The Mediation Effect of Burnout and Moderation Effect of Social Support on Work-Family Conflict-Turnover Intention Relationship among Malaysian Woman Engineers: A Proposed Framework and Methodology

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Abstract – *An increasing number of women participate in the work force due to socio-economic development result a big impact to work and family institution. Failure to meet demand for both work and family lead to work-family conflict that may give negative consequences on work and family. An example of major work-related outcome is burnout which can lead to turnover intention. Social support has been identified as an important resources that can reduce work-family conflict and burnout. This paper aims to identify the relationship between work-family conflict and turnover intention and also the mediation effect of burnout on work-family conflict and turnover intention relationship. It is proposed that there will be a positive relationship between work-family conflict and turnover intention and there is an indirect relationship between work-family conflict and turnover intention through the mediation effect of burnout. Social support from work and family is proposed to moderate the relationship between work-family conflict and burnout. Furthermore it is proposed that the strength of relationship between work-family conflict and turnover intention depends on the mediation effect of burnout and moderating effect of social support.* **Copyright © 2015 Penerbit Akademia Baru - All rights reserved.**

Keywords: Work-family conflict, turnover intention, burnout, social support

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The relationship between work and family has received highly attention because of the emerging of women entering workforce recently [1]. Due to this phenomenon, many individuals facing difficulties in managing between work and family responsibilities [2]. As a consequence individual may exposed to conflict between work and family. Work-family conflict may deal with conflicting demands of individual career, child care, elder care and personal life issues which lead to negative consequences in the workplace such as decrease organizational commitment [3], increase turnover intention [4] and higher level of absenteeism [5].

Balancing between work and family is a critical issue concern by women engineers cause by environmental factors work that demands a long time where it is difficult for them to carry out other responsibilities such as family demand at home [6],[7]. It is supported by [8] which stated that work and family demand is one of the challengers and barriers among women engineers

to be success and satisfied with their career and get higher position in their organization. Most of women engineers would leave their job after seven years and they did not reach senior level as their male counterpart [9]. Therefore the issue of retention and career development for women engineers must be taken seriously.

In Malaysia it is reported that female engineering student increase from 5% in 1981 to 30% in 1999 and about 50% in 2010 [10] and surprisingly data from department of statistic of Malaysia shows that only 36% of women enter workforce compare to man which is not parallel with the number of female graduate from engineering studies. This phenomenon reflect actual women engineer turnover rate in Malaysia where the percentage of women leaving engineering field include those who did not enter the profession or leave the profession for to look for another job after several years of working in engineering field. It shows that women are still under represented in the field of engineering. One of the reason that has been identified is unable to manage multiple work-life roles and they quit to spend more time with their family [11].

A number of studies promotes that work-family conflict linked with burnout [12, 13,14]. Early research of burnout focus on human service profession such as nurses and social worker. [15,16]. However later, a few research indicates that burnout can occur beyond this type of profession [17]. Engineering profession consist of high qualified individual surrounding by challenging environment which can easily fall to burnout. Kunda [18] found a sign of burnout in a qualitative study of high tech engineers. Burnout associate with intention to leave the job which will reflect the actual turnover [19].

In Job Demand Resources Model [20], job demand and job resources function to predict burnout. Burnout is most likely to exist in the condition of high job demands (work-family conflict) and low resources (social support). Therefore, social support act as a useful resources to prevent burnout from occur and may come in form of work support and family support. Social support can also be considered as an important element to reduce work-family conflict.

A few studies had been done regarding the role of social support as a moderator in work-family conflict and burnout relationship. However most of the study focus only in work support and did not include family support. Moreover at the best of authors knowledge there is no study conducted regarding the combination effect of burnout and moderation effect of social support in work-family conflict and turnover intention relationship. Therefore the aim of the present study is to identify the relationship between work-family conflict and turnover intention and to highlight the mediation effect of burnout on the relationship between work-family conflict and turnover intention among Malaysian women engineers. In addition the moderation effect of social support on work-family conflict and burnout relationship will also be identified. Finally this study will examined the integration mediating effect of burnout and moderating effect of social support in work-family conflict that may influence the relationship between work-family conflict and turnover intention among Malaysian women engineers. The finding of the present study is expected to help the government and industry in development of policy to improve the quality of human resources especially for women employees. By understanding this issue it may reduce work-family conflict among women employees which may lead to burnout and turnover intention.

