

# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **1.0 Research Background**

Although Organizational Behavioral Science has been around for at least thirty years and we are now in the new millennium, there are still significant human problems faced by many organizations across the industries. Human resource experts are still grappling with employee-related problems contributing to the lower performance level. In the past decades, managers were preoccupied with restructuring their organizations to improve employee's performance and enhancing their productivity to meet the competitive challenges in the international marketplace and quality expectations of customers (Luthans, 2005). Corporate organizations are spending billions of dollars to enhance the value of human capital enabling them to attain the organizational objectives and targets established by the organization. However, in fact, experts estimate that 70 percent of American workers at big companies are unhappy with their jobs. The researchers could not be sure whether research findings from Western countries could be generalized to many other regions of the world that different cultural traditions, religions, ideologies, and family structures (Yu, 2007). Some researchers who have considered the problem believe that Asian people will view work and family differently because of cultural differences. Consequently, researchers and scholars have begun to investigate work-family issues from different perspectives.

For that reason, Malaysia is one instance of Asian countries that about 70% of working women at workplace are married or have families of their own, which contribute to the

increasing number of families with dual-work (Jamilah et al., 2006; PSD, 2010). Furthermore, since few decades the participation of women, including married women, in the labour force steadily increased until the mid 1990's. Although there was a reduction of women's participation in the labour market due to the economic downturn in 1997, the percentage of married working women (61.8%) in 1995 increased to 63.9% in 2005, and substantial proportion of the women labour force were in the production occupation in the manufacturing sector (Department of Statistics, Malaysia, 2006). As married couples, the wisdom of balancing between the roles at home and at work is important to ensure the well being of the family (Sabitha, 2009). Moreover, women are increasingly occupying both work and family roles simultaneously, they are more likely to experience inter-role conflict involving incompatible demands from the work and family domains (Aminah, 2007).

In this connection, women's roles in society have begun to change, especially with the emergence of the women's movement, for example, recently, women's labor force participation in Malaysia has rapidly increased to reach (about 11.4 million) [Eighth Malaysia Plan, 2000]. Despite these changes, women are still faced with some obstacles. The reason why these obstacles still exist is that men see parenting as a typical prerogative of women, while considering the pursuit of career under the jurisdiction of men (Lawlor, 1994; Schwartz, 1989).

Working women, while facing "stressors" similar to working men have often supplementary ones not experienced by working men. The stress generally faced by those who work comes from administrative strategies and policies, organizational design

and structure, working conditions and organizational processes, women face additional and different stressors (Robbins, 1998; Luthans, 1992). These stressors comprise work-family conflict, social isolation and discrimination (Long, 1995; Evetts, 1994; Marshall, 1995). In the majority of the western countries, teaching task is considered a female profession, particularly in elementary level (Ruijs, 1993). However, management, and university teaching positions are reserved for males (Ruijs, 1993; p.535).

In developed countries, some studies related to professional working women holding administrative and non-managerial positions are plentiful (Marshall, 1995; Tanton, 1994; Moen, 1992; Evetts, 1994), also women's organizational promotions are less than those of men, and men are more expected to be promoted to higher managerial levels (Lyness and Schrader, 2006). Managers and business leaders however, recognize the need for strengthening family life because the ability to balance work and family roles greatly affects the productivity of employees and is considered to be a challenge for both women and men in the 21st century workforce (Eby et al., 2005). During the past two decades, there has been an increasing interest in the conflicting demands of work and family roles, and the effect of that conflict on both organizations and employees (Allen et al. 2000; Greenhaus & Powell, 2006).

Based on a literature review, most employees attempt to use different strategies to cope with conflicting family roles and work demands, and there are many researchers interested in the study of methods dealing with work-family issues in a variety of environments and their relationship to some variables. Lazarus and Folkman (1988) found social support, transition from subject, self-control and plans of problem-solving

as a coping strategy to deal with pressing conditions. In addition, some previous studies found that religiosity or religious coping strategies play an important role in reducing and buffering the effect of job stressors in persons; for example, Kasberger's (2002) study showed that religious coping strategies reduced the amount of stress. Furthermore, there is an important role of religious coping as a moderator variable in modifying the impact of stressor on job stress (Safaria, 2010).

