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The Influence of Work-Family Conflict and Family-Work Conflict on Well-Being: The Mediating Role of Coping Strategies

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Abstract

This research was conducted to gain an overview of the effects of work-family conflict, family-work conflict and coping strategies on the well-being of selected female respondents among the academic staff at University Teknologi MARA. They represent a group of highly educated respondents with heavy workloads who are expected to be able to manage and balance their well-being. This study also aims to determine the mediating effects of coping strategies in the relationships between work-family conflict, family-work conflict and women's well-being with the use of the self-determination theory as an underpinning theory. The data was collected from 140 respondents using systematic sampling and subsequently analysed using SEM-AMOS 21.0. This study was carried out to test the confirmatory model of work-family balance and coping strategies in the prediction of the well-being of women. It will be a beneficial guide and a contribution to existing knowledge in the field of human resource management when presented to academicians in public institutions of higher education.

Keywords: Coping Strategies, Family-Work Conflict, Married Working Women, Well-Being, Work-Family Conflict.

Introduction

The issue of work-family balance and women's well-being has continued to attract research attention worldwide. The well-being of working women is of increasing concern, as labor force participation among women continues to rise. Women attained global well-being when they demanded work, jobs and careers that have potential for development (Campione, 2008). Furthermore, being strongly involved in their jobs enhances women's well being (Sahu & Rath, 2003). The nature of the job and the working conditions of that women have also contribute to their psychological well being.

Towards the 21st century, the traditional family structure of the husband as the primary breadwinner and the wife as the homemaker has become less common as the number of women entering the labour force has increased. The erosion of the boundaries between work and family roles is brought about by structural changes within the organisations. The problem of integrating work and family became a social phenomenon when the conflicts resulted in unfavourable consequences affecting families, employers and employees (Parasuraman & Greenhaus, 1997).

For married working women, irrespective of the sector they are in, the age group they belong to, the number of children they have and their spouse's profession, it is very difficult to balance their work and personal lives (Delina & Raya, 2013). Nowadays, modernising trends such as the existence of the mobile phone application WhatsApp, with its whatsapp group feature, adds more conflict between work and family roles for working women. However, it is not clear how work-family conflict (hereinafter WFC), and family-work conflict (hereinafter FWC) may affect these women's well-being. In particular, it is not clear whether these 'effects' are directly or indirectly mediated through other variables.

The objective of this study is to examine the relationship between WFC/FWC and well-being among married working women. Although there is an accepted level of evidence indicating that WFC has a major influence in women's well-being, research done by O'Driscoll, Brough, and Kalliath (2004), however, found that neither WFC nor FWC produced any longitudinal effects. In other words, both variables failed to influence well-being over time.

In understanding women's well-being, this study is underpinned by the self-determination theory which is based on the concept that an individual who has the motivation to balance their lives will find a way to overcome the conflict between work and family. This study intends to use the self-determination theory as a framework to explore the effects of coping strategies as an important intervening variable between WFC/FWC and women's well-being. Therefore, this study also aims to examine the effects of coping strategies as a mediator variable between WFC/FWC and women's well-being.

Although previous research has found that WFC may act as a mediator between work and family related variables and individual well-being (Noor, 2010), studies investigating the mediator impact of coping strategies on the relationship between WFC/FWC and well-being have never been carried out. Therefore, the second objective of this study was to address this gap by investigating the role played by coping strategies as a mediator to the relationship between WFC/FWC and women's well-being.

An Overview of Previous Studies, Theoretical Discussion and Hypotheses Development

Well-being is a multi-dimensional phenomenon (Stiglitz, Sen & Fittoussi, 2009) and from a hedonistic approach, well-being can be defined in terms of pleasure attainment and a focus on happiness (Ryan & Deci, 2001). The hedonic approach relates to subjective well-being in terms of satisfaction (Diener, Suh, Lucas & Smith, 1999). In addition to that, it is also known as the psychological well-being as it describes the quality of life of a person (Srimathi & Kiran Kumar, 2010). A very happy person with a high level of satisfaction with life has a high level of subjective well-being (Albuquerque, Pedroso, Figueiredo & Matos, 2012). The well-being of employees has important implications to the individual, the organization and also society since happiness makes people more productive (Oswald, Proto & Daniel, 2015).

One of the factors that may influence well-being are WFC and FWC. These terms refer to the conflict between these domains when engaging in one role is more difficult because of the involvement in other role. Therefore, the amount of time and psychological resources an individual decides to commit to both domains will result in a balanced life (King, 2005). WFC is defined as “a form of inter-role conflict in which the role pressures from work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect” (Beutell & Greenhaus, 1982). The WFC may increase, if the individual commits more time or psychological resources to work. Furthermore, when flexibility is minimal and the amount of control the person has over a job is limited, conflict occurs (King, 2005).

