



Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development

**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOCIAL SUPPORT AND
WORK-FAMILY CONFLICT AMONG EMPLOYEES IN SELECTED
HOTEL IN SARAWAK**

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**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOCIAL SUPPORT AND WORK-FAMILY
CONFLICT AMONG EMPLOYEES IN SELECTED HOTEL IN SARAWAK**

LEE WEN XUAN

This project is submitted
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a
Bachelor of Science with Honours
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Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development
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(2020)

The project entitled ‘The relationship between social support and work-family conflict among employees in selected hotel in Sarawak’ was prepared by Lee Wen Xuan and submitted to the Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Bachelor of Science with Honours (Human Resource Development)

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to identify the relationship between social support and work-family conflict among employees in selected hotel in Sarawak. Questionnaires were distributed to 70 employees in a hotel located in Kuching, Sarawak. The data obtained from the present study were analyzed using the Statistical Package of Social Science (SPSS). Pearson Correlation and Spearman's Rho Correlation were used to test the hypotheses of the study. The findings indicate that family support and co-worker support do not have a significant relationship with work-family conflict whereas supervisor support has a significant relationship with work-family conflict. This study can contribute to the human resource practitioners and organization in understanding social support may affect work-family conflict among hotel employees.

Keywords: Social support, family support, supervisor support, co-worker support, work-family conflict, hotel employees

ABSTRAK

Tujuan kajian ini ada untuk mengenal pasti hubungan antara sokongan sosial dan konflik kerja-keluarga antara pekerja di hotel terpilih di Sarawak. Borang soal selidik telah diedarkan kepada 70 orang pekerja di sebuah hotel yang terletak di Kuching, Sarawak. Data yang diperoleh dari kajian ini dianalisis menggunakan Statistical Package of Social Science (SPSS). Ujian korelasi Pearson dan ujian korelasi Spearman's Rho digunakan untuk menguji hipotesis kajian. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahawa sokongan keluarga dan sokongan rakan sekerja tidak mempunyai hubungan yang signifikan dengan konflik kerja-keluarga sedangkan sokongan penyelia mempunyai hubungan yang signifikan dengan konflik kerja-keluarga. Kajian ini dapat memberi sumbangan kepada pengamal sumber manusia dan organisasi dalam memahami sokongan sosial yang mungkin mempengaruhi konflik kerja-keluarga dalam kalangan pekerja hotel.

Kata Kunci: Sokongan sosial, sokongan keluarga, sokongan penyelia, sokongan rakan sekerja, konflik kerja-keluarga, pekerja hotel

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Introduction

This chapter will be discussing the background of study and statement of problem. This is then followed by the research objectives, research hypotheses, and conceptual framework of the study. Also, the significance of study and definition of terms as well as the limitation of study will be discussed accordingly.

Background of Study

In this modernization and globalization era, people today are more concerned about their careers when compared with their personal interests due to rapid economic growth. Thus, to meet the family requirements as well as other demands, people must saddle with the need to involve in dynamic work. Consequently, the competing demands between the roles of family and work of the workers will arise the issue of work-family conflict. This is because the workers are striving for their desires to balance between their work and family.

According to researchers Aslam et al. (2011), in 1980s, the concept of work-family conflict is initiated by Greenhaus and Beutell which means there is an inter-role conflict occurred when the demands of an individual's energy and time in their job create pressure that intervenes his or her family obligations and duties. However, it is not only work that can bring to the conflict, but the family duties also can create pressure and intervene in the individual's job performance. Based on Ford, Heinen, & Langkamer (2007) and Nicole (2003), family-related as well as work-related factors, are the possible component that leads to the occurrence of work-family conflict. Furthermore, previous studies have also suggested that work-family conflict can be classified into work intervene family and family intervene work (Gutek, Searle, & Klepa, 1991; Adams, King, & King, 1996; Frone, 2003; Livingston & Judge, 2008; Yu, Lee, & Tsai, 2010). Struggles in handling both work and non-work

happen almost every day and undoubtedly leading some consequences for the employees and also their families. It is an undeniable fact that work-family conflict will affect one's work performance and satisfaction, as well as causing parental stress which resulted in reducing marital and family satisfaction (Peeters, Ten Brummelhuis, & Van Steenbergen, 2013). The majority of the employees who receive less social support are more likely to experience work-family conflict and may lead to emotional exhaustion. In summary, the issue of work-family conflict arises when the demands of participation in one domain are incompatible with the other domain.

