindividual research substantiates our claim by showing that on teleworking days, individuals experience less work-to-home conflict than on days they work at the office (Delanoeije et al., 2019). We aim to replicate this finding and put forward the following hypothesis:

*Hypothesis 1:* Within individuals, working from home (compared with at the office) will be negatively associated with work-family conflict.

Time pressure is a work-related stressor that refers to the experience of having to work at a fast pace or having insufficient time to complete work-related tasks (Baer & Oldham, 2006). We argue that on days when employees work at home they experience less time pressure, for the following three reasons. First, on working from home days, employees have significantly reduced contact with their colleagues and supervisors, and thus less work-related distractions that may keep them from focusing on their work-related tasks (Bailey & Kurland, 2002; Golden, Veiga, & Dino, 2008; Haddad, Lyons, & Chatterjee, 2009; Kolb & Collins, 2009; Peters & Wildenbeest, 2010; Taylor & Kavanaugh, 2005). The lack of interruptions may decrease the individual's feeling to speed up the work pace. Another potential explanation for why employees may experience less time pressure on a working from home day is the greater autonomy in deciding how and when to perform their tasks (Gajendran, Harrison, & Delaney-Klinger, 2014). Control over scheduling one's own working day can be used to schedule work efficiently, thus saving energy and time. A final reason for why working from home may have a time pressure reducing potential is that it eliminates commuting time (Peters, Tijdens, & Wetzels, 2004), consequently leaving the employee with more time that can be spent on work-related tasks.

Lending support to the above arguments, empirical research suggests that the working from home practice has the potential to reduce experiences of time pressure (Peters & Van der Lippe, 2007). In their cross-sectional study among 807 employees in The Netherlands, Peters and Van der Lippe (2007), showed that employees working from home more than one day per week on average experience less time pressure than full-time on-site workers. Thus, we expect that on working from home days, individuals experience less time pressure than on office days. Time pressure, in turn, may be a strong predictor of daily work-family conflict. Dealing with time pressure on a given day may keep individuals from actively participating in the family role because of depleted (emotional) resources (Pluut et al., 2018; Prem, Kubicek, Diestel, & Korunka, 2016; Prem et al., 2018). In line with the resource (drain) perspective in work-family spillover theory, which proposes that once resources are expended in one domain they become unavailable for other domains, we put forward the following hypothesis:

*Hypothesis 2:* Within individuals, time pressure experienced at the end of the workday mediates the negative relationship between working from home and work-family conflict experienced at home.

On days when employees are not able to satisfy the needs of the home domain due to the demands of the work role (i.e., work-family conflict), they may experience stress because they could not successfully manage both roles (Grandey & Cropanzano, 1999). We posit that work-family conflict is an exhausting and resource draining experience for two reasons. First, previous research has suggested that experiences of work-family conflict may lead to a negative *state of being*, including negative emotions such as anxiety and dissatisfaction (Greenhaus, Allen, & Spector, 2006). Judge and colleagues (2006), for instance, showed that on days when employees' work interferes with the family role, they experience more negative emotional responses (i.e., hostility and guilt) at home. Second, when stress arises from the incompatibility of two salient life roles, the individual is likely to ruminate about "whether and how one can fix the issues causing the conflict and the potential consequences of the conflict" (Davis, Gere & Sliwinski, 2016, p. 330). In order to overcome negative emotions and prevent rumination, the individual experiencing work-family conflict is likely to engage in self-regulation (Muraven & Baumeister, 2000) and invest personal resources, such as optimism (Beal et al., 2005; Liu et al., 2015), to offset further resource loss.

In line with the resource loss principle of COR theory (Hobfoll et al., 2018), then, conflict between work and family may negatively affect well-being the next morning. We know from previous empirical work that work-related well-being has a state-like component and fluctuates on a daily basis (Liu et al., 2015; Pluut et al., 2018; Simbula, 2010; Sonnentag, Mojza, Demerouti, & Bakker, 2012; Tims, Bakker, & Xanthopoulou, 2011; Van Gelderen, Bakker, Konijn, & Demerouti, 2011). Day-level variations in well-being can be explained by fluctuations in personal resources (Liu et al., 2015;



Sonnentag, Binnewies, & Mojza, 2010). As we argue that individuals who experience work-family conflict are more likely to start the next morning with inadequate personal resources, we expect that day-level variations in work-family conflict explain fluctuations in employees' levels of emotional exhaustion and work engagement the next workday.

