

Juxtaposing Types of Family-Work Conflict Between Malaysian and Western Employees

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Abstract: In comparison to work-family conflict (WFC), family-work conflict (FWC) has not been examined heavily, particularly the types of family-work conflict, that is., time-based, strain-based and behaviour-based. Even though many antecedents for FWC originated from family domain, due to spillover and crossover effect, organization will also suffer the negative consequences of FWC. Thus, by understanding the specific types of the family-work conflict, more specific interventions can be undertaken by organizations. The aim of this study is to advance the understanding of family-work conflict types in Eastern culture by comparing it with ten Western studies that utilized the same measure i.e. family-work conflict scale by Carlson, Kacmar and William [1]. Descriptive statistics and one sample t test in SPSS version 23 were used to analyze the data. In general, behaviour-based FWC is higher than time and strain-based FWC. Malaysian employees scored significantly higher FWC than did other Western studies. Male Malaysian respondents particularly, scored highest in all three dimensions of FWC than did the Westerners. Thus, culture dimensions such as collectivist and polychronic time orientation as well as support for child and elder care and social problems may shed some lights on understanding this interesting finding.

Keywords: Family-work conflict, Time-based, Strain-based, Behavior-based, Malaysia

I. INTRODUCTION

Work life balance (WLB) view as a lack of conflict or interference between work and family roles, that is, low levels of inter role conflict (negative interaction between work and family) and high level of inter role facilitation (positive interaction of work and family) [2]. This definition has been used to categorize WLB into negative and positive interaction between work and family. The negative interaction between work and family interface is also known as work-family conflict, work interference with family and negative spill over. Work-family conflict remains a key factor for many employees, a challenge with current research is that scholars often methodologically and theoretically confound all forms of non-work conflict in the work-family measure [3].

The most quoted definition of WFC is by Greenhaus and Beutell which was defined Work Family Conflict as:

A form of inter role conflict, in which the demands of work and family roles are incompatible in some respect, so that participation in one role is more difficult because of participation in the other's role [4, p. 77].

This conflict is bidirectional, that is, work can interfere with family matters (Work Family Conflict – WFC) and also family can interfere with work (Family Work Conflict - FWC). Greenhaus and Beutell [4] further divided this conflict into three (3) types, which are: time-based (time pressure, lack of time for family, leisure etc.), strain-based (anxiety, fatigue, tension) and behaviour-based (incompatible behavioural expectations between work and home life). Carlson, Kacmar and William [1] further developed the three types of WFC and FWC into 18 items scale which has been used to measure work family conflict (WFC) and family work conflict (FWC) globally including Malaysia (see [5], [6]).

In comparison to work-family conflict (WFC), family-work conflict (FWC) has not been examined heavily, particularly the three types of family-work conflict, time-based, strain-based and behaviour-based. Even though many antecedents for FWC originated from family domain, due to spillover and crossover effect, organization will also suffer the negative consequences of FWC. Thus, by understanding the specific types of the family-work conflict, more specific interventions can be undertaken by organizations.

Kelloway, Gottlieb and Barham [7] in their six-month longitudinal survey data suggested that strain-based FWC is an antecedents to stress and turnover intentions. Strain-based emerged as an outcome of stress. Time-based usually related to household chores and caring activity for children and / or elderly. Therefore, number of children, age of the youngest child, and family size (including older relatives) are the possible antecedents of time-based conflict. Strain-based include lack of spousal support, husband-wife dissimilarity in career orientation, in family roles, and in attitudes towards a wife's employment status. Behaviour-based include family-role ambiguity, intra-family role conflict, and high family role involvement [8]. Thus, the aim of this study is to advance the understanding of family-work conflict types in Eastern culture by comparing it with ten Western studies that utilized the same measure i.e. family-work conflict scale by Carlson, kacmar and William [1].

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