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**WHEN WORK ENRICHES FAMILY LIFE: THE MEDIATIONAL ROLE OF  
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES**

Monica Molino\*, Chiara Ghislieri\*, & Claudio G. Cortese\*

\*Psychology Department, University of Turin, Via Verdi 10, 10124, Turin, Italy.

*Corresponding author:* Monica Molino, Psychology Department, Via Verdi 10, 10124 Turin, Italy.

Phone number: +39 011 6702050. e-mail address: monica.molino@unito.it

# WHEN WORK ENRICHES FAMILY LIFE: THE MEDIATIONAL ROLE OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

## **Structured Abstract:**

Purpose. Several studies have pointed out the importance of work-family enrichment (WFE) for individuals' well-being and organizations; for this reason, it seems important to understand how organizations may promote it. This study attempts to understand the role of organizational resources and, particularly, of opportunities for professional development (OPD), in promoting WFE. Specifically, it tests the mediation role of OPD between job resources (supervisor and colleague support, job security) and WFE.

Design/methodology/approach. The present study was conducted using a self-report questionnaire administered to 353 employees and self-employed workers from different occupational sectors.

Findings. Filling a gap in the literature, the results showed that two job resources (supervisor support and job security) increase OPD which, in turn, mediates the relationship between the two job resources and WFE. Colleague support showed only a direct positive effect on WFE.

Research limitations/implications. The first limitation of this research concerns the cross-sectional design of the study, due to which no causal conclusions can be drawn. Moreover, future research might integrate some job demands and additional job resources into the model. Finally, a deeper understanding of the construct of OPD emerged as necessary, as well as more accurate instruments to measure it.

Practical implications. Based on our findings, organizations are encouraged to improve opportunities for job training and professional development, with important benefits for individuals, in terms of quality of work and life, and for organizations, in terms of better job attitudes and performance. Moreover, as regards job security, more protection should be given to workers in order to enhance the quality of workplace learning and extra-work life.

Originality/value. This study highlighted the importance of integrating OPD into work-family studies, demonstrating their role in enhancing the quality of life in the family domain. Furthermore, this study is one of the first to focus on job security as a significant resource in promoting professional development.

**Keywords:** Work-family enrichment, job demands-resources model, professional development, job security

**Article Classification:** Research paper

## **Introduction**

The work-family interface, defined as the interconnected relationship between work and family domains (Voydanoff, 2005), is a well-established research topic nowadays (Yanchus *et al.*, 2010). The increase in research on it over the past decades is linked to shifting demographics, including more working women, dual-career couples, single-parent families (Major and Germano, 2006) and, more recently, to the information era (MacDermid, 2005). Given these changes, more employees report difficulties in juggling responsibilities in the two most important domains of adult life, namely, work and family.

The work-family interface can be looked at according to two different perspectives, the first one, which was given much importance in early studies, regarding work-family conflict (WFC) and the second one, more developed in recent years, regarding work-family enrichment (WFE). Both WFC and WFE are characterized by a process in which one's functioning and behaviour in one domain is influenced by quantitative and qualitative demands and resources from the other domain (Demerouti, Bakker and Voydanoff, 2010; Demerouti, Geurts and Kompier, 2004).

On the one hand, WFC is defined as an incompatibility between the work and family roles (Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985). The conflict model is based on the idea that a person has a limited amount of time and energy to engage in different roles (scarcity hypothesis; Goode, 1960) and strain is inevitable (given the over-demanding nature of engaging in multiple roles). In the 1990s, the use of this construct was criticized (Kirchmeyer, 1993): the WFC perspective was considered damaging to the growth of women's participation in work and contributed to the hypothesis of women's lower productivity, due to their multiple roles.

On the other hand, WFE is defined as the extent to which experiences in one role enhance performance in the other one (Greenhaus and Powell, 2006). The enhancement hypothesis (Marks, 1977; Sieber, 1974; Thoits, 1983), indeed, suggests that occupying multiple roles can be positive. Crouter (1984) identified positive spillover between family and work as the "neglected face" of studies in this domain.

