Family vs. Work
Victoria Caparas

From where I come, the vast continent of Asia, the family is top priority. In our highly collectivist societies, to build a family is a filial duty to: first, continue a lineage, and second, make sure that parents will be cared for in their old age. The division of labor is traditional: men are the breadwinners while women stay home to take care of the children and the household.

But, slowly, our societies are beginning to accept Western, or rather global, norms. For one, women have become well-educated. The economic landscape can change rapidly as more and more of them join the workforce. Consequently, more and more women are feeling the pressure to work outside the home as primary, secondary, or solitary breadwinners to ensure decent lives for their family members.
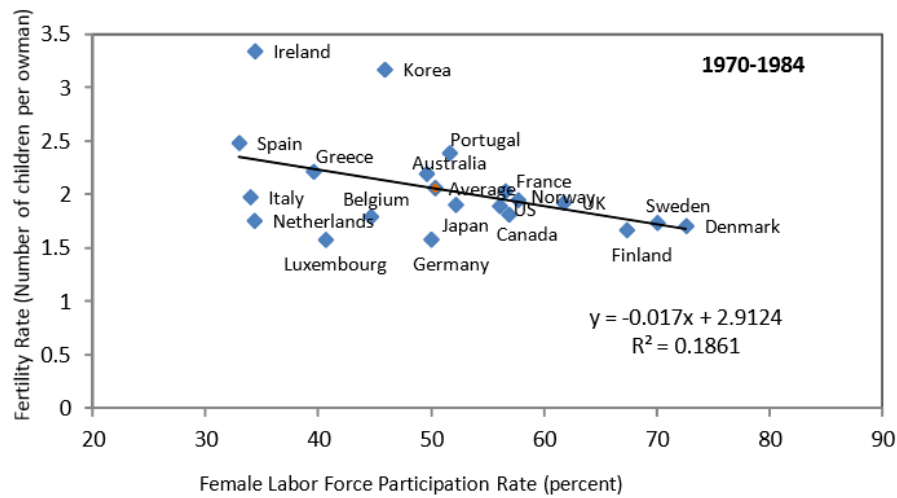
In America, dual-earner families are the most common.. Seventy percent of couple families with children aged 0-14 by 2007 have both parents working fulltime. Dual-earner families is also the most common in majority of OECD countries except for Japan, Turkey, and here—Mexico.

If the family has two parents working outside the home, the biggest question is: who minds the children and the home? And that question goes right to the heart of what I want to talk about today.

Is the family an obstacle to thriving at work? Is work a hindrance to building a family? Authors Stewart Friedman and Jeff Greenhaus put the dilemma more eloquently in their book, *Work and Family: Allies or Enemies?*

If you look at the realities of many families, the answer becomes quite obvious: family and work hardly go together. They are more enemies than allies.
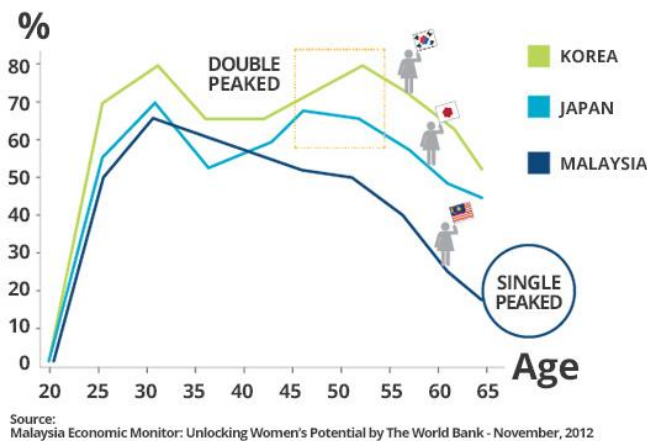
1. First, work-life conflicts are oftentimes resolved by postponing marriage or parenthood. A global survey showed that executives in Asia were more likely to have made a conscious choice of not marrying or entering a committed relationship because of work. Economists at the IMF have reported a negative relationship between fertility and women's labor participation in 19 OECD countries[i]:

