

Evaluating Social Support, Work-Family Enrichment and Life Satisfaction among Nurses in Malaysia

Wan Edura Wan Rashid ¹, Mohamad Sahari Nordin ², Azura Omar ² and Izhairi Ismail²

¹ Universiti Teknologi MARA

² International Islamic University Malaysia

Abstract. The purpose of the present study was to validate the hypothesized interrelationships among the constructs of social support, work-family enrichment and life satisfaction among nurses of public hospitals in Malaysia. This study also examined the likely mediation effect of work-family enrichment on support-satisfaction relationship. The primary data collection tool for the quantitative study was a questionnaire which was administered to 689 nurses employed in public hospitals in Malaysia. A full structural modeling testing were used in SEM with AMOS 17 data-fitting program, supported the hypothesized relationship. The results established statistically substantial and significant path coefficients.

Keywords: social support, work-family enrichment and satisfaction

1. Introduction

Work and family signify two important components in the lives of most people [1,2]. Interestingly, work and family roles can produce significant impact on life satisfaction [3]. In fact, managing the intersection between work and family is one of the critical issues for both management practitioners and academics [4]. With regard to this matter, the last three decades have witnessed changes in the lives of men and women in three ways: 1) both men and women juggling work and family roles simultaneously; 2) the existence of dual-income families, single parents and a growing number of women in the workforce; 3) the attitudes and values of men and women towards other aspects of life such as religion, leisure and the general quality of life [5]. As a result, organizations face the challenge of executing practices that allow their employees to perform at work as well as function meaningfully in their homes. Organizations must give serious attention to the relationships between work and family roles and other related constructs including individual satisfaction. This is the possible solutions for organizations to attract and retain capable employees. Understanding the work-family balance is crucial in enabling employees to experience satisfaction in life. This understanding is also invaluable in identifying strategies pertaining to enhancing job satisfaction among employees as well as improving individual and organizational performance.

Thus, the overall objective of this study was to validate the hypothesized interrelationships among the constructs of social support, work-family enrichment and life satisfaction among nurses of public hospitals in Malaysia. In addition, the study examined the likely mediation effect of work-family enrichment on support-satisfaction relationship.

1.1. Theoretical Underpinning of the Study

Based on work-family enrichment theory [6] that promotes the positive effects of juggling work and family roles [7-9], this study will examine three constructs that have a causal link to one another. They are social support, work-family enrichment and satisfaction (Figure 1).

1.1.1 Social Support

The phenomenon of social support is paramount for nurses and patients. In this study, social support is divided into two categories, work domain (supervisors) and non-work domain (spouse, family members and friends). Social support has been identified as an important resource that can produce effective coping in the event of work and family conflict, and is regarded as a core factor in enhancing the physical and mental health of employees [10-14]. Noraini [15] highlighted that social support can directly enhance well-being, lessen the impact of stress on well-being and prevent psychological distress following a stressful experience. However, when social support is inadequate, it may lead to harmful effects on the health and wellbeing of individuals [16]. A study by Chevarie [17] found that social supports have implications for nurses' physical and emotional well-being. If nurses have adequate support, they are less stressed, experience lower level of frustration and have better morale. If the opposite occurs, it can lead to burnout and turnover. Additionally, nurses who have adequate support are able to provide better quality of service to patients and family members.

1.1.2 Work-Family Enrichment

Theory of work-family enrichment provides a clear picture of positive outcomes of combining work and family roles. While there maybe other possible explanation for work-family enrichment, the study focuses on the impact of social capital resources. According to Greenhaus & Powel [6], social capital resources generated from one role (work) can improve the quality of life in the other role (family) or vice versa. In this study, it is proposed that social capital resources are achieved when a nurse received social support at home or at work. For instance, if Maria receives the support she needs from her spouse following a traumatic event in her personal life, she may be able to manage an unpleasant situation at the work place. This helps her to maintain a good relationship with her co-workers. From this example, support that comes from the personal role can help to enhance the quality of life in the work role. A recently study [18] involving 161 employed women has shown this to be true. The findings revealed that support has a significant relationship with work-family enrichment.