First, several studies have shown that work-family conflict is positively associated with burnout and emotional exhaustion (for a review, see Allen, Herst, Bruck, & Sutton, 2000). Taking a resource drain perspective, Simbula (2010), for instance, showed that at the within-person level, work-family conflict experiences predicted emotional exhaustion. Moreover, there is empirical evidence for the longitudinal effect of work-family conflict on emotional exhaustion and burnout (Hall, Dollard, Tuckey, Winefield, & Thompson, 2010; Innstrand, Langballe, Espnes, Falkum, & Aasland, 2008; Karatepe & Tekinkus 2006; Leineweber et al., 2014). Although previous research has shown that work-family conflict predicts emotional exhaustion on the day level and on the long term, we know little about how daily work-family conflict experiences influence the *next* day, specifically how employees feel the next workday. Based on the above theoretical arguments and empirical insights, we put forward the following hypothesis:

*Hypothesis 3:* Within individuals, work-family conflict experienced at home in the evening is positively related to emotional exhaustion the next morning.

Second, we expect that the effect of daily work-family conflict on next morning work-related well-being is not limited to feelings of exhaustion but also affects their levels of engagement. Employees who have enough personal resources (e.g., high levels of energy and mental resilience) are likely to be engaged in their work. Indeed, several studies have demonstrated that feeling recovered and refreshed in the morning (i.e., having energetic resources) helps employees to feel engaged in their work during the day (Kühnel, Sonnentag, & Bledow, 2012; Lanaj, Johnson, & Barnes, 2014; Sonnentag, 2003). When employees find themselves in a resource-depleting situation (i.e., work-family conflict), however, they may decrease their level of job engagement to protect their remaining resources (Babic, Stinglhamber, Bertrand, & Hansez, 2017). Indeed, numerous cross-sectional studies have shown that work-family conflict is negatively associated with engagement (Opie & Henn, 2013; Wilczek-Ruzyczka, Basinska, & Dąderman, 2012), and this negative relationship between work-family conflict and work engagement (vigor in particular) appears to hold over time (see Mauno, Kinnunen, & Ruokolainen's, 2007, for a 2-year longitudinal study). It remains to be investigated, however, how work-family conflict and work engagement relate across days. Using the above empirical insights and in line with the resource loss principle of COR theory, we hypothesize that experiences of work-family conflict in the evening reduce individuals' feelings of work engagement the next morning.

*Hypothesis 4:* Within individuals, work-family conflict experienced at home in the evening is negatively related to work engagement the next morning.

So far, we proposed that experiences of work-family conflict deplete personal resources and leave employees to start the next workday with scarce energy. In what comes next, we argue that work-family conflict also influences individuals' emotions towards the organization. Emotions refer to affective responses to specific events (Lazarus & Cohen-Charash, 2001). Depending on the pleasantness of the event, individuals can experience either positive (e.g., enthusiasm) or negative (e.g., hostility) emotions (Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988).

Failing to meet family demands because of work is unpleasant and thus may trigger a state of negative affect (Livingston & Judge, 2008). Indeed, studies that used within-individual designs found that work-family conflict predicts negative emotions, such as guilt and hostility (Judge et al., 2006). Importantly, these negative emotions are directed to the cause of the conflict as employees are likely to psychologically attribute blame to what has caused the conflict (i.e., the source) and become dissatisfied with that role (Shockley & Singla, 2011; Speights, Bochantin & Cowan, 2019). In fact, previous cross-sectional studies have shown that when work interferes with family, individuals appraise their work negatively, become dissatisfied with their job, and show less commitment to their organization (for meta-analytic studies, see Allen et al., 2000, and Amstad et al., 2011). Consistent with previous within-individual studies that have shown that state-level emotions can last until the next morning (Wang et al., 2013; Tremmel & Sonnentag, 2018), we hypothesize that experiences of work-family conflict in the evening increase feelings of negative affect and reduce feelings of positive affect towards the organization the next morning.

*Hypothesis 5a:* Within individuals, work-family conflict experienced at home in the evening is positively related to negative affect towards the organization the next morning.

*Hypothesis 5b:* Within individuals, work-family conflict experienced at home in the evening is negatively related to positive affect towards the organization the next morning.

