WORK ECOLOGY AND HUMAN WELLBEING

FEM 3104

DR SA’ODAH AHMAD
JPMPK/FEM/UPM
LEARNING OUTCOMES

- To explain conflict and job stress.
- To explain work–family and family–work conflict.
- To appreciate coping strategies in work–family and family–work conflict.
INTRODUCTION

- Given the demands of contemporary society and the need for most families to have dual wage earners, work and family conflicts are inevitable.
- Managing the conflict between family and work obligations is an important issue. The demands of family and work pose critical challenges to individuals, researchers, and organisations.
- Because of the openness of the economy, political changes, and changes in societal values, the balance of job and family obligations has shifted dramatically.

DR SA’ODAH AHMAD/FEM3104/JPMPK/FEM/UPM
WORK–FAMILY CONFLICT

- “a form of interrole conflict in which the role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect – participation in the work (family) role is made more difficult by virtue of participation in the family (work) role” (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985, p. 77).

- Conceptually conflict between work and family is bi-directional – work interferes with family (WIF) and family interferes with work (FIW).
Work-to-family conflict occurs when experiences at work interfere with family life, like extensive, irregular, or inflexible work hours, work overload and other forms of job stress, interpersonal conflict at work, extensive travel, career transitions, unsupportive supervisor or organization.

For example, an unexpected meeting late in the day may prevent a parent from picking up his or her child from school.
Family-to-work conflict occurs when experiences in the family interfere with work life like presence of young children, primary responsibility for children, elder care responsibilities, interpersonal conflict within the family unit, unsupportive family members.

For example, a parent may take time off from work in order to take care of a sick child.
Family–work conflict has been associated with:

- A number of dysfunctional outcomes (Bacharach, Bamberger, and Conley, 1990),
- Decreased family and occupational well-being (Kinnunen and Mauno, 1998), and

Netermeyer, et al., (1996) observe that work and family are two important domains that are not compatible and that there are usually conflicts between the two domains.
Today, work–family conflict (work interfering with family) is more prevalent than family–work conflict (family interfering with work) though both can occur.

Current research focuses on the causes of work–family conflict, balance of time, involvement and satisfaction, quality of life, and the outcomes between the two domains.
There are internal and external explanations for work–family and family–work conflict.

An internal explanation is the desire to be successful in multiple roles such as mother or father, brother or sister, leader or follower, and peer or subordinate.

Internally, work–family conflict occurs when what needs to be accomplished at work interferes with personal values.
Personal values may include spending daily quality time with family or simply rejuvenating after a hard day of work.

Internally-generated conflict can also occur when family responsibilities such as attending a school function or taking care of a sick child spills over into the responsibilities of work and increases the time spent away from the job.
External causes of work–family conflict may occur when your work assignment takes more time to complete than what you have to give or when your spouse is unwilling to support your endeavors both at home and at work.

Conflict between these domains also occurs when the amount of control followers have over their job is limited and flexibility is minimal.
COMPENSATION THEORY

- Suggests that people add more to one domain than the other in order to balance what lacks in either.
- In other words, life balance is a direct result of the amount of time and psychological resources an individual decides to commit to both domains.
- If the individual commits more time or psychological resources to work, then work–family conflict may increase.
- If an individual decides to commit more resources to family than work, but work requirements increase, then family–work conflict also increases.

DR SA’ODAH AHMAD/FEM3104/JPMPK/FEM/UPM
TYPES OF WORK–FAMILY CONFLICT (GREENHAUS & BEUTELL 1985)

- **The time–based conflict:** demands of one role that interfere with participation in the other role.
- **The stress–based conflict:** originating in one role that spills over into the other role detracting from the quality of life in that role.
- **Behaviour–based conflict:** behaviour that is effective and appropriate in one role but is ineffective and inappropriate when transferred to the other role.
FRIEDMAN & GREENHAUS (2000)

- Asserts that more autonomy in the workplace and networking with peers can increase the quality of work life.
- Their studies show that individuals who work for organizations that allow individuals to spend more time at home, work in virtual employment, and make flexible time arrangements, tend to perform better as a parent than those who do not have these opportunities.
- Maintaining satisfaction on both fronts is important for reducing the feelings of conflict.
- Individuals should clarify what is important in life and continually experiment with achieving goals.
They say that self-identity is the combination of family, work, leisure, and community service.

While some individuals are more aware of what they value than others, self-awareness is critical to managing the conflict between the two domains.

The decision making process and managing the allotted time between domains is handled best when the individual is aware of their surroundings.

