

Chapter X: Malaysian model of work-family interface: Similar or different from the West?

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Abstract

Currently, the work-family interface (WFI) model is mainly based on data from Anglo samples from Western developed countries. Little is known about the WFI model in Eastern developing countries. This raises the question of whether the Western WFI model can be generalized to other cultures. This research study aims to highlight the work-family interface model in Malaysia, a predominantly collectivist society with Islam as the official religion. 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. 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. On the other hand unlike Western findings, resources and demands from community domains made a more significant contribution to work-family conflict and enrichment than resources and demands from the work and family domain. Cultural dimension namely, polychronic time orientation and traditional gender role ideology as well as religion can explain these observed differences. These findings suggest that some aspects of the Western WFI model can be applied to Malaysia. However, the study demonstrates that the role of community and religion, which are neglected in the Western WFI model, were important in determining work-family interface in Malaysia. Thus, it may be concluded that in order to have a better understanding of work-family interface in a society which is predominantly collectivist and has strong cultural beliefs and values, aspects of community and religion must be integrated.

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