In sum, we propose that on days when employees work from home they are less likely to experience work-family conflict than on office days and this relationship is explained by reduced time pressure. Moreover, we propose that the effects of work-family conflict spill over to the next workday, in terms of employees' exhaustion and engagement levels in the morning and how they feel (i.e., positive and negative affect) about the organization they work for.

### 3.4 METHOD

#### 3.4.1 Sample and Procedure

We posted an online application form on network platforms, such as LinkedIn, to recruit professional workers. In order to qualify for participation in the study, the individual needed to be married or co-habiting and to work from home at least two days a week. Furthermore, the invitation indicated a preference for partner participation. A total of 34 individuals and 24 partners indicated to be eligible and agreed to participate in our daily research study. As an appreciation for participants' effort, ten raffle prizes were distributed among the participants. Winners were randomly selected from all eligible participants. Prior to the start of the diary study, participants were requested to respond to a one-time web-based questionnaire, which assessed demographic variables. All of the respondents completed the initial web-based questionnaire. Of the 34 focal employees who participated in our study, more than half (68%) were women. The age of participants ranged from 25 to 58, with a mean of 33 years. On average, participants worked 38 hours and worked from home 2.7 days a week. Individuals held jobs in a variety of sectors, such as the legal sector, academia, and IT.

Over a period of two workweeks individuals were required to fill out three daily web-based surveys, one in the morning at home, one in the afternoon at work (or at home on a working from home day) and one in the evening at home. Participants were instructed to answer the morning questions within an hour of waking up, fill out the afternoon questionnaire within an hour of finishing work and respond to the evening surveys within an hour of going to bed. During this same period, the spouse of the participant received one survey each evening and was asked to fill out the survey before going to sleep. In order to protect the anonymity of each individual, participants were requested to create an identification code, which could be used to link their records across days. Spouses were asked to use the same identification code as their partner, which we could then use to link the answers of participants and their spouses. Given that the recorded surveys contained a time stamp, we could check whether respondents filled them out on the same day. Surveys that were completed the day after were removed for further analyses. Our final sample consists of 34 participants, who provided 324 daily records with an average of 9.4 days per person, out of a maximum of 10 workdays. In terms of the spouse sample, we obtained 205 out of a possible 240 daily responses from 24 participants, with an average of 8.5 days per person.

### 3.4.2 Measures

**Workplace.** As part of the morning survey, respondents were asked to indicate whether they would work from home or at the office on that particular day. We then assigned a code to each category, where 0 indicates a working at the office day and 1 represents a working from home day.

**Time pressure.** Employees' daily experience of time pressure was measured in the afternoon survey, with three items out of the five-item workload scale previously used by Pluut and colleagues (2018). We asked respondents to indicate their agreement with statements such as "I had problems with the pace of work today" and "I worked under time pressure today" on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*. Our measure of time pressure had an average Cronbach's alpha of .82 across days.

**Work-family conflict.** Work-family conflict was assessed using the five-item work-family conflict scale developed by Netemeyer, Boles and McMurrian (1996). Following other intraindividual studies who used this scale (e.g., Pluut et al., 2018; Derks, Bakker, Peters, & Wingerden, 2016), we slightly modified the items to capture employees' daily work-family conflict experiences. Each evening, within an hour of going to bed, respondents rated the level of experienced work-family conflict with statements such as "Today, my job produced strain that made it difficult to fulfill family duties". Answers were recorded using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*. The average internal consistency across evenings was .93.

In the spouses' surveys, we assessed the perceptions of partners regarding the level of work-family conflict of the focal participants. The items used for the self-reports of work-family conflict (as described above) were slightly modified to change the referent. Each evening, spouses were asked to indicate their agreement with statements such as "Today, my partner's job produced strain that made it difficult for him/her to fulfill family duties" on a five-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*). The Chronbach's alpha of our spouse-rated work-family conflict variable was .94 across evenings.

**Work engagement.** Employees' daily engagement was measured in the morning within an hour of their wake-up time with the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES; Schaufeli, Bakker, & Salanova, 2006). The nine-item UWES consists of vigor, absorption, and dedication as dimensions of engagement. To measure *state* work engagement, scholars have created an adapted version of the UWES, which has been validated using daily diary data (Breevaart, Bakker, Demerouti, & Hetland, 2012). We slightly modified Breevaart and colleagues' questions to measure work engagement in the morning instead of retrospectively in the evening. Moreover, given that the absorption dimension of the UWES is only relevant at the end of the work day, we decided to exclude it from our scale. We asked respondents to indicate their agreement to statements such as "This morning, I feel strong

and vigorous when I think about my job" (vigor) and "This morning, I am enthusiastic about my job" (dedication) on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*. Our six-item measure of daily engagement had an average Cronbach's alpha of .91 across days.

