

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

The researcher in this chapter will discuss the definition of work-family conflict, discuss sources which create work-family conflict, outcomes of work-family conflict, working women and the impacts of work-family conflict, definition and development of coping strategies, types and categories of coping strategies, coping strategies from Islamic perspective. Also the researcher will try to look into the relationship between work-family conflict and coping strategies, work-family conflict and policies in academia, work-family conflict and the Malaysian context, also conceptual framework discussed.

2.1 Background of Work-Family Conflict

Conflict between work demands and family roles has become a very serious and hot issue in the 21st century. Work-family conflict has been defined by Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Kahn et al., (1964) as one type of inter-role conflict in which the role demands coming from work demands or from family roles are unsuited with role demands which come from another domain family or work. According to Kahn *et al.*, (1964) the role is the results of expectations of others about accurate behavior in a particular position. Conflict of role is described as the psychological strain that is brought about by conflicting pressures of role. Role theory suggests that conflict happen when individuals engage in multiple roles that are unsuited (Katz & Kahn, 1978).

Work family conflict is considered as a general difficulty faced by the majority of workers in the world and creates negative outcomes such as dissatisfaction, absenteeism, turnover, decrease in productivity, and low well-being. Many researchers have recognized work-family conflict as one of the main stressor at the workplace in the United States (Allen, Herts, Bruck, & Sutton, 2000; Frone, 2003). In Canada, for example work- time has increased for many, as did the non-work demands resulting from the continued change in family structures and the continued rise in the percentage of employees with child care, elder care or both (Duxbury & Higgins, 2003). Many researchers have demonstrated that work-family conflict can be oriented into two directions: work interferes with family (WIF) and family interferes with work (FIW), it means that two directions of influence: Frone et al., (1992) reported that work demands that source interference with family (work interference with family, WIF), and family roles that source interference with work (family interference with work, FIW).

2.2 Sources of Work-Family Conflict

Work-family conflict (WFC) is a widespread phenomenon of modern life in 21st century. However, recently a literature review has been reported that pressures arise from both work demands and family roles and can lead to conflict between these two domains. The current research on this topic indicates that both work and family domains have their own demands and problems, and can result in either work interfering with family life, or vice versa (Aryee et al., 1999; Frone et al., 1997). Work demands and family demands at workplace or at home has been a major sources of conflict between work demands and family roles especially with women.

2.2.1 Work-Demands

Work demands, in this study, mainly involves work hours, work schedule and work overload. Some studies have shown that work overload, work hours and work schedule are the significant predictors of work-family conflict associated with lower job satisfaction, life satisfaction and family satisfaction. For example high work-family conflict is positively related to high working hours (Bruck et al, 2002; Burke et al., 1980; Eagle et al, 1997; Major et al., 2002; Wallace, 1999; Yang et al., 2000), high work-family conflict is positively related to long working hours (Burke, Weir, & Duwors 1980; Frone et al., 1997; Grzywacz & Marks, 2000; Gutek et al., 1991; Pleck, Staines & Lang, 1980; Wallace, 1997). Many researchers attempt to identify causes of work-family conflict, as mentioned by some coining different terms such as:

2.2.1.1 Long Working Hours

Based on some literature review, we can consider long working hours as the main factor contributing to work-family conflict. Several studies have found that long working hours are positively linked to family-work conflict, although these relations are generally weak (Bruck et al, 2002; Burke et al, 1980; Eagle et al, 1997; Major et al, 2002; Wallance, 1999; Yang et al, 2000). Working overtime and shift work are also related to family-work conflict (Pleck et al, 1980). Some studies have found that long working hours are associated with work-to-family conflict (Burke, Weir, & Duwors 1980; Frone et al., 1997b; Grzywacz & Marks, 2000; Gutek et al., 1991; Pleck, Staines & Lang 1980; Wallace, 1997).

