

# Professional Life towards Family Life in the Context of COVID-19: Application in Mining Companies in the Former Katanga

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**Abstract:** *Reconciling professional and family life is a question that challenges all managers in organizations. Taking it into account in management practices becomes crucial for the human resources manager. In the companies where this research was carried out, this question is almost absent in the documents because the establishments of these were carried out hundreds of kilometers from the large urban centers where the majority of qualified employees live with their employees families. Condemned to go back and forth after a week, ten days, a month depending on the case; there is an imbalance between the work and family spheres. The COVID-19 context has further reinforced this phenomenon as these mining companies in the former Katanga have mostly confined their agents to work sites for months. This practice, which can be seen as managerial resilience in a particular health context, was not without consequence: if companies continued to produce, it was to the detriment of the family concerns of the agents.*

**Keywords:** professional life, family life, mining companies, containment, COVID-19, mining companies, Ex-Katanga

## 1. Introduction

Since the arrival of private operators in the mining sector in the Province of ex-Katanga during the liberalization of the sector in 2002 (law 007/2002 of 11 July 2002 on the mining code) in the Democratic Republic of Congo, it has A sort of intensification of the conflict between professional life and family constraints has been observed in the homes of agents working in this sector of activity. Indeed, often located in mining areas remote from traditional urban centers where there are services and utility infrastructure such as schools, health centers, drinking water; electricity, etc. and above all the skilled workforce; workers are forced to move closer to workplaces hundreds of kilometers from their family home. Therefore, these agents are released at the end of the week for some, after ten days or at the end of the month for others in order to return to their families for one, two, three or at most six days and then return to the workplace. . This new rhythm of coming and going has created a conflict between professional life and family constraints compared to the practices in pioneer companies in the sector which have applied a paternalistic policy.

The year 2020 has been an extraordinary year since the outbreak of COVID-19 in China in the city of Wuhan. Declared by the World Health Organization (WHO) first alert in the People's Republic of China and other states surrounding China, then declared as a public health emergency of international concern on January 30, 2020; this pandemic has subjected states and organizations in particular to severe tests of resilience.

On March 11, 2020, the covid-19 epidemic was declared a pandemic by the WHO, which established recommendations for essential protective measures to prevent saturation of intensive care services and strengthen preventive hygiene. These measures include physical distancing, wearing masks in public places, coughing in the elbow of the arm, prohibiting gatherings and large demonstrations as well as

unnecessary travel and travel, promoting hand washing, enforcement of quarantine, etc. This global pandemic has been the basis of the serial cancellations of sporting and cultural events across the planet, the implementation by many countries of containment measures to curb the formation of new sources of contagion and the closure of the borders of many countries. It has also had negative effects in terms of social and economic instability due to uncertainties and fears in the global economy.

In DR Congo, the covid-19 pandemic has been documented in the country from March 10, 2020, date on which a first case is confirmed on the national territory. The state of health emergency is declared resulting in the closure of airports, bars, places of worship, schools and universities, etc.

From the point of view of companies, the world is looking for itself; uncertainties are present everywhere on the planet: the union forces are weakened, by the taking of measures of containment of the population, some companies close, others by the force of the labor force. Opportunism and managerial resilience are developing practices such as teleworking (Fecteau & Renier, 2020).

As everywhere else, mining companies in the former Katanga are faced with a decisive choice: to continue producing to meet the production backlog or to temporarily close the companies? Mass technical holidays are the option for some and for others, to go so far as to confine workers to their workplaces for months in order to continue to produce in the reduction of worker mobility, a factor limiting the risk of spreading Corona virus disease. Agreements are made with union delegations, logistics are organized to adapt to the contingency. For companies, it is a question of continuing to produce and for agents, continuing to work in order to hope to earn a salary, the only source of income for households.

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From our field surveys, the following table summarizes the worker confinement situation on production sites:

**Table 1:** Statistics on companies that have confined agents

N°	Companies	Confined	Not Confined
1	RUASHI MINING		X
2	MUTANDA MINING	X	
3	TENKE FUNGURUME MINING	X	
4	KAMOA	X	
5	FRONTIER SA	X	
6	CHEMAF	X	
7	KAMOTOCOPPER COMPANY(KCC)	X	
8	SICOMINES	X	
9	COMMUS		X
10	LAMIKAL	X	
11	MKM	X	
12	SOMIKA		X
13	COMILU	X	
14	CDM	X	
15	EXCELLENCE MINING	X	
Total	15	12	3

Source: pre-field survey

As shown in the table above, this practice seemed to be widespread in the mining sector. And as we know, these companies are full of subcontractors that have been subjected to the same health constraints. We note that in our sample, 80% of companies confined workers to production sites during the period of the health emergency, from March 10 to July 21, 2020.