**Emotional exhaustion.** We measured emotional exhaustion in the morning survey with six items from the emotional exhaustion subscale of the Maslach Burnout Inventory (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). The items were slightly modified to capture individuals' daily experiences of emotional exhaustion. Each morning, within an hour of waking up, participants were requested to respond to questions such as "When I got up this morning, I felt too fatigued to face another day on the job" and "This morning, I feel like I am at the end of my rope". Respondents indicated their agreement with the statements using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*. Across days, the average internal consistency was .91.

**Positive and negative affect towards the organization.** Affective states towards the organization were measured each morning with five positive adjectives (e.g., "active" and "excited") and five negative adjectives (e.g., "jittery" and "afraid"), taken from the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS; Watson, Clark & Tellegen, 1988). Employees were asked to indicate the extent (1 = *very slightly or not at all* to 5 = *extremely much*) to which they felt each of the adjective descriptors at that moment thinking about the organization they work for. Positive affect (PA) and negative affect (NA) had an average Cronbach's alpha of .94 and .69 across mornings, respectively.

### 3.5 ANALYSES

The data used for the analyses has a nested structure, where days (Level 1;  $n = 324$ ) are nested within individuals (Level 2;  $n = 34$ ). Before conducting the analyses, we calculated the between-individual and within-individual variance components of all our study variables, by estimating null models (i.e., no predictors) for each construct. The percentage of variance because of within-individual variation in study variable scores ranged from 18% (morning organizational PA) to 89% for the workplace variable (see Table 3.1). The overall high day-to-day fluctuations of our study variables confirm that within-individual analyses are suitable to test our model. We used hierarchical linear modelling (HLM 6; Bryk & Raudenbush, 1992) to test our theoretical model. Each level-1 predictor variable was centered relative to the individuals' means across days on the focal variables. In this way, the scores signify deviations from an individual's respective mean, and "the subject serves as his or her own control" (DeLongis, Folkman, & Lazarus, 1988, p. 487).

Table 3.1 | Variance components of null models for level-1 variables

Dependent variable	Within-individual variance ( $\sigma^2$ )	Between-individual variance ( $\tau^2$ )	Percent variability within individuals
Workplace	0.225	0.026	89.5
Time pressure	0.786	0.354	69.0
Work-family conflict employee-rated	0.804	0.346	69.9
Work-family conflict spouse-rated	0.600	0.404	59.8
Morning engagement	0.313	0.488	39.1
Morning organizational PA <sup>a</sup>	0.187	0.826	18.4
Morning exhaustion	0.334	0.456	42.3
Morning organizational NA <sup>b</sup>	0.081	0.129	38.6

Note.  $N = 34$ . <sup>a</sup>PA: Positive affect, <sup>b</sup>NA: Negative affect. Percent variability within individuals was computed as  $\sigma^2 / (\sigma^2 + \tau^2) * 100$ . All within-individual variances were significantly different from zero ( $p < .001$ ).

3.6 RESULTS

The descriptive statistics for all focal variables and the between- and within-individual correlations are presented in Table 3.2. As a first step, to test Hypothesis 1, we regressed work-family conflict on workplace. Lending support to our first hypothesis, the results showed that on days when employees worked from home, they experienced less work-family conflict compared with days on which they worked at the office ( $B = -0.60$ ,  $p < .001$ ). We then used the procedures of Bauer and colleagues (2006) to holistically test a model in which time pressure mediates the path between workplace and work-family conflict. In support of Hypothesis 2, the findings indicated that working from home was negatively associated with time pressure ( $B = -0.55$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and time pressure was positively related with work-family conflict ( $B = 0.25$ ,  $p = .002$ ). Thus, both paths of the mediation model were significantly different from zero. As a next step, we employed an R package called ‘RMediation’ (Tofighi & MacKinnon, 2011), to test our mediation hypothesis directly. This package produces indirect effect estimates and generates confidence intervals around the effects on the basis of the distribution-of-the-product method. RMediation estimated the indirect effect of workplace to work-family conflict via time pressure at  $-0.14$  with a 95% CI of  $[-0.251, -0.049]$ . These results provide support for Hypothesis 2. Put differently, on days when employees worked from home, they felt less time pressure and consequently experienced less work-family conflict, compared with office days.

