

## **Associations of Work-Family Conflict, Job Satisfaction, Family Satisfaction and Life Satisfaction: A Study of Married Female Secretaries**

AMINAH AHMAD  
Women's Studies Unit  
Centre for Extension and Continuing Education  
Universiti Pertanian Malaysia  
43400 UPM Serdang, Selangor Darul Ehsan, Malaysia

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### **ABSTRAK**

Penyelidikan ini mengkaji akibat konflik antara peranan kerja dan keluarga bagi wanita yang telah berkahwin melalui analisis laluan bagi konflik tersebut, kepuasan kerja, kepuasan keluarga dan kepuasan hidup. Data telah diperolehi daripada 120 setiausaha wanita di negeri Selangor, Malaysia. Kajian ini mendapati bahawa konflik antara peranan kerja dan keluarga secara signifikan mengurangkan kepuasan kerja serta kepuasan keluarga. Kedua-dua kepuasan kerja dan keluarga mempunyai perkaitan yang signifikan dengan kepuasan hidup. Implikasi daripada kajian ini adalah konflik antara peranan kerja dan keluarga merupakan perkara yang sama pentingnya bagi individu dan organisasi kerana akibatnya yang negatif, iaitu kurangnya kepuasan kerja serta kepuasan keluarga dan ini seterusnya mengurangkan kepuasan hidup.

### **ABSTRACT**

This study examined the consequences of work-family conflict through path analytic associations of work-family conflict, job satisfaction, family satisfaction and life satisfaction. Data were obtained from 120 married female secretaries in the state of Selangor, Malaysia. Work-family conflict was shown to significantly lead to lower job satisfaction as well as family satisfaction. In addition, both job satisfaction and family satisfaction were significantly related to life satisfaction. The results of the study imply that work-family conflict is an important concern for individuals and organizations alike because of its negative consequences leading to reduced job satisfaction as well as family satisfaction and hence to reduced life satisfaction.

### **INTRODUCTION**

In Malaysia, the percentage of women in tertiary education and, consequently, in professional roles has been rising steadily. In 1990, 45.7% of women were in tertiary education (Department of Statistics, Malaysia 1992) compared with 38.6% in 1980 (Department of Statistics, Malaysia 1983). Of the economically active population, 10.7% of women were in professional, technical and related occupations in 1992 (Department of Statistics, Malaysia 1994) compared with 4.8% in 1970 (Department of Statistics, Malaysia 1972).

With these changing demographics, wom-

en have to deal with job-related demands which place limits on the performance of their family role. This trend results in work-family conflict as women try to cope with conflicting demands of work and the family (Aminah 1995). The work-family conflict experienced by married working women as they try to juggle the many roles they perform, along with their frustrations while searching for ways to deal with these conflicts, also reduce the level of work, family and life satisfaction women experience (Sekaran 1986).

Although the increased participation of women in paid employment while maintaining their traditional roles is a global phenom-

enon, most of the research in work-family interface has been done in Western cultures. As a result, relatively little is known about work-family interface in the non-Western cultures. Gaining a better understanding of the conflict arising from family life and work life and the satisfaction as outcomes of role conflict is an important area of concern with the increase in the participation of women in the work-force. This concern is justified because an individual's satisfaction, as a component of well-being, may impinge on their functioning as parents and thus have implications for the quality of children's lives (Dodge 1990; Hock and DeMeis 1990).

The objective of this study was to examine correlational and path analytic associations among work-family conflict, job satisfaction, family satisfaction and life satisfaction among married female secretaries. Married women were considered an appropriate target population because Hall (1972) noted that women's multiple roles tend to be salient simultaneously. The implication is that women may experience more role conflict as a result of the simultaneity of their multiple roles. This is because simultaneous role demands require setting priorities while sequential role demands set their own priorities.

In this present study the definition of work-family conflict proposed by Kahn *et al.* (1964) was used. This definition is consistent with that used by many other researchers (Holahan and Gilbert 1979; Kopelman *et al.* 1983; Greenhaus and Beutell 1985; Greenhaus *et al.* 1987; Bedeian and Mossholder 1989; Duxbury and Higgins 1991). Kahn *et al.* (1964) defined work-family conflict as a form of interrole conflict in which the role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect. Work-family conflict occurs when an individual has to perform multiple roles: worker, spouse and in many cases, parent. Each of these roles imposes demands requiring time, energy and commitment. The cumulative demands of multiple roles can result in role strain of two types: overload and interference (Kelly and Voydanoff 1985). Overload exists when the total demands on time and energy associated with the prescribed activities of

multiple roles are too great for the roles to be performed adequately or comfortably. Interference occurs when conflicting demands make it difficult to fulfil the requirements of multiple roles.