Service industries such as the hotel industry are the most significant component in the services delivery and in that capacity a critical part of the achievement of the hospitality firm or business including hotels (Mensah, 2009). Hotels have been driven in the human resources implementations which aim to deliver good quality services to the customers. The hotel employees often work for countless and unusual working hours to make sure customer gratification (Gamor et al., 2014). It is an undeniable fact that hotel employees who are communicating directly with the guests in the hotel industry play an integral character in maintaining good service quality. Also, the 24 hours of hotel operation causing the hotel jobs fairly demanding. The working time arrangement in the hotel has been known as countercyclical as the employees in hotel industry have to be still on their duty while other industries are off from their work. This situation usually occurs on weekends and during holidays. The inflexible working arrangements in the hotel sector is one of the major factors that leads to work-family conflict. The high demands on the job, stressful working environment, and less social support cause the employees in the hotel industry subject to struggling between the work domain and the family domain. Aslam et al. (2011) revealed that the transfer system, work overtime, shifts system, and working hours are also the reasons for the hotel employees to cause work-family conflict. Therefore, Namasivayam & Zhao (2007)

demonstrated the difficulty for a hotel employee to combine his work and family life. The hotel, is therefore has been described as a breeding place of work-family conflict for the hotel employees as they need to sacrifice their time for ensuring service quality, thus, neglected their family members. For example, the employees who are working in the hotel industry will face high demands of work and mostly high mental and physical workload, forfeit their precious resources (e.g. time and energy), thus causing them unable to perform their professional and family roles (Mansour & Mohanna, 2018). Hence, the issue of work-family conflict arises.

Prior researchers have recommended that future empirical studies should consider social support as a determinant to buffer work-family conflict (Hammer, Kossek, Anger, Bodner & Zimmerman, 2011; Kossek et al., 2011). To overcome this issue, Hammer et al. & Kossek et al. (2011) recommended that social support is very effective in managing work-family conflict. Research has documented that increasing social support would reduce work-family conflict. Past family research has focused mainly on the role of social support in managing work-family conflict encountered by employees (Allen, 2001; Carlson & Perrewé, 1999; Michel, Mitchelson, Pichler, & Cullen, 2010; Thomas & Ganster, 1995). In a recent meta-analysis research, Michel et al. (2010) pointed out that future researchers should focus on cross-domain effects when determining social support and work-family conflict. Prior study has indicated that there is a linkage between social support and work-family conflict. As mentioned by Greenhaus et al. (2012), scholars have demonstrated that social support that comes from the work and family are related to positive work and family outcomes, including low work-family conflict and high work-family enrichment in the study of work-life research. Thoits (2011) suggested that social support such as family members, supervisors, and co-workers can reduce conflict in the work-family domains. Meanwhile, the support can be derived from outside of self or among work and family domains (Ten Brummelhuis &

Bakker, 2012). Researchers O'Driscoll et al. (2004) found that co-worker support will reduce work-family conflict. On the other hand, support from family members mainly spousal support can help to provide a sense of security and stability to the employees (Kalliath et al., 2014). It is very beneficial in easing work-family conflict, especially among working women.

Statement of Problem

Traditionally, researchers Katz & Khan (1978) described work-family conflict using the Role Theory in the past study. As the era goes, the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory is recommended by some researchers as it is more suitable to explain the issue. This is because the majority of the researchers conceptualized an invalid detailed theoretical framework when discussing the work-family issue. They would rather conceive the Role Theory as a source of conflict. In the same vein, COR theory provides an appropriate framework for the researchers when investigating both dimensions of work-family conflict and family-work conflict, which could help them to better understand work-family conflict. Based on Grandey & Cropanzano (1999), in the COR theory, the negative outcomes such as work-family conflict would likely to occur if the valuable resources are not adequately obtained.

To date, research on work-family conflict has focused mainly on supervisory support, rather than co-worker support (Norling & Chopik, 2020). According to Talukder et al. (2018), the influence of supervisor support on work-family conflict, and its subsequent effects on employees' attitudes and job performance has not been fully examined. Future research is recommended to test whether other forms of social support, more directly related to the management of the work-life interface, like the recently introduced concept of family-supportive behaviors (Russo et al., 2016). Previous research has investigated the relationship between supervisor support and life satisfaction via work-family conflict. However, it would be interesting when other potential social support such as co-workers

(Kossek et al., 2011) and family support are chosen to examine how they dispose work-family conflict. Furthermore, past scholars have had indicated that the family is one of the primary sources of social support for working individuals and brings great advantages for them that go beyond the family domain (Ferguson et al., 2012). Moreover, these researchers also suggested that other contextual supports could be used to reduce work-family conflict. It is an undeniable fact that past research only focuses on working women in the IT sector (Devi & Rani, 2016) when discussing work-family conflict. Therefore, the present study should focus on other sectors (Maertz & Boyar, 2011) such as the hotel sector and take the sample from both male and female employees.