1.1.3 Life Satisfaction

Life satisfaction outcomes are divided into three parts; job satisfaction, family satisfaction and well-being satisfaction. Based on work-family enrichment theory, if a person's work role is enhancing his family role, it seems logical to hypothesize that this may be related to an increase in satisfaction in one's family role. Similarly, if a person's family role is enhancing his work role, an increase in work satisfaction could be possible. Henessey [18] provided support to this claim, indicating that work-family enrichment has a positive relationship with both work and family satisfaction. Specifically, the author reported that women with higher levels of work-family enrichment are more likely to experience higher levels of work and family satisfaction. Grzywacz [19] proposed that work and family enrichment may help to strengthen social relationships, thereby providing a buffer against negative events and leading to improved health outcomes. Several researchers have also suggested that increased levels of work and family positive spillover may be related to both greater job satisfaction and greater family satisfaction [20-22]. However, no empirical evidence exists with regards to the relationship between work-family enrichment and well-being satisfaction.

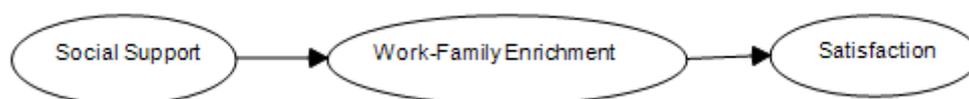


Fig 1: Hypothesized model

2. Methodology

A total of 710 questionnaires were distributed to married female nurses in public health care service in Malaysia. Although, the response rate was 100%, 21 questionnaires were later discarded because of missing data, Therefore, the effective response rate was approximately 97%. The sample size was deemed adequate for the application of structural equation modeling (SEM) to address the research objectives. The majority of

the respondents were Malay, diploma holders and above 40 years old. The majority has worked as nurses between 4 and 10 years.

This study adapted the measures used in previous studies. The measures of social support were adapted from the Sarason, Sarason, Shearin and Pierce's [23] shortened version of the Social Support Questionnaire. The Work-Family Enrichment and Family-Work Enrichment were assessed using two scales by Carlson et al. [24]. The measure of family satisfaction was adapted using a modified 5-item version of Brayfield and Rothe's [25] Job Satisfaction Scale. In this modified version, the word "work" has been replaced with the term "family life". Items for job satisfaction were assessed using the 3-item General Job Satisfaction subscale, which is part of the Job Diagnostic Survey (JDS) developed by Hackman & Oldham [26]. The Well Being Satisfaction, was adapted from the Overall Life Satisfaction scale developed by Quinn and Staines [27]. All items were measured using a six-point Likert-type scale (ranging from 1= strongly disagree to 6= strongly agree). All items were measured using a six-point Likert-type scale (ranging from 1= strongly disagree to 6= strongly agree). Later, the questionnaire was rigorously pilot tested on 100 respondents before the main data collection was performed. This pilot study was very important in ensuring more reliable data collected during the major survey with establishment of content validity. The respondents were invited to comments on the questionnaires and thus, their constructive comments provided a basis for refinement to the construct measures.

Using AMOS (version 17) the maximum likelihood estimation, the study tested the adequacy of the hypothesized models using structural equation modeling (SEM) approach.

