Work-life balance in Malaysia: A Proposed Model

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Currently, the work-life balance (WLB) model is mainly based on data from Anglo samples from Western developed countries**.** Little is known about the WLB model in Eastern developing countries**.** This raises the question of whether the Western WLB model could be generalized to other cultures**.** Therefore this research study aims to highlight the work-life balance model in Malaysia, a predominantly collectivist society with Islam as the official religion. Specifically, this study examines the influence of resources and demands on work-life balance. Work-life balance comprises both negative (work-family conflict) and positive (work-family enrichment) aspects of work-family interaction. Shifting from Western perspectives, resources and demands from the community domain are also investigated together with resources and demands from the work and family domains. Structural Equation Modelling analyses were conducted on data obtained through self-administered questionnaire completed by 506 (Time 1) and 296 (Time 2) executives and non-executives from three public and private sector organisations in Sarawak, East Malaysia, at three months interval.

It was found that work-family conflict and work-family enrichment were independent constructs that can co-exist simultaneously. Similar to Western findings, resources were significant and positively related to work-family enrichment, while demands were significant and positively related to work-family conflict. Different from Western results, resources and demands from family and community domains made a more significant contribution to work-family conflict and enrichment than resources and demands from the work domain. Eastern culture namely, collectivism and traditional gender role ideology as well as religion can explain these observed differences. These findings suggest that some aspects of Western WLB model can be applied to Malaysia. However, the study demonstrates that the role of community and religion, which are neglected in the Western model, were important in determining work-life balance in Malaysia. Thus, it may be concluded that in order to have a better understanding of work-life balance in a society which is predominantly collectivist and have strong cultural belief and values, aspect of community and religion should be integrated.

Key word: Work-family conflict, work-family enrichment, Malaysia, resources, demands, community