In recent years, several studies have pointed out the importance of WFE for individuals and organizations (Carlson *et al.*, 2011). The hypothesis that individuals' work roles may be a source of WFE (Greenhaus and Powell, 2006), as well as WFC, has become increasingly central (Gareis *et al.*, 2009; Hill *et al.*, 2007). At the same time, scholars showed that WFE is linked to an enhancement of job attitudes, job performance and job satisfaction (Carlson *et al.*, 2011; Odle-Dusseau, Britt and Greene-Shortridge, 2012; Shockley and Singla, 2011).

Considering these findings, and taking an organizational point of view, this study focuses on WFE in the work-to-family direction and on its determinants derived from the work domain (see, amongst others, Lapierre and Allen, 2006), assuming that organizations can have an influence especially on this direction (Carlson *et al.*, 2006; Frone, Russel and Cooper, 1992; Ghislieri *et al.*, 2011). Moreover, the increase of WFE can also positively impact job satisfaction: a recent meta-analysis (Shockley and Singla, 2011) showed that positive affective reactions to WFE occur mostly in the originating, rather than receiving, domain (supporting the source attribution perspective).

For this reason, it is important for organizations to understand how they can increase WFE (Bakker *et al.*, 2011). Therefore, using the job demands-resources (JD-R) model as a framework (Bakker and Demerouti, 2007), this study aims to understand the effects of job resources on WFE. Specifically, besides the traditional job resources that have been already considered in literature (e.g. supervisor support, colleague support; Siu *et al.*, 2010), the study takes into account also the role of opportunities for professional development (OPD), a still understudied construct that can play an important role in the enrichment process (Bakker *et al.*, 2011). Indeed, while the benefits of being engaged in both work and family have been recognized for over 30 years (Sieber, 1974), little empirical research in this field has considered the role of OPD (Bakker and Geurts, 2004) and this kind of research has never been carried out in Italy before.

## **Theoretical Context**

### *Work-family enrichment*

While other theoretical models have been used to understand the work-family interface (compensation, instrumentality, integration/segmentation, role identity and balance; Edwards and Rothbard, 2000; Ghislieri *et al.*, 2011; O'Driscoll, Brough and Kalliath, 2006; Poelmans, O'Driscoll and Beham, 2005; Rothbard and Dumas, 2006), the conflict perspective dominated two decades of work-family studies (1980s and 1990s). In the 2000s the trend has changed: research paired the study of WFE with the study of WFC.

Besides WFE (Greenhaus and Powell, 2006), other constructs were proposed to describe the benefits of being committed in both work and family (Ode-Dusseau, Britt and Greene-Shortridge, 2012), including work-family positive spillover (Edwards and Rothbard, 2000; Hanson, Hammer and Colton, 2006), work-family facilitation (Grzywacz, 2002) and work-family enhancement (Tiedje *et al.*, 1990). The distinction among these constructs is often fuzzy (Ghislieri *et al.*, 2011; Hammer and Hanson, 2006). We chose the construct of enrichment since its definition is inclusive of all concepts listed above (see Greenhaus and Powell, 2006 for a comprehensive explanation).

Enrichment is a process by which one role (the work or family one) enhances the other one. More specifically, it occurs when resources generated in one role improve the quality of life in another role (Greenhaus and Powell, 2006). Greenhaus and Powell's definition of the concept of resources (2006) is an extensive one which includes personal, social capital and material assets. The authors also suggest that there are two possible processes: 1) an *instrumental* path to enrichment – when a resource generated in one role is transferred directly from one role to another (enhancing performance in the receiving role); 2) an *affective* path to enrichment – when a resource generated in one role promotes positive affect in that role, which in turn produces high performance and leads to a positive affect in the second role.

Like WFC, WFE can be bi-directional (from work to family and from family to work). Carlson and colleagues (2006) regarded enrichment as a multidimensional construct, composed of three dimensions both in the work-to-family direction (development, affect and capital), and in the family-to-work direction (development, affect and efficiency).

Enrichment seems to be influenced by some dispositional aspects, such as extraversion (Wayne, Musisca and Fleeson, 2004) and positive affectivity (Michel and Clark, 2009), and some important antecedents of WFE are identified in organizational and family interest and support (Carlson *et al.*, 2006). Among principal determinants of WFE, the literature has widely considered job resources (Ode-Dusseau *et al.*, 2012; Siu *et al.*, 2010) since they have an important role in enrichment processes, according to the above mentioned definition by Greenhaus and Powell (2006).