In addition to that, Malaysian women with families revealed that an internal locus of control was negatively related to WFC and FWC (Noor, 2010). Conflict generally has a negative impact on work-to-family outcomes (Wayne, Musisca & Fleeson, 2004). According to researchers (Mesmer-Magnus & Viswesvaran, 2009), these outcomes are work domains, family domains and personal domains. Work domains including job burnout, poor job performance, intention-to-leave, and reduced organizational commitment (Netemeyer, Boles, & McMurrin, 1996). The stressors related to their work roles are more likely to increase feelings of WFC than FWC (Mesmer-Magnus & Viswesvaran, 2009). The three work stressors that are related to WFC are work variability, quantity of workload and frequency of stressful events (Fox & Dwyer, 1999).

In contrast, FWC increases if an individual decides to commit more resources to family than work (King, 2005). Conflicts that relate to family-to-work are reduced satisfaction in marital and family relationships, family role performances and family involvement (Mesmer-Magnus & Viswesvaran, 2009). Women experience FWC more than men (King, 2005). Stressors associated with family roles are more likely to cause feelings of FWC than WFC (Mesmer-Magnus & Viswesvaran, 2009). The three family stressors that link to FWC are marital tension, lack of help from spouse, and lack of child care (Fox & Dwyer, 1999). On the basis of the above discussion on WFC and FWC, we postulate that:

Hypothesis 1: WFC has a significant effect on well-being.

Hypothesis 2: FWC has a significant effect on well-being.

The self-determination theory assumes that humans are motivated by the degree of autonomy, or by their self-determination. Human’s motivation itself can take many forms based on its autonomy, either it is controlled or not (Ryan & Deci, 2001). From a psychological point of view, the self-determination theory asserts that the human behaviour and environment are related. Human behaviors are determined by the environment and most of the time what they decide in their life will cause them to behave in a certain way (Ryan & Deci, 2001).

Humans are said to experience an autonomous motivation when they are occupied with behaviors that are accepted, valued and considered to be significant personally (Litalien et al., 2017). Humans think that they are free to do anything and to behave in ways that will satisfy their desires (Ryan & Deci, 2001). This means that the self-determination theory assumes that a human’s autonomous motivations occur based on their individual perceptions of the reasons why something needs to be done and their own desire of doing it. The disengaging attempts to distance or stay away from a stressful situation is referred to as a coping strategy (Farran, Ammar, & Darwish, 2016).

In the context of WFC, FWC and well-being, the self-determination theory suggests that married working women who not only consider themselves as the perfect home managers but also endeavor to give full attention and commitment to their careers, are usually autonomously driven to accomplish their multiple roles (as a wife, mother, and employee) and perform well (Prendergast, 2008). Hence, they will try out various coping strategies to complete both their responsibilities at home and at work to balance their lives. Following the self-determination theory, the more there is an imbalance between work and family, the more they would find ways to cope with it and hence, they would enjoy a better well-being.

There are many strategies used by women to cope with WFC and FWC. In a qualitative research conducted by Gregory and Milner (2009), a group of middle-class women that were interviewed expressed that their coping strategies included sacrifice in many ways and that some of them are 'juggling' in life. The other examples of coping strategies shared were prioritising work, work role definition, using or refusing work-life policies and arrangements, taking time off, socializing, being problem oriented, avoiding, adapting, forming work-non work walls, getting family support and delegating (Shaffer, Joplin, & Hsu, 2011). Having said that, this research will test the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 3: Coping strategies will mediate the relationship between WFC and well-being. Specifically, (a) WFC is positively related to well-being; and (b) coping strategies are positively related to well-being.

Hypothesis 4: Coping strategies will mediate the relationship between FWC and well-being. Specifically, (a) FWC is positively related to well-being, and (b) coping strategies are positively related to well-being.

Methodology

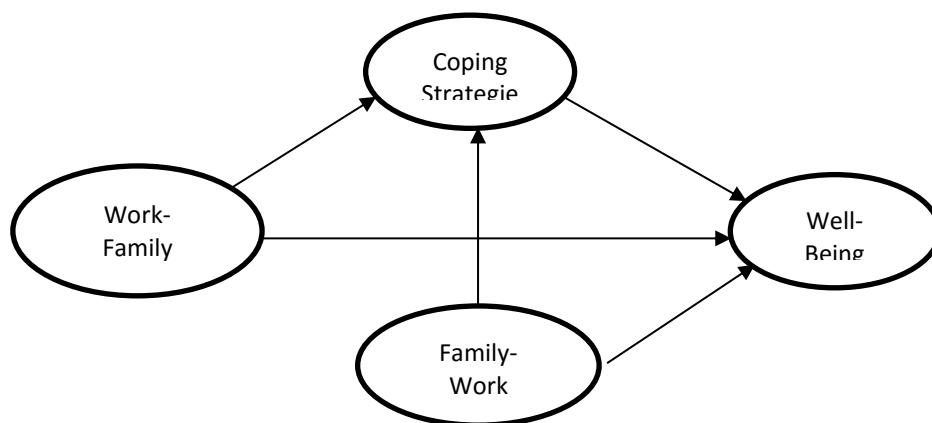


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

The current study focuses on four variables: work-family conflict, family-work conflict, well-being (WB), and coping strategies (CS) as per the framework in Figure 1. The aims of this study are to identify the significant relationships between WFC, FWC and CS towards women's well-being. Then, this study investigates the significant relationships between WFC and FWC towards WB where CS acts as a mediator.

