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Work-family Balance and Hybrid Working Environment for Women: An Agenda

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Abstract

There have been a number of women who have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic both in their personal and professional lives as well as in their online work. This study is aimed at investigating the impact of congruence between supervisor-person values and supervisor-organization values on women's work-family balance in hybrid working environments and the impact of this on their work-family balance at work. We have collected 111 completed surveys from working women in Malaysia using a survey tool. It has been found that working overtime and getting to work on time interfere with personal responsibilities at home and interfere with time management. When supervisors are unaware of the fact that there are times when personal/family demands trump work, an incongruence of person-supervisor value occurs. The incongruence between person-organizational values always occurs when an organization does not provide a work arrangement that works for people who have personal/family responsibilities as well as the needs of the company. It has already been found in previous studies that congruent relationships between individuals and organizations, or between employees and their supervisors, can have a profound influence on the outcomes of work, such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and stress levels. According to our study, a congruent approach to both the supervisor and employee values (person-supervisor and employee-organization) will lower the risk-taking behavior, especially when reducing conflict between work and home life.

Keywords: Work-Family Conflict, Person-Supervisor Value Congruence, Person-Organization Value Congruence

Introduction

There has been a great deal of change in the working lives of women due to the global COVID-19 pandemic. The ability to achieve a satisfactory role balance is one of the most challenging aspects of the lives of working women. In addition to having a disproportionate amount of responsibilities at home, women also have a hard time maintaining a satisfactory balance between their personal and professional responsibilities. As a result

of the inequality in domestic family roles, women face barriers to their career advancement, as well as an unbalanced work/family life balance (Uddin, 2021). There are also numerous other responsibilities that women are likely to encounter that also lead to role conflicts (Parlak et al., 2021). There has been an increase in the number of working women who have been unable to access childcare and other support services during lockdowns, which has resulted in an increase in their workload and reduced productivity. Despite the fact that Malaysian women place a greater emphasis on their work than their families, Nikmah et al (2020) claim that at the same time they are less competent as well. A mother, who is expected to stay at home and work while caring for her under-five-year-old children, is exposed to work demand, stress and exhaustion in such a situation.

Due to the collectivist values that are ingrained in Malaysian culture, it is believed that family is more important than career in Malaysian society because of the importance it gives to family (Mustapa et al., 2018). As a result, women's career advancement is dependent upon their ability to strike a work-family balance (WFB), but playing two roles is the biggest challenge that women face.

Literature Review

Work-Family Balance

The role of social roles plays an important part in the lives of every individual in this world. The notion of balancing social roles has drawn the attention of researchers from different disciplines, since these roles provide a sense of meaning and structure to people's lives (Frone, 2003). Those who are exposed to an imbalance between their social roles can experience adverse health outcomes and poor well-being as a result of the stressors associated with the imbalance between their roles (Frone, 2003). It is important to realize that the concept of balance encompasses more than the experience of conflict and enrichment. A research study conducted by Mustapha et al (2018) showed that there is a correlation between work and family in terms of conflict and enrichment at an individual level. Work or family will be adversely affected by this mechanism in one manner or another (conflict) or enriched in one way or another (enrichment). As can be seen in Figure 1, there is a four-fold taxonomy of WFBs. Essentially, there are two primary dimensions that need to be considered when analyzing the role of the work in family life (work-to-family versus family-to-work) and the nature of the effect (conflict or facilitation). There is a low level of interrole conflict and a high level of interrole facilitation in the WFB.

