

Work-Life Conflict among Working Women

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Abstract: The aim of this study was to determine the relationship between research demands, family demands and research-life conflict. Besides, this study was also conducted to find out which variable makes the strongest unique contribution to explain research-life conflict. The sample of this study came from 240 working women in one of the agencies under Malaysia's Ministry of Plantation Industries and Commodities. They were chosen to participate in this study using purposive sampling technique. A survey questionnaire was used as research instrument for data collection. The findings of this study were supported by previous researchers in which the findings revealed the significant relationship between work demands and family demands with research-life conflict. Meanwhile, research demands were found to be the dominant factor of this study. The issue of research-life conflict should be taken seriously because the effects could be serious not only to individual researchers but also the organizations that employ them and the families who care for them.

Key words: Research demands, family demands, research-life conflict, agencies, organization

INTRODUCTION

Over the past few decades, the issues of working mothers have become a major focus of vocational literature due to high participation of female employees in researching sector (Poduval and Poduval, 2009). Female employees with children at home will be more stressed than those without children. The researching mothers have to balance their two important roles as a mother and an employee at one time (Berger, 2014).

In the world of modernization and increasing complex live, non-traditional families are requiring women to research in order to support their husband who are known as the sole financial supporter of the family. When both parents in a family are working, it would result in better financial status as they can fulfil the demands of their family as well as to help each other in overcoming more challenging cost of living. Working mothers might experience conflicts where they must maintain most or all of their domestic responsibilities such as child care, elderly care and household responsibilities as well as holding a professional role at workplace.

The general business problem was working mothers have lack of time in order to carry two roles at a time. In fact, research indicates that employed mother will face conflicts when balancing family and research demands (Berger, 2014). The need to implement research-life balance in the organization has become a central focus for most of the researchers that have high interest with this

topic. There are several factors that give a greater impact between research and life of an employee such as research demands, family demands, work hours and workplace environment, management support etc. The employees especially working mothers must cope with these factors in order to release themselves from conflicts between work and life.

Literature review

Work-life conflict: As the world globalize, there are also development on growth of labour market. Nowadays, men are not the only one who entered into labour force but there are also increasing in the participation of women into working field.

The issue of research-life conflict has become a very hot topic to discuss among the researchers all over the world. Research-life conflict can be defined as a challenge, tension and trade-off associated to the settlement between and family task (Hofacker and Konig, 2013). The work-life conflicts among employed women frequently occurs when they failed to manage or organize the time between family and research properly (Berger, 2014). In addition these poor time management between research and family that a working mother have to cope with will lead them to a serious health problem as they may experience stress and illness.

There are two categories of conflicts, the research interference with family domains (Work-Family Conflict, WFC) and the family responsibilities interference with

work domains (Family-Work Conflict, FWC) (Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985). WFC takes place when the task from work intrude responsibilities for the home, meanwhile FWC occurs when home responsibilities interfere by work responsibilities (Bernardi, 2013). The issue of work-life conflict has become a very hot topic to discuss among the researchers all over the world. Work-life conflict can be defined as a challenge, tension and trade-off associated to the settlement between and family task (Bernardi, 2013). The work-life conflicts among employed women will frequently occurs when they failed to manage or organize the time between family and work properly (Berger, 2014). In addition, these poor time management between research and family that a working mother have to cope with will lead them to a serious health problem as they may experience stress and illness.

When a mother has to negotiate the demands between research and family there will be an increased in WFC/FWC that may lead to lower in research and family satisfaction (Shockley and Singla, 2011). Those multiple tasks either from research or household responsible are the proof that working women research five times harder than men due to childcare and elderly care (Ng and Feldman, 2011).

Work demands: Research overload or research demands can be defined as the situation where an employee does not have enough time to complete the task given to them and there are too many things to do at specific period of time (Bernardi, 2013). Heavy workload at the workplace will lead the employees to experience a conflict between research and family (Karatepe, 2013). As a result, this will cause the employees to experience emotional exhaustion that eventually will result in poor performance.

Excessive job demands that could not be managed appropriately will cause employee to face a major problem especially for a working mother as they are engaged to other responsibilities. According to health impairment process, the presence of job demands and emotional exhaustion will lead to negative or undesirable outcomes as such ineffective job performance (Karatepe and Ngeche, 2012). Other than that, overload of research demands may also lead to employee suffering from exhaustion and negative health status.