2.0 WORK-FAMILY CONFLICT AND TRUNOVER INTENTION

Work-family conflict rooted from role theory [21,22]. Conflict between work and family is considered as inter-role conflict where pressure from role at workplace and family are mutually incompatible [23]. Based on role theory, role demand from work and family with limited energy and resources leads to strain from competition from each role. The three forms of conflict are time-based conflict, strain-based conflict and behavioural-based conflict [23].

Turnover intention refers to one's intention to disengage from work and seriously considering for actual turnover. Turnover intention model is based from the theory of plan behaviours [24]. According to this theory, individual believe rooted from his/her attitude and will finally lead to actual behaviour. It is supported by [25] in the research from motivational theory stated that turnover intention will directly linked to actual turnover behaviour. To an organization, turnover intention rate give more important information that actual turnover so that early steps can be done in order to avoid actual turnover.

Overall turnover give negative consequences to the organization due to its indirect cost that related to its operational cost which linked to business profit [26].

In [27] review regarding the consequences of work-family conflict, turnover intention is the most highly related in the category of work related outcome. It is supported by [28] where work-family conflict is considered as an important factor in the process of turnover. Studies related to the relationship between work-family conflict produced mixed result. While some studies shows significant relationship between work-family conflict and turnover intention [29,30,31,32], others have found weak, negative or no relationship between the two variables [33,34,35]. According to [36] who investigate how work-family conflict influence turnover intention of medical representatives of national pharmaceuticals companies of Pakistan employee experience high level of work-family conflict significantly related to turnover intention. In addition work-family conflict, role conflict and role ambiguity accounted 50% of variance in turnover intention. [32] added that employee experience higher level of work-family conflict reported higher level of turnover intention and equally significant both female and male employees. Furhermore [29] study the relationship between work-family conflict and turnover intention of employee in banking and pharmaceutical sector revealed the same result. However these study did not point out specific types of work-family conflict that correlate with turnover intention unlike [30, 31, 37].

According to [30] who investigate how work-family conflict influence turnover intention of cancer workers in Australian health care setting, employee experience high level of work-family conflict significantly related to turnover intention. This study concentrate on four types of work-family conflict which are time-based conflict and strain-based conflict for both work interfere with family and family interfere with work. [31] and [37] confirmed the above finding where two types of conflict (time-based conflict and strain-based conflict) influence turnover intention among Maori people in New Zealand and sample of teachers in Malaysia respectively.

In a male dominated sample [38] and [39], also found positive correlation between work-family conflict and turnover intention. Besides other studies conducted in a female dominated sample confirmed the above finding where work-family conflict has a positive relationship with turnover intention [37,40]. Similar finding reported in another study performed by [31, 32,41] in somewhat equal gender sample. [31] research was conducted among New Zealand Maori

employees, [32] included Malaysia service sector staff while [41] study among sample of real estate brokers of Kaohsing city in Taiwan.

The above findings contradict the study by [33] who also carried out a study among sample of respondent from banking sectors in Pakistan. [33] examined that work-family conflict has a weak relationship with turnover intention. People are not ready to leave their work even though there is a work-family conflict. [42] also reported insignificant relationship between work-family conflict and turnover intention. Both studies conducted among employees in service sector. The analysis of work-family conflict conducted in both research were based on uni-dimensional dimension and not specifically involve dimension such as time-based conflict, strain-based conflict and behavioural based conflict. It is supported by [34] in a study among scientist and engineers working in R & D. Work interfere family do not have any significant relationship with turnover intention.[35] added that no relationship between work-family conflict and turnover intention and this study was conducted among health professional group in New Zealand.