The increased interest in understanding the work-family interface stems from the demonstrated outcomes of work-family conflict on role and life satisfaction. Life satisfaction was conceptualized as deriving from satisfaction through having a good job and family life (Sekaran 1983). Some prior evidence supports the relationship between work-family conflict, job and family satisfaction, and life satisfaction. Several studies have found negative relationships between interrole conflict and job satisfaction (Jones and Butler 1980; Pleck *et al.* 1980; Staines and O'Connor 1980; Kopelman *et al.* 1983; Sekaran 1985; Greenhaus and Parasuraman 1986; Parasuraman *et al.* 1989; Mohamed Hashim 1993). Work-family conflict was also found negatively related to family satisfaction (Pleck *et al.* 1980; Staines and O'Connor 1980; Greenhaus and Kopelman 1981; Jones and Butler 1980; Parasuraman *et al.* 1989; Aryee 1992). Several earlier researchers have found a positive relationship between job satisfaction and life satisfaction (Bamundo and Kopelman 1980; Rice *et al.* 1980; Sekaran 1985; Burke and McKeen 1988; Rice *et al.* 1992), and between family satisfaction and life satisfaction (Campbell *et al.* 1976; Lee 1978; Kopelman *et al.* 1983; Rice *et al.* 1992).

The model of work-family conflict proposed by Kopelman *et al.* (1983) was chosen as the theoretical base for this research. This model presents a nomological network among work conflict, family conflict, work-family conflict (which Kopelman called interrole conflict), and job, family and life satisfaction. The model is illustrated in *Fig. 1*.

Although this model includes both the antecedents and consequences of work-family conflict, this present study is limited to testing a part of the model, that is the relationship between variables consequential to work-family conflict.

Based on the model, the following hypotheses were postulated.

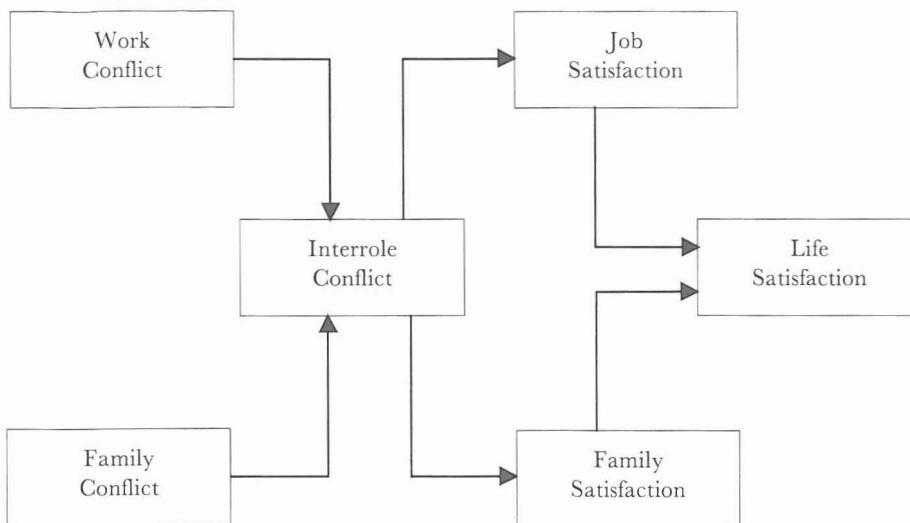


Fig 1: A model of work, family and interrole conflict  
 Source: Kopelman et al. 1983, p. 201.

- H1 : High work-family conflict will lead to low job satisfaction.
- H2 : High work-family conflict will lead to low family satisfaction.
- H3 : High job satisfaction will lead to high life satisfaction.
- H4 : High family satisfaction will lead to high life satisfaction.

**METHODOLOGY**

*Subjects and Procedure*

Subjects in the present study were women who (a) were married and living with their husbands, (b) had at least one child, and (c) were full-time secretaries by occupation. The secretaries in this study included stenographers doing the work of secretaries. These criteria were established to ensure that the women in the sample had quite similar responsibilities in terms of family and work roles.

The names and addresses of secretaries were obtained from two selected public organizations, and the Secretaries Society of Malaysia. Questionnaires and return envelopes were mailed to 234 women meeting these criteria from the state of Selangor. Of this number, 120 (87 from the public sector and

33 from private organizations) returned the questionnaires within a period of ten weeks.

The women in the sample averaged 39.3 years of age (SD = 5.09) and had an average of 3.0 (SD = 1.31) children. The majority of the women had completed secondary (58.8%) and diploma (31.9%) education. Only 3.4% had an advanced diploma or a bachelor's degree, and the remaining respondents had completed pre-university education (14.2%) or secretarial short courses (1.7%). They earned an average gross income of RM1532 per month.

