

# WORK-FAMILY COFLICT: APPROACH OF PARENTS RAISING CHILDREN UNDER TWELVE YEARS

## DARBO–ŠEIMOS KONFLIKTAS: TĖVŲ, AUGINANČIŲ VAIKUS IKI DVYLIKOS METŲ, POŽIŪRIO ANALIZĖ

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**Summary.** Parents face many challenges while raising children due to the lack of reconciliation between family and work responsibilities. The goal of this paper is to reveal factors and their coherence with influence on work-family conflict experienced by parents. Results of quantitative research have demonstrated that conflict appears as a complex situation involving inter-relations between parents, children needs, and influence of external factors on the family and professional lives. Moreover, results proved that aspiration to reconcile responsibilities and duties between family and work are mainly experienced through the work-family conflict which appears because of a lack of time and stress management, and behaviour models.

**Keywords:** work-family conflict, reconciliation.

**Santrauka.** Augindami vaikus tėvai susiduria su daugybe iššūkių, patiriamų dėl šeimos ir darbo atsakomybių derinimo trūkumo. Šio straipsnio tikslas – atskleisti faktorius ir jų sąsajas, darančius įtaką tėvų patiriamam darbo–šeimos konfliktui. Kiekybinio tyrimo rezultatai parodė, jog konfliktas yra matomas kaip kompleksinė situacija, kurioje svarbūs tėvų tarpusavio santykiai, vaikų poreikių atliepimas ir išorinių faktorių įtaka šeimos ir profesiniam gyvenimui. Rezultatai patvirtinta, jog, siekiant suderinti įsipareigojimus bei atsakomybes šeimai ir darbui, dažniausiai patiriamas darbo–šeimos konfliktas, išryškėjantis dėl laiko ir streso valdymo trūkumo bei elgsenos modelių.

**Raktiniai žodžiai:** darbo–šeimos, konfliktas, suderinamumas.

### TENDENCIES OF WORK-FAMILY CONFLICT

Contemporary modern society is under constant change. Global processes influence each person, therefore, it is challenging to keep the balance between personal needs, family requirements, professional obligations and society pressure. A person often does not perceive accelerating social change and thus cannot adjust to shifting processes. Seeking to avoid such situation, it is relevant to set the goals for a better and more comfortable life, living in harmony, and avoiding conflict situations. Society can be treated as social system of differently related elements. Each system may contain certain balance deficiency, tension elements or conflict situations (Leonavičius et al., 2005).

Analysis on the coherence between family and work environment considering it as a separate structure reflects several diverse situations being experienced by those confronting it – this is a search for reconciliation within family when family members have expectations and needs which are relevant and need to be balanced by compromising. Likewise, the maintenance of working position and a dialogue with an employer are important. It is obvious that an employer has expectations for a person being employed which might differ from those that the employed person holds. Thus, an employed person feels responsible for his own family and young children. Due to different concerns and expectations, work-family conflicts usually appear. The main factor of work-family conflict refers to high burden of responsibilities and roles assigned at both work and family (Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985). Thus, a conflict may concern both work and family settings. In the first case, work-family conflict interferes with family, and in the second case, family conflict disturbs proper work assignments. This conflict might be reversible when family and work fields interfere with each other (Cesnauskas and Lazauskaitė-Zabielskė, 2014). Present article analyses the above mentioned tendencies and factors being determined by a conflict when conflict refers to work-family settings. It is noticed that work-family conflict is strongly related to reconciliation of roles emphasizing their expectations and needs – once dissatisfied, they increase the role conflict (Hill, 2005; Cesnauskas and Lazauskaitė-Zabielskė, 2014). Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) distinguish three conflict presumption groups referring to time-based, strain-based, and behaviour-based conflicts. Time-based conflict refers to certain conflict that is influenced by the time devoted to one role, making it difficult for an individual to participate in the other role. An example might be presented when a parent-teacher experiences conflict at work as he/she should participate in an important meeting and at the same time should meet family obligations, like picking up a child at day-care. Strain-based conflict suggests that strain experienced in one role intrudes into and interferes with participation in another role. Meanwhile, behaviour-based conflict occurs when specific behaviours required in one role are incompatible with behavioural expectation in another role (Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985).

