

Family problems and work conflicts cause a vicious cycle of stress and confrontation

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Worrying about family problems during work time increases conflict with work colleagues, which can lead to spousal arguments at home in the evening, according to new research from the University of East Anglia (UEA).

A study conducted by Dr Ana Sanz-Vergel and colleagues from UEA's Norwich Business School and Complutense University of Madrid, Spain, asked participants to rate how much [family conflict](#) had affected their concentration at [work](#), and how much they had experienced rudeness and arguments with their colleagues and with their partner.

Dr Sanz Vergel said: "The difficulty of focusing on work when distracted by family worries made employees irritable. This led to them reacting negatively towards colleagues instead of using more adaptive strategies, such as seeking social support or being assertive.

"This negativity is transferred to the [home](#) in the form of increased conflict with their partners."

The findings are published today in the British Psychological Society's *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*.

DrSanz-Vergel said: "Previous studies have demonstrated that psychological and physical job demands, role ambiguity, shift work or job insecurity can cause conflicts between work colleagues.

"In this study we examined how worrying about family issues can interfere with work, and affect interactions with [colleagues](#) at work and with partners at home."

Around 80 couples working in 25 different organisations filled in a general socio-demographic questionnaire, and also completed a survey twice each day over a working week. Nearly 70 per cent of couples had at least one child. The mean age of participants was 42.

The daily interpersonal conflicts at work and daily family-work conflicts were measured at the end of the workday. Daily interpersonal [conflicts](#) at home were reported before going to bed

"These findings may help us to better understand how [family](#)-work conflict affects our relationships with others both at work and at home and on a daily basis."

More information: Ana Isabel Sanz-Vergel, Alfredo Rodríguez-Muñoz and Karina Nielsen. "The thin line between work and home: the spillover and crossover of daily conflicts." *JOURNAL OF OCCUPATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY*. Article first published online : 30 JUN 2014, DOI: 10.1111/joop.12075

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