CHAPTER FIVE

Discussion, Recommendations, and Conclusion

5.0 Introduction

This chapter will discuss the main responses to the research questions, as well as highlighting the results, the implications of these findings and how they contribute to the understanding of the difficulties Muslim working women experience in trying to cope with work-family conflict. This chapter is divided into three major sections. The first section will discuss the research findings. The second section will discuss the recommendations including recommendations for human resources management policies, manager's authority and employees. The last section will discuss implications for future research and the conclusion.

5.1 Discussion of the Research Findings

The purpose of the present research is to investigate work-family conflict among Muslim woman academicians in Malaysian institutions of higher learning and the role of religious coping strategies as moderator to work-family conflict and employees' well-being. For this purpose, a quantitative data technique was used in this research. The researcher also used a qualitative approach to obtain initial information and define the sources of the "work-family conflict" phenomenon, and coping strategies which were used. An in-depth interview which is a fundamental qualitative method was employed in the initial stage for data gathering. It allowed the researcher to explore the social realities behind the identified trends (Merriam, 1998). Interviewees were selected based on their expertise, position,

knowledge background including educational level and work experience. Furthermore, interviewees were selected based on those who could give enough information and provide the researcher with what he needed.

In this study, the researcher selected respondents from University of Malaya (UM), National University of Malaysia (UKM), Putra University of Malaysia (UPM) and International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM). These universities were selected for this study because of their similar characteristics, for example, their research university status and location in the Klang Valley. Furthermore, research universities were selected because they are likely to be involved in academic research, have more committed working lecturers, have better research in terms quality and quantity and have higher motivation among the research communities. Thus, they are more likely to experience more conflict and have more difficulty to balance multiple roles and responsibilities. The International Islamic University Malaysia was also selected because of its Islamic environment that practices Islamic values and principles.

One of the most critical barriers to women academicians' improvement is conflict between work demands and family roles. Muslim woman academicians usually do not seek administrative and leadership because of responsibilities for family and children. But in the case of Malaysia, most administrative and leadership positions in both public and private sectors have been filled up by women, showing that these multiple roles can contribute towards work and family life conflict. Therefore, for a deeper understanding of the sources of these barriers and the strategies used by Muslim working women to develop their well-being, the researcher used a qualitative data approach.

The purpose of qualitative data gathering in quantitative research is to obtain preliminary information before designing questionnaires, discover research problem, and gather opinions or main points about the phenomenon a researcher is studying, leading to the generation of insightful observations, and permitting a better understanding of the phenomenon. Five interviews were conducted with five Muslim woman academicians. These served as the pilot interview. However, the feedback from the supervisor revealed that the researcher had not probed sufficiently and gathered information that was irrelevant to the research. Thus, in the actual study, the researcher interviewed all the participants, bearing in mind the comments made by the supervisor.

Based on qualitative data gathering, most of the Muslim woman academicians were aware of the difficulties in balancing work demands and family roles. The work-family conflict appeared to be more acute for full-time Muslim woman academics who were equally engaged in bringing up children and family. The growing work pressures forced these academics to work longer hours and on weekends. This can be a source of conflict between work demands and family life. In this context, the interviews showed that most of the Muslim woman academicians experienced work-family conflict; some participants considered the main sources of these conflicts coming from long working hours, inflexible work schedule, office work overload, household work, issues related to children and husbands. However, some of them revealed that the problems faced by Muslim woman academicians stemmed from time management and prioritizing arrangement. It means some of the respondents used prioritizing arrangement as a strategy to cope with any problem although there were a lot of tasks that need to be done, they had to prioritize the most important ones and put the rest aside.

Domestic work remains central to women's time allocation even for those who work full-time. Domestic work pressures are accommodated within networks of mutual assistance involving friends, neighbours and predominantly family, and in the case of the middle-class (to which these academics belong) by acquiring domestic services. The ultimate responsibility for organizing and planning childcare and home tasks invariably seems to rest with women (Santos & Cabral-Cardoso, 2008). This is the general feeling of Muslim woman academicians in Malaysia. Nevertheless, many Muslim woman academicians in this study said that support from others is important for them to manage conflict between work demands and family responsibilities. Most of them acquired help from husbands, children, and housemaids or at work, from the manager, tutors, and friends. Work-family conflicts create some problems for family members, which can also affect work demands.

In psychological research, more studies suggest methods and ways how religiosity help people in dealing with life problems. One of the variables investigated by Meisenhelder and Chandler (2002), which was religious coping, correlated positively with mental health. This study is one of many to show a positive and moderate relationship between religiosity and well-being.