Gutek et al. (1991) argues that each of those three work-family conflict forms has two directions: conflict due to work interfering with family and conflict due to family interfering with work. Directions and forms of work-family conflict are illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1

Directions and forms of work-family conflict (Carlson et al., 2000: 251)

		Directions of Work-Family Conflict	
		Work Interference with Family	Family Interference with Work
Forms of Work-Family Conflict	Time	Time Based Work Interference with Family	Time Based Family Interference with Work
	Strain	Strain Based Work Interference with Family	Strain Based Family Interference with Work
	Behavioral	Behavioral Work Interference with Family	Behavioral Family Interference with Work

Within a family, tensions and conflicts which are transferred to a work place basically arise due to the quantity of children having in mind their age, especially focusing on the age of pre-school children (Ahmad 2008; Malone, 2011; Mjoli et al., 2013). Significant influence on the increase of work-family conflict depends on the mutual parents' agreement due to children care allocation or (dis)ability of grandparents and relatives to contribute. The influence is also noticed when one of parents returns to labour market after paternity leave or seeks self-employment, as well as ability to apply acquired professional knowledge and strive for career goals or work commitments considering rapid work speed (Anafartal and Kuruiüzüml, 2012). Considerable high significance refers to the settings, society provisions, and social policy of a country. Altogether those factors determine the intensity of work-family conflict form.

**The goal of the present article** is to reveal factors and their coherence with influence on work-family conflict experienced by parents.

**The research object** – work-family conflict.

**The research questions refer to the following context:** which factors initiate work-family conflict? How do these factors correlate? How firmly the determined factors influence work-family conflict?

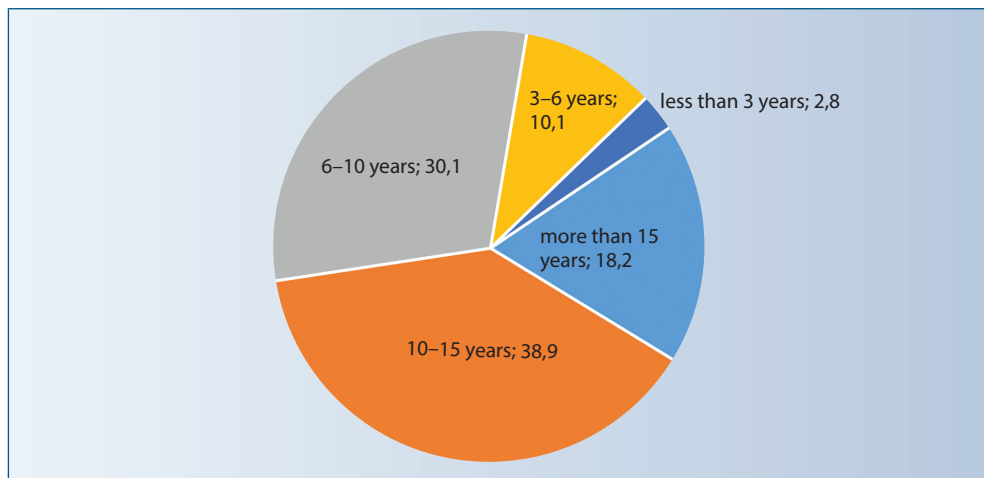
The research was based on the questionnaire survey method. The questionnaire was prepared according to the theoretical model set up by the group of the researchers (Tandzegolskiene, Rutkiene, Trepule, Tamoliune, Jurgile) referring to the accomplished narrative analysis of young families and employers' insights as well as to the generalizations of focus group (career specialists and human resources managers) (Tandzegolskiene et al. 2014) and research studies accomplished by the following scientists – Crouter (1984), Carlson and et al. (2000), Konrad and Mangel (2000), Scott (2001), Carlson and Kacmar (2002), Frone et al. (2003), Hill et al. (2003, 2007), Hill (2005), Winbauer et al. (2010), Rusconi (2011), Rusconi and Solga (2011), Hess and Pfahl (2011), Cesinger (2012), Bucaite-Vilke et al. (2012). The online survey was accomplished in March-May, 2016. The questionnaire was filled in by 411 respondents, yet 396 forms were used for analysis as fully answered. This article presents the results which refer to the experiences of young families who live in Lithuania, therefore, the conclusions will reflect one country context and generalized tendencies.

## RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

The research participants were representing all the municipalities of Lithuania mainly referring to mothers who were raising children under 12 years of age (350 or 88,4 percent), fathers – 44 (or 11,1 percent) and 2 foster carers. The majority of the respondents indicated having higher education background – 67,4 percent (267 respondents), non-university higher education (applied sciences) – 25,3 percent (100 respondents), occupational or secondary education – 7,3 percent (29 respondents).

The respondents also indicated gaining from 100 to 2500 euros per person, on average 422 euros per person.