During this period, officers were forced to remain confined to the workplace. The organizations built housing, paid for additional beds, erected protective walls, increased reception and health care capacities, and reinforced hygiene and safety measures on site, organized canteens and catering agents. From now on, it was forbidden to leave "the camps" without duly justified authorization. The agents were thus separated from their families for months, further widening the imbalance between professional and family life; hence our question of knowing the impact of this policy of confining workers on the production site on the work / family life balance?

## 2. Literature Review

In Europe, the expression "reconciling family and professional life" has entered the everyday language of political action under the impetus of European institutions and international organizations (Bihan & Martin, 2008). Work-life balance is an individually determined and defined state of well-being that a person can or wishes to achieve and which allows him to effectively manage his multiple responsibilities at work, at home and in his community, while maintaining their physical, emotional, family and community health without setbacks, stress or negative consequences. (Human Resources and Social Development Canada, 2005). This balance has become a priority, not to say the priority for organizations (Ali, et al., 2017). Companies feel obliged to take these contextual changes into account, aware of their image in particular within the framework of the "war for talents", they integrate the aspirations of the younger generations for a better balance as

a powerful lever of attraction (Ali, et al., 2017). Work-life balance is defined as a kind of inter-role conflict where the demands of work and family roles may be mutually incompatible. Indeed, involvement in one of the two may prevent or make it more complicated to invest in the other. Conflict is present when the person considers that the expectations, needs and duties of his family role are contradictory with those of his professional role, and this reciprocally (Linckens, et al., 2011). There are then associated factors including parental characteristics, family characteristics, job characteristics and work environment that explain the type of work-family conflict. These work-family conflicts are linked either to time, or to tension, or even to the behavior adopted. As for the level of conflict, it concerns the degree of balance between the role of parent and the role of worker. This conflict has repercussions on physical and mental health, on married, family and social life and on the work environment (www.stat.gouv.qc.ca, 2016).

The intensification of work-family conflict is explained by factors of the economic context, the demographic context, the work context and the social context. These factors are at the root of work-family conflict over time, role tension and behavioral conflict. The impacts on are also on the family level, on work, on the health of workers (St-Amour, et al., MARS 2005). Some research highlights the positive effects of work-life balance policies on staff mobilization, sense of belonging and retention (CHASSERIO, 2006).

At the practical level, guidelines are given to allow this work-family balance by maintaining parental leave, by encouraging it to reduce the period of interruption of activity and use it to prepare for the return to work, by adopting a child's right to be kept by developing a specific offer, by encouraging fathers to take part of the parental leave, by clarifying and, if necessary, extending the grant pension rights for parents looking after their children, by opening a part-time paid family support leave in the event of family difficulties, by strengthening the involvement of companies and social partners and by validating parental experience acquired in access to employment (Pecresse, 2006).

## 3. Methodology

To respond to our problem of knowing the impact of the policy of confining workers on production sites on work-life balance; we opted for a qualitative approach using the thematic content method with the sample size criterion being the saturation threshold. For reasons of confidentiality, the names of the agents have been deliberately put aside.

### The research field

Before presenting the data from the interviews collected, it seems opportune to present the field of research which is made up of companies in the mining sector in the former province of Katanga. The 2002 mining code, inspired by the World Bank and designed to attract foreign investment, helped the mining sector to gain momentum. Over the past 10 years, DR Congo's mining industry has been one of the most dynamic in sub-Saharan Africa. Despite a difficult operating environment (water and electricity supply difficulties and poorly performing mineral disposal

infrastructure), the abundant mineral resource explained, for a large part, the good performance of a sector contributing to more than 80% of the country's export earnings (<https://www.tresor.economie.gouv.fr/Pays/CD/le-secteur-minier-en-rd-congo>).