Religiosity is more difficult to define, and while many authors have offered some definitions, no one captures the full meaning of the word. Religiosity has been defined by Schafer (1996) as the "degree of participation in, or faithfulness to the beliefs and practices of a religion". Furthermore, religiosity is difficult to measure (Scutte & Hosch, 1996) because it has different definitions. For example Caird (1987) suggests three different

measures of religiosity such as cognitive which focuses on religious attitudes or beliefs; behavioral which evaluates church attendance or private prayer; and experiential which queries mystical experiences. Mookherjee (1993) also defines religiosity in terms of public or participatory which is based on church membership and the frequency of church attendance and private or devotional religious behaviour which is based on the frequency of prayer, Bible reading, and a cumulative score of devotional intensity. According to Koubek (1984) four actions are the most powerful predictors of various degrees of religious commitment. They are (1) being involved in congregational and personal religious activities, (2) praying to seek God's help, (3) seeking God's help in deciding right and wrong behaviour, and (4) having a strong interest in help provided by the congregation.

In Islam, religiosity has been defined by Al-Goaib (2003) as the commitment to the empirical and theoretical fundamentals of the religion through the fulfillment of Allah's rights, the protection of others rights, following Allah's orders, avoiding bad acts, and performing worship. Furthermore, religiosity in Islam is not measured only through the external component (physical action) but also built on the soundness and purity of heart, devoid of any corruption. In this study, most of the interviewees said that they turned to religiosity as a strategy to cope with conflicts between their work demands and family responsibilities. Religiosity is a common strategy for nearly all Muslims to cope with life problems. Moreover, coping strategies have been defined by Belal et al (2009) as "the ways an individual, group or organization use to minimize the effects of stress". To give help with coping, it must first be recognized that stress is a natural part of life. As such, stress cannot be avoided, but only minimized for a better response. Further, it is suggested that stress can vary within a person and from time to time (Crandall & Perrewe´, 1995). A

person's reaction to stress would very much depend on his attitude, and thus the feeling of stress differs among people (Mclean, 1979).

Similarly, Al-Munajjid (2006) explains some basic strategies to cope with strain from an Islamic perspective. The first strategy is to understand the truth of this world. This means the believer must know that this world is only temporary, that its luxuries are very few, and that the pleasures that exist in this world are not always perfect. It creates a little laughter as well as gives many reasons to cry; it gives a little but withholds far more. Furthermore, when a Muslim starts to worship Allah (SWT) and acknowledges he is very weak and needs Allah (SWT), he will understand the true meaning of this world and his life, and therefore correct all his mistakes and sins he has committed towards his manager, or family member, or to any employee at the workplace. Basically, he has submitted his life in the hands of Allah (SWT) and has declared himself to be weak and asks Allah (SWT) to help him, because only Allah (SWT) Himself will satisfy him, will make him very happy, will let him know how things work, and then He will guide him to deal with any life problem. The believer is only detained in this world, as the Prophet Mohamed (SAW) said "*This world is the prison of the believer and a paradise of the infidel (Kaafir)*".

The second strategy is remembering death. The Prophet (SAW) said remember frequently the one who will destroy all your pleasures: death, for there is no one who remembers death when is in straiten situations, but his situation will become more elaborate, and there is no one who remembers death during times of ease, but his situation will become straitened. Islam gives us ample opportunities to step back, relax, renovate and rejuvenate our minds. Following Islam not only guarantees rewards in life after death but success here in this

world too. Therefore, remembering death is an opportunity for any Muslim to renovate or correct methods and strategies to deal with life problems. Furthermore, remembering death is an opportunity to re-organize our ideas and deal positively and more effectively with life events.

The third strategy is the significance of creating the Hereafter one's main priority because the concerns of this world overpower and confuse people, but if a believer makes the Hereafter his main concern, Allah (SWT) will support him to focus and be determined. The fourth and last strategy is praying to Allah (SWT) as prayer or supplication is very beneficial, and includes both protection and treatment. According to Mujahid (2006), the feeling of stress can be contained if Muslims believe that God controls life and death. In addition, Muslims must always remember that life in this world is short and that continuous remembrance of Allah (SWT) by doing *Zikr* (refers to all forms of the remembrance of Allah (SWT), e.g. making supplication (Du'aa') and reading the Quran) will help in coping with all kinds of life problems such as stress, anxiety, and work-family conflict as stated in the Quran (13: 28) "without doubt in the remembrance (*Zikr*) of Allah do hearts find tranquility". Moreover, piety or *Taqua* means watching your actions as if you see Allah (SWT) because even if you do not see Him, He can see you. This high level of piety is called charity or *Ihsan*. The study by Al-Fahdawi and Al-Hawamdeh (2002) reveals that there is a significant relationship between *Al-Taqua* (piety) and job performance as well as job satisfaction. Al-Fahdawi and Al-Hawamdeh (2003) also found that there is a significant relationship between *Al-Taqua* and organizational loyalty building.