Family demands: Working mothers tend to have more responsibilities in household rather than men. There are several duties such as children care, elderly care, housework and family needs that require mothers to sacrifice most of their time and bear with all those responsibilities. Moreover, there has been an increasing number of women's labour participation rate as well as increasing in number of work-life conflict between family and paid employment (Hennig *et al.*, 2012). Women especially will be more concerned on family demands,

since they are the one that will manage the household works and look after the children as well as taking care of the elderly (Ng and Feldman, 2011). Most of working mothers find that they are being disposed by the major conflict between family domain and research domain, thus a positive support from spouse and family members are important for them in order to free themselves from those conflicts (Rokis, 2014). Other than that it was revealed that 80% of the men categorized themselves as the important financial earner for the family, whereas only 25% of women characterized themselves as economic supporter for the family (Alexander, 2010). The participation of women into working field and become the second financial distributor for the family is only to help their spouse.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study utilized quantitative research design which applies the usage of survey questionnaire. The sampling technique that was used for this study was purposive sampling technique. The principle objective of purposive testing is to concentrate on specific attributes of a population that are of interest which will best empower respondents to answer researcher's exploration questions. The researchers had distributed 250 sets of questionnaire to the respondents and 240 sets of questionnaire were returned to the researchers. The questionnaire consisted of six major sections. Section A presented the statements on the respondents' demographic characteristics. Meanwhile, in Section B, respondents were required to answer questions about work-life conflict. Besides, Section C consisted of questions on work demands, followed by family demands in Section D.

In addition, a 5-point Likert scales ranged from strongly disagree with the value of one to strongly agree with the value of five were used to assist respondents to choose their responses about the statement. In addition, the data collected was analyzed using Version 21.0 of Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) for Windows. The statistical approaches used to analyze the data were descriptive statistic and inferential statistics which included Pearson correlation and multiple regression analysis. Pearson correlation analysis helps the researchers to determine the relationship between selected independence variables and dependent variable. Meanwhile, regression analysis was used to see the amount of effects of independent variables towards the dependent variable (Sekaran and Bougie, 2010).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Reliability and validity tests: Table 1 shown the results of reliability and validity tests. Reliability and

Table 1: Results from reliability and validity tests

V	I	FL	KMO	BTS	EV	VE	CA
WD	7	0.633-0.771	0.865	724.573 p = 0.000	4.088	51.105	0.862
FD	8	0.543-0.787	0.874	747.053 p = 0.000	4.155	51.934	0.866
WLC	8	0.663-0.742	0.860	498.433 p = 0.000	3.468	49.541	0.830

V-Variables; I-Items; FL-Factor Loading; KMO-Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin; BTS-Bartlett's Test of Sphericity; EV-Eigen Value; VE-Variance Explained; WD Work Demands; FD-Family Demands; WLC-Work-Life Conflict

Table 2: Summary of respondent's demographic characteristics

Sample profile/Sub-profile	Frequency	Percentage
Marital status		
Married	167	69.6
Single	53	22.1
Others	20	8.30
Age (years)		
20-30	85	35.4
31-40	63	26.3
41-50	34	14.2
51-60	38	15.8
60 and above	20	8.30
Race		
Malay	194	80.8
Chinese	21	8.80
Indian	22	9.20
Others	3	1.20
No. of children		
1-2	31	12.9
3-4	71	29.6
5-6	44	18.3
7-8	27	11.3
Others	67	27.9
Level of education		
SPM	42	17.5
STPM/Cert	17	7.10
Diploma	51	21.3
Degree	90	33.3
Masters	44	18.3
PhD	6	2.50
Length of services		
1-3	58	24.2
4-6	43	17.9
7-9	37	15.4
10-12	43	17.9
13-15	29	12.1
16 and above	30	12.5

validity tests were conducted to ensure that the survey questions were clearly phrased and easy to be answered by respondents. As shown in the table above, the items for each variable had factor loadings of 0.5 and above, indicating that it met the acceptable standard of validity analysis (Coakes and Steed, 2007). The KMO score for each variable was >0.6 which indicated that the sampling was adequate for each variable. Furthermore, these variables were significant in Bartlett's test of sphericity and all variables had Eigenvalues >1. In addition, the result of reliability analysis showed that the value of Cronbach alpha met the acceptable standard of reliability analysis (between 0.830 and 0.866).

Demographic characteristics of the respondents:

Table 2 shows the distribution of respondents based on

Table 3: Result of pearson correlation coefficient for work demands and work-life conflict

Relation between variables	Moderate correlation (Sekaran and Bougie, 2010)	
Tests	Work demands	Work-life conflict
Pearson correlation (r)	1	0.619(**)
Sig. (2-tailed), p		0.000
N	240	240.0
Mean	3.9594	3.8012
SD	0.61740	0.61554

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

the demographic characteristics such as marital status, age, race, number of children, level of education and length of service that presented in terms of frequencies and percentages. Majority of the respondents were married (69.6%, n = 167). There were 35.4 % (n = 85) who were at the age of 20-30 year old. Most of the respondents were Malay (80.8%, n = 194), followed by the Indian (9.2%, n = 22) and Chinese (8.8%, n = 21). The smallest representative age group was "61 and above years old" with 20 respondents (8.3%). Besides, 29.6% (n = 71) of the respondents had 3-4 number of children. For the respondent's length of service, 24.2% (n = 58) of them have served the organization for 1-3 year. Followed by both 4-6 year and 10-12 year that obtained the same result which was 17.9% (n = 43). Furthermore, there were 80 respondents (33.3%) possessed degree as their highest education level, followed by Diploma (21.3%, n = 51), Master (18.33%, n = 44), SPM (17.5%, n = 42) and STPM/Certificate (7.1%, n = 17). Meanwhile, 2.5% of them had PhD as highest academic qualification.

