

# THE FOURFOLD TAXONOMY OF WORK-FAMILY BALANCE AND WELL-BEING: THE MODERATING EFFECT OF COPING STRATEGY

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## Abstract

The aim of this paper is to investigate the moderating effects of coping strategies on the fourfold taxonomy of work-family balance (WFC, FWC, WFF, and FWF) and well-being among married working women. This paper proposes a conceptual model to examine the relationship between work-family balance and well-being. Besides, this paper also proposes the moderating variable, which is coping strategies that are expected to moderate the relationship between work-family balance and well-being. The findings of this study may provide new conceptualisation related to the influence of these factors on women well-being that may allow for more empirical research to be conducted in the future, in studying the effects on other human resource management aspects.

**Keywords:** coping strategies; fourfold taxonomy; married working women; well-being; work-family balance

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Some studies in the feminist related research, found that the most prevalent factors that may influence well-being among married working women are career and family (Boyar & Mosley, 2007; Day & Chamberlain, 2006; Greenhaus, Collins, & Shaw, 2003; Noor & Abdullah, 2012; Seery, Corrigan, & Harpel, 2008). In addition to that, some researchers (Abendroth, van der Lippe, & Maas, 2012; Hamermesh & Lee, 2007) said that time pressure is a problem for married working women since they have to shoulder the majority of household chores and child care. This implies that the greater work demands in the workplace sometimes may cause people to use their personal time to meet the work demands (Duxbury & Higgins, 2001). Furthermore, according to some prior researchers, married working women with children often faced with the problem of time-squeeze (Boyles & Shibata, 2009; Omod & Smith, 2004; Sarwar, 2013; Schieman, Glavin, & Milkie, 2009), which arised due to long working hours. Thus, they face difficulty in balancing paid work demands and domestic tasks that can lead to fatigue, severe conflict, and pressure (Aryee, Srinivas, & Tan, 2005; Boyles & Shibata, 2009; Hsia, 2008; Nahum-Shani & Bamberger, 2011; Noor, Health, & Complete, 2006; Noor, 2010; Read, 2008; Sundin,

Hochwalder, Bildt, & Lisspers, 2007). These have more effects on the women who hold the triple roles as a parent, worker, and spouse; they were very stressful; that implies dangerous to their health and affects their quality of life (Hostetler, Desrochers, Kopko, & Moen, 2011; Khlal, Sermet, & Le Pape, 2000).

Previous studies found that role overload (i.e., work role and family role) did not always lead to conflict as supported by the Role Stress Theory (Culbertson, Mills, & Fullagar, 2012; Hill, 2005; Karimi & Nouri, 2009; Nordenmark, 2004), but it might increase individual well-being (Nordenmark, 2004). However, there have been little attempt to study the effect of work-family balance on well-being that combines all the fourfold taxonomy of work-family balance (Aryee et al., 2005; Karatepe, 2010; Selvarajan, Cloninger, & Singh, 2013; Sim & Bujang, 2012; Tone Innstrand, Melbye Langballe, Falkum, Espnes, & Aasland, 2009). Furthermore, empirical studies that investigated the moderating effects of coping strategies on work-family balance and well-being are even rarer. Therefore, this study differs from previous studies as this study will investigate the influence of the fourfold taxonomy of work-family balance (work to family conflict (WFC), family to work conflict (FWC), work to family facilitation (WFF) and family to work facilitation (FWF)) on well-being that will take into consideration the coping strategies as a moderator variable. Besides, this study also aims to investigate the moderating effects of coping strategies on the fourfold taxonomy of work-family balance (WFC, FWC, WFF, and FWF) and well-being among Malaysian married working women.

## **2.0 WELL-BEING IN MALAYSIA**

In the year 2012, the Prime Minister, Dato' Seri Najib Tun Razak has announced that the rate of family well-being in Malaysia is 7.55 on a scale of ten. Some scholars highlighted that psychological well-being may be affected by work-family conflict (Noor, 2010; Panatik, Badri, Rajab, Rahman, & Shah, 2011) that is underpinned by the Role Stress Theory (Jones, Chonko, Rangarajan, & Roberts, 2007; Karimi & Nouri, 2009). The Role Stress Theory assumes that high levels of demands in one domain may influence stresses in another domain (Jones et al., 2007; Selvarajan et al., 2013; van der Lippe, 2006).