From the Islamic view, performing any job to seek Allah's pleasure is considered as worship. But, sincerity of intention is very important, i.e. it must be done for Him alone to seek His pleasure but to prevent is anger. Even ordinary daily tasks become forms of worship when performed with this in mind. Honesty, precision and conscientiousness in every deed are required by Allah (SWT) and rewarded by Him. Thus, faith and belief in Allah (SWT) will produce greater acceptance, tolerance, willingness and sacrifices to carry out a job. The believer will accept work conditions and family responsibilities such as long working hours, irregular work schedule, work overload, children matters, spouse's attitudes, multiple role problems, and even financial problems if he believes that performing the job will lead to receiving Allah's acceptance. So the negative feelings on work and family will differ among believers based on their level of religious commitment.

Besides turning to religion or to Allah (SWT), there are other strategies to cope with conflicts between work demands and family life. For example, Participant 1 used communication as a strategy to cope with work-family conflict which means should communicate with family members, and also try to cope by emulating successful people, whether non-Muslims, or Muslims. Furthermore, she tried to cope by working happily, very diligently, and honestly. Participant 4 also used prioritizing arrangement system as a strategy to cope with any conflict. Lastly getting social support is a coping strategy used by some participants such as Participant 1, Participant 3, Participant 4, and Participant 5.

In the following sections, the researcher will discuss the quantitative data that are statistically relevant. In this research, there are five major research questions:

1- Is there any effect of work-family demands and management/supervisory support on work-family conflict?

2- Does religious coping strategy moderate the relationship between work-family conflict and employees' well-being?

3- What is the relationship between religious coping strategies and well-being?

4- Are religious coping strategies more significantly related to work-family conflict?

5- To what extent is the effect of work-family conflict on employees' well-being?

5.1.1 The Influence of Work-Family Demands on Work-Family Conflict

Work-family demands are considered as sources of conflict between work demands and family responsibilities such as long working hours, office work overload, household work, and children matters. The results from this study support the relationship between work-family demands and work-family conflict. There is a positive and significant relationship between work-family demands and work-family conflict which states that when work-family demands increase, there is an expected increase in work-family conflict. The results support previous empirical studies. For example, high work-family conflict is positively related to long working hours (Burke et al., 1980; Frone et al., 1997; Grzywacz & Marks, 2000; Gutek et al., 1991; Pleck et al., 1980; Wallace, 1997), high work-family conflict is positively related to work schedule inflexibility (Ayee, 1992), and work overload and irregular work schedules have a strong positive relationship with work-family conflict (Burke & Greenglass, 2001; Simon et al., 2004).

Some studies have shown the number of children living at home as positively related to work-to-family conflict and family-to-work conflict (Netemeyer et al., 1996). Time spent on family activities has been found to be positively related to family-to-work conflict (Frone et al., 1997; Gutek, 1991). **The qualitative data** support these findings, for example, most of participants considered children matters as a very important issue, and also most of the participants cared for their children themselves by taking them to school, bringing them back and taking them to the mosque, spending more time with them when they are sick, taking leave to take them to the hospital or clinic, all of which affected their job. Working women with children younger than 12 years old experienced more work-to-family conflict and family-to-work conflict than working women with older children Higgins et al., 2004). In the current case, it is suggested that the university management deals with these problems by providing more support and flexibility to its employees, especially the women.

Beckman (1978) shows that working women consider parenting and career as conflicting, if not competing roles. The fundamental consequence of married working women is the fact that, long working hours on both spouses decrease the much needed time for completion of household tasks, causing greater fatigue due to energy depletion at work, and depriving them of the most essential element to the growth and strengthening of their relationship-time together. **The interviews** showed that most of participants experienced work-family conflict, and some participants considered the main sources of these conflicts came from long working hours, inflexible work schedule, office work overload, household work, issues related to children and husbands; however, some of them said that the problems were time management and prioritizing arrangement.

5.1.2 Supervisory/Management Support and Work-Family Conflict

This study's results reported a negative but significant relationship between supervisory/ management support and work-family conflict. Furthermore, the results suggested that when the supervisory/management support increases, then there is an expected decrease in the work-family conflict. Several studies found that supervisory support is an important source of social support in coping with problems related to work-family conflict (Anderson et al., 2002; Burke & Greenglas, 1999; Duxbury & Higgins, 1994; Thomas & Ganster, (1995). Thomas and Ganster (1995) also report that supervisors support has a role to reduce work-family conflict. Argyle (1999) indicates that there are three major sources of social support for employees: support from supervisors, support from colleagues, and support from family members especially from spouses.