Fertility Rate (Number of children per owman) vs Female Labor Force Participation Rate (percent), 1970-1984

$$y = -0.017x + 2.9124$$
$$R^2 = 0.1861$$

2. Second, because women find it more difficult to combine paid work with childcare, they tend to quit their jobs when they get married and have children. I cite an Asian country. In this chart, you will see that Singaporean women's labor participation peaks at the 25-29 age group[ii] and then they exit presumably for childcare and elder care.
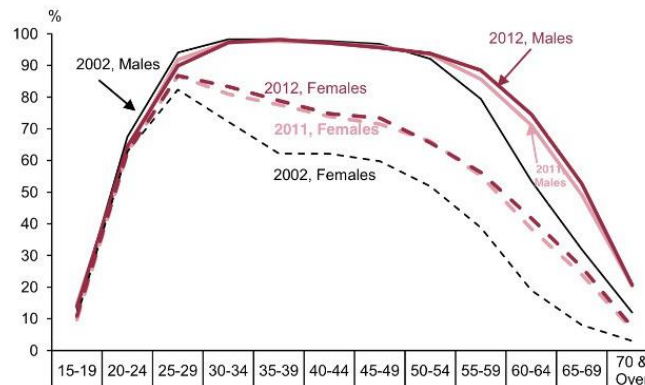
In this other chart[iii], you will see that Malaysian women's labor participation is similar to that of Singapore. A 2012 World Bank report calls it a "double-burden" for women to take care of children and elderly and manage their home. On the other hand Japan and Korea display two peaks like the letter M. The women in these countries work up to marriage or childbearing. They drop out of the labor force to care for children only to return again to work (largely as part-timers) when the children are older. Seven out of ten Japanese women return to work in their forties.[iv]

Source:
Malaysia Economic Monitor: Unlocking Women's Potential by The World Bank - November, 2012

The cause of enmity between family and work seems to be TIME. Both require time. A day has 24 hours for each and every one regardless of age, sex, or race. If an employee is at work, he can't be tutoring his kids. If an employee is at home attending to a sick child, she can't be at her optimum best in replying to office mails.

But many authors believe that there is a problem between family and work that runs deeper than TIME. It is the psychological impact and interference of work on family, and family on work. Depending on one's position within the company, home boundaries can be more permeable than work boundaries. People who have been promoted higher in the corporate ladder could recall that when they were much lower in the hierarchy, they tended to bring home work more often; they had more emergencies that needed quick action. They are continuously concerned with work matters even when at home. It means that leaving the workplace does not necessarily mean reducing one's psychological work involvement.

The conflict between family and work has real consequences: lower productivity, stress, burnout, lack of motivation, and low morale, to name a few. For women, work-family conflicts can have career penalties like the lack of promotion. Often, fulltime work demands total devotion and availability to office and travel schedules—quite incompatible with having commitments at home.

Nevertheless, managing work-family conflicts is not only a women's issue. Men are also concerned about their families and reconciling work-family demands, although they show it differently from the women. Men can also tend to be unproductive at work when they have conflicts with the wives or problems with family finances.

Men, like the women, also contend with social expectations. A male VP I interviewed in a telecommunications industry remarked, "In this country where there are many female migrant workers, the fathers would rather leave the children to the relatives. They don't want to hear people say 'look at that man, he is staying home while his wife is working herself to death overseas' or other comments like that."

Similarly, censure awaits a working man who is beset by family concerns during office hours. A single female I.T. employee observes that there are many married female colleagues who call on their children at the hour they are expected to be home from school. She adds, "I don't observe any male colleague doing that. If ever I overhear one phoning the kids at home, I might just think, 'Where is his wife anyway?'"

Perhaps the most tragic case of enmity between family and work is in *karo-jisatsu*, i.e. "suicide by overwork" in Japan, when workers work tremendously long hours to the point of self-destruction.

Yet, this is not the time to lament. There is a glimmer of hope, of better work-family for workers and their families. Work and family need not be enemies but allies.

Hope from Work-Family Research

Six years after the publication of the book *Work and Family: Allies or Enemies*, one of the authors, Jeff Greenhouse, co-wrote with Professor Gary Powell the journal article, "*When Work and Family are Allies: A Theory of Work-Family Enrichment.*"

They argued that work-family literature has been dominated by a conflict perspective. Human beings have a scarce resource in time and energy. Proponents of the conflict perspective assume that persons who participate in multiple roles (such as work and family) inescapably experience conflict and stress, and these diminish the quality of life.