To test our third and fourth hypotheses, we regressed work-family conflict on emotional exhaustion and engagement, respectively. We observed that on evenings when individuals experienced heightened levels of work-family conflict, they felt more emotionally exhausted ( $B = 0.20$ ,  $p = .004$ ) and less engaged ( $B = -0.12$ ,  $p = .010$ ) the next morning. Finally, we regressed work-family conflict on positive and negative affect towards the organization, to examine Hypothesis 5. Lending support for Hypothesis

5a, the findings indicated that on days when individuals experienced more work-family conflict, they felt more negative emotions towards the organization they worked for the upcoming workday ( $B = 0.06, p = .007$ ). Within individuals, experiences of work-family conflict did not predict positive emotions towards the organization the next morning ( $B = -0.03, p = .588$ ), which leads us to reject Hypothesis 5b.

Table 3.2 | Within-individual and between-individuals correlations of study variables

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Workplace <sup>a</sup>	0.48	0.23		−0.29***	−0.31***	−0.21	0.02	0.01	−0.06	0.01
2. Time pressure	2.78	0.66	−0.29		0.26**	0.19	−0.08	0.03	0.25	0.16
3. Work-family conflict employee-rated	2.07	0.67	−0.23	0.37*		0.40**	−0.19**	−0.07	0.34**	0.20**
4. Work-family conflict spouse-rated	1.86	0.98	−0.34	0.26	0.50*		−0.01	−0.04	0.27*	0.16*
5. Morning engagement	3.19	0.73	−0.13	0.12	−0.15	0.15		0.38***	−0.50***	−0.05
6. Morning organizational PA <sup>b</sup>	2.62	0.92	0.02	0.12	−0.08	0.25	0.78**		−0.11	0.15
7. Morning exhaustion	1.88	0.70	0.07	0.12	0.35*	0.13	−0.73**	−0.62**		0.29***
8. Morning organizational NA <sup>c</sup>	1.35	0.37	−0.06	0.23	0.11	0.15	−0.17	−0.02	0.41*	

Note. <sup>a</sup>Workplace: working at the office = 0, working from home = 1, <sup>b</sup>PA: Positive affect, <sup>c</sup>NA: Negative affect. Means (M) and standard deviations (SD) are between-individual descriptive statistics. The correlations below the diagonal represent between-individual associations, which are calculated based on individuals’ aggregated scores ( $ns = 34$  to  $24$ , pairwise). The correlations above the diagonal represent within-individual associations and are calculated using the group-mean centered scores ( $ns = 152$  to  $305$  for correlations involving spousal ratings and self-reported scores, respectively).

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .00$

3.6.1 Additional Analyses

To reduce the common rater day-specific bias concern related to experience sampling methodology (Ilies, Schwindt, & Heller, 2007), we replicated our mediation analyses with spouse-rated work-family conflict as an outcome. Using spousal rating, we did not find support for Hypothesis 2, which states that time pressure mediates the negative relationship between workplace and work-family conflict (indirect effect =  $-0.053$ , 95% CI of  $[-0.145, 0.026]$ ). However, the direct effect of workplace on spouse-rated work-family conflict was significant ( $B = -0.36, p = 0.007$ ). In other words, spouses confirmed that on days when employees worked from home, work was less likely to interfere with the family domain.

3.7 DISCUSSION

Our intraindividual study aimed to elucidate the process by which working from home affects employees’ work-home interface and consequently work-related well-being. Integrating work-family spillover theory (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000) with the resource loss spiral principle from COR theory (Hobfoll et al., 2018), we argued that on days when employees work at the office, they are more likely to (a) lose resources and (b) find themselves in a



loss spiral. In line with the first argument, we demonstrated that on office days, individuals experienced more work-family conflict, through greater perceptions of time pressure. In addition, we found that on working from home days not only employees but also their spouses reported higher levels of work-family conflict. Yet, we did not find support for the mediating effect of time pressure on the relationship between workplace and spouse-rated work-family conflict. It may be that the effects of time pressure as a work stressor are less noticed by the partner. This finding is in line with recent research that posits that some work-related demands are less observable by the significant other, and may be perceived by partners as less interfering with family participation (Ilies, Huth, Ryan, & Dimotakis, 2015).