Work-family conflict model hold that conflict between work demands and family roles has influenced the increase in the amount of time which is spent in both work domains and life domains. Rational model of work-family conflicts hold that conflict increases in proportion in the amount of time spent in the work and family domains (Duxbury & Higgins, 1994; Duxbury et al., 1994; Gutek et al., 1991). Yet despite the common assumption that time plays an important role in work-family conflict, surprisingly few scholars have actually measured work time conflict and its effect on the relations between work and family domains in the Malaysian context. Well, over 130 quantitative studies on work-family conflict have been published in the last 15 years, but only 10 include work time as a major study variable that have been identified (Aryee, 1992; Fox & Dwyer, 1999; Frone, Yardley & Markel, 1997; Greenhaus, Bedeian & Mossholder, 1987; Gutek et al., 1991; Izraeli, 1993; O'Driscoll, Ilgen & Hildreth, 1992; Parasuraman, Pruhit, Godshalk & Beutell, 1996; Wallance, 1997, 1999).

The time, is a very important factor in work interference with family (WIF), it also has direct effect on general work-family conflict (WFC). Some studies suggest that work time is significantly and positively related to work interference with family (WIF) or general work-family conflict (Aryee, 1992; Frone et al., 1997; Greenhaus et al., 1987, Gutek et al., 1991; O'Driscoll et al., 1992; Parasuraman et al., 1996, Wallance, 1997). However, little is known about why people spend more or less time working. Furthermore, it is not clear whether work time has a simple direct effect on work-family conflict.

2.2.1.2 Work Overload

There are several definitions of work overload such as the one, defined as having too much work to do and too little time is a psychological stressor (Claessens et al. 2004; Roberts, Lapidus, & Chonko 1997). Work overload looks to be the mainly agreed upon predictor of work-family conflict (e.g., Aryee, 1992; Burke, Weir & DuWors, 1980; Greenhaus et al, 1987, 1989; Pleck, Staines & Lang, 1980). Workload or work overload has been defined in both quantitative and qualitative terms. As described by Greenhaus et al. (1989), overly taxing work domain roles correspond to workload. This definition involves extended working hours or working overtime, shift works, overwhelming and difficult tasks. Burke and Greenglass (1999) and Voydanoff (1988) find that job stressors and work demands are the strongest predictors of work-to-family conflict.

Some studies have revealed that workload or work overload has positive and strong relationship with work-family conflict. It means that when work overload increases, there is an expected increase in the work-family conflict. A considerable amount of research has shown that work demands such as the number of hours worked, workload, shift work were positively and strongly associated with WFC (Burke, 2002; Higgins et al., 2000; Higgins and Duxbury, 1992; Saltzstein et al., 2001; Voydanoff, 1988). Again (Moore, 2000; Ahuja et al., 2007) have reported that work overload has a strong influence on work exhaustion". Work overload and work emotional demands are positively related to work-family conflict (Shimazu et al., 2010). While the findings obtained mainly in Western countries and the related theories refer to the clear relationship of work demands to work-family conflict (Spector, Allen, Poelmans, Lapierre, Cooper, & Widerszal-Bazyl, 2007), it is indicated that

long working hours, duty and heavy work load have a direct influence on work-family conflict (Boyar, Maertz, Mosley, & Carr, 2008; Kim, Leong, & Lee, 2005).

2.2.1.3 Irregular Work Schedule

A flexible work schedule has the potential to lead to both positive and negative results for companies and their workplace. Positive outcomes which comprise retention of clever employees, increase loyalty of an employee, decrease costs of operating, they also increase job satisfaction, productivity, but decrease conflict between work demands and family roles (Hill, 1998, 2001; Apgar, 1998; Kossek, 2005). Negative outcomes affecting both employees and employers include reducing of contact with the workplace, a possible loss of managerial control and the potential for increased WIF domains (Hammer, 2006). Increased WIF can lead to decreased quality time with family, increased work overload and the conflict role which can lead to reduced physical and psychological well-being both being related to diminished productivity (Sullivan & Lewis, 2006).

Flexible scheduling is an alternative work schedule as compared to regular work arrangement i.e. from 9:00am to 4:00pm; which have been in use for number of years. As mentioned above that it is an alternative work arrangement which gives employees some relaxation so that they could complete the given assignment according to their own work schedule. Many organizations have adopted this arrangement to their work place. It is because many of them believe that flexible work arrangement helps their employees to overcome the problem of conflict between their work and their family (Almer, et al., 2003; Cohen & Single, 2001, Hill, et al., 2001, Meyer, 1997). Most of the organizations have

adopted flexible scheduling practices and they have become more family-friendly because the flexible work arrangements are common components of many family-responsive human resource policies (Glass & Estes, 1997; Glass & Finley, 2002; Grover & Crooker, 1995), and because of this kind of scheduling these organizations have become more popular (Sara et al., 2004). Previous researches show that flexible scheduling also help employees in reducing their stress. A Survey of “Members of World at Work and AWLP October”,(2005) indicates that 58% of the respondents were of the opinion that flexible scheduling helps them to reduce their stress, only 11% gave a negative response and other 31% remained neutral.