Prottas (2008) and Cleveland et al. (2007) have noted some characteristics of the hotel industry such as countercyclical nature and unpredictable working hours may lead to the occurrence of work-family conflict among the hotel employees. Hotel employees also spend much amounts of effort, personal time and resources to improve job performance and service quality, but often experiencing difficulty in balancing their work duties and family responsibilities. In the same vein, the hotel industry provides 24/7 customer service thus causing them to have less interaction time with their family. There are some of the employees described frustrations could arise due to interruptions at home and have to be available in the hotel all the time. Researcher Hoque (1999) highlighted that long working hour, the need for coordination with colleagues, low job security, and irregular shift working hours are the reasons that lead to increased occurrence of work-family conflict. Hence, the employees may make their family structure changed dramatically and thus forming conflicts between their work and home responsibilities.

However, several studies have been carried out regardless of social support could provide a positive impact on the individual well-being as well as serve as a strong social resource that can be used to reduce work-family conflict (Erdwins, Buffardi, Casper, & O'Brien, 2001). It

is an undeniable fact that social support has a positive impact on lessening the psychological strain and work-family conflict, as well as enhancing job and family satisfaction. According to Gamor et al. (2014), married employees are more concerned about working time than unmarried employees and also, the young are more concerned about working hours than the elderly workforce. Therefore, family support can aid in reducing work-family conflict in individuals who are juggling work and family responsibilities (Carlson & Perrewé, 1999). According to Ray and Miller (1994), social support can be obtained from the workplace or outside the workplace and that support is a must for those who are experiencing work-family conflict. Supervisors have strong influences on how employees can better integrate work and family duties (Nasurdin & Hsia, 2008). Previous research also suggested that managers should arrange flexible work time and family-friendly in order to decrease the possible occurrence of work-family conflict (Gamor et al., 2014). Hence, this study is conducted to identify the relationship between social support and work-family conflict among hotel employees.

Research Objectives

The general objective of this research is to identify the relationship between social support and work-family conflict among employees in selected hotel. Specifically, the objectives of this study are:

1. To identify the relationship between family support and work-family conflict.
2. To identify the relationship between supervisor support and work-family conflict.
3. To identify the relationship between co-worker support and work-family conflict.

Research Hypotheses

Based on the research objectives above, the research hypotheses are indicated as follow:

Ha1 : Family support has a significant relationship with work-family conflict.

Ha2 : Supervisor support has a significant relationship with work-family conflict.

Ha3 : Co-worker support has a significant relationship with work-family conflict.

Conceptual Framework

Conceptual framework is used to show the relationship between social support and work-family conflict. There are two components of conceptual framework in this study.

Social support which is the independent variable includes family support, supervisor support and co-worker support whereas the work-family conflict represents as a dependent variable.