The researcher in this study discusses supervisory support as an antecedent variable for work-family conflict. Some studies have found that supervisory support is an important variable and a source of social support in coping with problems related to work-family conflict (Anderson et al., 2002; Burke & Greenglas, 1999; Duxbury & Higgins, 1994; Thomas & Ganster, 1995). If the supervisor provides his employees flexibility even when unofficially supporting the case of absence as an organizational policy, employees can balance between work demands and family roles more easily. In this study, the supervisory support is divided into two components: instrumental and emotional support (Frone et al., 1997). Emotional supervisory support refers to more listening, and understanding, sensitivity toward the issues related to work-family conflict, and real anxiety for the well-being of the employee and his family (Frone et al., 1997), and instrumental supervisory support refers to direct advice and assistance provided with the intent of helping an

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employee meet his family responsibilities (Frone et al., 1997). Supportive supervisors are thus instrumental in making and interpreting organization's work-family policies (Eby et al., 2002).

For management support, Magnini (2009) reports that without suitable and proper management, work-family conflict can create a series of unfavourable issues, including decreased employee performance, reduced job satisfaction, high absenteeism, and high turnover. **The qualitative data** in this study support this result, most of participants did not consider work schedule the source of conflict between work demands and family life because their work schedule was very flexible and the university management was very supportive of academic staff. However, some of them said that sometimes their work schedule was not flexible, thus creating some problems to balance their work demands and family life.

5.1.3 The Impact of Work-Family Conflict on Muslim Working Women's Well-Being

This study found that work-to-family and family-to-work had direct influence on the Muslim working women's well-being. Work-to-family and family-to-work conflict are important stressors that can lead to negative consequences for an individual's well-being. The results of this study revealed a negative and significant relationship between work-family conflict and well-being and recommended that for each unit increase in the work-family conflict, there was an expected decrease in the well-being of these academicians. Moreover, this research results showed that those women who experienced higher degrees of work-family conflict reported lower levels of job satisfaction, family satisfaction and psychological and physical well-being. The findings supported research hypotheses

regarding the outcomes of work-family conflict. In line with Frone et al.'s (1997) theory, work responsibilities interfered with family life more than family responsibilities interfered with work. Therefore, Muslim working women in this study experienced work-to-family conflict which was related to lower satisfaction with job and family and lower well-being.

Work-family conflict, therefore, is clearly linked to a variety of adverse outcomes. Rosin and Korabik (2002) in a sample of 945 employees in varied occupations found that employees with lower degrees of work-family conflict experienced lower role overload and job-induced tension, less perceived stress and job turnover, higher job satisfaction and family satisfaction. Several studies have also identified relationships between work-family conflict and well-being in non-work-related domains, with different work-life mechanisms driving different outcomes. For example, Frone (1997) found that family-to-work spillover is related to depression and poor physical health, while work-to-family spillover is more closely associated with health behaviours such as alcohol use. Several researchers have found a strong relationship between work-family conflict and general psychological health and well-being. In two studies, Parasuraman et al (1992, 1996) define general life stress as feelings of upset, frustration, or feeling tense, and found work-family conflict to be significantly related to these feelings of general stress.

Chen (2004), in a sample of 127 women managers in Taipei banks, found that the women experienced high role conflict which contributed to lower job satisfaction. Also as mentioned earlier, Rosin and Korabik (2002) found that employees with lower degrees of work-family conflict experience lower role overload and job-induced tension, less perceived stress and job turnover, higher job and family satisfaction, and fewer physical

symptoms. Hence, the findings provide preliminary evidence for the view that work-family conflict has negative impacts on individuals' well-being.

The link of work-family conflict to well-being has taken three different forms in previous studies. Based on the traditional approach used work-family conflict is considered as an antecedent of psychological strain, because it is thought to reason a state in which sources of an individual are threatened and exhausted, leading to a possible decrease in well-being (e.g. Eby, Casper, Lockwood, Bordeaux, & Brinley, 2005; Grandey & Cropanzano, 1999; Voydanoff, 2002). Work-family conflict has been related to reduced satisfactions and lower levels of psychological well-being (e.g., Frone, Russell, & Cooper, 1992; Hughes & Galinsky, 1994; Kinnunen & Mauno, 1998; Kossek & Ozeki, 1998; Thomas & Ganster, 1995). While WIF conflict is more related to work-related outcomes such as job satisfaction and burnout (e.g., Bacharach, Bamberger, & Conley, 1991; Burke, 1988; Gignac, Kelloway, & Gottlieb, 1996), FIW conflict is associated more with measures of psychological distress (Frone, Russell, & Cooper, 1992; Klitzman, House, Israel, & Mero, 1990). A recent meta-analysis by Kossek and Ozeki (1998) has also shown WIF conflict to have a stronger relationship with job and life satisfactions than does FIW conflict.