*Instruments*

Work-family conflict was measured using the interrole conflict scale of Pleck et al. 1980. This scale consists of eight items based on the most prevalent aspects of work-family conflict: excessive work time, schedule conflicts, and fatigue or irritability. The response options for the questions or items were five-point scales ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). Table 1 presents the mean and standard deviation of the items. The reliability coefficient (alpha) for this work-family conflict scale was 0.84.

Job satisfaction was measured with a single question. "Overall how satisfied do

TABLE 1  
Mean and standard deviation of items measuring work-family conflict

Item	M	SD
My work schedule often conflicts with my family life	2.1	0.81
After work, I come home too tired to do some of the things I'd like to do	3.1	1.07
On the job I have so much work to do that it takes away time for my family interests	2.3	0.99
My family dislikes how often I am preoccupied with my work while I am at home	2.8	1.99
Because my work is demanding, at times I am irritable at home	2.5	1.04
The demands of my job make it difficult to be relaxed all the time at home	2.4	0.95
My work takes up time that I'd like to spend with my family	2.5	0.97
My job makes it difficult to be the kind of spouse or parent I'd like to be	2.4	1.03

you feel with your career?" Response options were given on a seven-point scale ranging from very dissatisfied (1) to very satisfied (7). Family satisfaction was measured using the question "How satisfied do you feel with your family life?" Response options similar to that for job satisfaction were given. Although the use of a single question may not be sufficient to measure specific, sharply defined attitudes, this method has been used frequently in studies of global attitudes (Hall 1972).

Life satisfaction was measured using an eight-item semantic differential scale adapted from the general index of well-being defined by Quinn and Shepard (1974) in the Quality

of Employment Survey. The respondents were asked to express their feelings about each statement using seven-point response options. Table 2 presents the mean and standard deviation of the items. The reliability coefficient ( $\alpha$ ) for this scale was 0.90.

#### *Data Analysis*

Two types of analyses were performed in examining the relationships between work-family conflict and the other variables, namely, job satisfaction, family satisfaction and life satisfaction. First, zero-order correlations were computed to determine whether

TABLE 2  
Mean and standard deviation of items measuring life satisfaction

Item	M	SD
Boring... Interesting	5.4	1.32
Enjoyable... Miserable	5.1	1.50
Useless... Worthwhile	6.8	1.19
Friendly... Lonely	5.5	1.47
Full... Empty	5.5	1.18
Discouraging... Hopeful	5.7	1.22
Disappointing... Rewarding	5.4	1.29
Brings out the best in me... Does not give me much of a chance	5.2	1.18

TABLE 3  
Mean and standard deviation of variables

Variable	Max. Possible Score	M	SD
Work-family conflict	40	20.1	5.69
Job satisfaction	7	5.3	1.22
Family satisfaction	7	5.6	1.29
Life satisfaction	56	43.6	8.05

TABLE 4  
Correlations among variables

Variables	1	2	3	4	M	SD
1. Work-family conflict	-	-.40**	-.29**	-.33**	20.2	5.69
2. Job satisfaction	-.40**	-	.60**	.52**	5.3	1.22
3. Family satisfaction	-.29**	.60**	-	.51**	5.6	1.29
4. Life satisfaction	-.33**	.52**	.51**	-	43.6	8.05

\*\*  $p < .01$

linkages of some kind existed among the variables. Second, a path analysis procedure (Cohen and Cohen 1983) was conducted using the stepwise multiple regression procedure in which each variable is regressed on all other variables postulated to precede it.

## RESULTS

Table 3 presents the mean and standard deviation of respondents' scores for work-family conflict, job satisfaction, family satisfaction and life satisfaction. Correlational analysis revealed that work-family conflict was related to job satisfaction ( $r = -.40$ ;  $p < .01$ ), family satisfaction ( $r = -.29$ ;  $p < .01$ ) and life satisfaction ( $r = -.33$ ;  $p < .01$ ) (Table 4). Life satisfaction was related to both job satisfaction ( $r = .52$ ;  $p < .01$ ) and family satisfaction ( $r = .51$ ;  $p < .01$ ). The relationship between family satisfaction and job satisfaction was also significant ( $r = .60$ ;  $p < .01$ ).

The results of the test of hypotheses are shown in Fig. 2. All four hypothesized relationships were significant, congruent with the model by Kopelman *et al.* (1983) which deals with the consequences of interrole conflict.

Table 5 presents the results of regression-

path analysis predicting job satisfaction and life satisfaction. Work-family conflict explained 17% ( $R^2$ ) of the variance in job satisfaction and 7% ( $R^2$ ) of the variance in family satisfaction. Family and job satisfaction, as antecedents of life satisfaction, explained 27% ( $R^2$ ) of the variance. Job satisfaction contributed an incremental contribution ( $\Delta R^2$ ) of 5%.