The benefits of WFE have been identified in different ways: gaining awareness and/or skills usable in another role; providing a broader frame of reference from which to relate to others; creating a buffer in one role against failure in another domain; enhancing one's self-image; increasing the accessibility of social support; generating energy (Hanson *et al.*, 2006). Some research results confirmed the benefits of engaging in work and family roles to mental, physical and relational wellbeing (Barnett and Hyde, 2001), and the benefits of combining personal and professional lives (Barnett, 1998).



### *Opportunities for professional development*

In a modern and changing society, characterized by globalized competition and rapid technological development, workers are continuously required to learn and develop new competencies at work (Coetzer, 2007). Therefore, skill improvement is essential, but little is yet known about how this process of professional development and workplace learning can be supported.

Reorganization of work and new job design require employees to develop knowledge, skills and competencies to cope with workplace and organizational changes (Sugarman, 2001). Moreover, these changes have impacted the health and safety of workers and have increased their exposure to stress (Cox, Griffiths and Rial-Gonzales, 2000; Kompier, 2006; Theorell and Hasselhorn, 2005). Stimulating learning opportunities at work may be an important mechanism by which to develop the adaptive skills of employees necessary to cope with stressful work situations. Indeed, research has indicated that learning opportunities reduce stress (Holman and Wall, 2002), exert positive effects on the quality of work life (Panari *et al.*, 2010) and increase workers' motivation (Morrison *et al.*, 2005).

OPD can be considered an organizational resource that allows employees to cope with continuous changes and growing demands, to achieve their work goals and, consequently, prevent negative outcomes (Salanova, Agut and Peiro, 2005). However, what is meant by professional development has not yet been clearly defined in the literature (Elman, Illfelder-Kaye and Robiner, 2005). A range of different opportunities are provided during the process of work, for example, through activities at work, workers may develop social, emotional, or cognitive competencies, motivation, skills, as well as their self-concept. Elman and colleagues (2005) defined professional development as “the developmental process of acquiring, expanding, refining, and sustaining knowledge, proficiency, skill, and qualifications for competent professional functioning that result in professionalism” (p. 368). They referred both to the internal tasks of clarifying professional objectives and increasing self-awareness and self-confidence on the one hand, and to the social and contextual dimensions of enhancing interpersonal aspects of professional functioning on the other hand.

One of the dimensions of OPD is workplace learning, which is gaining increasing importance in the education and training of workforces (Jacobs and Park, 2009). Workplace learning enables individuals and organizations to cope with the changing nature of work and the economy: it helps improve efficiency and productivity, and it meets the personal and career development needs of workers (Panari *et al.*, 2010). Workplace learning may be formal, but is actually mainly informal (Rau, 2006). Informal learning is described as unstructured, experimental, non-institutional and integrated into the daily work routines (Holman and Wall, 2002; Morrison *et al.*, 2005).

Hence, OPD are usually associated with workplace learning and skill training designed to improve productivity, but very little research has been conducted on its role within the quality of work and life domains (Bakker *et al.*, 2003). Recently Bakker *et al.* (2011) studied the buffer effect of OPD on the relationship between job demands and WFC. In this study, we rather hypothesize a direct positive effect of OPD on WFE.

*Hypothesis 1 (H1): OPD increase WFE.*

#### *Other job resources*

Work environments that offer many resources foster the willingness to dedicate one's efforts and abilities to completing work tasks (Bakker and Demerouti, 2007). Among other job resources, workplace social support plays a significant role and increases the likelihood of success in attaining work goals. According to one of the most popular and earliest definitions, social support is the belief that the worker is loved, valued, and his well-being is cared about as part of a social network of mutual obligation (Cobb, 1976). Some authors (Tracey, Tannenbaum and Kavanaugh, 1995) have found that employees learn more from informal sources, such as supervisors and colleagues, than from formal learning activities. Learning is in fact a social process, consequently supervisor and colleague support encourages employees' growth and development (Ouweneel *et al.*, 2009).

