The Consequences of Work-family Conflict and The Importance of Social Supports to Reduce Work-family Conflict Among Employees

Noorfadhila Zakaria[1], Zanariah Ismail[1]
[1]Department of Human Development and Family Studies,
University Putra Malaysia (UPM)

Correspondence: Noorfadhila Zakaria (fadhilazakaria@gmail.com)

Abstract

_____

Conflicts that occur due to overlap between work and family matters are important topics in today's organizational context. Work-family conflict can be defined as a form of role conflict where the demands of work and family cannot be aligned in several ways. Some previous studies have mentioned that work-family conflicts negatively affect individuals such as emotional fatigue that ultimately lead to stress and disturb the psychological well-being. From that perspective, social support can help to reduce the stressful experience that is caused by work-family conflicts and improve the psychological well-being. There are two elements of social support originating from (1) work domain support; such as organization, supervisor and co-workers whereas, (2) non-work domain supports: can come from spouse, family members and friends. Thus, these two elements of social support seemed to be important elements to ease the burden of stressful experience among employees especially in work-family conflict.

Keywords: psychological well-being, social support, work-family conflict

_____

Introduction

As people move forward along with the ever-evolving world, new kinds of challenges arise in which all individuals are forced to face in their daily lives. Some of these challenges are especially new and hard to endure by dual-career couples or dual-earner families in which both spouses earn money by working for a living. This transformation of demographic trend affects the composition of the workforce and increases the number of dual-earner families, leading to role ambiguity. Hence, the study of the relationship between work and family has been an important research target over the past few decades, more so with the increasing number of employed parents experiencing work-family conflicts over the years.

Past reviews indicated that work-family conflict, social support from family members such as spouses as well as from non-family parties such as organizations, were mutually compatible to influence psychological well-being among employees. Psychological well-being is an indicator of a healthy lifestyle. According to Deci & Ryan (2008), psychological well-being has been identified as a combination of positive feelings such as happiness and optimal effectiveness in individual and social life. In addition to that, people with high level of psychological well-being are reported to feel happy,

capable, well-supported, and satisfied with life, (Huppert, 2009). Therefore, this study was conducted to determine the consequences of work-family conflict and the importance of social support to reduce work-family conflict among the employees.

Work-family conflict (WFC) has been defined as "a form of inter-role conflict in which the role constraints from work and family domains are mutually conflicting in some respects" (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985 p.77). Therefore, this means that the level of commitment and role demands increase as people step into different phases of adulthood where there is a constant juggle between family and work.

Previous study suggested that social support would directly improve the well-being of the individual, reduce the impact of stress on well-being and prevent psychological distress following the stressful experience (Noraini, 2003). Social support related to interpersonal relationships and social interactions could help to safeguard individuals from unwanted psychological problems (Nielson, Carlson, & Lankau, 2001). There are two types of social support: work domain and non-work domain. Examples of work domain support are support from their organization, supervisor and co-workers whereas non-work domain support can come from spouse, family members and friends (Aycan & Eskin 2005). Thus, these two types (work domain and non-work domain) of social support seemed to ease the burden of stressful experience especially in work-family conflict.

The increases in economic demands are causing an increase in the burden of job demand and workload. Increasing job demands tend to cause several problems in terms of time-based, stress, and behavior especially for those who are married. Individuals who are married have two major commitments, namely family and work. These commitments require both time and also a different approach to be implemented. Nevertheless, to balance and commit to these two major commitments is not as simple thing to do. Failure to balance and meet the needs of both these two commitments will result into an imbalance which in turn will trigger work-family conflicts (Scott, Carl, Donald & Jon, 2008).

The Consequences of Work-Family Conflict

As Malaysia nowadays has an increased number of dual-earner families from 2010 (7,421.8 people) to 2013 (8,410.1 people) (Department of Statistic, Malaysia), the research on married employees that face work-family conflicts is prominent in both the West and in Malaysia.

The Former General Director of Public Services Department (PSD), Tan Sri Mohamad Zabidi Zainal acknowledged in his speech at the launching ceremony of Psychology Open Day 2014 that employees in the public sector nowadays have to face the increasing pressure of workload in order to deliver the best quality of service to the public system of Malaysia. Increase in workload may lead to the increase of work stress. Malaysian employees especially who are married have multiple roles that need to be balanced between role effect in a work domain and family domain; therefore, work-family conflict arises which then may affect their overall well-being as well.

