Family-Friendly Support Programs and Work-Family Enrichment: The Mediating Role of Organizational Perceptions

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Family-Friendly Support Programs and Work-Family Enrichment: The Mediating Role of Organizational Perceptions

Noraini Binti Mohamad Hipiny

A thesis submitted
In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
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2016
The project entitled ‘Family-Friendly Support Programs and Work-Family Enrichment: The Mediating Role of Organizational Perceptions’ was prepared by Noraini Binti Mohamad Hipiny and submitted to the Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Master of Science in Human Resource Development.

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my daughter, Hasanatul Fathiyah. She has always been my source of inspiration and motivation.
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First and above all, I praise God, the almighty for providing me this opportunity and granting me the capability to proceed successfully. In this section, I would like to add a few words of acknowledgment for the people who have been a part of this research right from inception. The inscription of this dissertation has been one of the significant tasks I have encountered and without the continuous support and guidance from the people involved, this research would not have been a success. It is to them I owe my greatest gratitude.

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Noraini Binti Mohamad Hipiny
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Below are the abbreviations used in this paper, which are listed in order of their appearance:

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<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>FSOP</td>
<td>family-supportive organizational perceptions</td>
</tr>
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<td>FFP</td>
<td>family-friendly support programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WFE</td>
<td>work-to-family enrichment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FLFP</td>
<td>female labour force participation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FWA</td>
<td>flexible work arrangements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Government</td>
<td>the Malaysian Government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1MF1st</td>
<td>1Malaysia Family First</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WLB</td>
<td>work-life balance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NWoW</td>
<td>New World of Work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JD-R</td>
<td>job demands-resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EAP</td>
<td>Employee Assistance Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HR</td>
<td>human resource</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PIC</td>
<td>personnel in charge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HOD</td>
<td>head of departments</td>
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<td>SPSS</td>
<td>Statistical Package for Social Sciences</td>
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ABSTRACT

Family-Friendly Support Programs and Work-Family Enrichment: The mediating Role of Organizational Perceptions

The purpose of this paper is to identify the mediating role of family-supportive organizational perceptions (FSOP) between family-friendly support programs (FFP) (flexible work arrangements, specialized leave options, childcare facilities, financial supports, information and support and others) and work-to-family enrichment (WFE) (developmental-based, affective-based and capital-based) among working women. A quantitative methodology was used in this study. Data were gathered through survey questionnaire that was administered among 163 managerial and professional women and non-managerial and non-professional women currently working in two selected public institutions of higher education in Sarawak, Malaysia. The hypotheses of the study were analysed using Pearson’s correlation analysis, multiple linear regression (Enter) analysis and Sobel test. The results revealed that FSOP mediate the effect of the awareness on the availability of FWA and childcare facilities on WFE (affective-based), which highlight the important role played by FSOP in determining the outcome of FFP. Another important finding showed that there is a small negative relationship between FSOP and WFE (affective-based). Hence, the adoption of work-life balance approach has to take into consideration the context in which it will operates as there is no ‘one size fits all’ approach that can meet the real needs of various cultures.

Keywords: family-supportive organizational perceptions; work-to-family enrichment; family-friendly support programs
ABSTRAK

Program Sokongan Mesra-Keluarga dan Pengayaan Pekerjaan-Keluarga: Peranan Persepsi Terhadap Organisasi