Both supervisors and colleagues can provide support that fosters positive work experiences. Supervisor support involves caring about subordinates, valuing their contributions, helping them with work-related issues and facilitating their skill development (Rafferty and Griffin, 2004). Colleague support denotes the degree of assistance and caring received from others, including tangible help, encouragement and information (Ducharme and Martin, 2000).

In today's work environment, characterized by different configurations and new career paths (like protean and boundaryless career; Briscoe, Hall and De Muth, 2006), another important resource is job security. Perceived occupational security is a psychological state concerning workers' expectations of future job continuity (Kraimer *et al.*, 2005). Individual differences in perceived job security may be contingent on organizational practices that affect the current working relationship, on job conditions or on the nature of the psychological contract itself. According to various studies, the objective condition of low employment security has many negative effects on well-being (Connelly and Gallagher, 2004; Falco *et al.*, 2008).

Within this frame of reference, OPD have a fundamental role, because the perception of work experience as an opportunity to grow professionally can influence attitudes towards one's professional future, with implications for the capacity of personal planning (Pombeni and Vattovani, 2005) and the ability to cope with low job security (Panari *et al.*, 2010). At the same time, it is necessary to launch active employment and vocational training policies for workers in order to encourage flexicurity as a strategy, achieving a good balance between flexibility of labor markets and employment organizations on the one hand, and employment and social security, on the other hand (Wilthagen and Tros, 2004).

Since our objective was to investigate the role of resources on WFE, we adopted the JD-R model (Bakker and Demerouti, 2007), that appears particularly interesting due to its flexibility as it permits to consider various types of job resources and their effects on different outcomes. Therefore, such approach allowed us to fill a gap in the literature where few resources have been considered in relation to WFE (Bakker *et al.*, 2011).

The JD-R model was originally designed to explain which combination of job demands and job resources influences well-being (e.g. burnout and work engagement). Nevertheless, it can also be suitable to explain the complex relationship between work and family life (Demerouti, Bakker and Bulters, 2004), “beyond the organizational border” (Bakker *et al.*, 2011), because the work and family domains have become inextricably bound to each other (Voydanoff, 2005).

The present study focuses only on the role of job resources; in fact, they are important not only as they may compensate for the impact of job demands, but also because they have a positive role *per se* (Bakker and Demerouti, 2007). Specifically, the JD-R model implies a process in which job resources play both an intrinsic motivational role – they foster employees’ growth, learning and development – and an extrinsic motivational role – they are instrumental in achieving work goals (Bakker and Demerouti, 2007).

Considering that studies of the work-family interface based on the JD-R model have focused mainly on the buffering effects of job resources on the relationship between job demands and outcomes (Bakker *et al.*, 2011), this study aims to improve the knowledge about the other process involved in the model, investigating the direct effects of job resources on WFE. Specifically, consistent with the literature, we expect a direct effect of job resources on WFE (Carlson *et al.*, 2006; Odle-Dusseau *et al.*, 2012; Siu *et al.*, 2010).

*Hypothesis 2 (H2):* job resources (colleague support, supervisor support and job security) increase WFE.

Moreover, as regards professional development, if it is a resource *per se*, it can also be influenced by other job resources which improve workplace learning practices, supporting the ability of workers to cope more effectively with negative events and threatening circumstances.

*Hypothesis 3 (H3):* job resources (colleague support, supervisor support and job security) increase OPD.

Finally, considering the role that job resources play in the processes involved in the JD-R model, and considering their potential direct effect on WFE (Carlson *et al.*, 2006), we expect that also OPD increases WFE and, consequently, partially mediates the relationship between the other job resources and WFE.

*Hypothesis 4 (H4):* the effect of job resources on WFE is partially mediated by OPD.

Figure 1 shows the theoretical model representing the 4 study hypotheses.

----- **FIGURE 1** -----

## **Method**

### *Participants*

The research involved a convenience sample of 353 employees and self-employed workers (working continuously as consultants in small-middle size organizations) from different occupational sectors: 40% were from public and private service sectors, 12% were from education and research, 37% were from industry and commerce and 5% were from public health (missing cases = 6%). The sample has been collected via a snowball exercise; respondents received an e-mail explaining the purpose of the research and were asked to fill in an online self-report questionnaire.