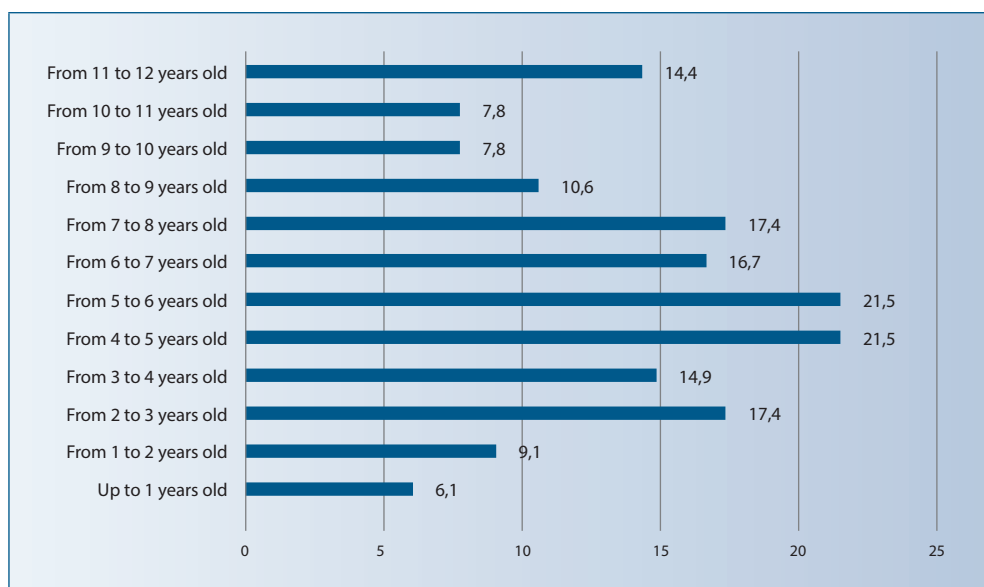
The majority of parents who were raising children had a worker status, thus only 4,5 percent were not working. Half of the parents were working in a private sector (46,7 percent), another large part – in a state sector (32,8 percent), and 17,2 percent – in a public sector. The majority of the respondents (80,8 percent or 320 individuals) were working on a full-time basis. The work experience is illustrated in Picture 1.



Picture 1. The work experience of young families (percentage)

Though the age of the respondents reaches up to 35 years, more than one third of them have a working experience of 10-15 years (38,9 percent), and 30 percent have been working from 6 to 10 years.

More than half of the respondents raise two children within a family (53,3 percent), and one third of the respondents raise one child (35,6 percent), consequently 39 respondents' families raise three children, 3 respondents' families – four children and 1 family – five children within a family. The age of children is presented in Picture 2.

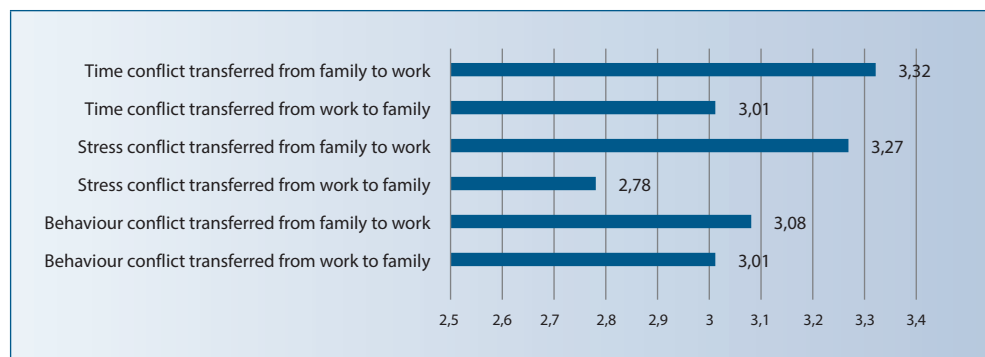


Picture 2. The age of children of respondents' families (percentage)

45,5 percent of the respondents were on parental leave for 12 months, and 85,1 percent – for 24 months. In Lithuania, family members have the opportunity to get the state support for raising children under two years.

## RESEARCH RESULTS

The analysis of work-family conflict was accomplished following the six positions presented in the work-family model (Table 1). Evaluation of each conflict contained the conceivable scale from 1 till 5 when 1 was the weakest and 5 – the strongest conflict expression. The research results revealed the evaluation of all conflict types as mean. The biggest conflict was experienced by the respondents while managing the time (family time management problems were transferred to work environment, and the lack of time provided for the family was detected, Picture 3). The stress was also initiated by the tension felt within the family and being transferred to working environment.