Most of past research conducted in service profession, pharmaceutical and banking sector. Little study has been done regarding the relationship between work-family conflict and turnover intention in engineering profession especially on women engineers. Therefore this study aims to identify the level of work-family conflict, the level of turnover intention and the relationship between work-family conflict and turnover intention among Malaysian women engineers.

Proposition 1: Work-family conflict is positively related to turnover intention among Malaysian women engineers

2.1 Work-family conflict and burnout

Burnout is a term used in psychological that explain about long term exhaustion and loss of interest in work. It is an extreme form of stress [43]. [44] classified burnout as a three dimensional syndrome that includes emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and personal accomplishment. [45] reconceptualise the new concept on burnout with new measure known as Maslach Burnout Inventory- General Survey (MBI-GS) that focus to other working context apart from doing "people's work". The three dimension of burnout change its terminology to exhaustion, cynicism and professional efficacy. In Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI), emotional exhaustion refers to depletion of emotional energy and fatigue and the direction of the source of feeling is direct to people while in Maslach Burnout Inventory-General Survey (MBI-GS) exhaustion refers to feeling towards one's job at workplace. In Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI-GS) cynicism replace the terms depersonalization. Cynicism refers to indifferent attitude towards one's job at workplace rather that the feeling of insensitive and unfeeling for others. Professional efficacy focus more on direct expectation at work. This includes one's expectation of long term of effectiveness at work.

Job demand resources model (JD-R) is a model that explains regarding stress-strain relationship introduced by [45]. Strain is a reaction resulted from the existence of stress condition and can be observed through psychological, behavioural or physiological level such as burnout [46]. According to JD-R model, work environment can be divided into two categories which are job demands and job resources. Individual may experience strain due to lack of job resources to meet excessive job demands [47].

Study conducted by [48] found that work-family conflict increases burnout (exhaustion and disengagement) among frontline service jobs. Work-family conflict is positively related with emotional exhaustion, and cynicism. It is supported through study done by [49] where work-family conflict is positively related to emotional exhaustion. This study is conducted at Norwegian oil and gas company.

Another study also shows that work-family conflict was associated with high scores on exhaustion and cynicism among software developer [50]. Similarly, [51] also found that work interfere family were positively associated with emotional exhaustion and cynicism respectively among nurses. Furthermore, [52] concluded that work-family conflict is positively related with emotional exhaustion among university employees. This is supported by [30, 53, 54] study which reveal that negative work home interference was positively associated with burnout. Summary from the above literature confirms that conflict between work and family positively related with burnout.

2.2   Burnout and turnover intention

Study found that burnout has been connected with various forms of job withdrawal. For example absenteeism, intention to leave the job and actual turnover. It is supported by [19]; [55], where individual who experience burnout has a tendency to leave the workplace. However individual suffering from burnout but still engage with their workplace may be likely tend to show low productivity and ineffectiveness at work.

Study conducted by[56] found that burnout was significantly associated with turnover intention among social workers. It is supported by [30] who reveal positive correlation between burnout and intention to leave. Burnout predicted turnover intention among ambulance personnel [57]. Another study shows that emotional exhaustion and depersonalization both have significant effect on a desire to leave employment among correctional staff [58]. Research finding by [59] also points towards that emotional exhaustion and cynicism have a positive relationship among older workers. According to past studies, individual who experience burnout may have possibility to leave their organization.

2.3   Burnout as a mediator in the relationship between work-family conflict and turnover intention

A study done by [30] among Australian cancer worker found that burnout mediates the relationship between work-family conflict and turnover intention. So it is proposed that work-family conflict has an indirect relationship with turnover intention through burnout among Malaysian women engineers.