The sample consisted of 52% females and 48% males, aged between 19 and 61 ( $M = 36.33$ ;  $SD = 9.92$ ) and 33% having children. In the sample, 55% had a bachelor's or master's degree, the remaining 45% had a lower educational qualification. Most of the participants (63%) had permanent

employment contracts, 18% had fixed-term ones and 13% were self-employed (missing cases = 6%). Weekly working hours were, on average, 41.27 ( $SD = 9.31$ ; min = 8; max = 70).

### *Measures*

*Supervisor support* was measured by 4 items (Karasek *et al.*, 1998) with a 4-point Likert scale from 1 = strongly disagree to 4 = strongly agree (“My supervisor is concerned about the welfare of those under him”).

*Colleague support* was measured by 4 items (Karasek *et al.*, 1998) with a 4-point Likert scale from 1 = strongly disagree to 4 = strongly agree (“People I work with take a personal interest in me”).

*Job security* was measured by 3 items (Kraimer *et al.*, 2005) with a 7-point Likert scale from 1 = totally disagree to 7 = totally agree (“My job will be there as long as I want it”).

*OPD* were measured by 4 items (Bakker *et al.*, 2003) with a 5-point Likert scale from 1 = totally disagree to 5 = totally agree (“My work offers me the opportunity to learn”).

*WFE* was measured by 3 items (Ghislieri *et al.*, 2011) with a 5-point Likert scale from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree (“At work I feel positive emotions and this helps me to be a better family member”).

### *Data analysis*

The statistical package PASW 18 was used for descriptive analysis (means and standard deviation), internal consistency of each scale and to analyze the correlations among variables through Pearson’s coefficient. We controlled for gender, age, mean seniority on the job and having children in all analyses. The empirical model of the relationship between variables was investigated by structural equation modeling (SEM) which estimates a complete model, incorporating both measurement and structural considerations (Bollen, 1989). SEM analysis was assessed by the software Mplus 6 (Muthén and Muthén, 1998-2007). Moreover, the Sobel test (Baron and Kenny, 1986; Sobel, 1982) has been applied to verify the significance of mediational effects. To address the

common method variance issue we performed a confirmatory factor analysis using the Harman's single-factor test (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2003). Results indicated that one single factor could not account for the variance in the data [ $\chi^2$  (135) = 1748.15,  $p < .01$ , RMSEA = .18, CFI = .50, TLI = .44, SRMR = .14.] and therefore the threat of common method bias is unlikely.

## Results

Table 1 shows descriptive statistics, reliability and correlations among all variables. All scales presented acceptable reliabilities, since Cronbach's alphas ranged from .77 to .89. Analysis showed a high positive correlation between WFE and OPD. Moreover, both WFE and OPD correlated with all job resources considered (supervisor support, colleague support, job security).

----- TABLE 1 -----

----- TABLE 2 -----

Table 2 displays the results of three SEM models, comparing the "no mediation", the "full mediation" and the "partial mediation" role of OPD. Model 3 (partial mediation) had a statistically significant better fit than both Model 1 (no mediation),  $\Delta\chi^2_{M1-M3}$  (6) = 225.16,  $p < .01$  and Model 2 (full mediation),  $\Delta\chi^2_{M2-M3}$  (3) = 13.05,  $p < .01$ . Thus, we adopted Model 3, which is graphically represented in Figure 2; all items had significant factor loadings, between .57 and .95. OPD mediated the relationship between the two job resources taken into account on the one hand, supervisor support (Sobel test,  $t = 4.03$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and job security (Sobel test,  $t = 5.79$ ,  $p < .001$ ), and WFE on the other. Colleague support had a weaker significant direct effect on WFE, although it is demonstrated that variation in WFE was explained above all by OPD.

The model also showed a correlation between two items on the colleague support scale, CS<sub>2</sub> and CS<sub>3</sub>, which seem to be the items that investigate the personal, more than the professional, closeness

and interest among colleagues. Moreover, there is a correlation between items WFE<sub>1</sub> and WFE<sub>2</sub> from the WFE scale. They appear to be mainly focused on characteristics of work (e.g., professional skills and positive emotions) that generate an explicit enrichment from work to family, more than other aspects such as sense of accomplishment.