Self-awareness reduces the incompatibility between the work domain and the family domain.
Further, these researchers suggest that a more holistic approach to life enhances the quality of life and reduces the conflict between the two domains.

Participation in different roles can enrich an individual’s life through building strong relationships with individuals in various roles such as a superior, peer or subordinate, a spouse, and/or a community leader.

More importantly, the individual must be open to change and be willing to ask the hard question of what is truly important in their life.
Both men and women experience work–family conflict but the difficulties are usually greater for women.

Women tend to experience more family–work conflict when there is a child at home less than three years of age.

Women also experience more family–work conflict when their spouse does not help with child rearing.

Women may also be more likely to take time off from work to care for a sick child than their working spouse.
Work Characteristics
- No. of hours worked
- Work schedule inflexibility
- Work stressors

Family Characteristics
- No. of children
- Age of children
- Family support

Work-Family Conflict
- Job-spouse conflict
- Job-parent conflict
- Job-homemaker conflict

Job Satisfaction

Marital Satisfaction

Life Satisfaction
COPING

- Coping is defined as the cognitive and behavioural efforts of individuals to manage taxing demands appraised as exceeding their personal resources (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984);
- It is the things people do to reduce harm from life’s stressors (Aryee, Luk, Leung, & Lo, 1999).
- Pearlin and Schooler (1978): coping referred to “things that people do to avoid being harmed by life strains”.
- The basic assumption of Pearlin & Scooler’s model was that people reacted to forces that they perceived as harmful.
COPING STRATEGIES

- Coping referred to people’s reactions to external life strains, with the aim of avoiding, preventing, or controlling emotional stress.
- Coping behavior can be exercised by:
  - Eliminating or modifying the conditions giving rise to difficulty.
  - Perceptually controlling the meaning of experience in a manner that neutralizes its problematic characteristics,
  - Keeping the emotional consequences of problems within manageable bounds.
Coping allows people to use various skills to manage the difficulties they face in life.

Coping resources are the material and/or psychological strength possessed by persons or families.

Coping resources can be used to manage, reduce or eliminate stress.
PERSONAL COPING

- According to the Conservation of Resources Theory (Hobfoll, 1989, 2001), when stress levels rise, individuals expend internal or external resources to manage the distress.
- Internal resources are resources that the person possesses; they encompass personal characteristics, such as efficacy, optimism and coping styles.
- External resources do not belong to the person but are available from his/her external environment.
Using personal coping with work–family conflict in an effort to manage conflicting work and family demands might be seen as relying on internal resources.

Because work–family conflict has been commonly grounded in the theories of role stress and inter-role conflict most previous studies of personal coping in this domain have examined the role of personal coping as a moderator variable in the relationship between work–family conflict and stress, wellbeing and health (Rotondo, Carlson, & Kincaid, 2003).
These studies typically addressed work–family conflict as a stressor, and demonstrated how various coping strategies can moderate the stress to strain relationship (e.g., Lapierre & Allen, 2006; Rotondo et al., 2003).

Effective coping styles, therefore, should also be associated with lower levels of work–family conflict. If an individual copes effectively, his or her work–family conflict should be lower because it is “under control” (Carver & Scheier, 1982; Rotondo et al., 2003).
LAZARUS & FOLKMAN
TYPOLOGY OF PERSONAL
COPING

1. PROBLEM SOLVING COPING: depicts active coping, and focuses on exerting control and resolving the stressful situation.

2. EMOTION-FOCUSED COPING: is passive coping and involves regulating emotions to make the stressful situation more tolerable.

- Adapting Lazarus and Folkman’s typology demonstrated mixed result:
  - Problem-focused coping has been found to decrease FIW but proved less effective in decreasing WIF.
Thus, individuals may have greater control and opportunity for positive change in the family domain than in the work environment (Rotondo & Kincaid, 2008).

