Moderating Effects of Supervisory Support between Work-Family Demands and Life Satisfaction among Malaysian Female Academicians

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Abstract

The present study was conducted to examine the relationship between work-family demands and employee life satisfaction, as well as the role of supervisory support in moderating work-family demands and life satisfaction. The researchers used 300 female academic staff as respondents, working in the Research Universities of - Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Their ages ranged from 30 to 60 years. Findings show that the effect of work-family demands on life satisfaction is significant for female employees that the supervisory support of employees has an effect in the increase of life satisfaction of employees. Moreover, the hypothesis was proved as the supervisory support was found to moderate the relationship between work-family demands and life satisfaction.
Key- words: Work-Family Demands, Work-Family Conflict, Life Satisfaction, Supervisory Support.

1. Introduction

Conflict between work demands and family roles has become a very serious and contentious issue in the 21st century. Work-family conflict (WFC) has been defined by Greenhous & Beutell,

1985; Kahn et al., (1964) as one type of inter-role conflict in which the role demands stemming from work-demands or from family roles are unsuited to the role demands originating from family, work or other domains. Work demands in this paper, mainly involves work hours, work schedule and work overload, while family demands involve caring for children for young and middle-aged employees. According to Kahn *et al*., (1964) the role is the result of expectations of others concerning accurate behavior in a particular position. The conflict of role is effectively described as a psychological strain that is brought about by conflicting pressures exereted by the role. Role theory suggests that such a conflict occurs when individuals engage in multiple roles that are unsuited (Katz & Kahn, 1978).

One of the most critical barriers to female academicians' improvement is conflict between work demands and family roles. In the case of Malaysia, most administrative and leadership positions in both public and private sectors have been filled up by females, reflecting that these multiple roles can contribute towards work and family life conflict (Achour, 2012). Therefore, the main sources of these conflicts come from long working hours, inflexible work schedules, office work overload, household work, and issues related to children and husbands. Some studies have shown that work overload, work hours and work schedules are significant predictors of work-family conflict and are linked to lower job satisfaction, life satisfaction and family satisfaction. For example a high level work-family conflict holds a positive correlation to high working hours (Bruck et al, 2002; Burke et al., 1980; Eagle et al, 1997; Major et al., 2002; Wallance, 1999; Yang et al., 2000), high work-family conflict is positively linked to long working hours (Burke, Weir, & Duwors, 1980; Frone et al., 1997; Grzywacz & Marks, 2000; Gutek et al., 1991; Pleck, Staines & Lang, 1980; Wallace, 1997), also high work-family conflict is positively linked to work schedule inflexibility (Ayee, 1992), and work overload and irregular work schedules have a strong positive correlation to work-family conflict (Burke and Greenglass, 2001; Simon et al., 2004).

Moreover, some studies have shown that an increased parental demand results in higher work-family conflict. Noor (2003) reported that the number of children at home was a crucial factor in regards to these variables. In families with no children at home, the total workload of full-time employed men and women was aproximately 60 hours per week. For women, the number of hours per week increased rapidly with children at home, but this increase was much smaller for men. In families with three or more children, women' total work load was almost 90 hours while men's was about 70 hours a week–a mean gender difference of about 2.5 hours a day. Several studies have shown that the number of children living at home is positively associated with WFC and FWC (Netemeyer et al., 1996). Moreover, time spent on family activities has been found to be positively associated with family-work conflict (Frone et al., 1997., Gutek., 1991), and working women with children younger than 12 years of age experience more conflict between work and family with further conflict for working women with older children (Higgins et al., 2004).

2. Life Satisfaction

Life Satisfaction refers to the degree to which individuals are satisfied with their lives in general (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985). Life satisfaction is generally an evaluation of feelings and attitudes regarding a particular point in time ranging from negative to positive. Life satisfaction is one factor of three major exponents of well-being. Life satisfaction is frequently included as an outcome or consequence variable in work-family research (Allen, Herst, Bruck, & Sutton, 2000). Life satisfaction was defined as "a global assessment of a person"s quality of life according to his own chosen criteria (Shin & Johnson, 1978, p. 478, as cited in Diener, 1984)". The evaluation of life satisfaction is based on the individuals" own standards; the person herself evaluates how satisfying her life is according to her own chosen criteria rather than externally imposed criteria (Diener, 1984). Diener and colleagues (1999) added some domain specific satisfaction such as satisfaction with family, work, social relationships, and self. Therefore, cognitive domain of subjective well-being consists of overall life satisfaction and domain-specific satisfactions (Diener, 1984)