In addition to being a growth-promoting sector and provider of formal and viable jobs in DR Congo, the choice of this sector is justified in our study also by the fact that the establishments of these companies have moved away from the large traditional cities (Lubumbashi, Likasi and Kolwezi). The practices are such that agents are forced to leave families for a certain number of days for reasons of proximity to the workplace. This is not without consequences for the work-life balance. In addition, during the period of the proclamation of the state of health emergency in March, most of these companies decided, almost by contagion, to confine workers to work sites for months. The choice is therefore justified for this sector where the work-family imbalance is most experienced.

**Construction of data collection tool**

Data collection was carried out through guided interviews with officers who were affected by the containment measure at the sites. In compliance with barrier measures and to get around the difficulty of accessing work sites, we were able to reach nine agents who agreed to answer our questions. Four interviews were conducted by phone calls for approximately 25 to 35 minutes, and five other agents responded to our questions by email. The data collected was transcribed with the Word tool, then analyzed with the IRAMUTEQ .07 alpha 2 software (R interface for multidimensional analyzes of text and questionnaires). Iramuteq is a text and data table analysis software. It is based on the statistical software R (<http://www.r-project.org>) and on the python language (<http://www.python.org>).

Iramuteq offers a set of treatments and tools to help describe and analyze textual corpora and individual / character matrices.

It is free software developed by Pierre Ratinaud. Iramuteq is an R Interface for Multidimensional Text and Questionnaire Analyzes, its operation consists of preparing the data and writing scripts which are then analyzed in the statistical software R. The results are finally displayed by the interface.

**4. Study Results**

In this section, we present the socio-demographic characteristics of the agents interviewed, analysis of the survey data and the analysis of the data.

**4.1 Characteristics of socio-demographics**

Agents	Gender	Age	Marital status	Dependents	Time of confinement
1.	Male	43 years	married	8	4.5 months
2.	Male	38 years	married	3	45 days
3.	Male	43 years	married	6	4months
4.	Male	43 years	married	4	3 months
5.	Women	55 years	single	6	1 month
6.	Man	31 years	single	0	4 months

7.	Man	35 years	married	4	1 month
8.	Man	37 years	married	6	7 months
9.	Man	29 years	single	3	3months

**4.2 Corpuses of interviews**

Agent 1: I am 43 years old, married with 8 dependents. When COVID-19 occurred, the company made the decision to confine us to the work site. It was from mid-March 2021 until late July. The decision was indeed forced and verbal. The camps were set up and the conditions were not too good. Tensions and nervousness among agents, attempted strikes, etc. to get in touch with our families, only the telephone helped us by normal call or especially the WhatsApp given the costs of long communications. In any case, between confinement and the momentary shutdown of the company during that time, I find that I would choose confinement. How else to support the family? Work is hard to find and we work for the family of course. It was not easy but no choice. The company gave us confinement bonuses of one thousand francs a day in addition to the basic salary. On the consequences, in any case physically and morally, we were really affected. Life as a couple was really affected. Sexual deprivation, we no longer saw our children during this time, no small or extended family, no friends ...

But alas, this decision still helped workers keep jobs and the company continued to produce. We were working overtime and it looks like the production even increased. I was motivated as before when you think about the family load! Finally, if I had other sources of income or my small business, I was never going to accept being confined to the workplace. I was going to quit altogether.

Agent 2: I am an agent in the human resources department in our company. I am 38 years old, married and the father of two children in addition to my wife. I spent about forty-five days in confinement in the workplace. Then I got to work eighty percent of my time online and the rest face-to-face. We therefore signed a voluntary accommodation contract with the employer for those who wanted to continue working. I have personally experienced loneliness and to get in touch with the family you had to call morning and evening to find out what they are like. But between confinement and closure I would choose confinement because if I lose this job the chance of finding another is minimal. I believe that when there is a balance between work and family, it gives us the strength to withstand the stresses of professional life. I don't think this decision was healthy. I was working as before anyway even if living conditions on a scale of one to ten, I can give six. If I had other means to live, I had to quit the company.