Kinnunen & Mauno (1998) stated that about 40% to 78% of employed parents experience work-family conflict at some point in their marriage. However, previous research did not pay attention to the question as to how negative outcomes related to work-family conflict may be avoided.

Negative impact on the family domain is often related to work. Therefore, to ensure the well-being of families as well as employees, it is important to manage the responsibilities between the roles at home and at the workplace (Sabitha, 2009). Improper management of work and family balance will eventually cause problems or stress (Greenhaus Beutell, 1985; Kahn et al. 1964; Voydanoff, 2004) as both elements are the fundamental of the life of an individual (Noraini, 2001).Several studies have reported that work and family conflicts will affect some things in family life and work. There is a negative relationship between work and family conflicts with family satisfaction (Parasuraman & Simmers, 2001; Huang et al., 2004), there is a negative relationship between work conflicts and families with marital satisfaction (Kim & Ling, 2001; Aycan & Eskin, 2005), there is a negative

relationship between work and family conflicts with psychological well-being (Noraini, 2002; Noraini 2004; Aycan & Eskin, 2005). Previous findings also found that there is a positive relationship between work-family conflicts and psychological distress (Major, Klein, & Erhart, 2002; Mauno, Kinnunen, & Pyykko, 2005).

In line with that, work-family conflict is shown to have a negative impact on individual's well-being, employers, and family. Furthermore, these conflicts have contributed to low organizational commitment, work dissatisfaction, family dissatisfaction, pressure, employee turnover, health problems, psychological problems, and various other social problems (Netemeyer, Boles & McMurrian, 1996).

High work-family conflict is associated with negative consequences for individuals such as life dissatisfaction, anxiety, depression and poor health. In terms of relationships, there is an increase of interpersonal conflict, marital dissatisfaction, and divorce. These negative consequences will cause absenteeism, tardiness, low commitment, and loss of talented employee in an organization (Nurnazirah, Samsiah, Zurwina & Fauziah, 2015). Thus, high level work-family conflict among Malaysian employees would directly affect the individuals' mental and physical fitness and indirectly affect the organizational performance.

Previous research suggests that work and family conflict was a significant stressor which leads to negative outcomes to Malaysian as well as to Western employees. R Zirwatul Aida and Azlina (2014) in their study on 1125 manufacturing employees revealed that regardless of gender respondents who were married and have children have demanding responsibilities from their family and work. Accordingly, employee may fall into in dilemma choosing between work and family demands which lead to guilt by choosing one over the other. Thus, it will affect their overall wellbeing.

Besides, individuals will lose motivation in fulfilling their family demands if they spend their time all day long for their job (Aslam, Shumaila, Azhar & Sadaqat, 2011). Consequently, individual that is burden with workload will experience fatigue, stress, and negative emotion (Ahmad, 2008). It shows that these consequences would indirectly influence the individuals' psychological well-being especially to those who are married and spend overtime at the workplace to complete all tasks given.

According to the Conservation of Resources model, suggested that inter-role conflict results to stress whenever resources are lost in the process of handling both work and family roles. These possibilities or actual losses of resources are leading to various kinds of negative outcomes which may include physiological stress, dissatisfaction, depression, or anxiety (Hobfoll & Shirom, 1993).

Carlson and Perrewe (1999) highlighted that family and work support as an independent variable and as a moderator as well in the role stressors and work-family conflict, and they suggested that social support could be best conceptualized as a variable that directly influences perceived stressors. Conservation of Resources model also has been applied in the study of work-family conflict conducted by Grandey and Cropanzano's (1999). The model suggests that individuals are motivated to obtain and maintain resources such as social support networks while coping with stress, which implies that social support has a direct effect on work-family conflict.

Therefore, social support seems to be a crucial indicator for the individuals to face up to this role conflict. Social support can come from various parties such as spouse, friends, family members, colleague, and supervisor. However, current studies aim to emphasize on social support in the dimension of spousal and organizational support because it is closely related to the surrounding of those who are married and working.