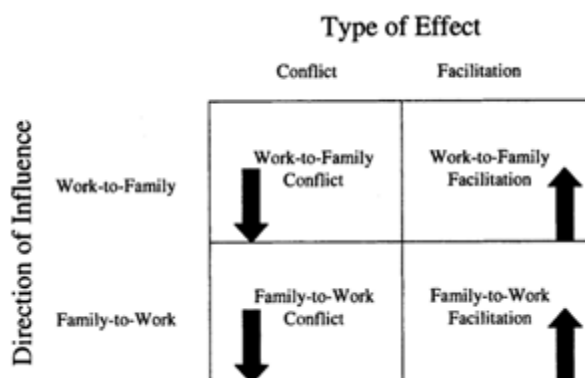


Figure 1: Dimension of Work-Family Balance (Frone, 2003, p.146)

Vieira et al (2018) argue that there has been a dominant negative perspective in WFB research, which emphasizes the negative effects of multiple roles and its implications for performance. This is an aspect of stress that is characterized by individuals being unable to deal with multiple and conflicting demands from multiple and salient roles, resulting in the exhaustion of limited resources in terms of energy and time. Further, these outcomes are also said to undermine an individual's physical and psychological well-being, thereby lowering their quality of life and reducing their quality of life. Due to this, the study focused exclusively on work-to-family and work-to-work conflict (WFC, FWC) among female employees, and excluded the components of work-family engagement (WFE) and work-work engagement (FWE).

Person-Supervisor Value Congruence and Person-Organization Value Congruence

According to previous research (Liao et al., 2019), informal social support at work or at home is negatively related to work-family conflict (Liao et al., 2019). On the other hand, it has a positive impact on well-being outcomes such as family and work satisfaction. As a result of cultural norms and expectations, social support can also be derived from a variety of sources (including co-workers, supervisors, organizations, families, spouses/partners, etc.). French et al (2018) have argued that there is a distinction to be drawn between support from individuals in the workplace, such as supervisors and co-workers, and support at the organizational level (Jolly et al., 2021). In Pan et al (2012), employees' perception of organizational support was positively correlated with their perception of congruence between their personal values and their organization's value regarding role boundaries, resulting in reduced Work-Family Conflict (WFC). Employees' perceptions of their organizations are heavily influenced by their interactions with the entire work environment, while supervisors provide an exceptionally valuable source of signals that influence their perceptions (Stefanidis & Strogilos, 2020).

If a supervisor were to allow workers to adjust their schedule so that they can care for their sick children, for instance, it would be very helpful for an employee who needed to leave work so that she could care for her sick child (Oludayo et al., 2018). When faced with such circumstances, a supportive action like sympathy or understanding may not be very effective as a support action. According to Drummond et al (2017), individuals who perceive a high level of social support are less likely to experience and recognize work-family conflict compared with individuals who perceive a low level of support. As well as listening to problems, supervisors who are supportive may also arrange schedules in order to accommodate work and family obligations, give advice, look after children, or assist with household chores.

Methodology

A descriptive and correlational research design was used to collect and analyze data for this study. A questionnaire was used to examine the variables of the study. The person-organizational value and person-supervisor value questionnaires were adopted from Warner & Hausdorf (2009), with a total of six and seven questions, respectively, based on Warner & Hausdorf (2009) findings. A total of eight questions from Karatepe & Uludag (2007) were adapted for the WFB component. The responses to each of the questions were rated on a Likert-Scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. A convenient sampling method was used in order to reach female employees who work from home for the purpose of this study. A variety of industries are represented in the survey, including banking, education, and the service sector. The collection of data took place over a period

of three months and there were 111 respondents in total in the survey. A descriptive statistic was used to report the mean of each variable. In order to assess the impact of independent variables on the dependent variable (WFB), a Multivariate Regression Analysis was used.

Result

In general, most respondents were married, had children, and belonged to the Malay ethnicity. A majority of the respondents have worked for a company for 10 years or longer. It is shown in Table 1 that the overall mean results for each variable can be found. According to the results of the study, WFB is to be considered as moderate ($M = 3.33$, $SD = 1.25$). There are most of the respondents (71, 63.9%) absent from family and social events as a result of work, and half of them (59, 53.1%) have experienced conflict between work and family. Most participants (85, 76.5%) felt that involvement at work is not necessarily going to bring them happiness nor would it make them better family members as a result.