Agent 3: I have been working in the human resources management department for fifteen years now in our company. I am married and the father of five children. I was confined for about four months by company decision due to COVID-19. We are made to sign deeds of voluntary commitment to be confined and when you go out, you no longer have the right to enter the camp so as not to infect others. The company took care of us for food, accommodation, etc. with my family I communicated by phone and every day you had to ask how they woke up and

what they did during the day. We activated the megas to talk for a long time on WhatsApp at night especially after working hours. It was tough, but it was necessary to continue to survive instead of the company closing its doors. In addition each month the company paid us a containment premium of ninety dollars. It is true that the family is important for a good life, but without the means, what to do? Physically and mentally we were affected, but this decision helped all of us, the company and us agents. Production increased and we were working courageously as before. Even though I had other means to live, I love my society which made me who I am, I was always going to accept being confined to save society.

Agent 4: I work as a supervisor in the human resources department of our company, I am married with three children and I am 43 years old. When the state of health emergency measure was declared at least last March, the company forced us to be confined to the workplace for three months. No document was signed and the decision was verbal. Some of our colleagues got stubborn and walked out and the company decided they weren't going to re-enter the site. The situation was difficult. There were conflicts between workers and to that we had to add the monotony in the meals. It was really boring and we missed the family very much. The phone kept us in touch. Morning and evening you had to call to find out how they were doing. The communication budget has really increased, but we often used WhatsApp to communicate for a long time outside working hours. But it must be said that this decision helped us to continue working and earning the salary. Otherwise if the company had closed it was going to be difficult for our survival. The company also gave the confinement bonus per day in addition to meals varying between three and five dollars per day. Work is important, but so is family. This decision had negative impacts on couples, the agents' social and family. Some couples have separated even though the decision was beneficial for society and for us as well. We worked as before and production increased. If I had other means to live, I was never going to accept being confined to the workplace, I was going to quit.

Agent 5: I am a single female with six dependents. I am 55 years old. For a month, the company recommended that we stay at the work site without first signing any document. It was a time of stress, uncertainty and stalemate. Only the phone allowed me to get in touch with my family. Between temporary closure of the company and confinement, I would choose confinement. During this time, we have not received any bonuses for containment. The confinement has had a negative impact on social life and even on the workplace. During this period, my commitment dropped significantly and I was no longer working as before. Never if I had the means to live otherwise I was going to agree to stay in the company and accept to be confined.

Agent 6: I am thirty-one years old, single. I agreed to be confined to the workplace during the lockdown for about four months. I would say it was an imposition on a simple press release posted on the valves. At the beginning it was difficult to bear then little by little we picked up the pace. But it took a lot of effort to live in these conditions.

Tolerance, patience. Monotony, no way to repress, lack of free time and cut off from the family world. Only the telephone allowed us to speak with the family. But instead of shutting down the business, better lockdown. The premium was really minimal per day two dollars. I think that in order to work well, a man needs a balance between work and family life, otherwise it is very serious. This weather had a very negative impact on physical and mental health. No sport, no hobby, no social life with the people you love. But it was necessary for us and for society. After a while, my performance dropped and if I had other things to do, I was never going to accept being confined. I had to stay at home while waiting for the end of the measurement and then go back to work under normal conditions.

Agent 7: I am 35 years old, married and have 4 dependents. I was forced into confinement at the company for a month. No contract has been signed for this. No additional payment for this. This time was very difficult. It took hard work to produce two to three times to support our colleagues and keep the business going. It is important that there is a balance between work and family. Confinement in the workplace has had a negative impact on physical and mental health, marital life, and social and family life. For me this decision was neither beneficial for society nor for us. My engagement even increased but if I had other means I would leave the company instead of being confined.

Agent 8: I am married, six dependents and 37 years old. I was forcibly confined to the workplace for seven months. I signed a deed of engagement for this. This time was really demotivating and to get in touch with the family, you needed the phone. But what can I say? Between being confined and shutting down the business I would personally choose confinement. No plug was given to us for this. I believe that in order to work well, a man needs a balance between work and family life. Containment has had a negative impact on the workplace. But the decision saved the company and the agents. But my commitment and my motivation were not the same. If I had other means to live, I was going to stay with the company.