----- **FIGURE 2** -----

**Discussion and conclusion**

The main aim of this study was to investigate the role of OPD as a mediator between other job resources (colleague support, supervisor support and job security) and WFE, according to the JD-R model. The mediation model showed a good fit to the data and was consistent with the theoretical model of the study.

As regards to the first hypothesis, results showed that OPD strongly increase WFE. It can be concluded that opportunities to learn at work, to grow professionally, to see one's strengths enhanced, may not only prevent negative outcomes (Salanova, Agut and Peiro, 2005) and foster decent work environments (Lee, 1998), but may also assume a decisive role in promoting the enrichment from work to family (Bakker and Geurts, 2004). Further research, including qualitative and longitudinal studies, should investigate whether the process activated by OPD is both instrumental and affective. In fact, OPD allow for both the acquisition of skills which can be used directly in the family domain, and an overall improvement of self-image through the enhancement of personal strengths.

Concerning the second hypothesis, only colleague support showed a direct effect, albeit weak, on WFE, in line with the literature that suggests the importance of some organizational interests and support in promoting WFE (Carlson *et al.*, 2006). More specifically, enrichment is directly related to the quality of relationships with colleagues, as the latter is a resource capable of fostering an



environment more conducive to having positive experiences at work, which can be expressed in forms of enrichment outside work.

Regarding the third hypothesis, results confirmed the ones of recent studies on workplace development processes (Rafferty and Griffin, 2004) and showed that supervisor support has a direct effect on OPD. This finding is particularly interesting, as it highlights that in the presence of supportive leaders more OPD emerge, or, if nothing else, they are perceived more strongly by workers. A different interpretation is also possible, one to be examined more closely in future research: the relationship with supervisors, and the opportunity of reciprocal feedback, might be a resource and an opportunity for professional development *in se* and *per se* (Cortese, 2007).

Concerning colleague support, results did not show a positive impact on OPD. It is possible that, in Italian organizations characterized by hierarchical relationships, workers are unable, or not allowed, to contribute to their colleagues' professional development and learning. In the future, qualitative research should investigate these aspects, with particular attention to the specificity of the Italian working contexts.

Finally, job security significantly increased OPD, which is the finding that could be considered the most original contribution of this study. Feeling a sense of security towards one's job is an important resource to enhance the perception of professional growth, and the sense of continuity over time. On the one hand, employees with permanent contracts, in big and well-established companies, receive more important and continuous investments in their professional development. On the other hand, however, job security might be considered by the workers as a "guarantee", confirming that the company is investing in them for the long run. It would be interesting, in future research, to also investigate the role of the psychological contract in understanding the effect of job security on professional development.

Since there are no other studies on the relationship between job security and OPD, the findings of this research may be considered distinctive of the Italian cultural context, where the issue of job security may be particularly relevant, especially in times of crisis. It would be interesting to study

this hypothesis more thoroughly through cross-national studies (Kohn, 1989; Sousa-Poza and Sousa-Poza, 2000).

In general, these results appear to be in line with the conclusions of several authors (Bakker and Demerouti, 2007; Van Ruysseveldt, Verboon and Smulders, 2011), identifying that the lack of resources precludes concrete goal accomplishment and undermines employee learning opportunities.

Finally, concerning the last study hypothesis, the empirical model showed that the effect of two resources, supervisor support and job security, on WFE is mediated by OPD. Therefore, this study highlighted the significant mediational role of OPD, suggesting that OPD are an important factor that enables WFE and should be integrated into theoretical work-family studies and practical implications.

#### *Research limitations*

Although these results are interesting by themselves, the study presents several limitations. With regards to the research design, as already mentioned in part, longitudinal research would be necessary to evaluate causal links. Moreover, it would be of great utility to go beyond mere self-appraisal of the variables under examination, by considering some “objective” data (e.g., type of job contract) and for the dependent variables appraisal by others (in the case of enrichment, for example, by the partner).

As for those variables included in the study, OPD should be operationalized more precisely, examining its sub-dimensions more carefully (Rau, 2006), and giving attention also to formal training or career development practices.

