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WORK/FAMILY BALANCE: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WORK/FAMILY CONFLICT AND WORK/FAMILY ENRICHMENT AMONG NURSES IN HEALTHCARE SERVICE IN MALAYSIA

BY

WAN EDURA WAN RASHID

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Kulliyyah of Economics and Management Sciences
International Islamic University
Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

Over the past two decades, the issues relating to work/family balance have been the subject of various investigations. This focus is indeed warranted given the fact that work and family can result in conflict (work/family conflict) and enhancement (work/family enrichment). Critically however, the extant literature suggests that work/family conflict and work/family enrichment to be related yet in distinct constructs. Employing a mixed methodology, the present study aims to develop a comprehensive framework to model the relationships between work/family conflict and work/family enrichment in achieving work/family balance. In the first phase of the study, a cross-sectional survey design is employed and responses from 689 nurses from public hospitals in Malaysia were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to test the relationship between two predictors (social support and self-esteem) to work/family conflict and work/family enrichment and their impact of overall satisfactions and work/family balance. The findings reveal that the work/family conflict is negatively related to work/family enrichment. In fact, it is found that social support and self-esteem are negatively related to work/family conflict and work/family conflict is negatively linked with overall satisfaction. Meanwhile, social-support and self-esteem are positively related to work/family enrichment and work/family enrichment has a significant positive relationship with overall satisfaction. With regards to direct relationships, social-support and self-esteem are positively related to overall satisfaction. The findings also indicates that work/family conflict serves as mediator between social-support and overall satisfaction. Work/family enrichment on the other hand only partially mediates the relationship between self-esteem and overall satisfaction. Contrary to expectations, overall satisfaction is significantly negatively related to work/family balance. The findings of the quantitative study was substantiated and supported by the findings of the second phase of the study in which 12 nurses were interviewed. In conclusion, the study contributes to the present knowledge of work/family balance by providing simultaneous relationships that integrate the causes and the effects of work/family conflict and work/family enrichment in a single framework.

ملخص البحث

منذ أكثر من عقدين قد أصبحت القضايا المتعلقة بالتوازن بين العمل والأسرة موضوعَ البحث والدراسة، ذلك لأن العمل والأسرة قد ينتج عنهما التعارض (تعارض العمل مع الأسرة) والإنماء (إنماء العمل والأسرة). والدراسات المتاحة تفيد بوجود العلاقة بين تعارض العمل مع الأسرة من جانب والإنماء لهما من جانب آخر مع اختلافهما في البنية. وعليه تهتم هذه الدراسة بتطوير إطار شامل للتمثل للعلاقات بين تعارض العمل مع الأسرة من جانب وإنماء العمل والأسرة في جانب آخر لكى يتحقق التوازن بين العمل والأسرة، وذلك بتوظيف المنهج المزدوج. وفي الطور الأول من الدراسة تم توظيف عميلة المسح ثم تحليل إجابات من 689 ممرضة من المستشفيات العامة في ماليزيا باستخدام (SEM) لأجل فحص المنبئَين (الدعم الاجتماعي وحب الذات) عن معارضة العمل مع الأسرة من جهة وإنماء العمل والأسرة من جهة أخرى وأثر كل منهما من حيث الشعور بالارتياح الإجمالي والتوازن بين العمل والأسرة. وأفادت نتائج الدراسة أن تعارض العمل مع الأسرة له علاقة سلبية بإنماء العمل والأسرة. كذلك إن الدعم الاجتماعي وحب الذات لهما علاقة سلبية بتعارض العمل مع الأسرة كما أن بين هذا الأخير وبين الشعور بالارتياح الإجمالي علاقة سلبية أيضا. أما الدعم الاجتماعي وحب الذات فبينهما وبين إنماء العمل والأسرة علاقة إيجابية، كما أن بين هذا الأخير وبين الشعور بالارتياح الإجمالي علاقة إيجابية أيضا. وبالنسبة للعلاقات المباشرة فالدعم الاجتماعي وحب الذات لهما علاقة إيجابية بالشعور بالارتياح. كما أشارت النتائج إلى أن تعارض العمل مع الأسرة يتوسط بين الدعم الاجتماعي والشعور بالارتياح الإجمالي، بينما يتوسط إنماء العمل والأسرة - بشكلي جزئي - بين حب الذات والشعور بالارتياح الإجمالي. وبخلاف المتوقع فإن الشعور بالارتياح الإجمالي له علاقة سلبية بالتوازن بين العمل والأسرة. هذا وقد تم تعضيد نتائج البحث الكمي بنتائج الطور الثاني من البحث حيث قوبلت 12 ممرضة. وفي الختام قد ساهمت هذه الدراسة في مجال التوازن بين العمل والأسرة بإبراز العلاقات المتزامنة التي تربط بين أسباب ونتائج تعارض العمل مع الأسرة من جانب وإنماء العمل والأسرة من جانب آخر في إطار مفرد.