Proposition 2: Burnout mediates the relationship between work-family conflict and turnover intention among Malaysian women engineers

2.4   Social support as a moderator in the relationship between work-family conflict and burnout

According to [60], social support is the exchange of resources between at least two persons, with the goal of helping the person who receives the support. In general, social support helps individuals to retain existing resources and gain new resources [61]. For example, according to [62], social support from either work or family generates positive effect in the source domain

and increases the quality of life in the other domain. The primary functions of social support are emotional and instrumental supports [63]. Emotional support includes behaviour that provides encouragement, understanding and attention, while instrumental support includes behaviour such as assisting in problem solving and any kind of assistance with the aim to facilitate an individual's participation in the other domain [64]. Both types of social support can give positive effect that helps an individual with work domain [65]. Work support includes support from supervisor, co-workers and management [66]. While family support consist of spouse and other family members or friends.

In other study done by [67] general terms of social support which not specific to source of support has been use. The findings reveals that social support is negatively related to work-family conflict. Another study done by [68] general work social support was negatively related to the aspect of strain-based work-family conflict. However the strength of relationship is week. Workplace family support is an important source of social support that have big implication to work-family conflict. Employee work in environment with strong family support reported less work-family conflict [69] compare to environment perceived less family support. A study done by [70] suggest that informal social support from organization is a potential resources to reduce work-family conflict. On top of that administrators' support was negatively related in time-based work-interfere family and strain-based work-interfere family [68]. However the strength of relationship in this two aspect of work-interfere family was weak.

A study by [71] found that supervisor support decreased work-family conflict among frontline employees in Northern Cyprus Hotel and this was confirmed by empirical data. This finding was supported by [72], which indicated that the supervisor support gave important consequences to work-family conflict and reduced work-family conflict. [73] added that supervisor support has a negative correlation with work-family conflict in study on female academic staff working the research university in Malaysia.

Additionally [74] study on the relationship between work resources (social support) and work-family conflict among Iranian male employees reveal the existence of negative significant relationship. In this study social support at work includes supervisor and management support. Furthermore [75] did a comparison regarding four types support in workplace which are perceived organization support, supervisor support, family supportive organization perception, and supervisor work-family support. The result shows that specific support for work-family specific construct from both supervisor and organization are more strongly related to work-family conflict compare to general support from both supervisor and organization. On top of that another study done by [76] regarding to cross domain support where work support helps employee in dealing with family responsibilities and at the same time conduct job task at workplace. For example, an organization may promotes flexible working schedule in order to accommodate with family responsibilities. Furthermore co-worker support takes a role to alleviate the impact of work-family conflict in the study done by [77] on 23 large organization in New Zealand.

Regarding to type of social support, a research by [78] revealed that support from partner (husband) and family members reduce perceived work-family conflict experience by married female nurses in Iran but there was no significant relationship between co-workers and work-family conflict. The research in this area was extended by [79] whom suggested that supervisor support and also family support were key predictors to work-family conflict among lower skill workers in manufacturing company in the Southern Region of US. However in this research,

supervisor support was found to be negatively related to work-family conflict but family support has no significant relationship with work-family conflict. It is similar with [80] study on a data collected from two western cities in US. The findings shows that social support received from workplace showed a significant and negative relationship with work-family conflict. Nevertheless none of non-work social support was significantly related to work-family conflict. In comparing within genders related to source of social support [81] reveal that both organization and spousal support related to work-family conflict for men but only spousal related to work-family conflict for women.

On the contrary [82] on a study among Hong Kong employees and their spouse found that work-domain support has no effect on work interfere with family. Similar finding reported by [68] where colleagues' support was not significantly related to work-family conflict. This study was conducted among full time lecturer and teachers in private educational institution in Kuching, Malaysia.

Generally social support is considered as important resources for an individual dealing with psychological, physical and well-being. Burnout is associated with lack of autonomy, role ambiguity, low professional self-esteem and lack of social support. Social support act to reduce or eliminate the effects of stress. It functions to overcome frustration and help to carry out challenge to solve difficult problems. Therefore social support can be utilized to protect against burnout [83].