Lending support to the second argument, we illustrated that employees start the next morning feeling emotionally exhausted and less engaged and they have higher negative affect towards the organization they work for. Interestingly, experiences of work-family conflict in the evening did not predict employees' positive affect towards the organization the upcoming day. An explanation for this finding might be that work-family conflict is a negative situation and positive affective states correspond with positive events instead of negative events (Gable, Reis, & Elliot, 2000). It should also be noted that positive affect showed very small within-person variability (18%, see Table 3.1), suggesting that this variable is less sensitive to day-to-day fluctuations.

### 3.7.1 Strengths and Implications for Research

Our findings contribute to research on work and family by elucidating what happens on a working from home day, why it has a work-family conflict-reducing potential and how work-family conflict experiences spill over to the next workday. First, we are among the first (see also Delanoeije et al., 2019) to relate working from home to work-family conflict on a daily level. But it remains elusive *why* precisely working from home has a work-family conflict-reducing potential. This study examined how time pressure explains the negative relationship between working from home and work-family conflict. Consistent with the idea that the very nature of telework supports individuals in saving (working) time (Haddad, Lyons, & Chatterjee, 2009), our results show that on days when individuals work from home they experience less time pressure than on office days. Second, it seems that employees who work from home are left with more resources that can be used to actively participate in the family role, and therefore experience less work-family conflict. Third, we drew on COR theory (Hobfoll et al., 2018) to posit that experiences of work-family conflict also extend to the upcoming workday, in terms of employees' energetic levels and how they feel about the organization they work for. Research to date has mostly tested negative spillover effects from work to family within the same day (e.g., Pluut et al., 2018), and little effort has been expanded to study overnight effects of work-family conflict (Du, Derks, & Bakker, 2018). The current



research suggests that the resource draining nature of work-family conflict has cross-day implications. Specifically, we found support for the resource loss spiral principle of COR, such that experiences of work-family conflict deplete personal resources, such as energies, leaving employees to feel emotionally exhausted and less engaged in their work the next morning. This is in accordance with the process view of the work-home resources model of Ten Brummelhuis and Bakker (2012), which entails that effects of work-family conflict develop over time. In addition, our findings propose that individuals wake up with negative affect about the organization they work for when work has interfered with their family life the previous day. This result is entirely consistent with prior research suggesting that people are likely to become unhappy with the cause of the conflict as they attribute blame to the source (Shockley & Singla, 2011). Yet, our study is unique in that it is among the first to show how daily work-family conflict experiences influence how individuals feel about the organization they work for and how such emotions last till the next workday.

Finally, our study contributes to research on the working from home policy. Most working from home research has studied between-person differences (Biron & van Veldhoven, 2016). Such cross-sectional studies require employees to place themselves in either a “home worker” or “office worker” category. Although this approach is appropriate when examining differences between the two worker types, it may not portray a realistic picture of how the policy is used. In The Netherlands, for instance, approximately one-fifth (19%) of the working population works from home on an occasional basis (CBS, 2018), indicating that many individuals work from home on some days and spend the rest of their workdays at the office. Consistent with this trend, a recent review (Allen et al., 2015) posited that working from home should be studied at the within-individual level because employees’ workplace is likely to fluctuate on a day-to-day basis. For the current study we sought out participants that showed very high within-person variability for this construct (89.5%, see Table 3.1). It enabled us to develop an intraindividual model of the daily consequences of working from home. Our results show that everyday decisions to work from home or at the office have important consequences, not only for how employees experience the workday (i.e., time pressure) and how this affects their home life but also for how they start their next workday. In doing so, we believe our study advances research on the working from home policy.

### 3.7.2 Practical Implications

Our day-level research study holds critical practical implications for organizations and employees. First, organizations are highly recommended to offer employees the possibility to work from home, at least on some days, as part of their employment policies. Results from our research showed that working from home can reduce the likelihood that employees experience conflict between work and family and may aid in shaping more energetic

and positive subsequent workdays. We know from previous research that engaged employees perform better, have more creative ideas, and transfer their energy to co-workers (Christian, Gartzke, & Slaughter, 2011; Orth & Volmer, 2017; Van Mierlo & Bakker, 2018). Adopting a working from home policy may enable employees to successfully manage both the work and family role and organizations can reap the productivity benefits of employees' work engagement.