However, a few researchers had found that the conflicting finding on the household responsibilities shouldered by working women, may positively influence women well-being (Mikucka, 2011; Nordenmark, 2004; van Steenbergen, Ellemers, & Mooijaart, 2007). This finding is underpinned by the role expansion theory (Allis & O'Driscoll, 2008; Nordenmark, 2004; van Steenbergen et al., 2007). The role expansion theory assumes that "... being engaged in a multitude of social contexts often generates social support, added income, increased self-complexity and opportunities to experience success, all of which are resources that can be used to create a satisfactory, self-image and life situation" (Nordenmark, 2004). Although many studies on well-being have been conducted by previous researchers (Mikucka, 2011), attempts to investigate how the coping strategies adopted by women can affect their well-being, it was a new undertaking. Thus, the authors believed that this study needs to be carried out as to add more to the studies in this field, to improve the well-being of married working women as voiced by the former Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin (Sim & Bujang, 2012).

## **3.1 DEVELOPMENT OF PROPOSITIONS**

### **3.2 The Fourfold Taxonomy of Work-Family Balance**

Human resource challenges are the biggest concern for a growing number of employers. Leading employers agreed that the positive work-life outcomes for employees, would be achieved from work-life balance to the satisfactions of challenging work and career development, as key ingredients for successful

business strategies (Glavin & Schieman, 2011; Karimi & Nouri, 2009; Maintier, Joulain, & Le Floc’h, 2011; Nahum-Shani & Bamberger, 2011; Namayandeh, 2011; Nordenmark, 2004). These researchers also stated that work-life imbalance and job stress are two problems that posed risks, to worker’s well-being as well as to organisational performance.

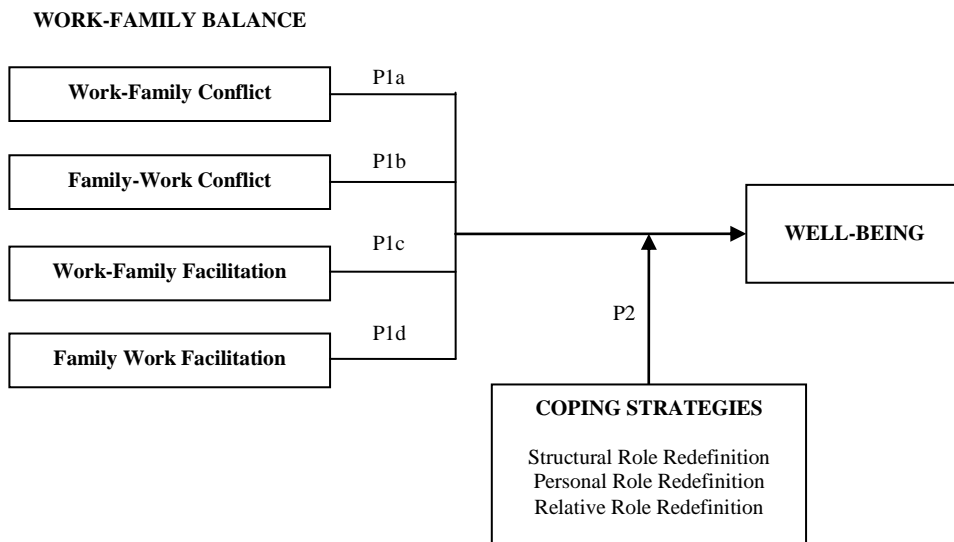
On the basis of literature review, there is a lack of research that study the relationship between work-family balance and well-being that combines all the fourfold taxonomy of work-family balance, particularly among married working women. In a study of Frone, Russell and Cooper (1992), they proposed that work-family balance should be classified in two dimensions, which are (1) direction of influence between work and family roles (i.e., work-to-family and family-to-work) and (2) the types of effect (i.e., conflict and facilitation). This proposed a concept, produces four separate dependent variables, namely work to family conflict (WFC), family to work conflict (FWC), work to family facilitation (WFF) and family to work facilitation (FWF). Thus, the following propositions are suggested regarding the nature of these relationships.