Agent 9: I work for a mining company. I am still single and 29 years old but with three people that I take care of. I was subjected to workplace lockdown for three months. We were asked to choose between staying in the workplace and leaving. So take it or leave it. No official document was signed except a list where whoever wanted to stay put their name. During this time, the situation was very difficult. Terrible monotony in terms of food, we ate almost the same foods. As we could no longer go out, the rhythm was that we had to work thirty days a thirty. It was stressful, painful so those with weak hearts created fictitious illnesses just to get out a bit and make contact with the outside world. The phone was the only tool to communicate with the family. Between confinement and temporary shutdown of society, I would choose confinement of course. In addition to our salaries, we get a bonus of four dollars a day the first month, six dollars a day the second month and finally ten dollars a day the last month. The family-work balance was totally shaken. Fatigue, stress, anxiety. The decision was beneficial for the company and for us also to continue to have a salary. Our commitment has even increased. But I had other things

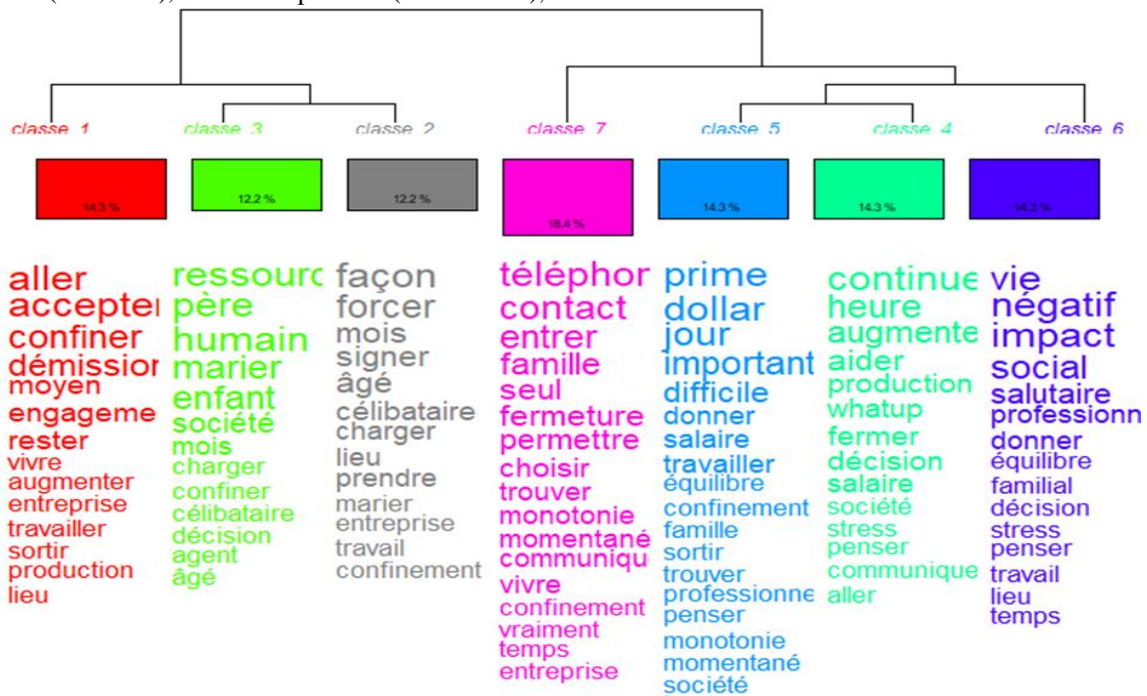
to do like capital; I wasn't going to accept being confined. I was going to stay home and quit altogether.

4.2 Results from Analyzes of Iramuteq Software

The directly available results present a summary of the classification (CHD tab), the class profiles (Profiles tab),

and a factorial analysis of the correspondences carried out on the increasing contingency table forms / lemmas and classes (AFC tab).

4.2.1 Descending Hierarchical Classification of text segments from the Integer Lexical Table



**Interpretation:** This dendrogram shows the distribution of classes according to each other in the form of word clouds. Thus our lexicometric analysis generated 7 classes to which we gave themes in order to perfect their interpretations.

The observation reflects that the first class is the most important (even if it is not necessarily the largest in terms of percentage: 14.3%) because it is this which reveals the meaning of the discourse of our corpus. This meaning shows us a set of coocurrent words having the same root in the same class (Case of Go, Accept, confine, resign etc.).