Kajian ini bertujuan untuk mengenalpasti peranan persepsi berkaitan sokongan terhadap keluarga yang diberikan oleh organisasi (FSOP) antara program sokongan mesra-keluarga (aturan kerja fleksibel, pilihan cuti khusus, kemudahan penjagaan anak, bantuan kewangan, maklumat dan sokongan dan lain-lain) dan pengayaan pekerjaan-keluarga (berasaskan pembangunan, afektif dan modal) dalam kalangan wanita. Kajian ini menggunakan kaedah kuantitatif. Data dikumpul daripada 163 wanita dalam kumpulan pengurusan dan profesional dan sokongan yang sedang berkhidmat di dua institusi pengajian tinggi awam terpilih di Sarawak, Malaysia melalui borang soal selidik. Hipotesis kajian dianalisis menggunakan analisis korelasi Pearson, analisis regresi berganda (enter) dan ujian Sobel. Dapat menunjukkan bahawa FSOP menjadi pengantara kesan kesedaran tentang kewujudan aturan kerja fleksibel dan kemudahan penjagaan anak ke atas pengayaan pekerjaan-keluarga (berasaskan afektif). Ini membuktikan kepentingan peranan FSOP dalam menentukan keberkesanan program berkenaan. Kajian turut mendapati ada hubungan yang kecil dan negatif antara FSOP dan pengayaan pekerjaan-keluarga (berasaskan afektif). Oleh itu, penggunaan pendekatan keseimbangan pekerjaan-kehidupan perlu mengambil kira konteks di mana ia akan beroperasi kerana tiada pendekatan 'satu saiz untuk semua' yang boleh memenuhi keperluan pelbagai budaya.

Kata kunci: persepsi berkaitan sokongan terhadap keluarga yang diberikan oleh organisasi; pengayaan pekerjaan-keluarga; program sokongan mesra-keluarga.
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

The major goal of this study is to continue and extend previous efforts aimed at identifying the mediating role of family-supportive organizational perceptions (FSOP) between family-friendly support programs (FFP) and work-to-family enrichment (WFE). This chapter deliberates on the macro view of some of the important aspects of the study. The first section of this chapter discusses the background of the study. The second section explains the statement of problems, followed by objectives of the study (section three), research questions that have been addressed (section four), research hypotheses (section five) and conceptual framework (section six). Later, this chapter describes the significance (section seven) and limitations (section eight) of the study. Conceptual and operational definitions of terms that have been used in the study are also being discussed (section nine). Finally, the chapter ends with a summary.

1.1 Background of study

In retrospect to the end of World War II, there were less than one-third of women in the labour force. While the number of women in the labour force has expanded largely ever since, there is a downward trend of female labour force participation (FLFP) rates since 1999.
as women had reached the peak of their labour force participation that is 60 per cent (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014).

Thus, in an attempt to understand this downward trend, organisational behaviourists and feminists have been debating about the factors that influence a woman to leave an organization after childbirth and not re-enter (Subramaniam, Overton, & Maniam, 2015). Further, Subramaniam et al. (2015) demonstrated that flexible work arrangements (FWA) have a positive effect on work-life balance, which might be the primary factor on women's decision to work in paid labour.

In Malaysia, while equal treatment is given to women at the workplace (Abdul Karim, 2013), the labour force participation rates among Malaysian women remained low at 54.1 per cent in 2015 (Department of Statistics of Malaysia, 2016). The FLFP rates were even lower during specific periods in the women’s lifecycle that corresponding with the childbearing and childrearing years (Noor & Mohd Mahudin, 2015). Further, Abdul Karim (2013) stated that the FLFP rates started to decline continuously beginning from the 30 to 34 years old age group, which indicated that women who had left the workforce do not re-enter.

In addition, based on the 5th Malaysian Population and Family Survey, the survey reported that women left the paid labour due to several factors, including childcare issues, getting married, moving with husband, and pregnant. The survey also specified that 18.8 per cent of working women were having problems in balancing between work and family roles, including no adequate time for family, childcare and oneself. Also, the survey revealed that 34.2 per cent of working women would like to have a childcare centre at work, 17.8 per cent
of working women would like to have a specific leave to take care of sick child, and 13.7 per cent of working women would like to have flexible working hours (National Institute of Population and Family Development of Malaysia, 2014).