Proposition 1a: There is a negative relationship between WFC and well-being of married working women.

Proposition 1b: There is a positive relationship between FWC and well-being of married working women.

Proposition 1c: There is a negative relationship between WFF and well-being of married working women.

Proposition 1d: There is a positive relationship between FWF and well-being of married working women.



**Figure 1 The Proposed Conceptual Model**

### 3.3 Coping Strategies

Married working women have to shoulder all domestic responsibilities without the ability to access options for restructuring the nature of their role responsibilities (Allis & O'Driscoll, 2008; Culbertson et al., 2012; Glavin & Schieman, 2011; Hostetler et al., 2011; Nam, 2014; Omori & Smith, 2004; Phipps & Prieto, 2016; Pitney, Mazerolle, & Pagnotta, 2011; Sarwar, 2013). They need to rely on themselves to manage their multiple roles demands (Hattar-Pollara, Meleis, & Nagib, 2003). The tendency to opt for leave from employment to cope with the stress of their multiple roles restricts their chances for career advancement or job stability (Jones et al., 2007; Raskin, 2006). This may ultimately place them in a devalued employee position (Banwell, 2006; Hattar-Pollara et al., 2003).

Some scholars also highlighted that the tendency for coping with the job stress and work-life imbalance affected the absenteeism of the employees in organisations (Boyles & Shibata, 2009; Carlson, 1999; Ganster, 2008; Gignac et al., 2012; Hecht & Allen, 2009; Hsia & Nasurdin, 2008; Jones et al., 2007; Karimi & Nouri, 2009; Rotondo & Kincaid, 2008; Voydanoff, 2002; Wickramasinghe, 2010). They coped with this emotion, by shielding of the emotions, distancing, disengaging and removing oneself from home, are the indications either in which these women find themselves in the powerless position, or that they have become empowered to effect positively for a change in their lives (Hattar-Pollara et al., 2003). Moreover, few studies found that some of the workers who suffered the work-life imbalance, tend to seek consultation relating to their physical and mental health problems (Duxbury & Higgins, 2001; Gignac et al., 2012; Khlat et al., 2000; Nadeem, Muhammadi Sabra, 2009; Phipps & Prieto, 2016; van der Lippe, 2006; Wepfer, Brauchli, Jenny, Hämmig, & Bauer, 2015).

Lo, Stone and Ng (2003) classified coping strategies into three types, based on Hall's typology. They are 1) structural role redefinition, 2) personal role redefinition and 3) relative role redefinition. Structural role redefinition, that is, a woman might alter external structurally imposed expectations held by another person(s), regarding acceptable professional behaviour. Such as, adjusting one's working hours by regularly leaving at 5.30 p.m. instead of 7.30 p.m., in order to spend more time with children illustrates this concept. Adjusting role tasks such as asking husband to wash dishes would also fit this category (Day & Chamberlain, 2006; Dilworth, 2004; Wellington, 2006). Besides, married women seldom structurally redefine their role in coping due to their marital status (Lo et al., 2003). Moreover, domestic role-relation stress can be managed by cognitive negotiation of stress in their marital status, that seems to take it upon themselves, this is not only to create the environment conducive to conflict resolution, but also to carefully plot the context that could make the negotiation successful (Aryee et al., 2005; Hattar-Pollara et al., 2003).