Some previous studies have shown that, majority of employees are facing these two problems of work-family conflicts and stress in an inflexible 8 hours daily during 5 or 6 days in a week schedule. Flexible scheduling is one of the tools to help them to overcome these two problems. There are many other advantages of flexible scheduling on work place. According to Johnson, (1995), employees who face work-family conflicts due to the rigidity of their job schedule are likely to consider quitting their jobs three times more than those who don't face such problem. Flexible Scheduling also helps to reduce organizational cost related to stress which is 2.5 times higher than the workers who do not feel stress and depression (Goetzel et al., 1998).

2.2.2 Family Demands

Family demands in this study mainly involve caring for children for young and middle-aged employee. The number of children and life stages of children (commonly age of the youngest child) are rather objective indicators of the level of family demands (Rothausen,

1999). Past research have shown that married employees experienced higher family-work conflict than their single counterparts, and parents experienced higher family-work conflict than non-parents (Herman and Gyllstrom, 1977).

2.2.2.1 Number of Children and their Ages

Previous studies have shown that the percentage of working mothers having one child only, had conflict less than those having more than one child, and it increases as the number of children reaches two or three. Working mothers who take care of their young children themselves with help from their husband and an older child show the smallest prevalence of conflict. The number of children living at home is positively associated to WFC and FWC (Netemeyer et al., 1996). Additionally, it has been reported that working women with children younger than 12 years old experience more work-family conflict and family-work conflict than working women with older children (Higgins et al., 1994). Keith and Schafers (1980) state that sources of work-family role strain among people with job and families were working hours per week, number of children, and their age. Employed parents faced many difficulties especially employed mothers with children preschool age in coordinating work family needs (Friedman, 1987; Hughes & Galinsky, 1988). Employed mothers with children preschool age were in greater work and family role strain than the males and more attention was being given to what work place can do to solve work-family problems (Greenberger et al., 1989).

Netemeyer et al. (1996) found that there was correlation between the number of children at home and family-work conflict. The presence of children in the household has also been

positively related to work-family conflict (Carnicer et al., 2004). Among female factory operators with youngest child aged less than three years, Aminah (2007) found that they experienced more work-to-family conflict than those with youngest child aged three and above. Similarly, Lu et al. (2006) found that the age of the youngest child was negatively correlated with both WFC and FWC. The findings support the contention that working mothers with younger children would experience more work-to-family conflict than those with older children. Parents of dependent young children, especially mothers, have higher family demands than those with older children. These greater, often unpredictable demands, such as childcare arrangement and care of sick child, would result in lower levels of control over the work and family interface and thus higher levels of work-family conflict. However, as children get older the demands, especially those related to childcare, would decrease, resulting in increased levels of control and lower stress for the parents. The age of children and the number of children have the strongest positive correlation with work-family conflict. This finding is supported by other research studies on work-family conflict (Low, 1996; Aryee, 1992; Pleck et al., 1980). The more children a woman employee has, the more time and effort she will have to spend on her children.

2.2.2.2 Time Spent on Family Activities

The number of women in 21st century, has increased tremendously in workplace which results in working women become involved in the formal sector, there is a trend for them to spend less time with their families. Some studies have found that time spent on family activities is positively associated to family-work conflict (Frone et al., 1997b; Gutek et al., 1991). Specifically, hours used for family and chores are positively correlated to family-work conflict and hours spent at one's place of employment is positively related to work-to-

family conflict (Frone et al., 1997; Grzywacz & Marks, 2000; Gutek, Searle & Klepa, 1991; Netemeyer et al. 1996). Time spent in family work that is, housework and child care activities-is expected to be related to work-family conflict. Childrearing activities may interfere with work schedules and the total amount of family work may contribute to overload and energy depletion.