On the other hand, a number of research takes the expansionist approach. It assumes that the human spirit has a great capacity to expand, to take in more work than it can handle, for a worthy motive. And love for the family is a noble goal that pushes a person to work. Research in this area examines the rewards and benefits in combining work and family. Studying the positive relationships between work and family has given rise to concepts of enrichment, positive spillover, enhancement, and facilitation.

In simple terms, how can participation in multiple roles be beneficial? Research found three areas:

First, participation and satisfaction in multiple roles can bring about greater well-being than having only one role or being dissatisfied with one role. For example, being able to enjoy the job perk of a health insurance assures working moms of less worries and greater well-being. Emotional gratification for a man who earns well and is able to support his family promote well-being at work and at home.

Second, participation in both work and family roles can buffer persons from distress in any one of their multiple roles. For example, emotional social support within the family can help a parent recover for off-work activities. How many times have you heard someone beset with work problems exclaim: how fortunate I am to have a wonderful family to go home to? Think of this buffering effect if you manage a portfolio of stocks—the loss in one can be offset by the profit in another.

Lastly, the experiences in one role can produce experiences and outcomes in the other role. There is actually a transfer of positive experiences from one sphere to another.

Work enriches family life: Career women can run their home professionally with the same skills and attitudes that make them effective at work. For example, active cultivation of a network of contacts is a prized management skills. Women can use the close ties or social network and useful information from the workplace as a resource in managing the home. For instance, an equipment maintenance man who did well in the office has been contracted by a number of female employees to service their house air-conditioning units.

Family life enriches work: On the reverse, work in the home can also produce transferable skills that are relevant in the workplace. A pertinent tribute I heard from two male presidents in the manufacturing industry in two separate interviews is that *Women are good housekeepers and they bring these housekeeping skills in the office*. While they spoke, I sensed their gratitude for a skill the company did not spend for but they were surely benefiting from.

But you will note in the two previous examples that the resource in the skills generated in one role was instrumental to improve performance in another role. That is only the instrumental path.

Work-family enrichment may also follow the affective path or the indirect pathway where better performance is achieve through positive affect like dispositions, moods, emotions, and mental states. For example, a working couple may experience more creativity and satisfaction at home after experiencing a happy week at work. On the reverse, after spending a great weekend away with the family, an employee may feel more enthusiastic, alert, or energetic when he gets back to the office on a Monday.

Research continues finding out how organizational initiatives for work-family balance can result to work-family enrichment. So now let's focus on these organizational initiatives.

Hope from family-responsible companies

Businesses are transforming their way of managing people by being more family-friendly. They realize that family-friendly programs result to greater job satisfaction, better mental health, reduced stress, and self-reported higher levels of engagement, fewer absenteeism, and enhanced productivity.

When companies see the need to grow and develop their human capital, they embrace work and family balance as a key competitive business strategy. They expand the options of employees to develop their careers according to their individual needs and circumstances. They change the culture by rethinking the manner, place, and time when work is done and when business results are achieved.

Randall Tobias, former CEO and now Chairman Emeritus of Eli Lilly, aptly reiterates the same principle for the 21st century employer: [v]

> Such efforts to help employees make a life as well as a living are really no more than recognition of the new reality. You can ask people to leave their personal lives at the factory fence; in the old days, that was the culture of most corporations, including our own. But you're really just kidding yourself if you think that they have the capacity to comply. You cannot hire part of a person. You get the sore back along with the skillful hands. You get the anxious heart along with the educated brain.

I would like to share with you the global study of the IESE Business School's International Center for Work and Family. This study envisions a world where companies effectively assist their employees to integrate work, family, and personal lives. I fully share this vision with Prof. Nuria Chinchilla who was instrumental in making me participate in their global research since 1999.

(Prof. Nuria Chinchilla became my thesis adviser upon the death of the former IESE Dean Juan Antonio Perez-Lopez in 1996. Some of you here might be familiar with these two professors of Managing People in Organizations.)