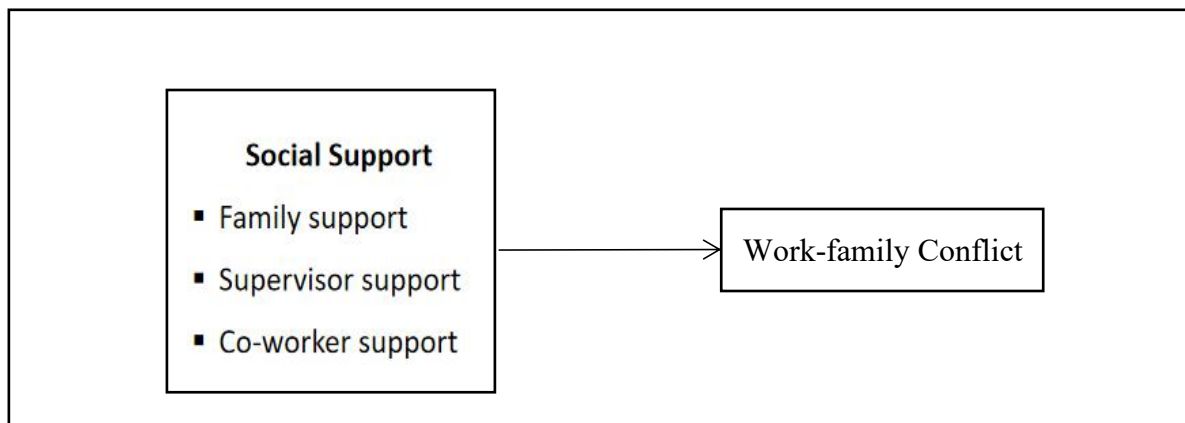


Figure 1 Conceptual framework

Definition of Terms

Social Support

Conceptual definition:

Based on Barrera et al. (1981), social support is defined as ‘different forms of aid and assistance provided by family members, friends, neighbors, and others’ (p. 435), which vastly encloses a mass of social interactions. Social support is explained as the extent to which employees believe that others in their social environment value their contribution and care about their global well-being (Kottke & Sharafinski, 1988). Thoits (2011) illustrates social support as the emotional, informational and instrumental assistance provided by significant others, such as family members, colleagues, and supervisors.

Operational definition:

In this study, social support is referred to the employees' subjective perceptions of the support that is given by other individuals, such as supervisors, family members or co-workers in a purpose to reduce work-family conflict.

Family Support

Conceptual definition:

According to King et al. (1995), family support is defined as people's perceptions of how family members feel concerned and committed to the family unit and support each other. Family support comprises the instrumental and expressive social support provided to and received from family members (Voydanoff, 2014).

Operational definition:

In this paper, family support refers to someone in the family helps the employee to feel better when he is upset about his job and always try to cheer him up. They are willing to take on extra household responsibilities when the employee's job gets very demanding.

Supervisor Support

Conceptual definition:

Supervisor support involves providing emotional support for employees' work-life challenges, modeling how supervisors themselves handle work-family issues, looking for creative solutions that meet the needs of both employees and organizations and facilitating employees' flexible work practices (Hammer et al., 2009). Allen (2001) highlights that supervisor support is a supervisor who "is sympathetic to the employee's desires to seek a balance between work and family and who engages in efforts to help the employee accommodate his or her work and family responsibilities" (p. 417).

Operational definition:

In this study, supervisor support is the supervisor is willing to listen to the employees' problems in juggling their work and non-work life, at the same time helping them to solve the conflicts. The supervisor will take some time to listen to their personal needs. The employee can rely on his supervisor to help him solve the conflicts.

Co-worker Support

Conceptual definition:

According to Susskind et al. (2003), co-worker support refers to the extent to which employees have confidence in their co-worker's willingness to assist them in carrying out work-related service-based duties to completion. Co-worker support makes up the sharing of knowledge, providing encouragement, and supporting one another while helping one another in assigned tasks (Zhou & George, 2001). Co-worker support denotes the degree of aid presented by work colleagues (Liao, Joshi & Chuang, 2004).

Operational definition:

For this study, co-worker support refers to the support provided by the colleagues to an individual in order to aid each other in getting the job done and giving useful advice on the job problems at the workplace. The co-workers are care and close to each other.

Work-family Conflict

Conceptual definition:

Work-family conflict refers to a form of inter-role conflict in which the role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible. (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). As mentioned by Voydanoff (2005), work-family conflict is a cognitive evaluation of work and family resources and demands. The two popular work-family conflict issues are time-based conflicts and strain-based conflicts (Lambert & Hogan, 2006).

Operational definition:

The demands of the job make the employee feels difficult to maintain the relationship with his spouse and children as the work often interferes with his family responsibilities. The busy work always keeps the employee away from his family activities.

Significant of Study

From the theoretical perspective, the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory is chosen in this study to further explain the role played by support as it provides an advanced framework. According to Halbesleben et al. (2014), COR theory is explained as an integrative theory of assets that perceive assets extensively. COR theory states that people will look for resources such as social support in order to manage their professional and personal lives to avoid work-family conflict.

In this study, the roles of human resource practitioners are important in minimizing the occurrence of work-family conflict. As a human resource practitioner, it is vital to promote the work-life policies and programs such as Employee Assistance Program that involving useful resources to the employees. The human resource practitioners could organize a workshop for the employees to share their work-family strategies with each other that they often used at home and workplace. Besides, the practitioners could conduct a focus group or short self-assessment with the employees to better understand the work-family conflict that they are facing.