Many studies have examined the amount of time spent in family work by married men and women; however, this research does not report relationships between family work hours and work/family conflict (see, e.g., Pleck, 1985). Women experience work-family conflict because they have to manage both work and family roles simultaneously, whereas men can delegate their family responsibilities to their wives and concentrate fully on their career. If men provided greater support in terms of household chores and childcare, work-family conflict would not be a major problem for working women. Companies can play a part in encouraging fathers to be more active in childcare tasks by offering paternity leave and child sick leave for their married male employees. It appears that organizing child care activities, household chores, and professional responsibilities creates stress and conflict between work demands and family roles for many working parents (see Eckenrode & Gore, 1990, for a review).

2.3 Outcomes of Work-Family Conflict

2.3.1 Well-Being

In latest years, well-being has become the focus of strong research and interest. The concept of well-being has become increasingly an important issue, for example some of

them considered well-being as quality of life. Well-being has been defined by Emerson, (1985:282) as satisfaction of an individual's goals and needs through the actualization of their abilities and lifestyle. Well-being is a notion that people and policymakers generally aspire to improve. However, it is an ambiguous concept, lacking a universally acceptable definition and often faced with competing interpretations. Wellbeing is generally viewed as a description of the state of people's life situation (McGillivray, 2007, p. 3).

2.3.2 Measuring Well-Being

Well-being is difficult to define but it is even harder to measure. In general, well-being measures can be classified into two broad categories: objective and subjective measures. The first category measures well-being through certain observable facts such as economic, social and environmental statistics. People's well-being is assessed indirectly using cardinal measures. On the other hand, subjective measures of well-being capture people's feelings or real experience in a direct way, assessing well-being through ordinal measures (McGillivray and Matthew, 2006; van Hoorn 2007). In this research, the researcher will focus on subjective measures; thus, subjective well-being is divided into three parts; life satisfaction, family satisfaction, and job satisfaction.

2.3.2.1 Life Satisfaction

Life satisfaction generally is evaluation of feelings and attitudes about particular point in time ranging from negative to positive. Life satisfaction is one factor of three major exponent of well-being. Life satisfaction is frequently included as an outcome or consequence variable in work-family research (Allen, Herst, Bruck, & Sutton, 2000). Life

satisfaction can also increase suitable to higher achieving power and affordability due to dual income. Life satisfaction is one of the most commonly studied outcomes of work-family conflict (Kossek & Ozeki, 1998). There are some empirical studies supporting this relationship. For example Hill (2005) found that WFC and FWC facilitation were each positively and significantly associated with job satisfaction and life satisfaction. Also, Beutell (2005) found that generally measure of work-family synergy was significantly correlated to life satisfaction.

2.3.2.2 Family Satisfaction

Family satisfaction is commonly considered the main factor as an outcome or important variable in work-family research. Family satisfaction is one of the most widely researched areas in family-related outcomes and has generally been shown to increase as the amount of work-family conflict decreases (Allen et al., 2000). Kopelman et al., (2003), Rice, Frone, and McFarlin (1992), Aryee et al., (1999), Burke and Greenglass (2001) all found that family satisfaction was negatively related to work-family conflict. However, Parasuanman, Greenhaus, and Granrose (1992) found no relationship between work-family conflict and family satisfaction. Allen et al., (2000) and Kossek and Ozeki, (1998) meta-analyses found a negative relationship between work-family conflict and marital satisfaction, family satisfaction and life satisfaction. However other studies yielded insignificant results between work-family conflict and life satisfaction, marital satisfaction and family satisfaction (Beutell & Greenhaus, 1983; Netemeyer et al., 1996; Parasuraman et al., 1996).

2.3.2.3 Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction has become the most extensively intentional variables in organizational research. Furthermore, job satisfaction has become a hot topic in latest years among consulting firms. Job satisfaction is one of the most frequently studied outcomes in the work–family conflict literature (Grandey et al., 2005). According to Allen et al. (2000) and Kossek and Ozeki, (1998) meta-analyses generally found a negative relationship between job satisfaction and WFC and FWC. However, some studies on work-family conflict and job satisfaction have yielded mixed results. For example, Wiley (1987) used a sample of university students (N=191) and did not find a significant relationship of work-family conflict to job satisfaction. Using a sample of 310 married working women with children who were working a full-time in Malaysia found that work-family conflict was associated negatively to job satisfaction and positively to symptoms of distress.

