

WORK-FAMILY CONFLICT IN EAST VS. WEST COUNTRIES

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Purpose: This study was conducted in Malaysia, a country with Islam as the official religion, and aimed to advance the understanding of both directions of work-family conflict (WFC) — work interference with family (WIF) and family interference with work (FIW) in an Eastern culture. We compared our findings with those of 14 other Western studies. Further we explored the relationships between WIF, FIW and job, family, community and life satisfaction.

Methodology: Data were obtained from 506 employees in three public and three private sector organizations. Questionnaires were distributed via human resource managers.

Findings: Results showed that similar to Western studies, WIF scores were higher than FIW scores. Malaysians were significantly lower on WIF than Westerners. Nevertheless, Malaysians scored significantly higher on FIW than all Western samples. Within the Malaysian sample, FIW also had a stronger negative relationship with all facets of satisfaction and WIF had a positive relationship with family satisfaction.

Research limitation / Implication: Cross sectional data were presented which could result in common method bias.

Practical implication: Organizations can assist in minimizing WIF and FIW by providing family-friendly policies and parenting related programs. The importance of family in an individual's life in Eastern cultures is different than in Western cultures. Therefore multi-national companies operating in Eastern settings would be well-advised to take cultural aspects such as collectivism into consideration.

Originality: The study provides insights into Eastern experiences of WIF and FIW compared with Western experiences. The study expands previous studies by measuring both directions of WFC and employing a heterogeneous sample (e.g. not just female, those married, those with children).

Keywords: Work interference with family, family interference with work, Malaysia, satisfaction, collectivism

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