In addition, this study did not consider certain important job resources, including, for instance, autonomy and variety of tasks which might have significant relationships with both OPD and WFE. Professional development, indeed, is expected in jobs with high degrees of freedom in procedure and time management, requirements of skill enhancement, decision making, and responsibility

(Dunckel, 2002). Moreover, several studies have pointed to the importance of task variety in workplace learning (Van Ruysseveldt, Verboon and Smulders, 2011; Wielenga-Meijer *et al.*, 2010). Support outside the workplace, mainly family support, might be also considered (Peeters and Le Blanc, 2001), as well as the WFC dimension to take a dual conflict and enhancement perspective on the work-family interface.

This study, like other research on enrichment (Siu *et al.*, 2010), focuses exclusively on the effect of resources. However, some demands might have a role in enrichment dynamics. Wayne, Randel and Stevens (2006) highlighted, for example, that organizational time demands negatively predicted WFE. Consistent with the JD-R model and its hypotheses, it would be very valuable to focus future studies on the role of job demands, and on the relationship between them and job resources.

In addition, some authors (Van Ruysseveldt *et al.*, 2011; Xanthopoulou *et al.*, 2009) have assumed that learning opportunities might play a health-promoting role through the promotion of personal resources. From this perspective, future research should focus on the relationship between OPD and the development of personal resources (such as self-efficacy, optimism, self-esteem or feelings of mastery).

Lastly, the study does not allow for observation of differences based on occupation or organization: which also indicates a possible development or approach for the future.

### *Practical implications*

Despite these limitations, the study is significant at a practical level. Job security, in particular, is highly relevant today, when this issue is being debated in Italy also at a political level. It is therefore important to include this element in studies linked to those work dynamics which may affect quality of life both at work and outside. Our research shows how job security can increase OPD, which in turn have a positive influence on WFE: this result suggests that, in Italy, at least, greater protection in terms of job security could have beneficial effects on the quality of life.

As concerns the role of supervisors, the results of the research highlight the importance of the selection of leaders and of the training for leadership, at different levels of the organization. This element is indeed strongly linked to OPD. Such training would, on the one hand, promote transformational leadership (Avolio and Bass, 1999; Bass, 1998; Yee *et al.*, 2011), and on the other hand, more practically, enable direct superiors to be more diligent in providing their co-workers with more opportunities to gain experience, to learn on the job and to receive training in the classroom.

The relationship between OPD, WFE and training is certainly a topic which requires further examination: training, whether it be in the classroom, on the job or by distance learning, may therefore represent an important tool to make the individuals feel they are experiencing continual growth, on a learning path which goes hand in hand with daily work life, as a form both of enhancing personal resources and of recognition of personal potential.

In conclusion, highlighting two of the most important lessons learnt from this research, organizations should give both employees with a permanent or fixed-term contract the same OPD (Torka and Schyns, 2007); in this way, also workers in situations of low job security will perceive investments in their professional development from organizations, and consequently improve their WFE. Secondly, organizations should not consider the investments intended to OPD for workers and to leadership training for supervisors in competition with those for initiatives of organizational welfare, because all these interventions contribute to a positive integration between work and family domains.

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**Table 1. Descriptive statistics, reliabilities and correlations among all variables.**

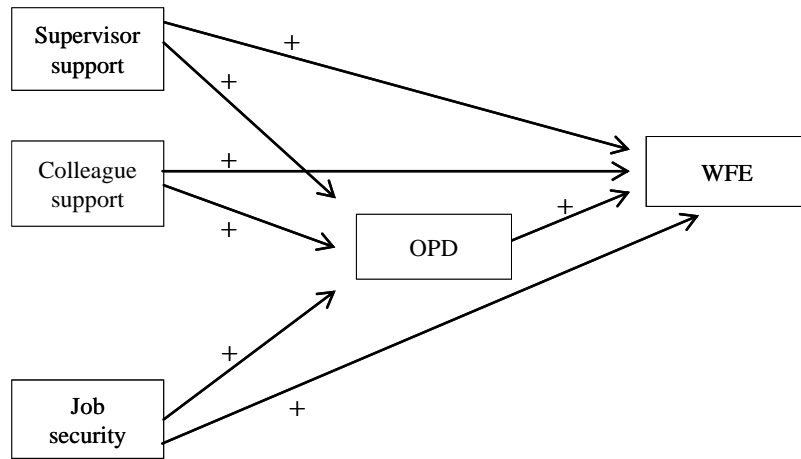
	<b>M</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b><math>\alpha</math></b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>1. WFE</b>	2.71	1.09	.88	1				
<b>2. OPD</b>	3.29	.97	.86	.58**	1			
<b>3. Supervisor support</b>	2.56	.82	.87	.44**	.43**	1		
<b>4. Colleague support</b>	2.84	.64	.77	.37**	.28**	.52**	1	
<b>5. Job security</b>	4.07	1.69	.89	.21**	.35**	.14*	.10	1