Picture 3. Conflict elements positioning family and work place

The results revealed that lowest stress is influenced by the tension emerging at work or professional environment, though less conforming family needs. Assessing the tendency of conflict, it might be noticed that stronger conflicts are initiated due to family commitments. That means, family or family needs are strongly affected if work requires much more time and energy than planned, or a person aims to devote more time and attention to family or family needs, yet work activities restrict this aim at the same time initiating conflict.

The analysis of work-family conflicts which influence each other was based on Spearman correlation (Table 2) indicating the strongest links between time management and tension conflicts which were transferred from working into family environment when the conflict initiated at work and transferred to home environment brought stronger tension and referred to the time management. Strong correlation was detected while evaluating conflict initiated by behaviour which was transferred from home into working environment and vice versa. That means, the conflicts influenced by personal behaviours were stronger despite the causes which might be attributed to work or home settings.

Table 2

## Correlation between the different types of conflicts

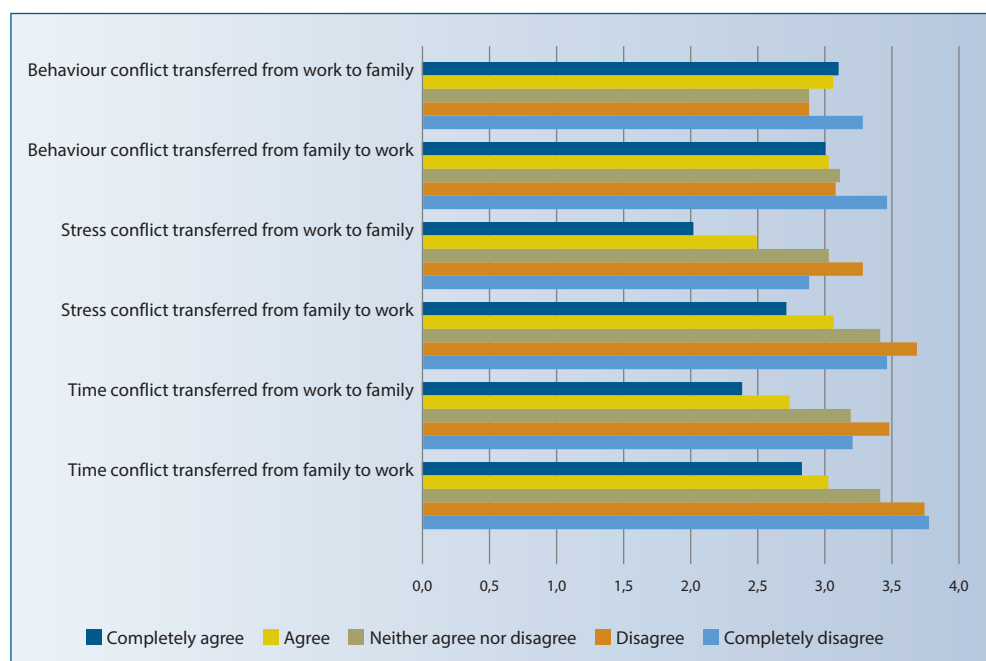
	Time conflict transferred from family to work	Time conflict transferred from work to family	Stress conflict transferred from family to work	Stress conflict transferred from work to family	Behaviour conflict transferred from family to work	Behaviour conflict transferred from work to family
Time conflict transferred from family to work	1	0,437**	0,638**	0,369**	0,232**	0,120*
		0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,017
Time conflict transferred from work to family		1	0,510**	0,647**	0,176**	-0,014
			0,000	0,000	0,000	0,787
Stress conflict transferred from family to work			1	0,433**	0,281**	0,153**
				0,000	0,000	0,002
Stress conflict transferred from work to family				1	0,111*	-0,086
					0,027	0,088
Behaviour conflict transferred from family to work					1	0,599**
						0,000
Behaviour conflict transferred from work to family						1

Statistically significant links between behaviour conflict detected in work place and time conflict or stress conflict are not determined. This means that behaviour, which essentially depends on individual action and certain situation, as well as conditions, if transferring work conflict into home settings, do not depend on personal time management or stress conflict in professional field. It might be stated that conflicts affected by behaviour are mutually inter-related, therefore, do not correlate with other types of conflicts.