5.1.4 The Impact of Work-Family Demands on Well-Being

This research results uncovered that these was no significant relationship between work-family demands and well-being. Therefore, work-family demands which are measured by long working hours, work overload, irregular work schedule, number of children and their ages, and time spent with family activities are considered as sources of work-family

conflict that might influence the well-being of Muslim working women with family responsibilities.

Research on work-family conflict found that this variable influences a variety of outcomes, including psychological well-being, such as depression, marital satisfaction and life satisfaction (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Gutek et al., 1991; Voydanoff, 1988), job satisfaction, organizational commitment, burnout, and turnover (Burke, 1988; Frone et al., 1992; Greenhaus, 1988; Pleck et al., 1980). Allen et al. (2000) link worked-family conflict to three categories of outcomes: work-related (e.g. job satisfaction), non-work-related (e.g. life satisfaction), and stress-related (e.g. depression). Several studies have supported the outlook that long working hours are negatively related to personal and family well-being (Cooper, 2000; Charlesworth, et al., 2002; Dawson, McCulloch & Baker, 2001; Pocock, 2003; Glezer and Wolcott, 1999). However, as Spurgeon, Harrington & Cooper (1997) note, most of the research fail to differentiate between long working hours and change work, which can be very disruptive, and between long working hours and work overload, which may be both highly stressful and an essential reason for long working hours. Barnett (1998) comes to similar conclusions in her literature review. She concludes that there is some evidence that negative impact of long working hours on well-being may be restricted to very long hours.

Gordon and Whelan (2004) add that the support provided by husbands and partners provides a critical complement to family-friendly programme offered by many organizations to facilitate the balancing of work and family demands and results in greater well-being of women. Many studies have in fact shown work-family conflict to mediate

the stress-strain relationship, acting as a mechanism through which work and family demands influence well-being (e.g. Eby, Casper, Lockwood, Bordeaux, & Brinely, 2005; Frone et al., 1997; Noor, 2003). The number of children has also been associated with increased work and family demands, leading to higher levels of work-family conflict (e.g. Noor, 1994), and consequently, to reduced well-being (e.g. Kinnunen & Mauno, 1998).

In this context, the **interviews** showed that most of Muslim woman academicians experienced work-family conflict, which some participants considered the main sources of these conflicts as coming from long working hours, inflexible work schedule, office work overload, household work, issues related to children and husbands. However, some of them said that the problems were time management and prioritizing arrangement.

5.1.5 Religious Coping Strategies and Work-Family Conflict

The results of this study showed that these were no significant relationship between religious coping strategies and work-family conflict. Several studies support this result, for example Achour and Boerhannoeddin (2011) found that religious coping strategies were negatively related to work-family conflict and work-family demands; these variables are thus negatively related to well-being. Work-family conflict is negatively related to religious coping strategies, the relationship is very weak and not significant, which tells us that there is no direct influence of religious coping strategies on work-family conflict. Women frequently use religious coping strategies when experiencing work-to-family conflict.

Religiosity can be a common strategy to cope with conflicts between work demands and family responsibilities for many Muslims; some researchers have addressed some life

problems from the Islamic perspective such as Al-Munajjid (2006) who reported in his study that there are four Islamic coping strategies to cope with stress; the first strategy is understanding the reality of this world, the second strategy is the importance of making the Hereafter one's main concern, the third strategy is by remembering death, and the last strategy is praying to Allah (SWT) as *Du'aa'* (prayer or supplication) which is very beneficial, and includes both protection and treatment. Rafik (2009) also found seven strategies to cope with life problems such as faith (*Iman*), mediation and relaxation (*Fiker*), remembrance (*Ziker*), imagination, praying, patience (*Sabar*) and its rewards, and the last strategy is thankful to Allah (*Shukar*) as Allah loves those who do *Shukar*.

Religiosity is an important factor to consider in trying understanding work-family and more generally work-non-work balance because one's involvement in religiosity can influence the way one governs his professional and family life. To many people, religiosity is a way of thinking (Pargament, 1997: 36). Religious involvement can provide people with a framework for living, applicable to the widest range of human experiences (Pargament, 1997: 132). It can also serve as an important source of moral frameworks that shape understanding of ideal family arrangements (Ammons & Edgell, 2007). Furthermore, religiosity or religion provides its followers with ways to come to terms with tragedy, suffering, and the most significant issues in life (Pargament, 1997: 3). In turn religion provides individuals with methods to deal with conflicts in life domains. Those who are involved in religion bring a reservoir of religious resources with them when they are faced with stressful issues in life (Pargament, 1997), such as times of imbalance between work and family. However, if the quality of this involvement is negative it could lead one to be drained of these resources.