This study is conducted to fill in the research gap as stated in the statement of problem. The finding of this study will prove that there is a linkage between social support and work-family conflict. Social support is an important resource as it can help to reduce work-family conflict of the individuals and at the same time increase their working performance and job satisfaction. Besides, social support is related to positive work and family satisfaction as it leads to a low level of work-family conflict. Social support such as

family support is crucial as even a small thing that the family members do can make the others feel warmed and being cared for. Also, supervisor support such as mentoring, guiding, and assisting their subordinates can help the employee to perform their job responsibilities well and thus increase their performance evaluations. Furthermore, co-worker support is significant in helping their colleagues to complete the work tasks as they have more job resources that allowing them to deal with stress and solve the clients' problems.

Limitation of Study

This study contains a few limitations. First and foremost, this research is only limited to the selected hotel due to the time, energy and cost constraints. The result may not represent the overall opinions of all hotel employees in Kuching, Sarawak. The range of this research is only for the hotel that the researcher has chosen. Hence, the findings may lack accuracy. Secondly, the questionnaires may consume a long time to process as the respondents are busy with their work matters. Also, the collected results may have limited due to a bias response. This is because their answers may be influenced by other colleagues or managers during the answering session and leading the respondents to have some reservations about their true opinions and perceptions. As a result, this has prevented them from answering the questions honestly, thus, the results are affected.

Summary

At the end of this chapter, we are able to understand the background of study, statement of problem, research objectives, research hypotheses, the development of conceptual framework, significant of study and some definition of key terms. Then, the next chapter will discuss about the issue and theory that related to this study and also some past findings.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

In this chapter, the issues and concepts related to the study will be discussed. Besides, discussion of the related theory will also explain in this chapter. Last but not least, some of the past similar findings will also be covered in this part.

Discussion of Concepts

Social Support

Three elements of social support will be discussed in this study namely family support, supervisor support and co-worker support. We cannot deny that there is an increasing number of dual-career and single-parent families as the economy to date is changing tremendously, thus causing the stress level of an employee to increase. The busy employees with multiple characters who are attempting to meet various expectations, appear to look for the resources in one form of support to diminish the stress. Stress will undoubtedly raise the issue of work-family conflict. According to O'Driscoll et al. (2004), social support is argued as a resource that has been appeared to have some advantageous effects on diminishing mental strain, increasing employment and family fulfillment, and also lessening work-family conflict. In the opponent, an absence of social support can worsen the work-family issue (Ayman & Antani, 2008), which thus can lead to expanded mental strain and diminished fulfillment with both the professional and family lives.

Social support can be classified into four types of support that is instrumental, emotional, information and appraisal support and that this support can generate from both the work (supervisors and co-workers) and non-work (spouses and partners) domains. King et al. (1995) illustrated that the most prevalent used types of support are instrumental and emotional when discussing the area of work-family conflict. Instrumental support is giving substantial and

actual aid (House, 1981) whereas emotional support is showing care, concern and emphatic, and also sympathetic. Supports that generate from work domain are usually help in reducing work-family conflict whereas supports that emerge from non-work domain are mainly aid in reducing family-work conflict.

Based on Barrera et al. (1981), social support refers to the assistance provided by friends, neighbors and family members which includes a huge number of social interactions. People are able to possess valuable resources with the presence of social support. Generally, Kossek et al. (2011) indicate that the support at work comes from the supervisors or co-workers which concern about the well-being of the employees or colleagues by offering social resources. On the other hand, the work-family support refers to the helpful social resources provided by the supervisors or co-workers to aid them to balance the relationship between their work and family.

Social support may personate as an antecedent to work-family conflict. Previous research has confirmed that social support can lessen work-family conflict (Lin, 2008). Therefore, employees who have powerful social support networks may undergo less stress in their environment (Cohen & Wills, 1985). This thus shows that social support is a positive resource that can be used to reduce work-family conflict. Burke et al. (2010) stated that it is a duty and responsibility in a collectivistic country to provide support for the family members and employees. Based on Drummond et al. (2017), the individual will encounter more pressure of work-family conflict if social support is absent.

Family Support

Family support offers both emotional and instrumental support. Emotional family support occurs when the family members do something warm and the others feel being cared while the instrumental family support occurs when the family members give each other various forms of support to aid in their daily workload (Adams, King, & King, 1996).