The team of Prof. Chinchilla in IESE created the concept of Corporate Family Responsibility which is the "internal, essential, and nuclear dimension of Corporate Social Responsibility." CFR considers the employees' families as an important stakeholder of business organizations. The families are the most important partners of the companies, as they helpform a new generation of workforce committed to improving their competitiveness and sustainability. Helping employees themselves to nurture a healthy balance between career and family is already a smart business investment–after all, a happy family person is a productive employee.

CFR hinges on the company's leaders, the culture it fosters, and the policies it promotes to cultivate work and family integration in work places. A company with CFR has leaders that:

- Make sure every decision takes people into account
- Create flexible and equal opportunity policies and practices
- Foster worker commitment and satisfaction
- Increase the competitiveness and sustainability of the company

The three dimensions of CFR are company policies, supervisor support, and organizational culture.

- **Company policies** that facilitate work-life balance include options of time flexibility such as telecommuting, flexible hours, part time hours/job sharing, and short time/compressed week. They also provide professional support services and family benefits that go beyond economic compensation, including personal and professional counseling, seminars on work-family reconciliation, in-company childcare centers, leaves of absence to care for family members, and maternity/paternity leaves beyond the legal minimum.

- **Supervisor support** lies in managers who know how to listen to professional and personal problems, build trust to speak and effectively resolve conflicts, organize the department so that both company and employees benefit, and are good role models.

- **Organizational culture** refers to how taking advantage of family-related/flexibility policies is generally perceived within the organization, affecting the employees' inclination to use them. Corporate family responsibility fosters a culture that values working parents' use of work-family policies without penalizing their careers, and respects people's workloads without creating expectations for them to put work over family time.

To measure Corporate Family Responsibility is the diagnostic tool called the IFREI which stands for the IESE Family-Responsible Employer Index. Since 1999, more than 3,800 companies from 19 countries have participated in this survey.

A new version of the questionnaire, IFREI 1.5, was developed in 2010, this time addressed to employees. With respondents from 22 countries, the IFREI 1.5 measures the impact that policies, the supervisor, and culture have on the organizational and individual outcomes.

The logo of CFR shows the desired progression from a Type D to a Type A workplace. What do these ABCD types signify?

Let us start from the least desired workplace to the more family-responsible type.

> **Polluted**. The work environment systematically hinders integration between work, family, and personal life. These areas enter systematically into conflict.
>
> **Unfavorable**. The work environment occasionally hinders work-family-personal life integration. Some policies in place but not widely implemented.
>
> **Favorable**. The work environment is supportive; its work-family balance policies are instituted with a broad degree of acceptance. Its culture and practices occasionally encourage balance between work, family, and personal life.
>
> **Enriching**. The work environment is very positive and favors the integration work-family-personal life. These areas enrich each other, achieving a high level of satisfaction and commitment. Its management has solid conviction for the need for work-family balance. Its family-responsible policies are implemented, understood, and accepted throughout the organization.

The use of the category "polluted" requires some explanation. The environmental movement has gone a long way in the past 50 years in terms of advocating for more sustainable environment for all inhabitants of this planet. We join that movement by focusing on the sustainable organizational practices that will protect the human ecology and maintain a working environment for employees to fulfill their duties as spouses, parents, and caregivers.

A business organization impacts on the human ecosystem of people, family, and societies.[vi] It influences the employees' quality of life and their ability to satisfy other vital roles. Companies that promote CFR create enriching environments that promote work-life integration. Workers have time to raise children, and care for the elderly and other dependents. On the other hand, a low level of CFR produces polluted environments that result in dissatisfaction, stress, loss of motivation, and turnover intentions.

Our latest IFREI survey has a good representation of over 17,000 respondents around the globe. The sample has 55 percent male respondents. 64.5 percent of all respondents (69 percent men and 59 percent women) have children. Moreover, only 42 percent of the respondents are managers. More than half (60 percent) of the people in non-managerial positions are parents.

The survey results show that 15% perceive their work environment as Enriching, 31% perceive it as Favorable, 41% Unfavorable, and 13% Polluted.

We are measuring perceptions here because research has found that the mere presence of family-supportive policies and benefits do not always translate to positive employee job attitudes. An employee can perceive that the organization is not family-supportive and hence, is not likely to avail of family-friendly benefit options. Therefore, the organizations will not likely profit from the economic gains expected of work-family initiatives.