Referring to the analysis which tries to identify conceivable influence of family children quantity on the diverse elements of work-family conflict, the families were divided into three groups: those raising one child, two, and three or more children. Applying the variance method (ANOVA), it was identified that only one conflict attribution may refer to the quantity of children a family raises – this is the tension transferred from family into working environment. As it was stated formerly by the scientific researchers (Ahmad, 2008; Malone, 2011; Anafartal and Kuruüzüml, 2012; Mjoli et al., 2013), the research results just confirm – growing number of children within a family progressively increases the conflict: the mean evaluation of conflict for the families raising one child refers to 3,12, two children – 3,34, three and more children – 3,45 ( $F = 3,122$ ,  $df_1 = 2$ ,  $df_2 = 392$ ,  $p = 0,045$ ). In other cases covering the diverse conflict tendencies, the distinctions were not statistically significant, though the means imply that during time management and tension conflict, the higher quantity

of children within the family usually increase the tension, meanwhile the tension is decreased in behaviour conflict. This might be explained by the fact that a bigger number of children within a family require higher behaviour flexibility, therefore, the conflict level when flexibility is present noticeably decreases.

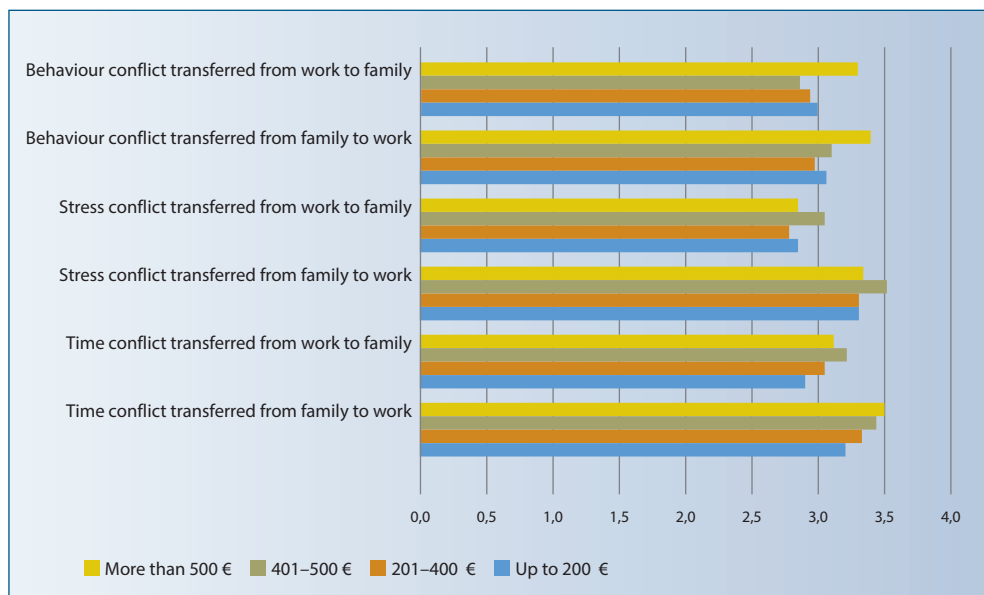
The respondents were provided with the statement “I think that being a good mother/father does not affect being a good employee at work.” While responding to this statement, the respondents focus on: having no opinion whether this statement is correct (29 percent), agreeing with the statement (25,5 percent), completely agreeing with the statement (15,4 percent). 30,1 percent of the respondents did not agree with the statement. The analysis of this statement, as well as diverse correlations between work-family conflicts, indicated that assessment of behaviour conflict does not differ, meanwhile assessments of time and stress conflict are statistically significant ( $p = 0,000$  referring to all cases of time and stress conflicts, Picture 4). In this case, it is essential that provided statement is evaluated by the respondents in a more positive way when stress evaluation is lower.



Picture 4. Family-work conflict assessment referring to work and family reconciliation