Religion provides individuals with guidance about where to go and how to get there during stressful periods in life (Pargament, 1997: 5). Religious involvement also offers a formal mechanism that can provide an individual with a positive social network and opportunities for enhancing transferable skills and opportunities (i.e., increased inter-role facilitation). The religious world helps people to understand their personal limitations and encourages them to go beyond themselves for solutions (Pargament, 1997). Going beyond oneself for solutions will allow one to utilize the resources of social support. Most of the religion's power lies in its ability to assess negative situations from an alternative vantage point, and in turn crises become an opportunity for closeness with God (Pargament, 1997). Pargament, (1997: 173) also states that "Religion places negative events in a positive sacred context without denying or distorting the fact that a fundamental change has taken place.

5.1.6 The Moderating Effect of Religious Coping Strategies on the Relationship between Work-Family Conflict and Well-Being

The second aim of the study is to examine the moderating effect of religious coping strategies on the relationship between work-family conflict and well-being. The benefits of religious coping strategies support work-family conflict and outcome variables were supported in this study. This research found that supportive religious coping strategies were negatively associated with work-family conflict but positively related to job, family and life satisfaction. Furthermore, results of this research discovered that those who had more religiosity would experience greater well-being and did not reduce levels of work-family conflict. This study suggested that supportive religious coping strategies would help Muslim working women to balance their work demands and family life, and achieve more well-being. The result in Table 5.25 shows the model is statistically significant; this result

supported the presence of a moderating effect, or in other words, the moderating effect of religious coping strategies explains 24.7% of the variance in well-being.

Several studies have examined the relationship between work-family conflict and an individual's general well-being (Chou, 2004; Huang, 2005). Furthermore, the study examined indirect effect of religious coping strategies as a moderator in the relationship between work-family conflict and employees' well-being. In other words, Muslim working women is well-being would not emerge from work-family conflict except among those who had more religiosity. If the Muslim woman academicians had limited religiosity, then work-family conflict would affect their well-being. The results revealed that, religious coping strategies strengthened the relationship between work-family conflict and well-being; thus religious coping strategies play an important role, as a moderator to work-family conflict and in developing the well-being of Muslim working woman academicians. In the end, the moderating effect of religious coping strategies on the relationship between work-family conflict and Muslim working women well-being was considered statistically significant.

Religious coping strategy is a very important factor and more effective with stressful events and daily problems that an individual cannot control. As the researcher mentioned earlier, religious coping strategies consist of elements of emotion-focused coping strategies and problem-focused coping strategies which also include social support as a strategy to cope with the pressures by giving advice, assistance, subsidies, emotional support and justifying the perceptions of the individual and his actions. The same thing is experienced with religious coping strategies, which include more practice of prayers and religious worship that focus on emotion. Also the qualitative data showed that most of the participants said

that they turn to religion or religiosity as a strategy to cope with conflicts between work demands and family responsibilities. Some of them turn to Allah (SWT) as one strategy to cope with conflict between work demands and family responsibilities and some of them turn to Allah (SWT) as the first or last strategy to cope with any conflict.

5.1.7 Religious Coping Strategies and Well-Being

The third objective of this study is to examine whether religious coping strategies have direct relationship on well-being. Religious coping strategies are the ways an individual, group or organization use to minimize the effects of stress (Belal et al., 2009). Coping strategy is defined as "any activity, in thought or deed, which has its goal of the removal or modification of a threat to identity" (Breakwell, 1986: 78). The results of this study showed a positive and significant relationship between religious coping strategies and well-being. The results suggested that for each unit increase in the religious coping strategies, there is an expected increase in the well-being. Considered in this context, religious coping strategies are positively associated with well-being as well as life satisfaction, job satisfaction, and family satisfaction.

Several previous studies have reported that religious coping strategies are positively related to well-being. Noor (2008) found that Islam, like all other religions, is associated with well-being, because it provides guidance on how to live one's life, offers comfort and support in good and bad times, and gives meaning and identity to individuals. Since centuries ago Muslims have used reliance on God as a coping strategy to deal with challenging events of life to achieve well-being (Al-Ghazzali, 2001). The most important thing for all Muslim

working women is the individual's natural relationship with their creator and their reliance on Allah (SWT). Some empirical studies have demonstrated the significance of reliance on God as a coping strategy in the reduction of anxiety, depression, and restitution of hope (Ghobari, 2004). The religiosity in the Muslim society comprises a much broader concept as stated by the Prophet (May peace be upon him), "*Iman* (faith) has over seventy branches, and modesty is a branch of *Iman*". (Sahih Muslim, 1: 55).