Our study has revealed the many benefits of Corporate Family Responsibility:

- Fewer intentions to leave the company – only 5 percent for those in an enriching environment claim to intend leaving their current company, compared with 50 percent of those in polluted environments.
- More productivity – in an enriching environment people are 19 percent more productive than those who work in polluted environments where it is impossible to integrate work and family life.
- Higher perception of support – 88 percent of employees in enriching environments perceive that the company supports them, compared with 26 percent of people in environments that make it difficult to have work-family balance.
- Better health – 78 percent of respondents express general health when in an enriching environment, compared with 55 percent of those in a polluted environment
    - When employees have to take care of young children and their environment is enriching, their health is 40 percent better than what is perceived by those who take care of children and are in polluted environments.
    - Employees who care for dependent parents and work in environments that allow them to balance say that they enjoy excellent health, 71 percent more than those in the same circumstances who work in polluted environments.
- More dedication to young children – on a weekly basis, people in enriching environments dedicate 21 percent more time to having dinner with their children, 32 percent more time to playing with them and 37 percent more time to reading together, than those in polluted working environments
- Better quality of life – 83 percent of people in polluted environments consider themselves to have poor quality of life, while 54 percent of people in enriching environments perceive a high quality of life.

Policies

The study results indicate flexible working hours as a policy is accessed by more than half of world's men and women, while less than 40 percent say they have access to the other flexibility options.

The relatively greater prevalence of flexible working schedule over telecommuting and the other flexible working arrangements could also be explained by the culture of "face time" which assumes that being on worksite is equivalent to being productive. Even the compressed workweek is not as popular as flex-time

because the employee is off from work and not accessible for a full weekday even if he/she puts in a full week's work.

It is also possible that there is more access to telecommuting than what is reflected by the respondents. However, even those who qualify for the benefit of working away from the office may opt to stay within company premises so that they will not lose out on office news, networking, promotions, or opportunities for professional development. These disadvantages are much less for those who use flexitime since they are still present on the office premises on the core work hours—they arrive and leave at discretionary times.

It is surprising that more telecommuters are men. A *New York Times* article featured a recent telephone survey with results showing that more men than women telecommute.[vii] The study found that 31 percent of fulltime workers opt to telecommute at least part of the time, three-quarters of these are men.[viii] Troup and Rose (2012) cite international studies concluding that men are as motivated as women to work from home.[ix]

The use of part-time work is not so prevalent. However, it is to be expected that more women than men do part-time work, primarily because the women are the secondary breadwinner in the family and they continue to be primarily responsible for childcare and domestic tasks.

Results also show that 23 percent of the men and 25 percent of the women have access to paternity and maternity leaves, respectively, beyond the legal minimum. Why would a company go beyond the legally-stipulated minimum requirements? Half (49 percent) of organizations surveyed in the UK say offering paternity leave beyond the statutory minimum has had a positive impact on employee morale.[x] Another study noted that employees in law firms that have access to generous policies are more apt to return to work.[xi] Retention is one significant motive—providing the bare minimum of what the law allows may not attract talented career women to balance employment and family.[xii]

Leadership

Without the support from supervisors, even the most family-friendly of policies will not help. The supervisor's role is critical in taking on the department's outputs, determining staffing levels, allocating the tasks, and approving work scheduling—including leaves.

A manager fosters CFR by seeing the value of caring for the family. He/she respects personal freedom, encourages balance by way of organizing the department and supports subordinates by facilitating work and family reconciliation using appropriate solutions.

This is not exactly the same as the caring behavior of managers who can motivate his subordinate to do the job well and earn a promotion but who may not be supportive of his family responsibilities. For instance, a manager can offer a subordinate a promotion and relocation without considering their implications to the affected person's family.

Research found that family-supportive supervisory behavior consists of four dimensions: emotional support, instrumental support, role-modeling behaviors, and creative work-family management.

- Emotional support is perceived in a manager who is approachable, takes time to talk to their workers, lowers the barriers for them to open up about non-work matters and family issues that impact their work, and sympathizes with their work-family dilemmas. Results show that female managers are perceived more favorably than male managers. Perhaps male bosses find it more difficult to navigate the emotions in assisting their subordinates.