Here is an indication of the different themes with regard to the different classes:

Class 1: Refusal of forced confinement and probability of resignation

Class 2: Constraint of constrained agents of force

Class 3: Responsible position at work and responsibility in family

Class 4: Increase in working hours and production

Class 5: Containment premium unsatisfactory (Low)

Class 6: Negative impact of confinement on the social and professional life of agents (Work-family life balance)

Class 7: Need to stay in touch with family despite the risk of business closure

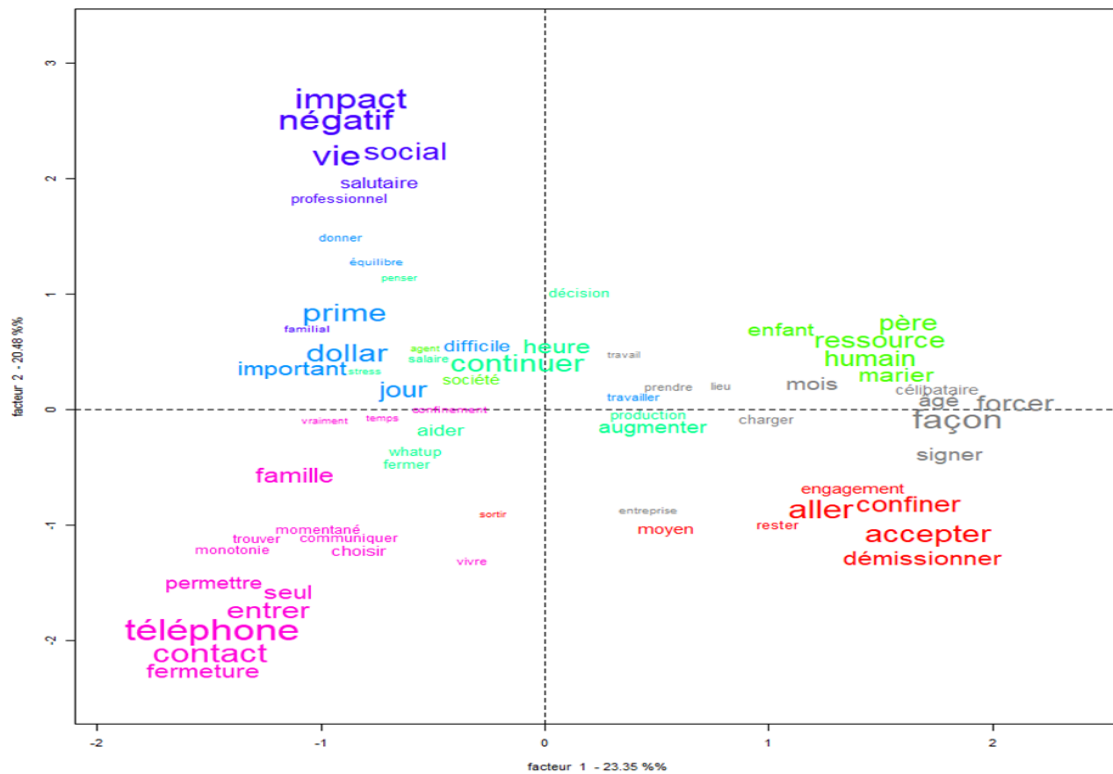
Furthermore, it should be noted that classes 1, 3 and 2 work together while classes 6,4, 5 and 7 also work together. According to these indications of the software according to the grouping of the classes:

The lockdown was forced, involuntary, so the majority of officers, if they had other means to live on, would quit.

There is a very strong link between professional responsibility and family responsibility. The two spheres must always be in balance, but during the time of confinement, this balance was upset to the detriment of the family.

This confinement on the other hand had a positive impact on the continuation and even the increase of the production of the company despite the fact that for the contained agents, the conditions were not satisfactory. Containment would be the lesser evil instead of temporarily shutting down the business.

4.2.2 AFC of the Reinert method. Factorial plane (1-2) from AFC representing the active forms



This graph represents the starred variables i.e. the characteristics on the texts introduced during the formatting of the corpus. In our study, the different agents interviewed (\* Agent2\_IMPACT. \* Agent8\_IMPACT.), their gender (\* Sex\_h, \* Sex\_f) and their identity (\* Nat\_Cong) which are modalities are projected on the factorial plane of the AFC crossing the active forms and the modalities of the class variable. The speeches of agents 2, 4 and 8 represent the class (1 on the y-axis) opposed to the speech of agents 3, 9 and 1.