Many strategies to cope with life problems have been applied in western societies such as imagination, communication, social support and religiosity. Most of these strategies to cope with daily problems are rooted in Islamic spirituality and different Islamic forms of worship, 'Ibadatat, which can be - if performed in the correct way - considered as a good tool for coping with life's stresses (Tahar, 2006). For example, Kandaswamy, (2007) mention that stress can be reduced using the following Islamic techniques or Islamic coping strategies: Dua, Sabar, Uboodiah, Remembering Death, Zikr, Tawakkul, and Tilawat-ul-Quran. Anthar (2007) publishes the effects of listening to Quranic recitation on physiological parameters, for example, the heart rate, the blood pressure and the muscle tension and reports improvement in all, irrespective of whether the listener is a Muslim or non-Muslim, Arab or non-Arab. As mentioned before, the main difference of coping strategies between Western and Islamic perspective is the emphasis among individual's relationship with his/her Creator and their reliance on Allah (God); some empirical studies have demonstrated the significance of reliance on God as a coping strategy in the reduction of anxiety, depression, and restitution of hope. This difference displays clearly only in religious coping strategies, because these strategies relate to religion, beliefs and ethics values.

The qualitative data supported these findings and reported that besides turning to religion or to Allah (SWT), there are other strategies to cope with conflicts between work demands and family life. For example, Participant 1 used communication as a coping strategy to cope with work-family conflict which means she would communicate with family members, and she also tried to cope by emulating successful people, whether non-Muslim, or Muslims, furthermore she tried to cope by working happily, very diligently, and honestly. Participant 4 also used prioritizing arrangement system as a strategy to cope with any conflict. Lastly getting social support is a strategy to cope used by some participants such as Participant 1, Participant 3, Participant 4, and Participant 5.

5.2 Recommendation

The purpose of this study is to examine the role of religious coping strategies and its influence on the relationship of Muslim working women's experience of work-family conflict and their well-being. In this section, the main recommendations of this research including human resource management, managers' authority, and for employees will be discussed. Lastly, implications for future research and conclusion will be also discussed.

6.2.1   Recommendations for Human Resource Management Policies

The university management should assist Muslim woman academics to develop their potential in performing their duties by allowing them flexibility and independence in working. Besides, the university management should promote the image of the staff as deserving respect. Furthermore, the university management should see to the needs and wants of the Muslim women academics by discussing with the human resource department

about increasing the well-being benefits, improving the social status of these academicians, and also creating a special department for woman and family issues called the department of Woman and Family's Affairs with the aims to improve their social well-being, and provide them with knowledge and the latest skills, methods, techniques, and strategies to cope with all kinds of family life problems.

6.2.2 Recommendations for Managers' Authority

The officers and managers should organize seminars and workshops to help Muslim woman academicians to cope with work-family conflict, reduce the feeling of strain, and also to update their skills and knowledge. Furthermore, they should continually instill awareness in Muslim woman academicians towards the importance of religious coping strategies and social support especially from managers, family and close friends and influence them to seek support whenever needed.

5.2.3 Some Advices for Employees

All Muslim working women at the workplace should:

Read the Holy Qur'an daily and try to understand it as much as possible because the Qur'an supports and motivates the believers on how to cope with all kinds of life problems. Furthermore, they will feel better about solving their problems. The Quran should be read in the office, when is walking, read it out loud or in a low voice, or listen to it when driving a car. When they are reading and listening to the Quran will help refresh their hearts and their minds, and then thy will feel fresh and very satisfied. Allah (SWT)

says: "*And verily We make it easy as learning the Koran, but is there any who take heed*" (Surat Qomar: 22).

They should also make *Dua*, and be assured of being answered, and know that Allah (SWT) does not answer a *Dua* from a careless heart which does not concentrate; make *Dua* and ask Allah (SWT) for His help to solve their problems. Moreover, they ask help from Allah (SWT), He will help them to overcome any obstacle, conflict or problem. They should face their troubles with *Taqwa*, *Salat*, and *Dua*, and Allah (SWT) will satisfy them and will give them more happiness. But, when they make supplication, they should supplicate with confidence. Prophet Mohammed (peace be upon him) also said: "*Allah is angry with those who do not ask Him for anything*" (Source: Tirmidhi).

Pray to Allah (SWT), and ask Him for His help, because prayer is the key and/or way to solve all kinds of life problems. Furthermore, when they pray, they will feel as though their problems have been resolved somehow because the prayer makes them feel very happy and satisfied. Furthermore, the prayer also makes them feel extreme connection with the controlling power of this world (Allah) and that from Him they receive maximum support (Tahar, 2006). Allah (SWT) says: "*O ye who believe! Seek help with patient perseverance and prayer: for Allah is with those who patiently persevere*. (Surat Al-Baqarah 2: 153).

Always ask for Allah's forgiveness; because Allah (SWT) knows when they may commit sin without being aware of it. If they ask for Allah's forgiveness, Allah (SWT) will provide by ways, methods, and strategies which help them to reduce stress, anxiety, worries, and all kinds of work-family conflicts. Abdullah Ibn Abbas (May Allah be

pleased with them) said in Sunan Abu Dawood: Prophet Mohammed (peace be upon him) said: "*If anyone continually asks pardon, Allah (SWT) will provide for him a way out of every distress, and a relief from every anxiety, and will appoint for him from where he did not reckon*".