2.4 Working Women and the Impacts of Work-Family Conflict

The importance of women in the industrial labor force in a developing country like Malaysia can be analyzed in relation to the new development in the world economies linked with export-oriented industrialization. Since the 1970s the influx of multinational companies into Malaysia, especially in the export-oriented zones have increased. This process has systematically linked the national to international markets, thus expanding the demand for labor force in the industrial sector, especially the manufacturing sector. Malaysian women have benefited more than men from such industrialization. The establishment of export-oriented zones in the 1970s had provided more employment opportunities in the manufacturing sector. For example, the electronics industry was not

only the largest exporter of manufactured products but also the largest employer in the manufacturing sector, with more than 75 percent of its workforce consisted of women. Likewise, over 90 percent and about 85 percent of the workers respectively employed by the clothing and textile industries were mainly females (Aminah, 1998).

Nevertheless, participating in the workforce has caused an impact in women's lives in many ways. Some studies indicate that working women are over-committed and finding combining work-family conflict and stressful (Cowan, 1983; in Moore and Gobi, 1995). They were experiencing role conflict as a result of performing different social roles that demand unsuited behavior (Davis and Robinson, 1991). Societal and parental perception of gender roles attributes higher importance to women's family roles as mothers, partners and homemakers; and down grade the importance of their work roles as breadwinners and professionals. From the perspective of the gender role theory, social values allot more time to the on going day-to-day domestic activities and less time to paid work. When there is role conflict, the professional working woman gives more importance to her role as a professional. Traditionally, the majority of working women have opted for a selected number of largely female-typed occupations, such as teaching, nursing and secretarial jobs.

Normally, women turn to these female-typed occupations to minimize conflict with family roles as these occupations tend to be more time-flexible. However, status enhancements in these occupations are more difficult to attain (Moore and Gobi, 1995). A recent study in South Korea, Park and Liao (2000) focused on married working women professors who by good value of their investment in higher educational training are likely to recognize their work as another primary role. The study assessed role gratification or role enhancement

and role strain of the working women professors compared to the ordinary housewives. It was found that married working women professors had more non-traditional gender-role attitudes when compared to housewives. In addition, the study indicated that transnational resocialization from overseas experiences in a Western society had a positive effects on the role gratification among the married working women professors (Park & Liao, 2000).

Some previous studies have shown that gender attitudes, political, and religious attitudes by Park and Liao (2000) has shown that gender attitudes as well as political and religious attitudes can be resocialized by adult activities, such as the transnational experiences of these women professors who may have lived in a Western society and thus had resocialized their perception and roles. The findings on assuming of double role sets show that these women professors in South Korea experienced more role gratification as well as more role strain than the full-time housewives did (Park & Liao, 2000). It is understood that the group of married women professors may have had a strong motivation for work, and they experienced satisfaction when a good balance was maintained between the demands of work and home.

However, the balance between both roles may have been affected by the interplay of cultural norms and social characteristics of the society. This findings is supported by another study by Yi (1993) which found that even when a woman has a professional job outside the home and has achieved much, she also tries to carry out her household responsibilities and the central duty of improving the family status through her children's educational achievements (Liao, 1998). This pressure also reflects separate gender role demands. Hence, these South Korean married women professors may have achieved self-

expectations based on their cultural socialization, thus creating strains for themselves. Working at home can create conflict of behavior-based, as the focus and force required to complete work opportunity is likely to conflict with demands for attention from spouse and or children.

Strain-based conflict could be particularly related to academicians, as work characteristics of educational positions generally involve high level of uncertainty and independence, as well as anxiety, worry and dissatisfaction associated to disappointments, unconvinced expectations and coping with a multitude of responsibilities. New academicians may perhaps particularly susceptible to “spillover” as feelings of proficiency, worries of negative evaluation and anxiety regarding job security is “taken home” on a regular basis. As a means of coping with feelings of work-related anxiety, academicians could even work longer and much hours, resulting in greater family-based stress as expectations of family members are ignored. Poelmans (2001) reported that work-family conflict on managerial couples in Spain touches on the changing trend of research methodology used by scholars in the field of work-family conflict in the last 25 years. In the last and past decade or so there has been an increase in studies employing qualitative methods involving in-depth interviews rather than quantitative methods.