In addition, there are moderate levels of the second variable, the person-supervisor value. The results of this survey indicated that supervisors have a favorable view of respondents' initiative to balance work and non-work activities (51, 45.9%). The supervisors sometimes took into account the needs of respondents (48, 43.2%), who had family matters (when appropriate) ahead of work.

The third variable measures the balance between the individual and the organization. As for the level, it was also moderate ($M=2.75$, $SD=1.43$). A majority of respondents (61, 54.9%) believe that family obligations interfere with their ability to perform well in their organization and some (35, 31.5%) believe that family is a secondary concern to their career. It is worth noting, however, that most people (60, 54%) do not believe that making their needs as their main priorities will put them in a negative light in their organization or make them appear unfavorable to management.

Table 1

Level of WFB, Person-Supervisor Value and Person-Organization Value

Variables	Mean	Std. Deviation	Level
Work-family balance	3.33	1.25	Moderate
Person-Supervisor Value	2.99	1.08	Moderate
Person-Organization Value	2.75	1.43	Moderate

Mean value (Low = 1.00 - 2.33; Moderate = 2.34 - 3.67; High = 3.68 - 5.00)

A summary of the regression analysis can be found in Table 2. The WFB was predicted using multiple linear regressions which were based on person-supervisor and person-organization values within the regressions. A significant regression equation was found on person-organization value ($F(1, 109) = 5.219$, $p < .024$), with an R^2 of 0.046. Nevertheless, the results of this study did not find any significant evidence that a relationship existed between person-supervisor.

Table 2

Regression Analysis Summary for Work-Family Balance (WFB) (N=111)

Variable	B	SE (B)	β	t value	p value
Person-Supervisor Value	-0.96	3.27	-.094	-.986	.326
Person-Organization Value	-.190	3.21	-.214	-2.284	.024*

*R²=.046**Discussion and Recommendation**

Organizations should put an emphasis on work-family balance as an important part of working life, improve work-family balance policies and practices that are geared towards women, as well as create a family-friendly work environment in order to increase female engagement and decrease gender inequality amongst employees. According to Baxter and Chesters (2011), women who are flexible when it comes to when they arrive at work and when they leave work are perceived to have the best WFB, and this perception remains even after taking into account all other factors that affect work-life balance. When it comes to women's childcare responsibilities, organizations should recognize that there may be instances where formal and informal work arrangements are appropriate for different employees at different times, depending on the employees' needs. It may contribute to a greater understanding of the importance of flexible arrangements for mothers to maintain work performance in light of the unpredictable nature of childcare, such as children's illnesses (Troup & Rose, 2012).

Conclusion

Based on the results of this study, we conclude that respondents have difficulty balancing work and family obligations. It is common for women to play a larger role at home, which can include taking care of their families, as well as taking on more responsibility (Yadaf et al., 2019). The expectations that come with marriage also increase. The gender gap in the labor market was made worse during the Covid-19 pandemic due to unequal distribution of household chores during the pandemic. As a result of the fact that historically, women have been disproportionately responsible for housework (cooking, cleaning) and childcare (Alon et al., 2020), this problem continues to exist today. Consequently, flexible work plans can be a big asset for women's careers that are also busy with family obligations. The supervisor's and the organization's role in addressing women's work-family issues is crucial to improving women's work-life balance. Even though there is a moderate level of person-supervisor value among respondents, they are quite satisfied with their supervisor's ability to support their day-to-day work as well as balance family and personal needs. A regression analysis revealed that the WFB among respondents could be explained by a combination of person-organization values. A family-friendly policy or practice or a flexible approach to work, for example, could enhance women's work-life balance among other potential factors. Women are more likely to feel supported by their organizations when it comes to flexibility, and they feel less conflict between their work and home lives, which leads them to become better spouses and family members (Znidarsic & Bernik, 2021).

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