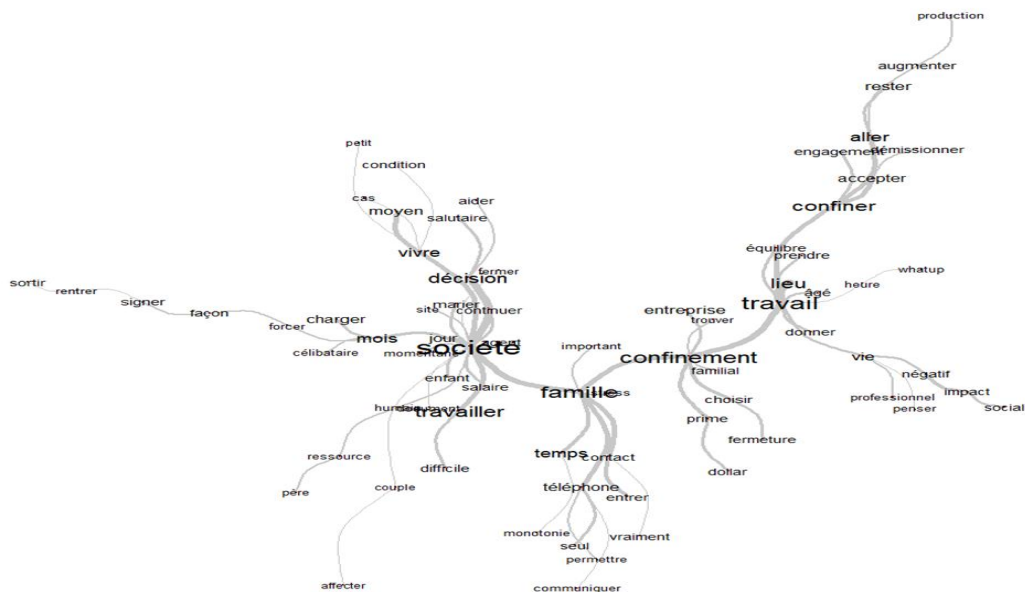
#### 4.2.3 Similarity graphs

This is an analysis of co-occurrences, Chi2 etc. presented as graphics of associated words. The similarity indices proposed in IRaMuTeQ are those available in the proxy

library of R (Meyer, Buchta). This analysis implements the concepts of graph theory used in Relational Data Analysis (Network Analysis). The Fruchtermanreingold algorithm is used in this article to optimize the display of the graph and visualize the most "central" words ("typical" words of the corpus).

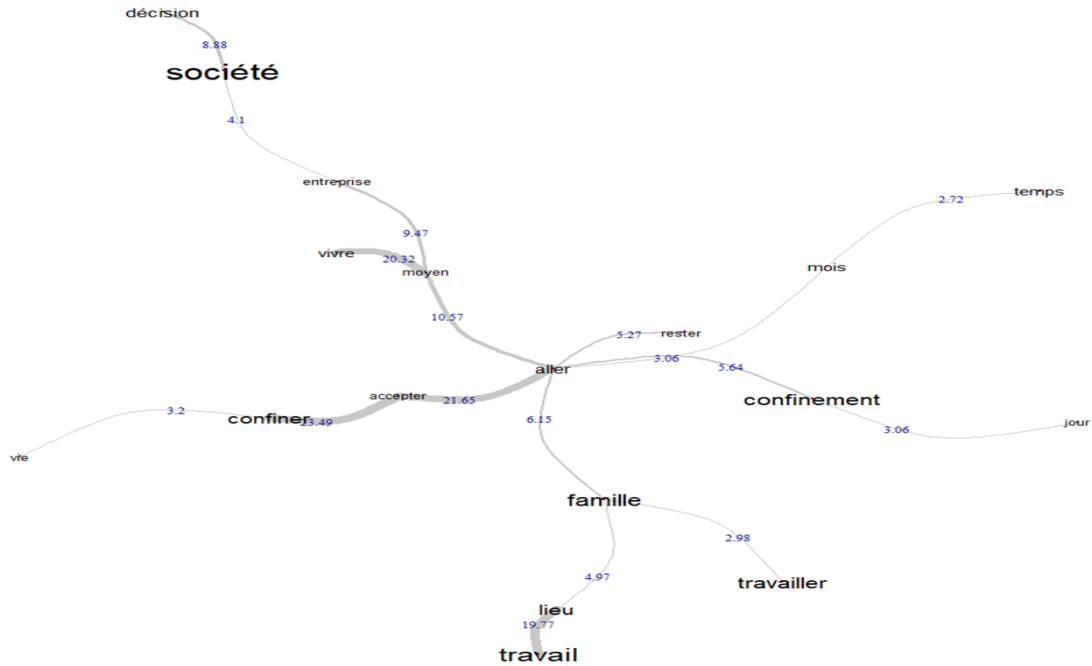
The most central forms / words are detected from the calculation of their intermediate centrality (Case of Society, Family, confinement and work). These words serve as intermediaries to connect (in the sense of co-occurrence) a large number of other words together.