More recently, the focus of the study has also shifted from the individual as the subject of study to couples in a family, especially those studies that have addressed the work-family conflict between husband and wife (for example: Jones and Fletcher, 1993; 1996). Lastly, Poelmans points out that the past studies have always been centered on a few recruiting variables such as work and family involvement, work and family stress, job and life

satisfaction, social support and turnover. With this, Poelmans has contributed a new variable in the study of work-family conflict that is the decision-making problem among couples. In his study, Poelmans (2001) focused on managerial couples in Spain, where one or both members had managerial responsibilities. He examined work-family conflict from the aspects of time based and strain-based conflict. The result justified some of the conventional variables in work-family conflict research: work stress, job satisfaction, time-based and strain-based work-family conflict and socio-demographic factors (Allen et al., 2000; Ernst & Ozeki, 1998; Poelmans, 2001). In addition, the findings (Poelman, 2001) also revealed certain themes like personal values and priorities, decision-making and choices in situations of work-family conflict, the conflict, the quality of the relationship of the couple, the time people actually spent with their children, job characteristics and learning.

According to Poelmans (2001), these result suggest that instead of conceptualizing work-family conflict as an inter-role conflict (the dominating theoretical approach in the field), one could frame it from three aspects : i) as an individual decision-making problem which is based on personality, values and situational factors; ii) as a decision-making problem in which the central problem solver involved several dependent ‘actors’ (spouse, parents, employer and others) plus taking initiatives and decisions in a process of continuous interaction.

2.5 Work-Family Conflict and Policies in Academia

Research on work-family conflict has found out that such conflict is higher among those who work longer hours, or have greater work demands and report higher job

involvement and greater autonomy (Eby et al., 2005), thus rendering the academic context particularly sensitive to work-family issues. The fact that total commitment might be self-imposed by social and career expectations does not change the main argument of this research: as the culture of long hour becomes 'the norm' in university settings, academics are likely to feel the tensions between work and family life and the work-family culture that prevails in academia is unlikely to make things easier for faculty members, particularly women who try to balance job requirements with the demands of family life.

Universities have traditionally organized academic careers based on male life patterns, making it more difficult for women to advance their careers while building a family (Armenti, 2004; Moen & Sweet, 2004). However, the intensified organizational demands and current expectations from academics supposed to devote unlimited time to their work have raised new gender issues worth addressing. The gendered division of household labor and the gendered expectations of family obligations and responsible parenting that remain in Western societies (Acker & Armenti, 2004; Jacobs & Winslow, 2004) also play a significant part in the tensions between work and family, particularly for mothers of young children.

In Malaysia, Aminah (1995) adopted Hall's method of study and applied it to a study of the work-family conflicts experienced by 82 professional women from research institutions in West Malaysia. In her study the most commonly adopted coping method was Type III (reactive role behavior), followed by Type II (personal role redefinition). For example, she showed that many of the women in her study group changed their own

attitudes/approach to work (for example, by trying to meet all the demands from their multiple roles through careful planning, scheduling and organizing). They also altered their perceptions of role expectations (for example by establishing priorities, portioning and separating roles and reducing the standards of some domestic chores).

A similar theme of adjusted expectations and standards was evident in the results of Husna and Lam's (1990) study. They interviewed professional women on how they allocated their time on both paid and unpaid work. Their results showed that the women, apart from the 8.5 hours spent at paid work, dedicated approximately 4.8 to 5.6 hours per weekday to family care and interaction. They spent more time with their children on recreational activities, verbal and affectionate interaction and academic stimulation than on physical care. Household tasks were given minimal time, with many of these tasks delegated to household helpers. Similar findings were reported in Noor Rahamah (1996).

Duxbury & Higgins (1994) Overload and stress related to work/family conflict have been found to be associated with a variety of negative outcomes, including individual health risks and depression as well as business costs of poor morale, decreased productivity, absenteeism, and turnover. In terms of academic careers, it could be expected that higher levels of work/family conflict could contribute not only to lower quality job performance but also could potentially result in denial of tenure or promotion, profoundly impacting both career and family.