## DISCUSSION

Upon examination of path coefficients the support from this study comes from the linkages between work-family conflict and job satisfaction as well as between both job and family satisfaction with life satisfaction. Although Kopelman *et al.* (1983) did not find significant relationships between interrole or work-family conflict and job as well as family satisfaction, as proposed in the model, this study supported the relationship between work-family conflict and job as well as family satisfaction.

The significant path between work-family conflict and family satisfaction and job satisfaction supports a study of 354 married professional women in Singapore by Aryee (1992) who found that work-family conflict

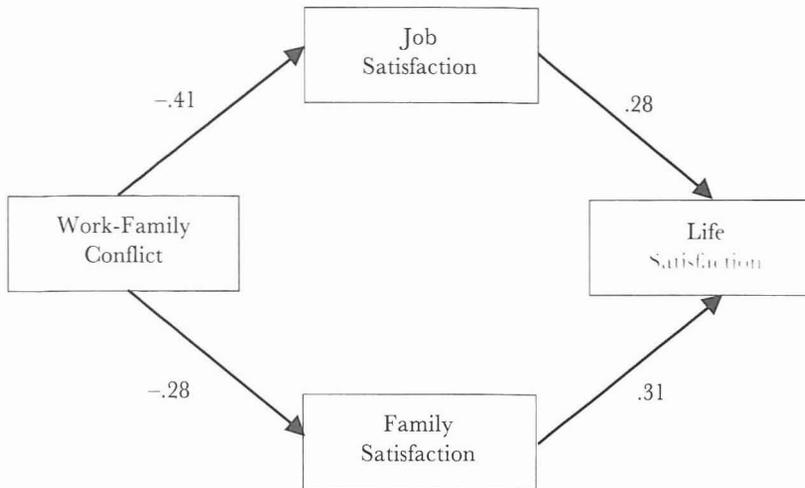


Fig 2: Significant path coefficients

TABLE 5  
Results of stepwise multiple regression analyses

Criterion Variable	Predictor Variable	Beta	Adj.	$\Delta R^2$	F
Job satisfaction	Work-family conflict	-.41	.17	-	23.84**
Life satisfaction	Family satisfaction	.31	.22	-	22.66**
	Job satisfaction	.28	.27	.05	
Family satisfaction	Work-family conflict	-.28	.07	-	10.25**

\*\*  $p < .01$

did explain the variance in family and job satisfaction although the contribution was only 11% and 15%, respectively. The study conducted by Parasuraman *et al.* (1989) also found that work-family conflict had a negative effect on job satisfaction as found in the present study. The significant relationship between job satisfaction and life satisfaction substantiates earlier studies by Pleck *et al.* (1980), Sekaran (1985), Jones and Butler (1980), Parasuraman *et al.* (1989), Rice *et al.* (1992), and that between family satisfaction and life satisfaction is line with the findings of Rice *et al.* (1992).

Although work-family conflict leads to lower job as well as family satisfaction, it is a stronger predictor of job satisfaction. However, for life satisfaction family satisfaction is a stronger predictor than job satisfaction.

Future research might focus on identifying other sources of variance in family satisfaction. As suggested by Kopelman *et al.* (1983) coping behaviour might mediate the relationship between work-family conflict and family satisfaction. Several studies have found that effective coping with interrole conflict is an important source of role and life satisfaction (Hall 1972; Beutell and Greenhaus 1982).

The findings imply that work-family conflict is an important concern for individuals and organizations alike because such conflict, as a source of stress, has been correlated with negative consequences, including reduced job as well as family satisfaction which can lead to reduced life satisfaction. The interrelationship between job and family satisfaction with life satisfaction indicates that the conditions at work can

affect the quality of family life and vice versa, as well as the overall well-being of families.

The findings of the present study, which demonstrate the relationships between role conflict, role and life satisfaction represent an extension of the previous studies that have emphasized the extent of role conflict and coping behaviour of married working women in Malaysia (Fatimah 1985; Aminah 1995). However, a significant limitation of the present investigation was the highly specific sample that was utilized – married female secretaries. The result reported here may generalize to married female secretaries, but any assumption of external validity beyond that is strongly cautioned.

Finally, it should be noted that the processes investigated and reported are part of a larger phenomenon – the work-family interface. This present research is only a building block in a broader and more complex research model concerned with understanding the interface between work and family. The results from a specific sample should be viewed as tentative and the model proposed by Kopelman *et al.* (1983) needs to be tested with other groups of working women. Groups with lower educational attainment, for example, may not support the relationship between job satisfaction and life satisfaction since Bamundo and Kopelman's (1980) study found that educational attainment positively moderates the relationship between job satisfaction and life satisfaction.

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