APPROVAL PAGE

The dissertation of Wan Edura Wan Rashid has been approved by the following:

_____
Azura Omar
Supervisor

_____
Ishairi Ismail
Supervisor

_____
Mohamad Sahari Nordin
Supervisor

_____
Arif Hassan
Internal Examiner

_____
Chris Rowley
External Examiner

_____
Nasir El Din
Chairman

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my own investigation, except where otherwise stated. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted as a whole for any other degree at IIUM or other institutions.

Wan Edura Wan Rashid

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AMOS	Analysis of Moment Structures
AVE	Average Variance Extracted
CFA	Confirmatory Factor Analysis
CFI	Comparative Fit Index
EFA	Exploratory Factor Analysis
GFI	Goodness-of-Fit Index
KMO	Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin
MI	Modification Index
MLE	Maximum Likelihood Estimation
MSA	Measure of Sampling Adequacy
MOH	Ministry of Health
NMP	Ninth Malaysian Plan
NMRR	National Medical Research Registrar
RMSEA	Root Mean Square Error of Approximation
SEM	Structural Equation Modeling
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
WFB	Work/Family Balance
WFC	Work/Family Conflict
WFE	Work/Family Enrichment

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The importance of balancing work and family roles has come to the fore of organizational research since the past two decades (Higgins and Duxbury, 2002). Generally, researchers agree that when a person has difficulty in striking this balance, this situation can be linked to several negative outcomes (Allen, Herst, Bruck, and Sutton, 2000; Byron, 2005; Ford et al., 2007; Kossek and Ozeki 1998). Conversely, if a person is successful in managing multiple roles, these roles may enrich his or her life (Frone, 2003; Greenhaus and Powell, 2006). Either way, researchers tend to be in consensus that work/family balance has important implications to organizations (Muhammad Imran, Muhammad Iqbal, Solomon, Noor and Saddam, 2010). Indeed, according to Messmer (1999), work/family balance is a tool that organizations could use to attract quality job candidates.

For the service organizations, like those in the healthcare sector, helping employees to achieve a certain level of work/family balance could go far in increasing employee work satisfaction and hence the value of services delivered to customers. Javalgi and Moberg (1997) noted that the value of a service is directly affected by the internal quality within the service organization itself. Thus, the challenge for all service companies is to institute workplace designs, rules, reward systems and so on that satisfy their employees and help meet the demands of their work as well as personal lives. Notwithstanding this potential importance of work/family balance concept to service organizations, there has been relatively little research on this area,

particularly in the healthcare sector. Hence, this current research examines work/family balance among nurses within the Malaysian context.

This introductory chapter is intended to present an overview of the present study. It has been organized into a number of sections comprising the background, the statement of problem, research questions, and objectives of study as well as the significance of the study. In the final section of this chapter, the overall organization of this thesis is highlighted.

1.2 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Work and family are the two most essential spheres of life for human being (Andrews and Witney, 1976; Campbell, Converse and Rodgers, 1976). Thus, managing the intersection of work and family domains has become a critical issue for both management practitioners and academics (Rothbard and Dumas, 2006). In recent years, managing these intersections has become more important in lieu of unprecedented changes in the lives of working men and women in three ways: 1) both men and women are juggling work and family roles simultaneously; 2) the number of dual-income families, single parents and women in the workforce; and 3) the attitudes and values of men and women towards other aspects of life such as religion, leisure and the general quality of life (Noraini, 2006).