Social support received at work and home associate with the level of burnout among individuals. Support from work and family helps to decrease burnout [84]. Study done by [85] among Turkish school counsellors found that spouse support related with personal accomplishment while family support associated with emotional exhaustion and personal accomplishment. According to [86] social support received at work from co-worker and supervisor can is extremely important to assist employee and reduce the feeling of burnout. Evidence shows that supervisor support can lower the level of burnout in a few studies related to nursing profession [87, 88, 89]. Similarly [90] study support the above findings where perceived organizational support negatively related with two dimension of burnout which are emotional exhaustion and depersonalization in a software development organization in US. Employees who perceive that their organization provided support instrumental and emotionally are more likely to experience lower level of burnout. According to past findings it can be summarize that the absent of social support link to work stress and may end with chronic job stress that leads to burnout.

Most of work stress theories explain that psychological resources play a role to change the strength or direction of a relationship. Resources can moderate the effect in stress-strain relationship. Thus, it is believe that social support can buffer the relationship between the stressor and its strain outcome. Based on the past findings regarding the relationship between social support and work-family conflict and also between social support and burnout, it is proposed that social support from work and family moderate the relationship between work-family conflict and burnout.

Proposition 3: Work support moderate the relationship between work-family conflict and burnout among Malaysian women engineers.

Proposition 4: Family support moderate the relationship between work-family conflict and burnout among Malaysian women engineers.

2.5 Integrating work-family conflict, burnout, social support and turnover intention into a single model

Evidence show that burnout mediates the relationship between work-family conflict and turnover intention [30]. Apart from that, past study also shows that social support moderates the relationship between work-family conflict and burnout [91]. Thus, work and family support may influence the mediating effect of burnout on work-family conflict and turnover intention relationship.

Proposition 5: The mediating effect of burnout on work-family conflict and turnover intention is moderated by work support.

Proposition 6: The mediating effect of burnout on work-family conflict and turnover intention is moderated by family support.

2.6 Propose research framework

Based on the past literature, this paper proposes a relationship between work-family conflict and turnover intention. It is proposed that there is a positive relationship between work-family conflict and turnover intention. Moreover it is also proposed that burnout mediates the relationship between work-family conflict and turnover intention. Apart from that past literature also found that social support act as an important factor to buffer the relationship between work-family conflict and burnout. So it is proposed that the relationship between work-family conflict and burnout is moderated by social support received from work and family. Finally it is also proposed that the mediating effect of burnout on work-family conflict and turnover intention is moderated by social support. The overall proposed framework is shown in figure 1.
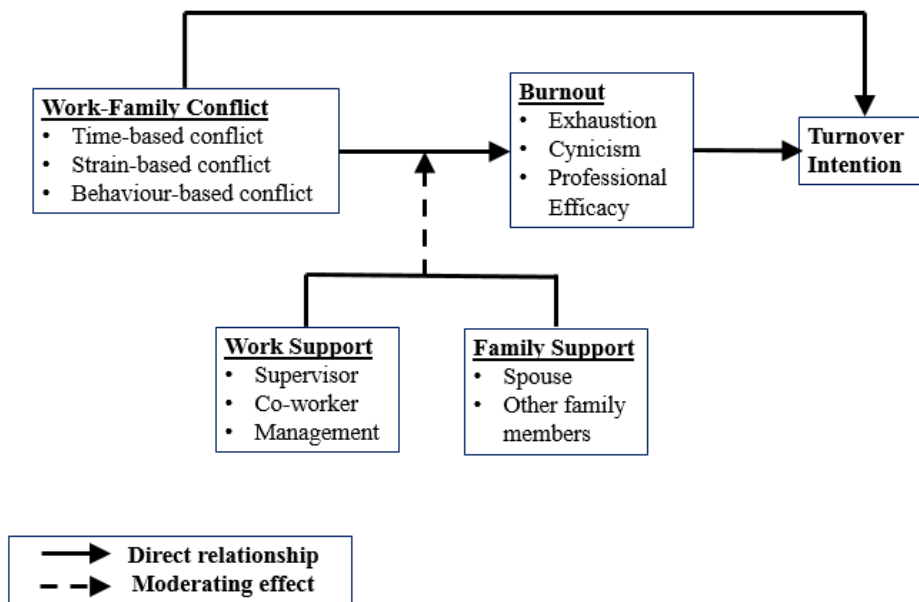