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

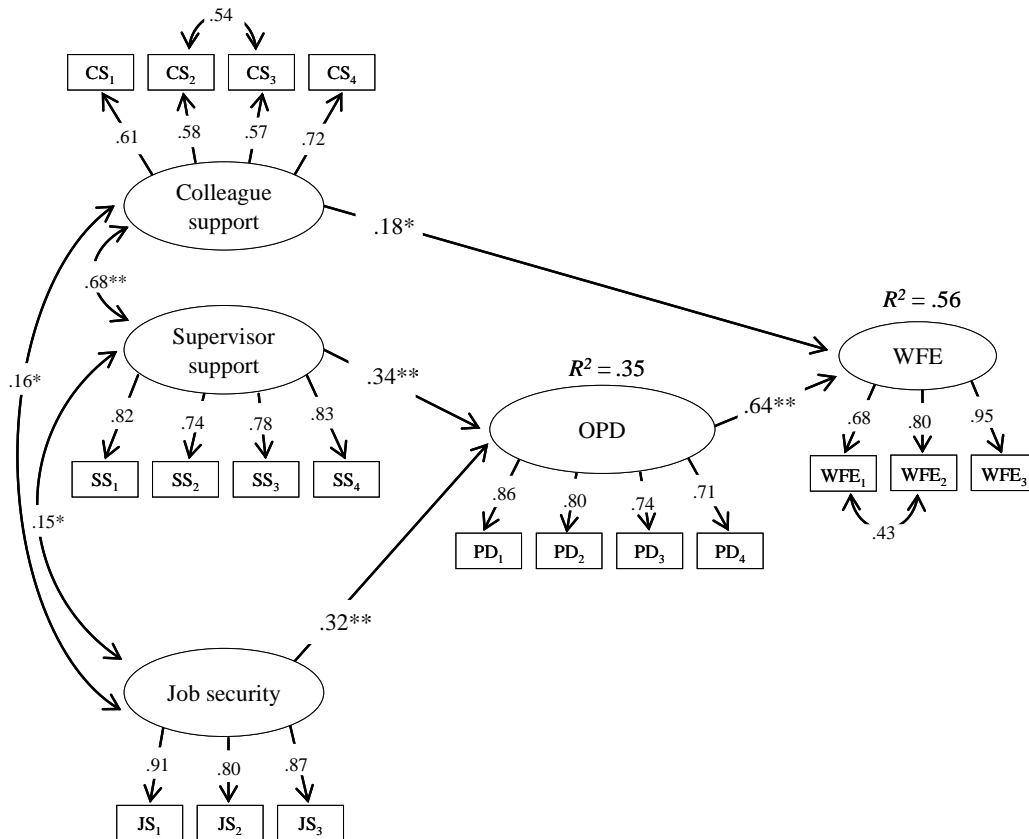
**Table 2. Results of mediated SEM analysis.**

	<b><math>\chi^2</math></b>	<b><math>df</math></b>	<b><math>p</math></b>	<b>CFI</b>	<b>TLI</b>	<b>RMSEA (90% CI)</b>	<b>SRMR</b>
<b>M1. No mediation</b>	457.86	129	< .01	.90	.89	.09 (.08, 1.00)	.18
<b>M2. Full mediation</b>	245.75	126	< .01	.97	.96	.05 (.04, .06)	.05
<b>M3. Partial mediation</b>	232.70	123	< .01	.97	.96	.05 (.04, .06)	.04

**Figure 1. Theoretical model.**



**Figure 2. The empirical structural equation modeling (standardized solution).**



\*\* $p < .001$ , \* $p < .05$ .