In the past, empirical research on work and family interface has been dominated by conflict perspective (Barnett, 1988; Greenhaus and Parasuraman, 1999; Haas, 1999). Overall, this notion assumes that a person who is engaged in multiple roles inevitably experience conflict which further jeopardize their quality of life. As the earlier research proposed, the tension between work and family roles can become a

source of stress (Thomas and Ganster, 1995) and it can deteriorate psychological strain (Allen et at., 2000), physical well-being (Frone et al., 2000) and satisfaction (Kossek and Ozeki, 1998; Schultheiss, 2006; Schwartzberg and Dytell, 1996). According to several meta-analysis studies, an individual with high level of work/family conflict has negative consequences such as lower job and life satisfaction, higher turnover intentions, greater general psychological strain, greater somatic/physical symptoms, higher depression and greater burnout (Allen et al., 2000; Byron, 2005; Ford et al., 2007; Kossek and Ozeki, 1998). From this explanation, it could be summarized that much of the research on the intersection of work and family continues to highlight three major aspects; conflict, stress and well-being.

In correspond to this matter, several researchers have called for a more balanced approach to the work/family literature (Barnett, 1998; Grzywacz and Marks, 2000; Frone, 2003; Greenhaus and Powell, 2006). More specifically, these researchers have explored the positive synergies in managing work and family lives. For example, Greenhaus and Powell (2006) introduced the concept of work/family enrichment, which is regarded as a construct that represents how work and family role can benefit one another as well as improve the quality of life in the other roles.

Another aspect that is closely related with the intersection of work and family domain is work/family balance. In general, organizations face the challenge of executing practices that allow their employees to perform at work as well as function meaningfully in their home. In recent years, there is an urgent call for an organization to find flexible and innovative solutions that would enable employees to achieve work/family balance. For many organizations, helping employees to balance work and family maybe be useful strategies for attracting and retaining capable employees (Wan

Edura, Mohamad Sahari, Azura and Izhairi, 2011a, 2011b). These researchers also strongly emphasized that understanding the work/family balance is crucial in enabling employees to experience overall satisfaction (work, family and well-being) in life. Additionally, this understanding is also invaluable in identifying strategies pertaining to enhancing job satisfaction among employees as well as improving individual and organizational performance (Muhammad Imran et al., 2010).

As a nation which has listed Islam as its official religion, balancing work and family roles is very imperative for married couples in order to ensure the well-being of the family. This is in line with the Islamic way of teaching in which Islam expects an individual at a minimum, to be balance, moderate and fair in everything they do; and strive towards excellence in goodness, as their target. As mentioned in Hadith Bukahri: Vol 8, Hadith 470.

> Always adopt a middle, moderate, regular course, where by you all will reach your target (paradise).

More importantly, Islam is a balanced way of life that sets a good example for the individual to practice especially in managing work and family domain with the ultimate aim of life is to gain true happiness (victory/ al falah) in the Hereafter. Hence, this present study suggests that if both domain (work and family) submit to the teaching of Islam, this can ultimately help to accomplish the well-being of people, society and the pleasure of Allah. As Allah mentioned in Surah Al-Rahman:

> And the Firmament has He raised high and He has set up the balance (justice)
> In order that you may not transgress (due) balance. So establish weight justice andfall not short in the balance. (55:7-9)

Moreover, unlike the Western society, being married and having children is not a choice in an Islamic society like Malaysia. Indeed, being married and having children are social imparatives (Omar and Davidson, 2001), in that few women (and

men) have the choice to avoid family lives. As such, many working women and working men in this country are living the dual-earner lifestyles that combine work and family.

1.3 WORK/FAMILY BALANCE AND THE NATIONAL AGENDA

Recently, it was reported that Malaysian women are the 16th most stressed out in the world because they feel pressured in having to strike a balance between work and family roles (The Star, 2011). This situation has occurred due to the fact that Malaysian women are expected to make significant contributions to their families' economic standing by working and at the same time, they are responsible for family and household chores. What is found in Malaysia is nothing new as prior research has shown that work/family balance is positively related to quality of life (Greenhaus, Collins, and Shaw, 2003; Lyness and Judiesch, 2008) and other indicators of well-being, such as level of stress (Marks and MacDermid, 1996). For Malaysia, research into this area is relevant and essential, given the national agenda to improve the quality of life of Malaysians (The Ninth Malaysian Plan, 2006).

Indeed, in the Ninth Malaysian Plan (2006) the government noted that it would place greater emphasis on building resilient families and a more caring society in order to achieve an optimal balance between material growth and societal development. In lieu of this key objective, the government formulated the National Family Policy. This policy attempts to promote family first and to ensure the incorporation of family interests in all policies, legislation, programmes, services and facilities (Government of Malaysia, Ninth Malaysian Plan [NMP], 2006).