2.6 Work-Family Conflict and the Malaysian Context

The government of Malaysia has been encouraging women's participation in the workplace. This has been regularly emphasized throughout the media, where the important role that female play in the economic development of the country is often highlighted. However, as more married women enter the labor force, concerns have also been expressed in an emerging literature review about work-family conflict over how these women cope with their multiple roles as a wife, mother and employee and how women manage to carry out each of these roles proficiently. Although the opportunities for women in employment in Malaysia have been 'formally' promoted and encouraged, cultural and religious values tend to do otherwise.

Women's primary role is still considered as the primary care taker of the family and men's on the other hand, lies in being the economic provider. For example, Malaysian women are more likely to feel guilty if home responsibilities are not carried out efficiently. Women's status is still considered secondary to that of men and, thus, they are often excluded from important economic and political activities (Noor, 1999; Topical Issue of Malaysia Women & Gender, 2001). In terms of employment opportunities, men are more likely to be promoted and there are no specific legislations that state equal pay for equal work except for the administrative directive issued in 1969 for government employees (Topical Issue of Malaysia Women & Gender, 2001).

Married Malaysian women who have taken the initiative to claim a role outside the home may be experiencing difficulties in coping with paid (work place) and unpaid work (domestic chores). Malaysian men although they may be supportive of their wives working because of extra family income might not accept an equal sharing of household

tasks. Several recent studies indicate that Malaysian women still bear the major responsibility for doing most household tasks and experience varying levels of work family conflict (Rahmah & Fatimah, 1999; Roziah, 2003; Noor Rahamah, 1996; and Noor, 1999). Aminah (1996) argues, additionally, that the experience of many Malaysian women fits within the spillover model, whereby their satisfaction or dissatisfaction at work influences their well being at home. However, in the study of Noor (1999), married working women did not express high levels of distress in managing multiple roles. Noor believed that this outcome was due to both religious and cultural values in Malaysia. That is, the women in Noor's study accepted their role conflict as 'trials from God' and were of the view that their religion had protected them from negative role experiences. Another reason given by Noor was that Malaysian women, unlike our Western counterparts, were less expressive and open in admitting their personal problems, especially regarding to their family matters.

Based on review of the literature, some empirical studies investigating the phenomenon of work-family conflict have been reported (Ahmad, 1996; Noor, 2002; Komarraju, 2006). However, these studies focused on the outcomes of work-family conflict as a replacement for their antecedents. A study on the associations among work-family conflict, job satisfaction, family satisfaction and life satisfaction among married professional Malaysian women found that work-family conflict is vital to the firms where these women work and to the women themselves. A study of employed Malaysian women with families revealed that an internal locus of control were less likely to experience work-family conflict (Noor, 2002).

Noor (2003) 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. Other researchers have viewed work–family conflict as a mediator of relationships between pressures of work and family roles and individual well-being (e.g., Frone et al., 1992; Frone, Yardley, & Markel, 1997). Noor’s (2003) study is important because it incorporates personality variables as predictors of women’s well-being. Although previous researchers (e.g., Amatea & Fong, 1991) have shown that the personal resources women bring with them into their roles are important, Noor’s (2003) study is one of those which 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 account for the most variance in the prediction of family-interfering-with-work (FIW) conflict.

A study on female Malaysian operators, clerks, secretaries, nurses and physicians found that physicians experienced the greatest intensity of work-to-family conflict. However, operators experienced the greatest intensity of family-to-work conflict (Aminah, 2005). In studies conducted on married working women in Malaysia, women not only experienced work-family conflict (Fatimah, 1985; Aminah, 1995), but work-family conflict was shown to lead significantly to lower job satisfaction as well as life satisfaction (Aminah 1996a, b). Work-family conflict also significantly leads to lower family satisfaction (Aminah 1996a). The findings of study of Aminah,(1997) and other studies conducted on 86 female researchers (Aminah 1995), and 100 professional

women (Fatimah,1985) showed that married working women in Malaysia experience work-family conflict. The findings also support those of other studies conducted by Pleck et al., (1980), Greenhaus and Beutell (1985), Gutek at al, (1991) and Higgins and Duxbury (1992) in the United States