Personal role redefinition involves changing one's role expectation, as opposed to changing the expectation themselves (Abdullah, Noor, & Wok, 2008; Hall, 1975; Hsia & Nasurdin, 2008; Raskin, 2006). Lo and colleagues (2003) stated that most of the women adapt "personal role redefinition" strategies to cope with the work-family conflict by employing a domestic helper. They tend to leave the childcare matter to the domestic helper who is helping them to eliminate a lot of the household and childcare pressures on them. Besides, Lo and colleagues (2003) also stated that getting support from the husband and discussing work-family problem can be very helpful as well. Sometimes, women have to put lower expectation for the children to help them in coping with family-work conflict. Lo and colleagues (2003) also highlighted that some of the women chose "structured role redefinition" as a mean of their coping strategy (Beutell & Greenhaus, 1982; Lo et al., 2003; Raskin, 2006). The groups of women are lowering their career expectation by trying not to meet all the demands at work. They are trying not to bring too much work home so that they can spend more time to communicate with their children.

The study conducted by Banwell (2006) also suggested that employer's actions to address workload distribution could provide employees who have experienced work-life conflict with a better balance (Duxbury & Higgins, 2001; Phipps & Prieto, 2016). The most highly educated workers, as well as those who are not compensated for overtime hour works, they give higher priority to a manageable workload in order to cope with work-life conflict (Banwell, 2006). According to the typology used by Lo and colleagues (2003), this type of coping strategies fall into personal role redefinition category.

Finally, Lo and colleagues (2003) indicate that the third coping strategies are relative role redefinition. The relative role redefinition is based on the assumption that "one's role demands are unchangeable and that the person's main task is to find ways to meet them" (Lo et al., 2003). This means that women have to meet all the demands of their role equally. In other words, they are expected to meet all the demands of being a worker, a spouse, and a mother (Beutell & Greenhaus, 1982; Hattar-Pollara et al., 2003; Kim, Park, & Park, 2008; Omori & Smith, 2004; Raskin, 2006). The behaviour that will be shown by this group of women is they are always demanding more of themselves in term of time and energy by giving up their sleeping hours, leisure time, personal time and social life (Boyles & Shibata, 2009). Therefore, it can be concluded that the types of coping strategies chose by women may affect the balance of women's lives. However, previous studies have not yet empirically proved that there is a significant difference in the impact of coping strategies on the relationship between work-family balance and well-being. Thus, the following proposition is suggested regarding the nature of these relationships.

Proposition 2: The types of coping strategies (i.e., structural role redefinition, personal role redefinition, relative role redefinition) may differently affect the influence of work-family balance and well-being.

#### **4.1 METHODOLOGY**

The study is initiated to design a questionnaire form. The questionnaire is developed in accordance with the objectives to be achieved at the end of the study. Each question is carefully designed to reduce as much as possible any biased answers from respondents. On the basis of the extensive review of the literature, a combination of existing validated measurements is used to develop the instrument for this study. Questionnaire forms will be distributed to the respondents via registered mail. Postal questionnaire method is chosen because it is typically cheaper compare to long-distance phone calls (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001).

Samples were married women who worked as a lecturer at a local university in Malaysia. This group is also selected as the population of interest by the other researchers (Aziz & Ramli, 2010; Chong, Huey, Li, Ying, & Kee, 2012; Ismail & Rasdi, 2006; Noor, 2006). We exclude married women who worked as a lecturer at a private university because it has different workloads and different salary scheme. The respondents will be selected using stratified random sampling technique as there are several groups in this study population, and only certain groups to be selected.

This study will use a self-administered questionnaire that refers to a data collection technique in which respondents read and answer the questionnaire, and thus give his responses without the presence of a trained interviewer (Hair, Black, Rabin, & Anderson, 2010). Findings from previous research proved that respondents are more likely to give honest answers when using self-administered questionnaire than answering face-to-face interview questions (Dillman, 2007). This method of data collection is also said to help reduce the tendency to social desirability bias that often occurs when sensitive data is requested (Dillman, 2007; Leedy & Ormrod, 2001).