- As regards the manager's instrumental support, the employee trusts that his manager will be able to assist him to solve particular personal and/or professional conflicts like approving requests for leaves or flexible schedules, coordinating the department's workload which would be affected by the employee's request, and the like. Results show an almost equal perception of male and female managers. This means that both managers can be effective in this area.

- Policy management refers to the way the manager organizes his department to facilitate that each and every one can benefit from a balanced work/life. Policy management affects the department, foreseeing the problems arising from work-family conflicts of each member and the unit as a whole, and effectively implementing changes for the better. Women managers are slightly ahead of male managers in this area. Perhaps the women managers are particularly skilled in showing fairness to all.

- Lastly, role modeling involves behaviors that give confidence to observers that work-family balance gives good results. Both men and women rate the women managers more favorably in the area of exemplarity. There seems to be fewer models of work-family balance in male managers as compared to female managers.

Culture

Work and family integration will not be fully achieved without the support of the prevailing culture in the organization. That's because no matter how many relevant policies there are, or how supportive the supervisors are, the employees won't have recourse to them if the prevailing culture sees non-work domains as separate private worlds, a deterrent to career advancement or a constraint to efficient teamwork.

Some companies have culture that may offer flexibility policies, for instance, but those who take advantage of them are thought of as slackers. On the reverse side, employees who do overtime are praised and deemed to be on the fast track for a promotion. There is also the culture of putting work over all the other things, which fosters an imbalance of work and family life.

Although maternity and paternity leaves are benefits due to qualified employees, preferences and perceptions regarding them can be influenced by groups with which the employees work. Having co-workers and supervisors who are also trying to balance work and family demands helps create an atmosphere that supports taking these leaves. Otherwise, employees who use these family leaves may be seen as expensive labor or disruptive of teamwork and work schedules.

Results show that, worldwide, half of the men and women do not resent the extended leaves taken by their colleagues to take care of a newborn. This implies that 1 in 2 employees could feel or express ill will towards the employee on leave.

The general culture towards flextime, part-time or job sharing policies, however, is more a bleak picture as only 21 percent of men and 26 percent of women believe that making use of these policies do not affect one's chances of advancing in one's career.

Then there is the unshakeable notion that one must work more than the required hours in order to advance in one's career. In the Philippines, only 36 percent of men and 41 percent of women do not believe that they must put in more hours than first established to advance in one's career. This indicates that more than half of the population accepts that to excel in one's career, one must work long hours. The outcomes of chronically hardworking employees can range from dedication and engagement at work to exhaustion and burnout.

These are the companies that have participated in the IFREI surveys:

ANNEX 19. COMPANIES PARTICIPATING IN THE IFREI

And these are the countries participating in the IFREI research:

You will see the Philippines is the first and only country representing Asia. I would be willing to have some more collaborators from this big continent.

Hope from the Community

So we've talked about how research has lead us to formulate the IFREI. And we know that the IFREI is a way to measure how well working environments help employees with work-family balance. Companies must strive to create enriching environments, but it is not that simple. Enriching environments are not only the product of policies and benefits, but also must be supported by the supervisors and the organizational culture.

Now, how can employers who have achieved family-responsibility and created enriching environments be known as such?

The Work Family Foundation Canada (WFFC) is a partner of the IESE International Center for Work and Family to push for change in workplaces. It is a non-profit organization created in 2010 with the mission to study and promote work, family, and personal life balance. The organization raises awareness of the effects of CFR on employees and companies, does research to analyze the implementation of family-friendly policies, and recognizes the companies that put CFR into practice through accreditation.

Interested companies may only apply for accreditation when they have received an IFREI 2.0 diagnosis where 70% of employees are within the Enriching (A) and Favorable (B) quadrants, as formulated by the team of Prof. Nuria Chinchilla of the IESE Business School-Center for Work and Family (IESE-ICWF). Once they qualify, companies may submit a solicitation for accreditation along with the final report of the IFREI 2.0, which will be evaluated by the Foundation's Academic Committee.

Once granted, the accreditation is valid for three years from the date of the final report. The company may use the "Accredited Member" seal in those 3 years. It identifies them locally and internationally as one of those companies that truly foster work, family and personal life balance. Accredited members also receive a diploma from the WFFC and a trophy attesting to the company's excellent diagnostic results in the IFREI.