A second implication is related to our finding that reduced feelings of time pressure (at least partly) account for why working from home results in lower work-family conflict. It seems that many employees experience the office as a rather stressful work environment that puts them under time pressure, which in turn has negative consequences for their work-home interface. Organizations need to take proactive measures in regard to this problem. We believe solutions can be found in the domains of social support and stress management. Prior research has shown that daily social support from supervisors can reduce the strain caused by work demands and thus aid in alleviating experiences of work-family conflict among employees (Pluut et al., 2018). We therefore suggest supervisors to help employees manage their time effectively and find non-disturbing workspaces to minimize work-related interruptions. Moreover, in terms of stress management, supervisors can help employees to change their appraisal of time pressure. It seems the employees in our sample appraised time pressure as a hindrance given that it had unfavorable consequences for their work-home interface. According to recent research, however, daily experiences of time pressure may also have a motivating effect (i.e., increased work engagement) when controlling for strain (Baethge, Vahle-Hinz, Schulte-Braucks, & Van Dick, 2017). Helping employees to appraise time pressure as a challenge instead of a hindrance may reduce its negative effect on individuals' work-home interface.

Finally, our results have crucial implications for employees. Employees who can make use of the working from home policy need to become aware that their everyday decision to work from home or at the office has critical consequences in terms of well-being. Our findings suggest that working from home days are less resource depleting than office days because employees experience less time pressure. Frequent exposure to a work-related stressor, such as time pressure, may not be sustainable on the long-term (e.g., becoming burned out, see Schaufeli & Buunk, 2003). Thus, it is key that individuals seek the opportunity to work from home for at least some portion of the week.

### 3.7.3 Limitations and Directions for Future Research

We should note several limitations of the current research. First, while we measured daily spouse reports of work-family conflict at home, common method bias is a possible limitation since our remaining variables were self-reported (Siemens, Roth, & Oliveira, 2010). However, considering that

on working from home days employees are not in direct contact with their supervisors and colleagues, it would not be feasible to collect multisource data for the other work-related constructs in our model (e.g., time pressure, engagement). Another limitation relates to the generalizability of our findings because our sample consisted exclusively of office workers. Jobs that cannot be performed by means of information technology may not be suitable for telework (Allen et al., 2015) and thus our findings may not extend to all types of workers. For instance, occupations that require presence at the workplace for personal interaction with customers (e.g., healthcare) may not lend themselves to working from home.

A second limitation relates to the conceptualization of our predictor and outcome variable. First, employees' use of the telework policy was merely assessed in terms of working from home. That is, we specifically recruited employees who mainly choose their home as the location of the worksite on teleworking days. Thus, our sample does not lend itself to examine differences in the effects of various work environments outside of the office. Perhaps working at a café yields different results in terms of experiences of time pressure because of increased interruptions. For a more nuanced understanding of the daily consequences of the telework policy, future research should collect data from employees who choose to work from different locations outside the office and examine any differences between these telework locations. Second, our outcome variable referred to work-family conflict (as perceived by either the focal participant or the spouse) but we did not test directly family in-role behaviours. To better understand how family life is affected by experiences of time pressure during the workday, future research may want to supplement our model with measures such as spousal interactions and time spent with the family. Existing research provides some guidance, such as looking at the daily relationship between work-family conflict and social interactions with the family (Ilies et al., 2007).

Third, the current study lacks data on possible boosters that may exacerbate the proposed relations in our model. We know from prior research, for instance, that employees who have telecommuted for over a year are better able to reap the benefits of the practice than individuals who have less experience (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007). It would be a valuable research endeavour to collect data regarding individuals' telecommuting experience (e.g., years) to test for possible cross-level moderating effects.

Finally, our findings do not provide a thorough picture of the next-day consequences of work-family conflict because we did not explore why (i.e., mediators) experiences of work-family conflict negatively affect work-related well-being the next morning and when (i.e., moderators) these effects are more likely to hold. It would be interesting to examine whether evening recovery experiences alleviate the negative effects of work-family conflict on next morning experiences, as previous research has shown that psychological detachment from work and sleep quality predict negative affect and fatigue the next morning before going to work (Sonnentag, Binnewies, & Mojza, 2008).