Static graph by co-occurrence index presented under the Fruchtermanreingold algorithm



By default, the shapes / words are the vertices of the graph and the edges represent the co-occurrences between them. The larger the size of the words, the more frequent they are in the corpus (Case of Family, Society, Confinement...), the thicker the links / edges, the more the words are co-

occurring. This shows that the relationship between society and family is very close (thanks to the thick line) and almost inseparable in order to maintain work-family life balance. Static sub-index graph of Chi-squared (Chi<sup>2</sup>) presented under the Fruchtermanreingold algorithm

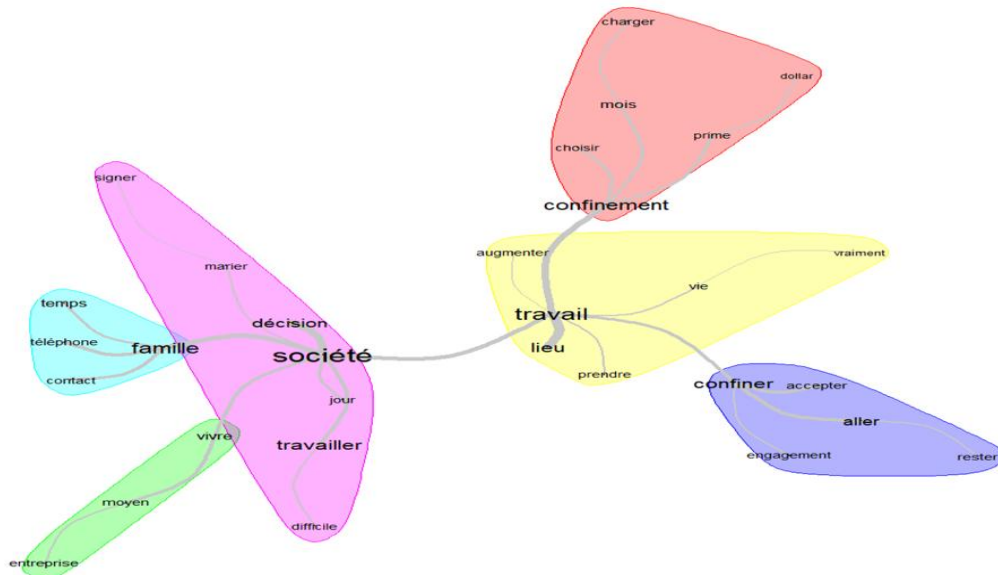


This graph shows the Chi<sup>2</sup> index, which is a statistical test that measures the strength of the link that exists between different variables.

confined (even under duress) are mainly against the closure of the company for fear of finding themselves without means of subsistence.

On this graph, graph theory shows us that confinement is closely linked to society. This implies that the agents

**4.2.4 Static sub-index graph of Chi-squared (Chi<sup>2</sup>) presented under the Fruchtermanreingold algorithm**



The detection of communities is also a method resulting from the theory of graphs making it possible to identify groups (here of words). Strongly co-occurring terms are found within the same community (Family case with the importance of time, contacts and communication) and are weakly related with certain communities. Furthermore, the linking traits are indicators of the strength of the link between communities. This leads us to conclude that it is

very important to maintain the Family-Society relationship (Work-Life Balance) in order to have a large number of workers dedicated to their tasks for more productivity in society.

**4.2.5 Word Cloud**

This analysis makes it possible to display the lexicon of words associated with the corpus in the form of a graph





BIEN REEL POUR LES ENSEIGNANTES-  
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