Emotion-focused coping strategies, has been typically found less effective, as they were not positively related or even related at all to WIF and FIW conflict levels (Rotondo et al., 2003). Yet some studies (e.g., Rotondo & Kincaid, 2008) pointed to the superiority of emotion-focused coping under certain circumstances.
SOMECH & DRACH–ZAHAVY’S TYPOLOGY OF PERSONAL COPING

- A more refined and elaborated typology.
- Four strategies (each with two sub-categories) denoting behavioural aspects of coping that specify what individuals actually do at work and/or at home to cope with work–family conflict were identified:

1. Good enough at home/work – lowering the performance of family/work responsibilities to a less than perfect level;
2. **Super at home/work** – insisting on doing all family/work duties singlehandedly and perfectly;

3. **Delegation at home/work** – managing one’s own family/work duties by delegating some to others; and

4. **Priorities at home/work** – arranging family/work duties in order of priority, and undertaking only those with high priority.
Findings (Somech & Drach-Zahavy, 2007) showed that among the eight strategies:

- Super at work was associated with reduced FIW and WIF;
- Delegating at home and Prioritizing at home were associated with decreased WIF;
- Prioritizing at work decreased FIW.
Based on previous research (e.g., Behson, 2002; Kirchmeyer, 1993), increasing use of different types of coping strategy, represents a way for the employee to take control over his or her conflicting demands, and are therefore linked to reduced levels of work–family conflict.
Easing work–family conflict can be further understood from an organisational perspective, namely the organisation’s formal and informal role in attempting to become family–friendly.

**Formal** means the ways in which organisations can manage the situation in such ways as providing child–care assistance, flexible working hours, and family leave (Veiga, Baldridge, & Eddelson, 2004).

**Informal** refers to values and unspoken norms represented in the organisational culture (Lobel & Kossek, 1996).
1. **POLICIES**: cover the ways employees’ work and leave schedules are handled, including part-time work, job-sharing, flextime, and parental/family leave. Family-friendly policies often involve reducing the number of hours worked, changing the place where an employee’s work is done, or increasing flexibility in the employee’s work schedule.
2. **BENEFITS**: cover forms of compensation that protect against loss of earnings, payment of medical expenses and vacation, and providing personal time, or all of these.

3. **SERVICES**: includes on-site or near-site childcare centres, resource counselling and referral systems, sick leave and elder care programmes, and discounts and vouchers for a variety of services.

DR SA’ODAH AHMAD/FEM3104/JPMPK/FEM/UPM
Reviewing the literature that has examined the link between the use of organizational supports and work–family conflict revealed inconsistent results e.g., Eby et al., 2005; Hammer et al., 2005; Kossek & Nichol, 1992).

Most studies examined only one specific type of support at a time (e.g., Thomas & Ganster, 1995), as opposed to a wider variety, or “bundles” of supports (Perry–Smith & Blum, 2000).
Findings on the adoption of policies such as alternative work schedules have generally demonstrated a relationship between utilization of this support and decreased work–family conflict (Brough, O’Driscoll, & Kalliath, 2005).

Wallace and Young (2008) found that organizational supports were of little value to working mothers; fathers seemed to benefit more.
Somech and Drach-Zahavy (2006) found that while utilization of organizational supports did not mitigate managers’ work-family conflict, it was beneficial for non-managers.

To sum up, the literature review of either personal coping or organizational supports revealed mixed findings, but generally indicated the contribution of both to a lessening of work-family conflict.
WAYS TO COPE WITH WORK DEMANDS – PERSON’S PERSPECTIVE

- Establish Boundaries
  - Make a point of trying to keep your work and family lives separate.
  - Don't spend a lot of time talking about family activities at work, and don't try to resolve minor family-related issues by talking to your spouse or children on the phone from the workplace.
  - When you're at home, avoid rehashing your work day at the dinner table or when spending time with family members.
Make the Time

If you have a demanding job that requires long hours or extended travel, it can be difficult to find the time for family activities.

To ensure you're not neglecting your family, incorporate family time into your schedule when planning your week.

If you're traveling, schedule time to talk to family members by phone when you won't be interrupted.
- **Change Work Hours**
  - Look for opportunities to change your work hours so you can spend more time with family. For example, if you work in the evening, talk to your employer about switching to the day shift so you can be home with the family at night.
  - You may even need to consider looking for a new job if that is the only way to change your schedule.
Delegate

- If you operate your own business, look for ways to delegate work tasks so that you free up more time to spend with family.
- For example, consider hiring a manager to oversee parts of your operation.
- You could also outsource tasks you've been performing yourself like bookkeeping, marketing, managing payroll or making deliveries.
- **Reduce Work Hours**
  - If it's financially feasible, consider reducing the number of hours you work.
  - In a situation where both spouses work full time, explore the possibility of you or your spouse switching to part-time work.
  - This will likely require some financial belt-tightening, but you'll create a situation where at least one spouse can spend more time with your children.
REFLECTION

Our wife called to remind you that you're married, sir.

My Mommy & Daddy are always Soooper Busy at Work, they don't have time for me!