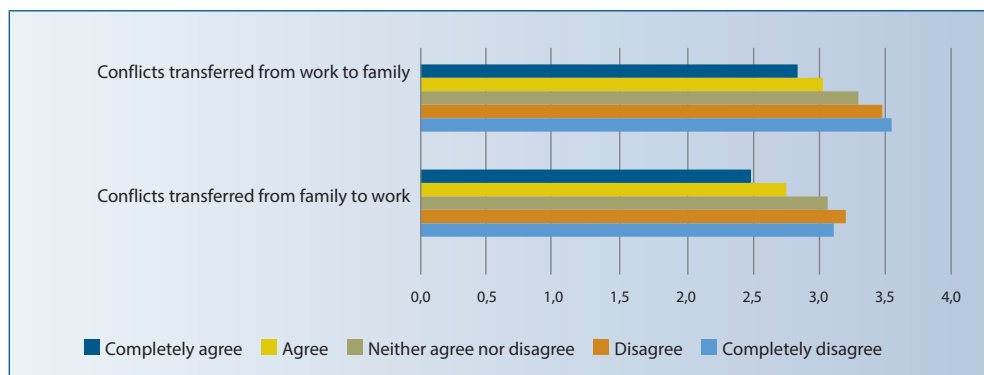
Anafartal and Kuruüzüml (2012) indicate that lower stress level is prescribed for men having more than 5 year work experience to compare with those having low work experience, meanwhile this factor does not crucially affect women. Whereas the majority of the respondents are women and those men who participated in the research indicated more than 5 year work experience, all the respondents were comparable conjointly. The research results indicate no significant distinctions referring to conflict assessment due to obtained work experience ( $p > 0,05$ ).

Another presumable source of conflict seeking for work and family reconciliation is related to income per person within a family. The respondents' income distribution per person (four groups determined: up to 200 euros; from 200 to 400 euros; from 400 to 500 euros; 500 euros and more) revealed that behaviour conflict transferred from family to work significantly differs comparing families with the different income rate ( $F = 3,823$ ,  $df_1 = 3$ ,  $df_2 = 383$ ,  $p = 0,010$ , Picture 5).



Picture 5. Family-work conflict assessment referring to family income per person

It is relevant to note that the most intensive behaviour conflict transferred from family to work is experienced by the respondents with the highest income, meanwhile the lowest behaviour conflict is attributed for the respondents earning from 201 to 400 euros per person.



Picture 6. Assessment of conflict tendency referring to work and family reconciliation



Analysis of conflict tendency according to both positions – work and family or family and work – indicates that higher conflict transfer refers to family position (mean – 3,22) than work position (mean – 2,94). In accordance with all the parameters analysed, it was determined that statistically significant disparity refers to one provision, namely, being a good mother/father does not affect being a good employee at work. In this case, the prognosis for both work-family and family-work tendencies in a conflict situation refers to more positive family-work reconciliation aspects indicating lower level of conflict ( $p < 0,05$ , Picture 6).

The summary implies that family conflicts are substantially transferred to professional field indicating high conflict tendency. Meanwhile, the conflicts referring to the opposite tendencies and addressing work-family environment are transferred less frequently. The quantity of children is one of the main and relevant factors influencing the conflicts' emergence. This is based on the research results revealing the tendencies of conflict transferred from the family to working environment when depending on the quantity of family children. Another fact was exposed that parents evaluate more positively the situation covering family needs and pace of life, as well as working nature and occupational commitments when family life and occupational activities do not interfere and enable to perform obligations in both fields at the same time experiencing less conflict situations. Conflicts based on the behaviour issues are not basically influenced by the parents' positive disposition. Thus, the behaviour is influenced by the income which affects the exceeding conflict while increasing.

## CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

Work-family conflict is actualized through both the involvement in family life and stressors which are transferred to work environment. It shows, however, that those difficulties which emerge within a family are severely transferred to work environment. Thus, a family member finds it difficult to consistently manage the time and plan family and work activities. Meanwhile, the stress and tension experienced in work environment are transferred to family settings less often. Nevertheless, family members are more oriented towards reconciliation of family needs and, in this case, they attempt to correspond to them while qualitatively organizing family life. According to the obtained results, those who fail incline to transfer the stress from family to work settings. Those obtained results confirm the position of diverse researchers (Wayne et al., 2004; Hill, 2005; Aminah, 2008; Cesnauskas and Lazauskaitė-Zabielskė, 2014) who state that stress and tension depend on an individual who takes too much responsibilities or is not able to balance the roles. Thus, one of the most significant elements of conflict refers to the deficiency of time management skills, and proper planning and organization of activities. Another significant conflict element worth to mention refers to the overlap of roles and too many responsibilities taken at family and work. Meanwhile, the factors facilitating conflict refer to personal conflict solving abilities and planning family and work activities in proper and purposeful way. However, all decisions should be complex as isolated actions do not affect any decrease of work-family conflict. And the balance between work and family could be facilitated using the ability to mobilize existing energy and time resources at family and work settings seeking for self-motivation. Thus, the research indicates that behaviour models applied in work settings for making decisions or those applied in family settings often increase conflict considering both tendencies.

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