The WFFC accreditation attests to the company's excellent diagnostic results in Corporate Family Responsibility. When a company gets accredited, it is a clear sign that its employees are working in enriching and favorable environments—they have reasonable work hours, enjoy flexible working policies, have supportive supervisors, and work within a culture that is not prone to burnout. That in itself is attractive for a lot of talented individuals looking for work; in this way, accreditation makes hiring talent and talent retention easier.

The WFFC grants companies that are given accreditation to use the IFREI Family-Responsible Company Logo, which not only marks the company as one that has the characteristics mentioned above, but also adds to the company's prestige. The Logo identifies the company as an innovative leader in developing solutions to promote positive changes that affect the quality of life of its employees.

To be recognized as a company that promotes CFR has many benefits. The identification given through accreditation:

1. Improves the organization's positioning in the sector, as it is a veritable indication of flexible culture, politics, and leadership;

2. Allows the organizations to compare their policies or other work environment factors with that of other companies within their own country and all over the world;

3. Enables companies to network with other companies that are also recognized for their CFR and share best practices;

4. Makes the company reap economic benefits—after all, a company that promotes CFR is likelier to retain talent, increase productivity, and lessen the costs of absenteeism.

Just one company setting up the standards for CFR in the local business sector can already create ripples, influencing many other companies to strive towards a more family-responsible direction in order to reap these same economic benefits.

Let me highlight three companies that have been accredited by the Work-Family Foundation Canada:

- **Walmart Argentina.** The only retailer to receive the WFFC accreditation in their country, Walmart Argentina has joined forces with the Center for Work and Family at the IAE Business School in adopting the IFREI model since 2012. The retailer allows employees with children to reduce their day to six hours during the first month of the baby's life without salary deduction.

- **Grupo Security.** The first company in Chile to be accredited as family-responsible, this finance, investment, and insurance company believes in the "importance of family as the foundation [of] our society." Hence, their "policies are designed to strengthen the family unit." The company's best practices include a post-natal flexitime policy, allowing mothers to leave work at 4:00pm during the four weeks following their return to work from maternity leave, plus financial aid to hire a nanny for a month. Fathers get five extra days of paid leave after the baby is born and a possibility of flexible hours during the first month of the baby's life.

- **Transactel (Powered by TELUS).** This call center in El Salvador conducted IFREI in 2013. It decided to implement day care for employees' children, extend the license for paternity leave, and organize training workshops to help couples strengthen their interpersonal relations and develop their competencies as parents.

Working parent-friendly schools

Allow me to digress to schools as I know some of you are actively involved in home-school collaboration. Schools enter in the framework of work-family balance in the sphere of the family under child care and education. Finding and choosing a quality child care and big school is a great challenge for every parent.

In the US, almost one-quarter (23.4 percent) of children under the age of five are in some form of organized child care arrangement, which includes day care centers, nurseries, and preschools. At the age of 5-14, 94% of the children are in schools.

Schools can reduce working-parents' experiences of conflicts or stressors by providing a source of support. Schools can be partners not only in the children's education but also in the parents' work-family balance.

In fact, there are numerous research on school schedules alone and how they relate to parents' experiences of work-family conflicts. Studies involve whether school and office holidays coincide or not, the occurrence of unusual school day schedules like half-days, summer and extended school breaks, daily school opening and ending schedules, closing of schools but not offices like during storms and hurricanes, and the length of school day relative to full-time work day. For instance, some parents think that schools have a notion of parents as full-time parents only, since they schedule PTO meetings mid-morning when working parents are in the offices.

Apart from schedules, school services can also be supportive of working parents. Services include after-school childcare and transportation. There is a stream of research on how PASS (parental after-school stress, i.e. concern over how their children were cared for after school) related to productivity and quality of work.

Lastly, apart from schedules and school services, working parents can find it challenging to access teachers, perhaps when they are not allowed to make personal phone calls during office hours or they are allowed but they find it embarrassing to make personal calls as they interfere with work. Or they can literally take the time off work to attend teachers consultations.

Homework supervision can be particularly demanding on working parents, especially the working mothers. School websites are useful to remind parents of due homework especially if children forget them. Giving homework above the children's capability with the assumption that they have parents or tutors to help them can create stress to working parents. Some working mothers literally take the time off from work to buy project materials for their children or assist their children to finish a project.