Figure 1: Proposed Research Framework

3.0 METHODOLOGY

The aim of this study was to examine the causal relationship between independent and dependent variables. In order to achieve this objective, the best design that suited the need of this study was causal (survey) research design. Causal research involves research question and hypothesis in where it will be tested using statistical tools [92]. Furthermore, the use of questionnaire as the tool to collect data is strongly suggested in this type of research and testing of hypothesis is allowed [92, 93, 94]. This study is a cross-sectional study or known as a one-spot study [93] where the data will be collected once throughout the entire research process.

In this study, questionnaire will be chosen as the instrument for data collection. The questionnaire for work-family conflict will be adapted from [94], turnover intention will be measured using four items from [95] and burnout will be using Maslach Burnout Inventory-General Survey [96]. For work support and family support [97] and [98] will be utilised in this study. Based on the Likert Scale (1-5), respondents will be required to choose the answers that have been set on each statement. Furthermore, researcher will process the information obtained from the questionnaire according to the methods of analysis used including descriptive statistic, structural equation modeling (SEM), path analysis, and factor analysis.

The respondent for this study will be comprised of the members of Institute of Engineer Malaysia (Women Engineer) to represent women engineers in Malaysia. Institute of Engineer Malaysia was chosen as the sampling frame to represent women engineers in Malaysia because it is one of the societies that is most established since 1959. The main function of this institution is to promote and develop the Science and Profession of Engineering in any or all of its disciplines and to facilitate the exchange of information and ideas related to engineering. Overall, the membership of the institution is currently about 30 000 and is increasing about 10 % per year, forming one of the largest professional organization in the country. Women engineers are represented by slightly more than quarter among 30 000 of its total members.

This research utilized cluster sampling method. First of all women engineers will be divided according to the region and the sample will be taken randomly from each region. The regions including Northern Region (Kedah, Penang, Perak and Perlis), Central Region (Kuala Lumpur, Selangor and Negeri Sembilan), Southern Region (Malacca and Johore), East Coast Region (Pahang, Terengganu and Kelantan) and also East Malaysia (Sabah, Sarawak and Labuan). In addition after grouping respondent into certain clusters, simple random sampling will be used. Simple random sampling method will be used in this study because of its equal chance to be selected among the population as the sample subject [99,100].

To test the hypothesis from the data that has been collected, SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Science) version 18.0 and AMOS (Analysis of Moment Structure) version 18.0 will be used. Standard statistical procedures including descriptive were conducted. The descriptive statistic includes frequency, mean, and standard deviation. Meanwhile structural equation modelling will be used to test the hypothesis.

4.0 CONCLUSION

The changing in socio-economy where a woman entering workforce contributes to many issues and one of the major issues is work-family conflict. Conflicting to meet the demand from both work and family increase intention for working women to quit from their current job. The effect

from work-family conflict to an individual includes burnout where a working women may suffer from long term exhaustion and lost interest in dealing with their job. In order to meet the demand both at work and family, social support play an important factor that can help to reduce work-family conflict and burnout which may lead to turnover intention.

By investigating the direct relationship between work-family conflict and turnover intention and indirect relationship through burnout among Malaysian women engineers, organization can take further action in helping to reduce the conflict between work and family for example through the implementation family friendly benefit to assist working women in balancing between work and family demand. By confirming the influence of social support in the relationship between work-family conflict and burnout and also turnover intention organization should address social support from work and family as an important factor that can help to reduce work-family conflict and at the same time will help to decrease burnout and turnover intention among Malaysian women engineers.

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