READINGS IN STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT AND BUSINESS ETHICS FROM ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVES

Edited by

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WORK – FAMILY BALANCE: AN ISLAMIC RESPONSE

Suhaimi Mhd Sarif
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ABSTRACT

This chapter attempts to response to work and family balance from an Islamic perspective so that both work and family can be balance to achieve ultimate accomplishment. In addressing this, both institutions if submit to the teaching of Islam, can ultimately accomplish the well being of people and society and the pleasure of Allah.

INTRODUCTION

There are increasing studies concerning the challenges of managing work and family responsibilities have been rife across many social science disciplines over the past 30 years. Downsizing, rightsizing, reengineering, outsourcing, mergers and acquisition were the ingredients of the late 20th century that further enhance to need of work-family balance. The increasing number of women workforce has inevitably arise greater need of work-family balance. This requires working mother to make a balance between the family obligations and organizational commitment. Both academics and practitioners already came to conclusion that striking work-family balance is crucial in maintaining employee's family obligations and organizational commitments (Buckingham & Coffman, 1999; Meyer & Allen, 1997). This situation is appropriate to include Islamic solution to work-family balance issue.

There are many ways a work-family balance can be achieved. One of the most popular ways is flexible working arrangement introduced by many modern organizations. This method is introduced after the increasing number of married women in the workplace. Women joined the workforce for many reasons; the most crucial one is to increase family income as financial burden of modern society has increased. Women participation in the workforce does not free women from traditional family responsibilities even though both husband and wife work. Even though flexible working hours may help reduce work-family imbalances, at least it could maintain employees' commitment to organizations. The following discussion talks about flexible working arrangements, women and men perception on work-family balance, commitments to organization, the use of technology for working mothers, myth of work-family balance, and the response of Islam on work-family balance.

FLEXIBLE WORKING ARRANGEMENTS

Managers introduced flexible working hours policy in the response to employees problems such as high rate turnover, absenteeism, and low productivity. However, the response to flexible working hours was not encouraged. Asian workers still bound to family obligations. For instance, the concern of Singaporean workers on family time was not at the expense of organizational cost in terms of cost, time and strain (Skitmore & Ahmad, 2003). Women workforce in Hong Kong also concerns about work-family balance but they are not able to really make a right balance (Aryee & Luk, 1996). In fact, flexible working hours may help create balance between work and family demands, but not for long-term solution. This arrangement is not always truly a worthwhile benefit across all types of works (Almer & Kaplan, 2000; Heiligers & Hingstman, 2000). Indeed, not all flexible working arrangement is worthwhile for women workers: both working mothers and career women.