

# The Relationship between Social Supports and Work Family Enrichment in Public Sector: Mediating Role of Opportunities for Professional Development

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## **Abstract**

**Purpose:** The purpose of this study is to examine the mediating effect of opportunities for professional development (OPD) on the relationship between supervisory support, organizational support and work-family enrichment (WFE) of employees in the public sector. The interfaces between work and family had recently engaged numerous scholars in examining the nature of such interface both in the Western and Eastern contexts. Most of these studies however focused on the adverse nature of this interface rather than on the beneficial enrichment relationships between work and family which in turn could determine the choice of role balancing strategies utilized. Further to this, there are yet fewer studies exploring the relationship between the perception of being a member of a supportive social network and the enrichment nature of the work family interface with the opportunities for professional development as the mediator influencing the relationship between these variables. Thus, this study is important in closing the gap between social support encompassing the components of supervisory and organizational supports towards WFE. The study will also examine the mediating effects of opportunities to earn professional credentials on the relationship between social support and WFE among employees in public sector.

**Design/methodology/approach:** A questionnaire survey was distributed to 150 employees and the data was analyzed by using descriptive analysis and inferential analysis.

**Findings:** The findings showed that social support comprises of supervisor and organizational supports were significantly related to WFE. Meanwhile, the opportunities to earn and maintain professional credentials partially mediate the relationship between supervisor support and WFE.

**Research limitations/implications:** This study confirmed the mediating effect of OPD on the relationship between social support and WFE.

**Practical implications:** The findings of this study will serve as important guidelines to develop planning strategies, implementing more effective policies in managing work and family role, promoting work-life balance, and quality of life among the employees that suit to their needs.

**Originality/value:** There are numerous studies on WFE, its antecedents and predictors. However the influence of OPD on this relationship has not been intensively studied.

**Keywords:** Supervisor Support, Organizational Support, Work-Family Enrichment, Opportunities of Professional Development

## Introduction

Due to the increasing number of dual-career couple and single parenting, balancing work and family has become a crucial and complex issue in the society. Although many studies have shown that the overlap between work and family roles lead to conflict (Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn, Snoek, & Rosenthal, 1964, Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985), there is also evidence that the benefits or advantages derived from the relationship of work and family (Carlson, Kacmar, Wayne, & Grzywacz, 2006, Greenhaus and Powell, 2006). The merge of work and family that produces something positive is known as enrichment. In general, work-family enrichment is defined as a bi-directional and multidimensional concept whereas work and family provide individuals with somewhat distinct resources that can be used to improve role performance and quality of life in other domains (Carlson et al., 2006).

The awareness on the need to help balance the multiple roles among the married employees has raised the advent of researchers being involved in the work and family relations. With regard to this matter, these issues have become the main concern to the management in both public and private sectors. Social support is one of the antecedents that have been proven to help working employees in managing work and family roles. Receiving support either in organization or in the family is crucial resources that can generate positive affect to both domain of work and family (Gryzwacz and Marks, 2000). Other studies showed that employees' turnover intention is higher if the perception of insufficient organizational support is low during the balancing of work and family roles (Leschyshyn & Minnotte, 2014). This finding reciprocates the findings of Molino, Ghislieri, & Cortese (2013) who identified that social support had a significant relationship with work-family enrichment and provide positive outcomes on the employee's well-being. Therefore, work family enrichment has become the major concern for all the employers to improve the organization image by providing appropriate social support to assist the employees in managing work and family roles.

Existing studies stated that work-family conflict will leads to negative effect on organizational image and productivity. Hence, organizations have been urged to assist their employees in managing the multiple roles such as introducing work family programs and policies, supportive supervisor and working environment. Past findings have suggested that there is a positive relationship between social support (supervisor support, co-worker support and organisational