3. Moderating Effect of Supervisory Support

The concept of supervisory support is defined as the degree to which supervisors can be relied upon by subordinates to both help and resolve issues, especially during times of difficulty (e.g., Bell, Menguc, and Stefani 2004; House 1981). Supervisor support is defined as the extent to which supervisors provide encouragement and support, in addition to maintaining a positive contribution to the subordinate's career development (Griffin, Patterson, & West, 2001; Kram, 1985). Supportive supervisors improve teamwork settings (McIntryre & Salas, 1995), enhance subordinates' job satisfaction (Agho, Mueller, & Price, 1993) and career satisfaction (Greenhaus, Parasuraman, & Wormley, 1990), and lower turnover rates (Shore &

Wayne, 1993). As a function of relational internal marketing, supervisory support is a mechanism through which vertical relationships can foster an environment that promotes employee motivation (e.g., Bell, Menguc, and Stefani 2004). Kossek et al. (2011) define perceptions of supervisor work-life support as an employee's perception that their supervisor cares about his or her work-life well-being.

Supportive supervisor behaviors include emotional support, instrumental support, role modeling behaviors, and creative work-life management (Hammer, Kossek, Yragui, Bodner, & Hanson, 2009). Managers and supervisors are very important source for employees who support them to balance their work demands and family roles. A few studies found that supervisory support is an important sources of social support in coping with problems associated with work-family conflict (Anderson et al., 2002; Burke and Greenglas, 1999; Duxbury and Higgins, 1994; Thomas and Ganster, 1995). Supervisor support means that managers provide emotional and instrumental support to workers in balancing job and family responsibilities, some researchers believe that well-being of a family lies largely in the hands of high-level supervisors (Rodgers and Rodgers, 1989). Moreover, one of the major management practices and support system that have the propensity to reduce work-life conflict is flexible or alternative work schedules (J.D. Nixon, undated, EEO Trust 2006; Conger, 1998).

4. Method

4.1. Participants and Procedure
Data was randomly collected from 300 females from academic staff in the Research Universities such as University of Malaya (UM), University Putra Malaysia (UPM), National University of Malaysia (UKM), and International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Their ages ranged from 30 to 60 years of age. Rapport was established by explaining the importance and the relevance of the study. Participants were assured that, their responses would be kept confidential and utilized only for the research purpose. They were asked to complete the questionnaires by following the instructions written at the top of the questionnaire..

5. Measures

5.1. Work-Family Demands
Family demand was measured by a 3-item scale developed by Yang (1993), the Cronbach alpha reported .77; and work demands were measured by a 5-item scale by Spector (1975). The Cronbach alpha reported .81.

5.2. Work-Family Conflict
Work-family conflict was measured using two subscales (5 items for WFC and 5 items for FWC) and included ten items developed by Netemeyer, Boles and McMurrian (1996). The Cronbach alpha reported .77.

5.3. Supervisory Support
Supervisory support was measured by a 5-items scale developed by Galinsky et al. (1996). Items assessed the extent to which managers provided emotional and instrumental support to employees on

balancing work and family responsibilities. A sample item for emotional support was "My supervisor gives advice on how to handle my work and family responsibilities" and for instrumental support was "My supervisor allows for flexibility in my working arrangements to enable me to handle my family responsibilities". Each item was rated on a 5-point Likert scale ("Strongly Disagree" to (5) "Strongly Agree"), and high scores indicated high support. The internal consistency of the scale for the present study was 0.84.

5.4. Life Satisfaction

In this research, life satisfaction was measured using 5 items developed by Diener et al., (1985), the Cronbach alpha reported .87. Sample items include "The conditions of my life are excellent." (Item-2) and "I am completely satisfied with my life." (Item-3). The scale uses a 5-point Likert response format, ranging from (1) "Strongly Disagree" to (5) "Strongly Agree".

6. Results and Discussion

6.1. Internal Consistency

The Cronbach alpha correlation coefficient for work-family demands was .816, Cronbach alpha correlation coefficient for work-family conflict was .912, the coefficients for supervisory support was .849, and Cronbach alpha correlation coefficient for life satisfaction was .827. Therefore, as related by Nunnally (1978), the reliability of research was very high, and as such the results are acceptable.

