

# Community Domain and Work-Family Enrichment: an Exploratory Study

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## Abstract

Recently, the positive side of work-family interface, work-family enrichment has been highlighted. However, most research came from Western cultural context and mostly focus on work and family domain only. Therefore, this study aims to investigate community domains demands and resources and its relationship to work-family enrichment in the Eastern cultural context, i.e. Malaysia. Self-administered questionnaire were answered by 506 employees from six organizations. It was found that family-work enrichment (FWE) is higher than work-family enrichment (WFE). Resources from neighbors and relatives were positively related to WFE and FWE. Interestingly, friends' resources were negatively related to WFE and FWE. The findings strengthened the link between resources and enrichment. This study has shown that support outside the workplace, particularly from relatives and neighbours are important in enhancing work-family and family work enrichment. Thus, organizations in collectivist society should create community supportive culture to enhance the experience of work family enrichment among the employees.

**Keywords:** work-family enrichment, family-work enrichment, community, resources, demands

## 1. Introduction

Work-family interface (WFI) has been extensively examined from Western perspectives. Greenhaus et al., (5) reported ninety five percent of work-family enrichment studies were conducted in Western developed countries. This suggests that work-family interface particularly, the positive interaction of work and family issues in non-Western contexts have been ignored even though changes in economic development, employment patterns and the use of technology are intensifying in developing countries.

Even though work and family interaction concept was first proposed by Seiber in 1974, only of late researchers begun to examine this proposition e.g. (3,6,12,19). Based on theories such as the expansionist theory (1), some argue having multiple roles as a worker, parent and community member enhances the knowledge, skills, and resources that could be utilized to improve performance at work and vice versa.

This study which was conducted in Malaysia, a collectivist society, should further our understanding of work life balance issues in a non-Western culture. The current study aimed to identify the relationship between demands and resources in community domains which include relatives, friends and neighbours and work-family and family work enrichment.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Works-Family Enrichment

Previous research demonstrates work-family enrichment is bi-directional, that is enrichment could be from work to family or from family to work and these are conceptually distinct with unique antecedents and outcomes (2,4,23). For instance, (8) reported that WFE predicted job performance positively; but not FWE.

Carlson et al., (7) defined enrichment as positive experiences gained from resources in one role enhance the performance of another role. These positive experiences can be transferred to other domain directly, or indirectly; via two paths; instrumental or affective. Resources can be in many forms such as skills and perspectives, flexibility and may be psychological, physical, social, and material in nature.

This study is based on Conservation of Resources Theory (COR) (14). From COR perspectives, a high level of work demands, ties individual resources, thus less time and energy remain for family and community role, which might lead, in turn, less WFE. Instrumental and emotional support from family members, relatives, friends or neighbours would protect energy-related resources, thus lead to higher FWE.