> I come from a middle-class family. My parents were both government employees and they put their four children in private schools. Since they were working an 8-hour office schedule and managing several little businesses on the side to finance the family expenses, they did not have time to help us with homework and projects. Together with my classmates, who also have fulltime working parents, we would compare our projects with classmates who were children of stay-home moms, and we were just happy that they have mommies to help them and we have ourselves to be self-reliant. That was 30 to 40 years ago. Fast forward, my sister is a stay-home mom with two kids and she asked me one day to assist her with her kids' homework. She told me her internet connection was down, and one nephew had to submit an assignment to enumerate 100 kinds of birds. Since my sister is active in PTA, I told her to suggest a more level-playing field in school, that is, that teachers give an assignment assuming that all kids have no internet and no stay-home moms to assist them. I was sure she still did the assignment but I don't know how she got 100 kinds of birds without the help of computer and internet.

Family Enrichment Courses

Now, I come to the last glimmer of hope to cite: your family enrichment courses on age-specific child education, family unity, and conjugal love. In my country, I was a client of family visioning courses for the parents of my college students. I know how beneficial your programs are to families and parents. I do hope you can also consider that apart from the schools, you can make inroads in companies.

Our advocacy for more family-responsible companies would be helped by the IFFD programs. Consider that, in our IFREI study, only 45 percent of the respondents have access to professional and personal counselling, and only 34 percent benefit from seminars, workshops, and informative sessions about work-family balance. Working parents will be helped by work flexibility policies but these need to be supplemented by parenting skills training and counseling services.

In my part of the world, strong traditional beliefs about the roles of man and woman within the family will take centuries to change. That men spend more time at home and share the domestic work may not be what women want especially if the family breadwinner has to bring in more income. But couples need to help one another in parenting.

There is an interesting research of 300 working couples in India which found that both career women and non-career women in the sample ranked highly the husband's role as companion of the wife and gave low priority to his role in sharing domestic tasks. Family-focused solutions should involve greater awareness of shared responsibilities in parenting and marriage.

Short summary

We've seen how society is changing; more and more women are entering and staying in the workforce. Thus, the challenge of balancing work and family is something many employees experience. But it is a challenge that can—if tackled well—result in a positive outcome, not only for families but also for companies. Research has shown that work and family can turn into allies, with work life enhancing life in the home and vice versa.

The IESE Family-Responsible Employer Index (IFREI) was thus formulated by the International Center for Work and Family (ICWF) as a way to measure Corporate Family Responsibility (CFR), an interior Corporate Social Responsibility. Through the IFREI, companies are diagnosed to be Enriching, Favorable, Unfavorable, or Polluted as work environments, using different dimensions such as Policies, Supervisor Support, and Organizational Culture.

With good IFREI results, companies can vie for accreditation from the Work and Family Foundation Canada (WFFC). This accreditation builds prestige for family-friendly companies, helping them attract and retain talent. I gave some examples of accredited companies, and then we talked about working parent-friendly schools—also key partners in the work-family balance challenge.

Now, changing landscapes doesn't have to be dreadful. As persons from different societies, each of us—I'm sure—can trace how our own societies have progressed in the last hundred, two hundred, even five hundred years. Not personally witnessed, of course!

But kidding aside, we've seen some changes made, and they may not have always been a good thing, but as there is always new growth after a storm, I am confident to say there is hope. We can make these changes work for our good, for the benefit of families. And we keep working to achieve it.

Concluding words

To end, I would like to share with you a student's ouput from a classroom activity. This semester, I am teaching Work-Life Balance to 65 students of Entrepreneurial Management. In preparation to drawing up a life plan, I asked them to visualize their tombstone and write their own headstone inscription. I noted ten adolescent boys writing "a loving husband and father," and three adolescent girls writing "a loving wife and devoted mother,"

But I chose two for being different from previous years' outputs and thus, memorable.

- (from a female student: her tomb with husband and three kids visiting her)
- (from a male student: two tombs side by side, husband and wife)

I was very glad and moved that this early in life, these two students have envisioned such depth of family unity. I imagined there must be something they see in their parents that speak of a strong union that lasts.

There is hope for the family in the generations to come.

Thank you all very much.

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