Results from Pearson correlation analysis:

- H_{a1}: There is a significant relationship between work demands and work-life conflict

As shown in Table 3, correlation between work demands and work-life conflict was found to be statistically significant (r = 0.619, p = 0.000). This indicated moderate relationship between both variables (Sekaran and Bougie, 2010). Therefore, the first hypothesis H₁ that stated there is a significant relationship between work demands and work-life conflict was accepted.

Role overload happens when a working mother endeavors to adjust being an employee and a mother at

Table 4: Result of Pearson correlation coefficient for family demands and work-life conflict

Relation between variables	Moderate correlation (Sekaran and Bougie, 2010)	
	Work demands	Work-life conflict
Family demands	1	0.607(**)
Sig. (2-tailed), p		0.0000
N	240	240.00
Mean	4.0010	3.8012
SD	0.61418	0.61554

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

one time. Adjusting these demands leads to lower levels of satisfaction between work and family. Besides, it was revealed that a working mother had a satisfactory measure of time for their family if their employment demands kept them far from their family commitment (Brown, 2012). In fact, an employed mothers struggle to carry out their roles as women, mothers and workers instantaneously because of the conflicts between femininity and motherhood caretaking and researcher norms. The more a mother has to negotiate these demands between research and family, the higher the work-life conflict, thus will result in lower the research and family satisfaction (Shockley and Singla, 2011):

- H₂: There is a significant relationship between family demands and work-life conflict

Results from Table 4 revealed that there was a significant correlation between family demands and work-life conflict ($r = 0.607$, $p = 0.000$). This indicated moderate relationship between both variables (Sekaran and Bougie, 2010). Therefore, the second hypothesis H₂ that stated there is a significant relationship between family demands and work-life conflict was accepted.

Family demands can be defined as a global perception of the level and intensity of responsibility within the family domain (Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985). Demands are not essentially corresponding to role overload but it will eventually influence a working mother to experience work-life conflict (Ng and Feldman, 2011). Furthermore, family demands will also cause a working mother to face the work-life conflict as they need to balance the time between research and family obligation (Shakil *et al.*, 2011).

Results from multiple regression analysis: As can be seen in Table 5 and 6 the R² value was 0.427. Expressed as a percentage, this means that the independent variables which are work demands and family demands explained 42.7% of the variance in work-life conflict. Furthermore,

Table 5: Results from multiple regression analysis (Model summary and ANOVA)

M	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	SE of the estimate	F-values	Sig
1	0.654(a)	0.427	0.423	0.46771	88.476	0.000(a)

^aPredictors: (Constant), family demands, work demands

Table 6: Coefficients^a

M	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients		
	B	SE	β	t-values	Sig.
1(C)	1.032	0.211	-	4.899	0.000
WD	0372	0.076	0.374	4.928	0.000
FD	0.324	0.076	0.323	4.260	0.000

^aDependent variable: Job satisfaction; M-Model; C-Constant; WD-Work Demands; FD-Family Demands; WLC-Work-life Conflict

from the table labeled ANOVA, it was clearly revealed that the result reached the statistical significance, $p = 0.000$ ($p < 0.0005$). To compare the contribution of each independent variable, researcher needs to look at the largest beta value. In this study, the largest beta coefficient was 0.374 ($p = 0.000$) which was for research demands. This means that research demands makes the strongest unique contribution to explain the dependent variable.

CONCLUSION

The duties of a career woman for families are important as they hold a huge responsibility for household research and the welfare of the children. The organization should consider implementing work-life balance in order to help the employees to keep their research and personal responsibilities on an equal level. Therefore, the researchers would like to recommend to any organizations to implement and formalize the home-based teleworking or telecommuting as well as offering the related potential solution to these problem. Moreover, applying flexible working arrangement will also help in balancing and improving the research and life among career women.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Next, it is recommended for the future researchers to carry out more studies with regards to work-life conflict by looking at its effects on job turnover, employee engagement and commitment towards research. Other than that, future researchers are advised to enlarge the population of the study and get the sample from other industries as well for instance food and beverage, banking, airline, etc., so that the feedback will be more interesting and the findings will be more accurate and precise.

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