The Importance of Social Supports to Reduce Work-Family Conflict Among Employees

Based on these viewpoints, social support seems to be an important source to reduce work-family conflict. Social support can be divided into two categories, the first being work-domain in terms of

organization, supervisor and co-workers, and the second being non-work domain which in terms of spouse, family members and friends.

As a spouse is the closest person a married individual has, it is a must for them to provide full support for their spouse especially spouses who are working. Adams et al., (1996) suggested that high levels of emotional and instrumental support from family members will lower family interference in their work. Emotional support from family members might make someone feel better when they are upset about their job. On the other hand, instrumental support assists in taking on extra household responsibilities if the job becomes very demanding and the family members are willing to straighten up the house when needed.

Strong moral support from a spouse is also one of the important indicators for an individual to achieve the best potential in them. Whenever the spouse is able to provide peace of mind for the individual, it inspires the person to deal with the challenge of climbing the ladder of success in their careers.

Studies on work, family and women's well-being in Malaysia indicate that support from the husband and the women's own personality can further contribute to their well-being, and also predicted happiness to one another (Noraini & Nor Diana, 2016). It shows that, spousal support would positively influence the negative effect of work-family conflict on psychological well-being. Instrumental and emotional support from the family members may ease the burden of managing family responsibilities, which helps to lessen the impact of parental demand on family-to-work interference (Nasurdin & O'Driscoll, 2011).

Apart from that, organizational support is one of the closest systems in the workplace. Thus, organizational support has been recognized as an important authority in employees' ability to balance work and family responsibilities (Allen, 2001; Behson, 2002). Aminah & Zoharah (2010) found that organizational initiatives that support work-life balance directly lower the work-family conflict experienced by employees. With the existence of work-life balance initiatives in the organizational setting, it will encourage organizations to reduce their employees' job roles interference with family roles. As an example, employees are allowed to leave work early to care for a sick child or parent. This would enable employees to have the time needed to attend to family matters.

Conclusion

As a conclusion, there are several consequences of work-family conflict. It is perfectly clear that, social support from spouse and organizational support is essential in order to overcome the rising work-family conflict among employees. This is according to dual-earner families (working husband and wife) that sometimes experience a role conflict between work and family, for example, unexpected meeting late in the day may prevent a parent from picking up his or her child from school and at the moment husband or wife has an outstation. Therefore, social support seems to be an important variable in reducing work-family conflict and increase the psychological well-being.

Recommendation

As a recommendation, human resource management in all government departments need to optimize psychological services and counseling by providing more intervention programs as to how to handle the conflict between the work and family domains. This is a good indicator of improving the psychological well-being of employees and dual-earner families.

References

Adams, G. A., Kings, L.A., & King, D. W. (1996). Relationships of job and family involvement, family social support, and work-family conflict with job and life staisfaction. *Journal of Applied Psychology,* 81, 411-420.

Ahmad, A. (2008). Job, family and individual factors as predictors of work-family conflict. *Journal of Human Resource and Adult Learning, 4*, 57-65.

Allen, T. D. (2001). Family-supportive work environments: The role of organizational perceptions. *Journal of Vocational Behavior,* 58, 414-435.

Aminah A. & Zoharah O., (2010). Perceived family-supportive work culture, affective commitment and turnover intention of employees. *Journal of American Science,* 6, 839-846.

Aslam, R., Shumaila, S., Azhar, M. & Sadaqat, S. (2011). Work-family conflicts: Relationship between work-life conflict and employee retention–a comparative study of public and private sector employees. *Journal of Research in Bussiness, 1*,18-29.

Behson, S. J. (2002). Which dominates? The Relative Importance of Work-Family Organizational Support and General Organizational Context on Employee Outcomes. Journal of Vocational Behavior, 61, 53-72.

Carlson, D. S., & Perrewe, P. L. (1999). The role of social support in the stressor-strain relationship: An examination of work-family conflict. *Journal of Management*, 25, 513-540.

Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2008). Hedonia, eudaimonia, and well-being: An introduction. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 9, 1-11.

Grandey, A. A., & Cropanzano, R. (1999). The Conversation of resoucers model applied to work-family conflict and strain. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 54, 350-370.