Coping strategies consisting of elements of emotion-focused coping strategies and problem-focused coping strategies also include social support as a strategy to cope with the pressures by including 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. A religious coping strategy is more important and effective with stressful events that an individual cannot control (Taha & Salama, 2006). Then, the purpose of this study is to examine the role of religious coping strategies in increase well-being of Muslim women academicians in Malaysian higher learning institutions.

### **1.1 Problem Statement**

Many human resource activities have been undertaken in developed economies with the expectation that it will simultaneously address the problem of job satisfaction, morale, performance and productivity. Unfortunately, however, many human resource regimes have given rise to work-life conflicts resulting in further degradation. Work-family conflict is one of the reason that has resulted in the decline of productivity, higher rates of absenteeism, higher turnover, lower morale, lower job satisfaction, family satisfaction

and a decrease in organizational commitment (Greenhaus, Collins, Singh & Parasuraman, 1997; Kinnunen, Geurts & Mauno, 2004; Lyness & Thompon, 1997; Netemeyer, Boles & McMurrian, 1996; Noor, 2002). According to Duxbury and Higgins (2001) during the 1990's there was a greater proportion of workers in Canada who were experiencing greater difficulty in balancing their role as employees, parents, spouses and, etc...

Empirical studies show that availability of work-life policies do not necessarily reduce work-life conflict, retention and absenteeism (Hudson, 2005; Mc Donald *et al.*, 2005). On the contrary it increases the number of interactions between work and family domains (Gupta & Jenkins, 1985). It also multiplies roles and responsibilities and work-family conflict on the shoulders of women in particular, additionally it increases the number of part-time and casual workers, reduces the number of employees engaged in full-time permanent employment. Moreover, it increases the number of hours spent at work. In connection to this, recent changes made at industrial relations legislation level, constituting of changes to the nature of work in Australia have impacted on work-family conflict (Watson *et al.*, 2003; Baird, Ellem and Page, 2006)

The number of women in the workforce has increased tremendously and will continue to rise at a high rate. The female labor force participation rate has risen from 44.7% in 2000 to 46.1% in 2006 in Malaysia (Ministry of Human Resource, 2006). Married women with children have also increased their hours of work substantially-from 869 hours in 1979 to an average of 1,255 hours annually in 2000, an increase that is equivalent to working ten additional weeks at full-time hours (Mishel, Bernstein, and

Boushey, 2003). At the individual level, tensions in the work-family interface have been adjudged to affect, *inter alia*, stress, well-being, reduced spousal and parental effectiveness, decreased life satisfaction and increased psychologically threatening activities (Noreen *et al.*, 2008).

Behavioral outcomes of both directions of conflict include reduced work effort, reduced performance, and increased absenteeism and turnover (Anderson, Coffey, & Byerly, 2002; Aryee, 1992; Frone, Yardley, and Markel, 1997; Greenhaus, Collins, Singh, and Parasuraman, 1997; Wayne, Musisca, and Fleeson, 2004). Family demands add more stress preoccupations of women who work outside their home. Caring for a disabled child, or being responsible for an elderly relative all increase stress on women in the workforce (Akabas, 1988). While these changes are occurring, businesses are experiencing rapid changes. There has been an increased global competition that focuses on customer service and technological advances has made access to work increased have contributed to amplifying stress on both employees and employers in this highly competitive business world (Parasuraman & Greenhaus, 1997).

In 2000, the female labor force stood at 44.5%, lower than the 1995 figure (“Eighth Malaysia Plan”). For women combining work and family, work-family conflict is inevitable because society places extreme importance on women’s family role, and many are likely to feel guilty if they do not attend properly to their home-related responsibilities. At the same time, however, women must also be committed to their work (Noor, 1999). Therefore, work–family conflict may be negatively associated with well-being for women working outside the home. Levels of organizational effects from

work-family conflict include increased of absenteeism, lower productivity, and higher turnover (Thomas & Ganster, 1995; Fernandez, 1986).