Accordingly, in the 11th Malaysia Plan, the Malaysian Government (the Government) has set forth a plan to increase the labour force participation rates among women to 59.0 per cent by the year 2020 (Economic Planning Unit of Malaysia, 2015). This aim is in line with the seventh challenge of the country’s aspiration to become a developed nation by the year 2020, which is;

Establishing a fully caring society will come before self, in which the welfare of the people will revolve not around the state or the individual but around a strong and resilient family. (Mohamad, 1991)

Consequently, the Government has introduced policies and programs related to the advancement of women, such as the 1 Malaysia Family First (1MF1st) movement and the National Family Policy. Specifically, the 1MF1st movement, through the National Blue Ocean Strategy, has three key focus areas, namely family perspective commitment, review of policies and laws to be more family-friendly and accessibility to family-friendly services, while the introduction of National Family Policy is to promote a work-life balance (WLB) through more FWA and provision of childcare, day care or respite centres by both public and private sectors (Abdul Karim, 2013).
Furthermore, among the Government’s initiatives to escalate the FLFP rate, the Career Comeback Grant, through Talent Corporation Malaysia Berhad (TalentCorp), aims to urge employers to recruit and retain women on career breaks, empowering them to grow their talent pool and offer career opportunities to women hoping to come back to work. The Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development is also collaborating with TalentCorp and MyStarJob to encourage women that were previously employed to return to work with the launch of flexWorkLife.my portal. This portal allows employers to share their successful experiences adopting family-friendly support programs, and enables employers to advertise part time or flexible job opportunities to women who would like to return to work (Abdul Karim, 2013).

Nevertheless, Noor and Mohd Mahudin (2015) emphasized that there are still lack of family-friendly policies and practices in the workplace, whereby only a few organizations have taken up initiatives to provide on-site or off-site childcare centres and childcare subsidy even though the Government has provided several financial assistance measures such as tax exemption and industrial building allowance. This indicates the relevance of assessing the effectiveness of such initiatives.

Moreover, the recent New World of Work (NWoW) Index (Wong, 2016) pointed out that Malaysians are not prepared for NWoW, with just 40 out of 100 respondents evaluated themselves exceptionally in embracing new People, Place and Technology standards, setting the nation ninth among the 12 markets included in the study. The study also revealed that
62.5 per cent of respondents said they should have been in the office to access distinctive gear or devices that are only accessible in the workplace (Wong, 2016).

Meanwhile, in the United States (U.S.), women are increasingly combining employment with family-care responsibilities, and opposed to Malaysia, the FLFP rates have been increasing in the prime childbearing and childrearing years (Fredriksen-Goldsen & Scharlach, 2001). However, based on U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2014), the FLFP rates were higher for working mothers with older children than for those with younger children. Consequently, there is a growing movement by major cooperation in the U.S. designed to encourage women to re-enter the workforce after their career breaks (Swift, 2008).

Separately, in Indonesia, Schaner and Das (2016) found that younger women in urban areas have increased their labour force participation in recent years, largely through paid labour, while younger women in rural areas have reduced their labour force participation, largely by opting out of informal, unpaid labour, which indicated that wage jobs were more desirable than other types of work and that many women exit wage labour due to family and childcare responsibilities. Thus, Schaner and Das (2016) suggested that women-friendly job placement services could increase FLFP.

In conclusion, despite the increasing concerns on WLB issues from both the Government and organizations through the implementation of FFP, working women still face challenges in balancing the conflicting demands of work and family as reflected by the low participation of women in the labour force.
Thus, the Government and organizations must find alternative strategies to address the issues, perhaps through a simultaneous attention to both physical and psychological approaches, which is by creating a family-supportive environment in the organization along with the implementation of formal work-family initiatives.

In addition, rather than assessing how jobs relate to negative personal outcomes at home, the Government and organizations should put a positive-psychological twist to the current approach by emphasizing on how work and work–family interactions can also be beneficial in personal lives such as WFE.

1.2 Problem statements

1.2.1 Empirical gaps

There are several empirical gaps that have been identified related to the present study. First, there has been an increasing amount of literatures that have suggested that the effect of FFP may be indirect. Allen (2001) showed that FSOP served as a mediating mechanism by which the availability of family-supportive benefits influenced work–family conflict and job attitudes. In the same vein, Butts, Casper, and Yang (2013) implied that policy availability effect on work attitudes and work-family conflict was mediated by FSOP. Therefore, it has been suggested that future research should include simultaneous attention to both formal and informal work-life practices, such as the effectiveness of formal initiatives can be enhanced.