Greenhaus, J. H. & Beutell, N. J. (1985). Sources of conflict between Work and Family roles. *Academy of Management Review*, 10, 76-88.

Hobfoll, S. E. (1989). Conservation of resources: A new attempt at conceptualizing stress. *American Psychologist, 44*, 513-524.

Huang, Y. H., Hammer, L. B., Neal, M. B., & Perrin, N. A., (2004). The relationship between work-to-family conflict and family-to-work conflict: A longitudinal study. Journal of Family and Economic Issues, 25, 79-100.

Huppert, F. A. (2009). Psychological well-being: Evidence regarding its causes and consequences. *Applied Psychology: Health and Well-Being*, 1, 137–164.

Kim, J. L. S., & Ling, C. S. (2001). Work-family conflict of women entrepreneurs in Singapore. Women in Mangement Riview, 16, 204-221.

Kinnunen, U. & Mauno, S. (1998). Antecedents and outcomes of work–family conflict among employed women and men in Finland. *Human Relations, 51*, 157–177.

Major, V. S., Klein, K. J., & Ehrhart, M. G. (2002). Work time, work interference with family, and psychological distress. Journal of Applied Psychology, 87, 427-436.

Mauno, S., Kinnunen, U., & Pyykko, M. (2005). Does work-family conflict mediate the relationship between work-family culture and self-report distress? Evidence from the five Finnish organiations. Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology, 78, 509-530.

Nasurdin, A. M. & O'Driscoll, M. P. (2011). Work overload, parental demand, perceived organizational support, family support and work-family conflict among New Zealand and Malaysian academics. *New Zealand Journal of Psychology, 40*, 38-48.

Nielson, T. R, Carlson, D. S., Lankau, M. J., (2001). The supportive mentor as a means in reducing work-family conflict. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 59*(3), 364-381.

Netemeyer, R.G., Boles, J. S., & McMurrian, R. (1996). Development and validation of work-family conflict and family-work conflict scales. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *81*(4), 400-410.

Noraini, M. N. (2001). Work, Family and Women's Well-being: Challenges of Contemporary Malaysian Women, Kuala Lumpur: International Islamic University Malaysia Press (IIUM Press).

Noraini, M. N. (2002). Work-family Conflict, Locus of Control, and Women's Well-Being: Tests of Alternative Pathways. The Journal of Social Psychology, 142, 645-662.

Noraini, M. N. (2003). Work- and family-related variables, work–family conflict and women's well-being: some observations. Retrieved from https://www.academia.edu/27426725/Work_and

family_related_variables work family conflict and womens_well-being some observations, on 19 January 2017.

Noraini, M., N. (2004). Work-family conflict, work-family-role salience, and women's well-being. The Journal of Social Psychology, 144, 389-405.

Noraini, M. N & Nor Diana, M. M. (2016). Work, family and women's well-being in Malaysia. *Handbook on Well-being of Working Women*, 717-734 published in M. Connerley & Wu, J. (Eds.). Springer (International Handbooks on Quality-of-Life Series).

Nurnazirah, J., Samsiah, M., Zurwina S., & Fauziah, N. (2015). Work-family conflict and stress: Evidence from Malaysia. *Journal of Economics, Business and Management, 3*, 309-312.

Parasuraman, S., & Simmers, C. A. (2001). Type of employment, work-family conflict and well-being: A comparative study. Journal of Organizational Behavior, 22, 551-   568.

R Zirwatul Aida, R. I. & Azlina, A. B. (2014). Malaysian work-family conflict and well-being: The moderating role of job control and social support. *Proc. of the Intl. Conf. on Advances in Social Science, Economics & Human Behavior.* 08-09 March 2014. Hotel G Tower, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

Sabitha, M. (2009). Resolving work family issues among public sector worker: Lesson to be learn from the private sector. Paper presented at the International Conference on Public-Private Partnership in Development, Kuala Lumpur, 15-16 January 2009.

Scott, L. B., Carl, P. M. J., Donald, C.M. J., & Jon, C. C. (2008). The impact of work / family demand on work-family conflict. *Journal Managerial Psychology*, 23, 215-235.

Voydanoff, P. (2004). The effects of work demands and resources on work-to-family conflict and facilitation. Journal of Marriage and the Family, 66, 398-412.