Put their trust in Allah (SWT); the true believer always puts his trust in Allah (SWT). Furthermore, putting ones trust in Allah (SWT) is a very important part of a Muslims faith and any who wants to follow Allah's guidance. If anyone has complete Faith and Trust in Allah (SWT), then there is nothing in life that is really difficult, and they can forget their worries. If they find it hard to believe, still they should believe that Allah (SWT) will place them in a situation, whereby, they are shown the Right Path! Allah (SWT) says: "*say: nothing shall ever happen to us except what Allah has ordained for us. He is our lord, helper, protector; and in Allah let the believers put their trust.*" (Surat at-Tauba: 51).

When one feels her heart is very heavy with life pressures and its problems, she must turn to Allah (SWT) and do her remembrance (*Ziker*) by herself. Remembrance (*Ziker*) refers all kinds of remembrance of Allah (SWT). Also, when she does remembrance of Allah (SWT); Allah (SWT) can change her situation and give her the patience to deal with her problems and difficulties. Allah (SWT) says: "*Those who believe and their hearts find satisfaction in the remembrance of Allah: By remembering Allah, truly satisfaction comes to the heart*" (Surat Ar-Ra`d 13:28). When one remembers Allah (SWT) at any time, any place, and then Allah (SWT) will not forget him; will give him what he wants, will support him to deal with his problems.

5.2.3 Implications and Recommendations for Future Research

Future research should investigate the effects of work-family conflict and the role of religious coping strategies in improving employees' well-being, as well as reducing conflict between work demands and family roles; managers and supervisors with university management are recommended to change their policies and plans for the employees' family issues. Also employees are recommended to conduct more religious worship that focuses on emotion, and more practice of prayers to increase their well-being, which might efficiently balance their roles in work and family domains. Thus, Muslim working women may lead a better and more successful life as a wife, mother and worker. The following are some proposed recommendations for future research:

- This research should be repeated in public and private universities and results can be compared.

- There are some factors such as organizational culture and climate, social support, flexibilities, and family-friendly policies related to work-family issues that should also be taken into account in future research.

- The current study examines only one moderating variable, namely religious coping strategies between work-family conflict and employees' well-being. Social support as a moderating variable with religious coping strategies should be investigated in future research to check whether they are efficient in the link between work-family conflict and well-being.

- The current research is a study on woman academicians' well-being, perceived social support and religious coping strategies. It is very important to achieve the objective measures of work-family demands, work-family conflict, and support, and to understand the relationship among them. It is better to include these variables in future research.

- The current study only used a quantitative technique to address the problems of work-family issues; future research should use a qualitative design to give more details about work-family conflict phenomenon.

- Future research should use direct interpretation and semi-structured interviews to allow the researcher to gain a deeper insight into the phenomenon being studied.

- Future research should study more on how to use religiosity as a coping strategy to cope with work-family problems, how to improve employees' well-being, how to select the best strategy to cope with conflict between work demands and family roles to obtain the best productivity and more satisfaction with job, family and life.

5.3 Conclusion

In general, this research has focused on work-family conflict among Muslim woman academicians in Malaysian institutions of higher learning. The current study highlights the importance of religious coping strategies in reducing the conflict between work demands and family responsibilities and to obtain the Muslim working women's well-being. Both work-family demands and work-family conflict were found to have significant and

negative correlations with well-being. Also both supervisory/management support and religious coping strategies were found to have a significant and positive relationship with well-being. In view of these findings, the religious coping strategies play a very important role, as moderator of work-family conflict and in developing and improving well-being in Muslim working women. Thus religious coping strategies have a moderating role of work-family conflict to Muslim working women's well-being.

The contribution of this research is not limited in providing empirical evidence; this research could also enhance the understanding of how to implement religious coping strategies in life. This study suggests that supervisory/management support (more flexibility) would help Muslim woman academicians to create a balance between their work demands and family responsibilities, and consequently, improve their well-being. This study also suggests lifting some responsibilities from staff that have full schedule working hours and distribute the workload among them evenly to reduce heavy work overload.

To deal with the work-family conflict, more coping mechanisms should be utilized such as communication and social support from family, close friends and significant others. The findings suggest that religious coping is a common strategy for all Muslim working women to cope with work-family conflict. Results showed that turning to religion or religiosity through faith (*Iman*), forgiveness, *Dua*, read the Holy Quran, trust in Allah (SWT), starting your day by positive ideas, remembrance (*Ziker*), praying, *Sabar* and *Shukar* are effective coping mechanisms to cope with work-family conflict.