Research on work-family conflict and its negative impacts on employees have now been explored extensively in Western industrialized countries (Allen, Herst, Bruck & Sutton, 2000). Despite strong indications that work and family issues are increasingly important phenomena in Asian countries, studies of work-family conflict in Asia are rare (Luk, 2001; Yang, Choi & Zou, 2000; Spector, Sanchez, Oi Ling Siu, Salgado & Jianhong, 2004). However, those few researchers who have considered the problem believe that Asian people view work and family differently because of cultural differences. Some research results between Western and Asian countries suggest that more research is needed to investigate work-family conflict and its impact on different groups and settings, because work and family issues are strongly related to cultural beliefs, values and norms (Lobel, 1991). As more and more Asian women enter the workforce, the effect of work-family conflict on Asian working women's satisfaction has become very vital.

In the context of Malaysia, some studies exploring the phenomenon of work-life conflict have been reported (Ahmad, 1996; Noor, 2002; Komarraju, 2006). However, these studies have focused on the work-family conflict outcomes as an alternative vis-vis their antecedents. As such, it remains unclear whether the findings on the antecedents of work-family conflict overseas are applicable to Malaysia. A study of the associations among work-family conflict, job satisfaction, family satisfaction and life satisfaction among married professional Malaysian women found that work-family conflict was vital

to the firms where these women work, as well as to the women themselves. In Malaysia the problem of striking a balance between work demands and family roles is a very hot issue to address. According to the Ninth Malaysian Plan 2006 to 2010, the working women labor force participation rate increased from 44.7% in 2000 to 45.7% in 2005 (The Economic Planning Unit 2006).

Some researchers have shown the conflict between work demands and family responsibilities as affecting well-being (Frone, Russell, and Cooper, 1992; Greenhaus & Parasuraman, 1999; Kinnunen & Mauno, 1998). Many researchers also have examined work-family conflict as a mediator of relationship between stress of work and family roles and individual well-being (e.g., Frone *et al.*, 1992; Frone, Yardley, and Markel, 1997). Noor (2003) has proposed and tested an exploratory model using demographic variables, personality, and roles as predictors of well-being, with work-family conflict acting as a mediator or an intervening variable between these sets of predictors and well-being. Besides this, her study is very important because it incorporates personality variables in predictors of women's well-being. Although previous researchers (e.g., Amatea and Fong, 1991) have shown that the personal resources that women bring with them in their roles are crucial, Noor's (2003) study was one of the few studies that have directly tested personality variables within their frameworks. Noor's (2003) results showed that although work-related variables explain the most variance in the prediction of work-interfering-with-family (WIF) conflict and job satisfaction, personality variables accounted for the most variance in the prediction of family-interfering-with-work (FIW) conflict.



Aminah et al. (2009) conduct a study on work-family conflict among single mother employees and its antecedents including dispositional (locus of control and perfectionism), job (role overload, role conflict and job flexibility) and organizational (supervisor support) factors. This study was applied on 159 Malaysian single mother employees using self-administered questionnaires. The findings of the study indicated that, 66% of the single mother employees experienced moderate to high levels of work-family conflict.

Nowadays, in many developed and developing countries working men and women experience problems of balancing their work and family domains (Joplin, Shaffer, Francesco & Lau, 2003). However, the impact of multiple roles at work and in family arenas may be differently culture-bound in different countries. As the modern world begins the third millennium, the significance of work and family is clearly visible in the daily challenges faced by employed parents who are playing work and family roles (Fallon, 1997; Zedeck & Mosier, 1990).

Previous studies have shown that workload, long working hours, irregular work schedule, number and age of children and time spent with family activities were major sources of conflict between work demands and family responsibilities (Burke & Greenglass, 2001; Simon et al., 2004; Netemeyer et al., 1996; Frone et al., 1997., Gutek., 1991). Work-family conflict can lead to different negative consequences on working parents' psychological, emotional and physical health such as low self-esteem, job dissatisfaction and poor work performance (Cooper et al., 1989; Susan et al., 1997; Firth, 1987). Sources of work-family conflict among Muslim female academicians can

generally be grouped into six categories: work overload, long working hours, irregular work schedule, number of children, their age and time spent on family activities. It is noteworthy that the conflicts may vary between institutions.