3. Result

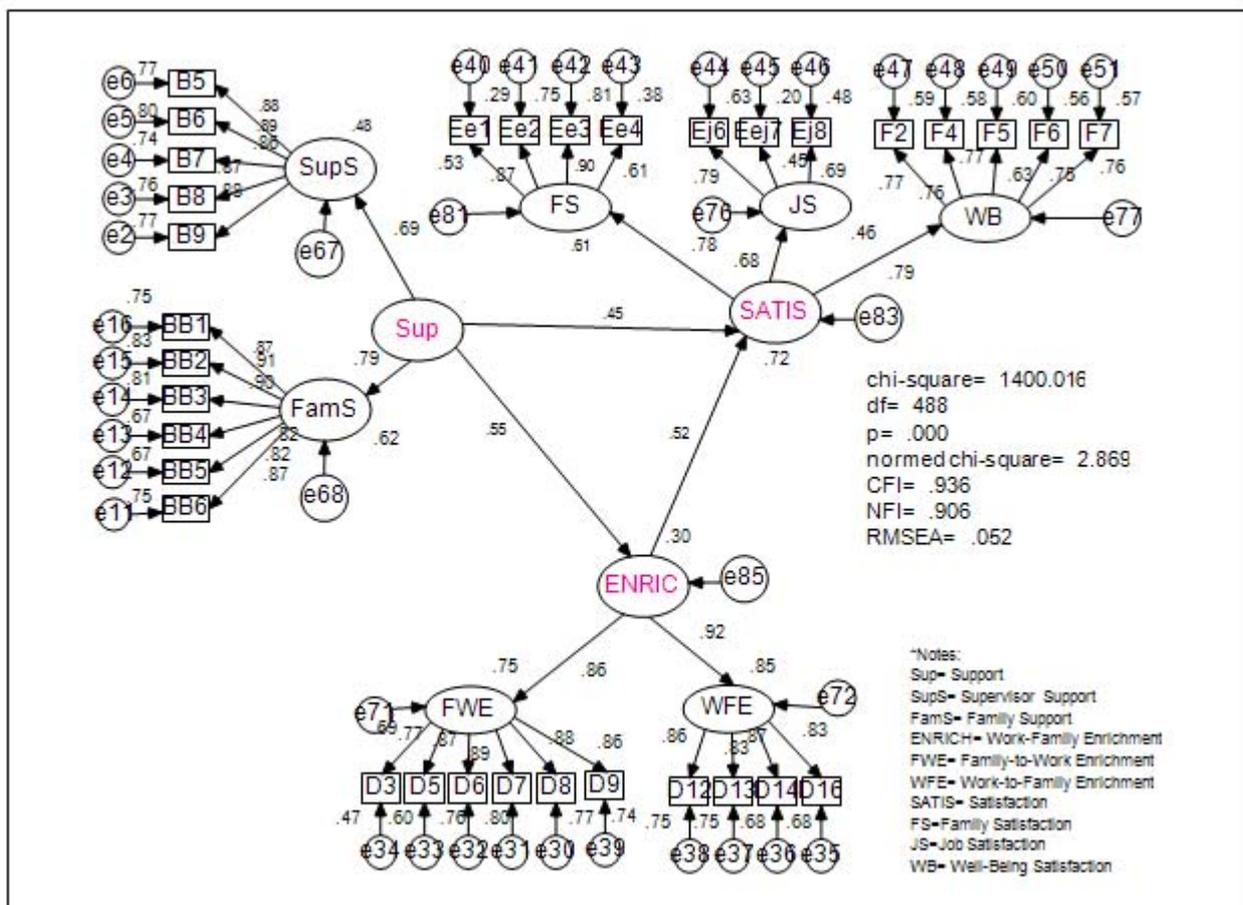


Fig. 2: Result of structural model

The results of the full fledged SEM (Figure 2), which used AMOS data-fitting program, supported the hypothesized relationships. Specifically, the maximum likelihood estimation of the model yielded the several noteworthy results, which collectively supports the adequacy of the model. The chi-square test of overall model fit resulted with a statistically significant discrepancy between the model and the data ($\chi^2 =$

1400.016, $p = .000$; CMIN/df = 2.869), however, the other overall fit statistics (RMSEA = .052; NFI = .906; CFI = .936) satisfied their respective thresholds deemed important in a good fitting model.

The analysis also produced statistically significant path coefficients, implying the following causal links: i) social support positively related to life satisfaction of employee, ii) social support positively related to work-family enrichment, iii) Work-family enrichment partially mediated the relationship between social support and life satisfaction, iv) social support however, exerted substantial direct effect on life satisfaction of employee. In addition the model was free from offending estimates and the directions of the estimates were theoretically justifiable. Finally, the parameter estimates were statistically significant at .05 level, and were of practical importance, since each standardized structural coefficient was larger than 0.2.

4. Discussions and Conclusions

The findings of the present study have expanded the existing body of knowledge on work-family enrichment in several ways. First, the data indicated that social support is directly influence and has significant effect on satisfaction outcomes such as well-being, family and job. In addition, the result is congruent with the earlier studies on social support [10-14], which found that social support has a strong relationship with satisfaction outcomes in enhancing the physical and mental health of a person. Second, the result provides empirical support for a positive relationship between social support and work-family enrichment. As Greenhaus and Powell (6) suggested, resources derived from either work or family role help in promoting work-family enrichment. The result is also similar to Hennessey's finding [18] that a person with a higher level of work-family enrichment will probably experience higher levels of support from their friends, family and co-workers. Third, the present study provides indications that an individual with higher levels of work-family enrichment are more likely to experience higher level of satisfaction towards wellbeing, job and family. This finding is consistent with the findings of previous studies [18] and assumptions [20,21] which suggest that increased levels of work and family enrichment may be related to greater satisfaction particularly on job and family matters.

However, this study has several limitations and requires further examination and additional research. First, this study has focused on married nurses with experiences in public health care service. Further research is needed to compare married nurses from public and private healthcare organizations for more rigorous result. Second, since this study only considered married nurses, it is unclear whether the analytical results can be generalized to unmarried nurses, male nurses and other profit-oriented sectors. Finally, the sample of this study was collected in Malaysia, generalizability to other countries might be limited due to cultural differences in managing work-family issues related to social support, work-family enrichment and satisfaction.

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