Notwithstanding these commendable moves by the government, more research is needed to further explore the connectivity of work/family conflict and work/family enrichment in achieving work/family balance. The extensive literature also suggests that work/family conflict and work/family enrichment are related; yet possess different constructs (see Chapter Two). Since there are few researchers that have actually examined this thesis, this study intends to fill the gap of knowledge in this aspect.

1.4 HEALTHCARE SECTOR

In addition to family-first concept, the Ninth Malaysian Plan also outlined several key economic agendas that the government planned to undertake to move the economy forward towards realizing the country's aspiration of becoming a developed nation by 2020. Amongst others, the government has singled out the service sectors as one of the primary drivers of Malaysia's current and future economy. Four service areas are given top priority, including tourism, education, financial and healthcare. In the healthcare services, Malaysia is to be promoted as the regional centre of excellence for health tourism (EPU, 2006).

The promise of health tourism for Malaysia is indeed alluring. Malaysia's prospect to be a regional hub in medical tourism is good given the modern medical facilities available within the country and the cost advantage derived from the country's lower currency exchange. High cost of medical treatment in the United States and Europe is pressing people to seek treatment in developing nations like Malaysia. According to Dhesi (2009), statistics from Tourism Malaysia indicated that 75,210 foreign patients were treated in 2001 and, by 2006, that figure drastically

increased to 296,687, amounting to RM236 million in revenue. As reported by the Association of Private Hospitals of Malaysia, the Malaysian medical tourism sector is projected to contribute RM540 million in 2010 by treating about 625,000 medical tourists (Dhesi, 2009).

However, before the promise could become reality, it is important for Malaysian hospitals, both public and private, to ensure the quality of services delivered fulfill to the standards. When a patient receives medical treatment, functional quality (the manner in which service is delivered to the patient) produced will influence his or her perceptions of service quality. According to Gronroos (1984), this often involved the patient's comparison of his or her perception of the medical service encounter experience with his or her pre-encounter expectations. Hospitals as service provider must always ensure the medical officers, nurses and support staffs are at the highest level of professionalism in delivering care to patients.

Critically however, achieving an acceptable standard for healthcare will not be an easy feat given the stressful nature of the healthcare professions (Abu Al Rub, 2004a, 2004b; Bianchi, 2004; Engel, 2004; Callagan, Shui and Wyatt, 2000; Shirey, 2006; Stacciarii and Troccoli, 2004; Tseng, 2004; Xianyu and Lambert, 2006). The demanding nature of the healthcare professions entailed these professionals having to constantly work in stressful situations of dealing with death, sickness, heavy workloads, and shift work, having difficulty in communicating with patients and their families, and possible conflicts with physicians, medical teams, nurses and supervisors (Callaghan et al., 2000; Xianyu and Lambert, 2006).

A study on 1,176 health service employees in one of United Kingdom health authorities found that nurses were under the greatest pressure among the health service

occupational groups of administrative and clerical staff, ancillary and maintenance staff, doctors, professionals allied to medicine, scientists and technicians, and general managers. Indeed, other research have also shown that nurses are under a tremendous amount of job-related stress, often working in unstable and tense environments (Callagan, et al., 2000; Lee, Zhang, Jen-Chen, Lin, Hsaio-Lien, and Chengchi, 2005; Yang, 2005).

1.5 NURSES IN THE MALAYSIAN HEALTHCARE SECTOR

A precursor to advancing Malaysia's healthcare sector is to ensure there are enough medical professionals in the country. Malaysia now has 75,000 registered nurses in the public and private sectors. This translates into 1:645 ratio nurse-to-resident, which falls short of the 1:445 the nurse-to-resident ratio of 1:200 as required by the World Health Orgnization for developed nations. In order to meet the country's developed nation target of 2020, Malaysia needs to train at least 130,000 nurses. Recognizing the acute shortage, the government has classified nursing as a critical field and has allowed the formation of many new nursing colleges. In fact, the government, under Budget 2009, has allocated RM 70 million to train 5,600 new nurses.

Critically however, increasing the number of registered nurses in the country is not an easy objective to achieve as there are many challenges that must be overcome. Specifically, according to Albaugh (2003), these challenges include coping with the changes in medical technology, poor compensation, better career opportunities outside the nursing profession, as well as unfavorable working conditions. The current skills shortages are further aggravated by intense competition for skills in the labour market between the public and private health sectors (Planning and Development Division,