Research on work-family conflict has become prevailing over the past decade, while research on employees' well-being has increased during the last years. The majority of studies on work-family conflict have been conducted in developed countries, and they used several coping strategies such as awareness, relaxation, meditation, social support, religiosity and communication to cope with work-family conflict, but there is an increasing recognition of the role of religious support in reducing work-family conflict (Boyce, 2005). Work-family conflict as work and family issues are related to cultural values, norms, and beliefs (Aryee, Luk, Leung, & Lo, 1999; Poelmans, 2005). According to the Common-Sense Model, religious coping strategies can act as moderator in the relationship between health problems perception and the outcome of assessment (e.g, health-related life quality) (Heijmans, 1998; Helder et al., 2002). Religious coping strategies refer to the employment of the cognitive and behavioural techniques when faced with stressful situations, in individuals with religious principles (Tix and Frazier, 1998). In other words, through religious coping strategies, humans attempt to comprehend these stressful situations through their religious belief systems (Gall and Grant, 2005).

Recently, there has been big concern about the role of religious coping aspects in health care (Kimmel et al., 2003; Mattison, 2006; Finkelstein et al., 2007; Ko et al., 2007). The importance of religious coping in helping people with this challenging disease should be

given proper awareness and attention especially in the Malaysian context; because there is limited research on this variable to date. Therefore, the main purpose of the present study is to investigate the relationship between work-family conflict and Muslim women well-being and the role of religious coping strategies as moderator on this relation.

## **1.2 The Significance of the Study**

It is believed that work-family conflict is an important issue to address, not just for employees but for companies as well. So, this research is significant for some reasons. According to Lobel (1991) some studies conducted on Western and Asian countries suggest that more research is needed to investigate work-family conflict and its impact on different groups and settings.

Since work and family issues are strongly related to cultural beliefs, values and norms, the increasing participation of women in the workforce has created increasing pressure for diversity management and work-life balance strategies. Also the number of employees responsible for taking care of family members will continue to increase.

This study serves to outline the traditional expectations of Malaysian society that impose strong demands on a woman's time and devotion with regards to her multiple roles at home and workplace. Very few studies have been academically conducted on work-family conflict, work-life balance and religious coping strategies in Muslim countries particularly, in Malaysia. Most of the previous studies were conducted in developed countries such as Australia, United States of America, Canada, and Hong Kong. Therefore, the researcher tries to examine to what extent religious coping strategies has

an influence on Muslim working women academics in balancing work demands and family responsibilities.

This study is significant; as for as its outcomes reveal that work-family conflict has become a big matter of concern to individuals as well as organizations because of its negative consequences leading to reducing family satisfaction, job satisfaction and hence life satisfaction. Furthermore, many studies found that increasing the role of religious coping strategies in decrease stress of life events and achieve well-being for employees, for example Boyce (2005) found that there is an increasing recognition of the role of religious support in reducing work-family conflict.

### **1.3 Scope of the Study**

This study focuses on the impact of work-family conflict on Muslim working women's well-being in Malaysian higher learning institutions. The researcher has selected four public universities in the Kelang Valley, namely University of Malaya (UM), Putra University of Malaysia (UPM), National University of Malaysia (UKM), and International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM). These universities have been selected for this study because of its similar characteristics: their Research University status, located in the Klang Valley and the lecturer's hard work. International Islamic University has been also selected because of its Islamic environment and values and principles practiced.

#### **1.4 Research Objectives**

The purpose of this study is to examine the influence of work-family conflict on Muslim working women's well-being in Malaysian higher learning institutions and the role of religious coping strategies towards work-life satisfaction. There are five objectives of this study:

- 1- To examine the extent to which work-family demands and management/supervisory have direct effect on work-family conflict.
- 2- To examine the moderating effect of religious coping strategies on the relationship between work-family conflict and Muslim women's well-being.
- 3- To examine whether religious coping strategies have direct effect on Muslim women's well-being.
- 4- To examine whether religious coping strategies have significantly relationship with work-family conflict.
- 5- To determine the relationship between Muslim women's well-being and work-family conflicts.

#### **1.5 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 conflicts?
- 3- Is there any effect of religious coping strategies on Muslim women's well-being?
- 4- Are religious coping strategies having significant relationship with work-family conflict?
- 5- To what extent does Muslim women's well-being affect work-family conflict?