Table-1. Correlations between work-family demands, work-family conflict, supervisory support, and life satisfaction

Variable	M	S.D	N of Items	1	2	3	4
1. WFD	22.67	4.83	7	1			
2. WFC	25.26	7.61	9	.581**	1		
3. Super Sup	17.10	3.45	5	-.220**	-.233**	1	
4. Life Sat	17.33	3.65	5	-.227**	-.299**	.405**	1

*P < .05. **P < .01.

Table 1 shows that there exists a positive and significant correlation between work-family conflict and work-family demands, ($r=.581$, $p<.01$). Work-family demands shows significant and negative correlations with supervisory support ($r= -.220$, $p<.01$), and life satisfaction ($r= -.227$, $p<.01$). Work-family conflict shows significant and negative correlation with supervisory support ($r= -.233$, $p<0.01$), and life satisfaction ($r= -.299$, $p<0.01$). The results also shows that significant positive correlation of life satisfaction with supervisory support ($r=.405$, $p<0.01$).

Table-2. Multiple Regression analysis testing moderating effects of Supervisory Support on the relationship between work-family demands and life satisfaction

Variable		R^2	Adjusted R^2	F	Sig
Step 1					
WFD		.051	.048	16.13	.02
Step 2					
SUP.SUP		.184	.179	33.49	.00
Step 3					
WFD, WFD*SUP.SUP	SU.SUP,	.210	.202	26.27	.00

*p < .05. **p < .01.

Hierarchical regression analysis was used to test the hypotheses that supervisory support moderates the relationship between work-family demands and life satisfaction. All variables were entered into the regression equation as recommended by Rose, Holmbeck, Coakley, and Franks (2004). In Step 1, work-family demands were entered, in Step 2, supervisory support, and in Step 3

interactions of supervisory support and work-family demands and life satisfaction as a dependent variable. The results of the moderator analyses are presented in Table 2 revealed that supervisory support significantly moderating the relationship of work-family demands and life satisfaction.

Significant increase in R^2 and Adjusted R^2 would be the indicator of the moderation effect. The same procedure was administered to test the moderating effect of supervisory support in the relationship between work-family demands and life satisfaction (Table 2). As can be seen from the table 2 (last column on the right), the interaction relationships were significant, telling that supervisor support has an effective effects on work-family demands and work-family conflict. The moderating effect of supervisory support would be the main effect directly related to work-family conflict, work-family demands as well as life satisfaction. Supervisory support was negative and significantly associated with lower work-family conflict as well as work-family demands. On the contrary supervisory support has positive and significant relationship with life satisfaction.

This study's results reported a negative and significant relationship of supervisory support with work-family conflict and work-family demands. Furthermore, the results suggested that when the supervisory support increases, then there is an expected decrease in the work-family conflict work-family demands. Several studies found that supervisory support is an important source of social support in coping with problems related to work-family conflict (Anderson et al., 2002; Burke & Greenglas, 1999; Duxbury & Higgins, 1994; Thomas & Ganster, (1995). Thomas and Ganster (1995) also report that supervisors support has a role in reducing work-family conflict. Argyle (1999) indicates that there are three major sources of social support for employees: support from supervisors, support from colleagues, and support from family members especially from spouses.

The researcher in this study discusses supervisory support as a moderator variable in the relationship between work-family demands and life satisfaction. Some studies have found that supervisory support is an important variable and a source of social support in coping with problems related to work-family demands and work-family conflict (Anderson et al., 2002; Burke & Greenglas, 1999; Duxbury & Higgins, 1994; Thomas & Ganster, 1995). If the supervisor provides his employees with flexibility even when unofficially supporting the case of absence as an organizational policy, employees can balance between work demands and family roles more easily. In this study, the supervisory support is divided into two components: instrumental and emotional support (Frone et al., 1997). Emotional supervisory support refers to more listening, and understanding, sensitivity toward the issues related to work-family conflict, and real anxiety for the well-being of the employee and his family (Frone et al., 1997), and instrumental supervisory support refers to direct advice and assistance provided with the intent of helping an employee meet his family responsibilities (Frone et al., 1997). Supportive supervisors are thus instrumental in making and interpreting organization's work-family policies (Eby et al., 2002).

In this study, supervisory support was also found to be directly related to life satisfaction. However, the direct relationship between supervisory support and life satisfaction was positive and significant. This finding is consistent with that of Thomas and Ganster (1995) who found that supervisor support reduced work-family conflict as well as work-family demands among health care workers. Anderson and others (2002) stated that supervisory support had a direct relationship with all employee outcomes includes job satisfaction, family satisfaction, and life satisfaction.

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