Once the primary data is obtained, the process of data analysis will be carried out. The statistical methods that will be used in the pilot study are Cronbach's Alpha, descriptive statistics, and exploratory factor analysis. Meanwhile, the statistical methods that will be used in fieldwork study are the confirmatory factor analysis. After the unidimensionality, validity and reliability of the measurement items were carried out; the structural equation modeling will be performed using AMOS Graphics version 21.0.

## **4.2 Measures**

### **4.2.1 Well-Being**

Nine items will be used to measure well-being (Aryee et al., 2005; Balmforth & Gardner, 2006). In this section, the respondents will be asked to indicate their overall satisfaction towards their job, family and life using 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The samples of items for well-being are "I feel that I am happier with my family than most other people", "Most days, I am enthusiastic about my job" and "All things considered, I am satisfied with my family life."

### **4.2.2 The Fourfold Taxonomy of Work-Family Balance**

16-items for facilitation and conflict are adapted from a study done by (Tone Innstrand et al., 2009). Items will be written symmetrically to measure the two directions of influence (family-work and work-family) and two types of effect (conflict and facilitation). The respondents will be asked to indicate how do their family life influence their work life and vice versa using 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (always). The first four items will be used to measure work-to-family conflict (e.g., "My job makes me feel too tired to do the things that need attention at home") and next four items will be used to measure work-to-family facilitation (e.g., "Having a good day on my job makes me a better companion when I get home"). Another four items will be used to measure family-to-work conflict (e.g., "Stress at home makes me irritable at work") and the last four items will be used to measure family-to-work facilitation (e.g., "Talking with someone at home helps me to deal with problems at work").

### **4.2.3 Coping Strategies**

In this section, the respondents will be asked to indicate how they cope with their work-family conflict and family-work conflict. Coping strategies are classified into three types; 1) structural role redefinition, 2) personal role redefinition and 3) relative role redefinition. A total of sixteen items questions, which are adapted from a study done by Lo and colleagues (2003) will be used to measure coping strategies on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (always).

The samples of the item for Personal Role Redefinition coping strategy are "I put lower expectations at home", "I train a child to be independent" and "I leave all household work to maid".

Besides, the samples of the item for Structural Role Redefinitions coping strategy are "I look at work as a job, not a career", "I give priority only to urgent work" and "I put the lower expectation of career".

Meanwhile, the samples of the item for Relative Role Redefinition coping strategy are “I cut down on my lunch time”, “I work harder”, “I try to meet all demands”, and “I give up personal time”.

## **5.1 POTENTIAL CONTRIBUTORS**

This study has the potential to contribute at least in the following two aspects.

### **5.2 For Future Research**

This study may contribute significantly to the existing knowledge related to the impact of coping strategies on the fourfold taxonomy of work-family balance and well-being. This study may provide understanding on the extent to which coping strategies undertaken by married working women may influence work-family balance and well-being. The findings of this study are also expected to stimulate new research that may include the effects of coping strategies on other human resource management aspects. The originality of this study may also contribute to a formation of a new body of knowledge and enrich the literature sources in the field of strategic management that will benefit the academicians.

### **5.3 For Organisation**

As this study will highlight the coping strategies affecting work-family balance and well-being, thus this study may serve as a guideline for an organisation and the policy makers in formulating policies and planning that could improve the quality of well-being among married working women. This study's findings are important for organisations which are looking to engage in strategic management to recruit and retain married working mothers (Raskin, 2006).

In addition, the study's findings are also expected to help the decision makers to make sound decisions to increase the flexibility of married working women in their workplace, particularly in Malaysia. This study may provide recommendations for the Malaysian government to increase the government's role in supporting women to remain in the Malaysia's labour force which eventually may continuously contribute to the country's economic growth.

## **6.0 CONCLUSION**

In sum, the central contribution of this paper is to propose a conceptual model (Figure 1) to examine the relationship between work-family balance and well-being. Besides, this study also proposes the moderating variable, which is coping strategies that are expected to moderate the relationship between work-family balance and well-being. The propositions provide the mechanism to test whether the hypothesised model of this study fits the data that will be collected. The major theoretical, empirical and practical contributions of this study have been highlighted and discussed earlier.

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