## **1.6 Definition of Main Terms**

**1.6.1 Work-Family Conflict:** work-family conflict has been defined as a form of inter-role conflict in which the role pressures from work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). Furthermore, work-family conflict can be broadly conceived of as a source of stress derived from degree of “fit” of work-family roles (Frone *et al.*, 1992a). Moreover, work-family conflict has been defined by (Greenhaus *et al.*, 2006) as the conflict that occurs between work roles and family roles as a result of the high-pressure demands associated with each role, and that reduces performance levels in the other roles.

**1.6.2 Well-Being:** Well-being has been defined by Emerson, (1985:282) as satisfaction of an individual’s goals, wants, and needs through the actualization of their abilities and lifestyle. Well-being is generally viewed as a description of the state of people’s life situation (McGillivray, 2007, p. 3). Furthermore, well-being is conceptualized as a global construct and is operationalized to include an employee’s job satisfaction, family satisfaction, and life satisfaction (Diener, 2000).

**1.6.3 Religious Coping Strategies:** Religious coping strategies can be defined as the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral ways of relating to the sacred that are used in the search for significance during stress (Pargament, 1997). Moreover, Taha and Salama (2006) have mentioned that religious coping strategies include more performance of prayers and religious practices as a type of coping strategies that focus on emotion. Furthermore, religious coping strategies are more important and useful with stressful events that an individual cannot control.

## **1.7 Benefits of the Expected Results**

- 1.** This study will assist organizations and employers with strategies on how to improve staff retention or reduce their turnover.
- 2.** The apparent outcomes of this study will advance and improve the identification of management practices that are able to enhance employee's morale, motivation, commitment, productivity and creativity.
- 3.** The results of this research will assist to create a family friendly work environment that allows them to retain experienced staff as well enabling staff to balance work and family needs
- 4.** The benefits of this research include identification of significant measures to enhance work-life balance among employees, to reduce work interference in their personal life and to gradually minimize personal life encounter with work.
- 5.** The outcomes of this research project will give a hand to employers by identifying measures to reduce worker stress and to make improvements in job, family and life satisfaction of employee.
- 6.** The results of this research will assist the Government of Malaysia to better understand the phenomenon and extend assistance to Malaysian women.
- 7.** This research attempts to determine and suggest practical measures to employers and employees on how to handle multiple responsibilities to be able to fulfill personal, professional and community demands at the same time.

**8.** This research also will help Ministry of women affairs of Malaysia to formulate public policy towards Malaysian women in public and private sector.

**9.** This research will provide Muslim working women academic staff with new and better ways of coping with the pressures.

**10.** This study will give more information about the importance of religious coping strategies in dealing with work-family conflict.

**11.** Results of this study will enable working women to determine the level of conflict and to develop personal strategies to cope and reduce work-family conflict which may affect the well-being of Muslim working women.

**12.** This study also will aid working women to develop different organizational activities or religious programs that will help the Muslim working women release their tension and achieve well-being.

### **1.8 Research Structure**

This thesis consists of five chapters. Chapter one explains the background of the research, problem statement, purpose of the research, research objectives, research questions, significance of the research, scope of the study, benefits or expected results, definitions of major terms, and research structure.

Chapter two focuses on the work-family conflict and conceptual framework. Firstly, it focuses on the background of work-family conflict, sources of work-family conflict, which would be mentioned under this heading “work demands and family demands”,



positive outcomes of work-family conflict such as job satisfaction, family satisfaction and life satisfaction, working women and the impacts of work-family conflict, work-family conflict and coping strategies, works-family conflict and policies in academia, works-family conflict and the Malaysian context and conceptual framework for the current study. Furthermore, this research also focuses on the concept of ‘coping strategies’, types of coping strategies, categories of coping strategies, and coping strategies from the Islamic perspective.

Chapter three describes the methodology, procedures, and questionnaire development for pilot study and full study, including the research design, population, sampling strategies, data gathering method, instruments and reliability, validity, data collection, and data analyses and techniques. This chapter also describes the theoretical framework and how hence research hypotheses are developed to answer the research questions based on the review of literature and the statement of the problem. Overview of the description of the research strategies and the sampling procedures are also provided.

Chapter four presents the results of the survey, the sample, its demographic variables and work and family characteristics, and correlation among variables. Chapter five explains and provides an overall discussion of the research findings, theoretical and practical implications, avenues for future research, summaries the research, and discusses the implications of the results. Recommendation and conclusion for future research are also discussed.