The population of this study consists of UiTM lecturers who are specifically based in Pahang. They represent a group of highly educated respondents with a heavier workload when compared to academic staff at other public universities in Malaysia. The questionnaires were distributed to the lecturers in UiTM Pahang Jengka and Raub campuses. 140 out of 300 respondents were randomly selected for this study and returned the completed questionnaires. This sample is good enough to fulfil the minimum required sample size to analyse the data with Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) by Soper (2017). The online calculator used is based on scientific literature by Cohen (1988) that offers detailed guidance on how to use these variables to choose a minimum necessary sample size for regression users aiming to achieve a given level of statistical power. Across the social sciences, convention specifies 80 percent as the minimum acceptable power.

The questionnaire was adopted from (Aziz, Yazid, Tarmuji, & Samsudin, 2016) that have shown evidence of reliability and validity. The questionnaire consists of twenty-nine items that measure four variables and twenty questions on demographic factors. Work to family conflict (WFC), family to work conflict (FWC), and coping strategies (CS) were measured in twenty-two items in a brief statement followed by a ten-point Likert scale ranging from “never” (1) to “always” (10). Besides that, seven items measured well-being (WB) also in a brief statement followed by a ten-point Likert scale ranging from “strongly disagree” (1) to “strongly agree” (10).

The data collected were screened to make sure there is no missing data, no outliers and that it is normal for valid testing. Then, the Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was used to check the validity of the variables and compare the initial reliability of the scales. The data was analyzed using Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) to measure the unidimensionality, validity and reliability of the latent construct and path analysis of Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was done on the model fit and weights of constructs. The analysis results obtained were used to answer all four hypotheses that were previously constructed.

Analysis and Results

There were 140 respondents of the survey, of whom all were female lecturers. The main age group, which made up 80 percent of the respondents, were between 21 to 40 years old. Mostly, they were Malay and Muslim academicians and 88 percent of them held Masters Degrees. 66 percent of the respondents were married and 77 percent of them had more than 13 hours of workload per week. 31.4 percent of them responded that their spouse always helped with the household chores. There were 35 percent of respondents without children, 19.3 percent of respondents with 1 child and 15.7 percent were with 3 children. The biggest percentage of respondents comprising of 30 percent sent their children to the day care centre. About 28 percent of them spent more than 5 hours with their children. The majority of the respondents, 95.7 percent did not employ a maid.

Reliability and Validity of the Measurement Items

Table 1: KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.928
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	5757.653
	Df	561
	Sig.	.000

Table 2: Results of Factor Analysis and Reliability Analysis

	Factor			
	CS	WFC	FWC	WB
Restructure work.	.648			
Giving priority only to urgent work.	.584			
Cut down on lunch time.	.561			
Work during travel time.	.543			
Take work home.	.515			
Avoid all time wasters.	.434			
My job produces strain that too hard to fulfill family duties.		.789		
Things I wanted to do at home could not be done because of the demand of my work.		.768		
The amount of time spent at work makes it difficult to fulfill family responsibilities.		.759		
My job makes me feel too tired to do the things that need my attention at home.		.708		
Job worries or problems distract me when I am at home.		.669		
My job reduces my energy for home activities.		.590		
Due to work-related duties, I have to make changes to my plans for family activities.		.587		
The demands from my work interfere with my home and family life.		.526		
My home life interferes with my responsibilities at work.			.868	
The demands from my family members interfere with work-related activities .			.846	
Activities and chores at home prevent me from getting the amount of sleep needed to do my job well.			.834	
Things I wanted to do at work could not be done because of the demand from my family members.			.820	
Family-related strain interferes with my ability to perform good job-related duties.			.813	
I have to put off some tasks at work because of demands for my time at home.			.794	
Responsibilities at home reduces the effort to devote myself to work.			.792	
Personal or family worries and problems distract me when I am at work.			.708	
In most ways, my life is close to my ideal.				.880
So far, I have gotten the important things I want in my life				.877
The conditions of my life are excellent.				.869
Most days, I am enthusiastic about my job.				.815
All things considered, I am satisfied with my family life.				.756

All things considered, I am satisfied with my current job.				.705
Most days, I am enthusiastic about my family.				.690
% of Variance (77.714%)	12.348	7.898	4.701	3.687
Eigen values	4.198	2.685	1.598	1.253
Reliability (Cronbach's Alpha)	0.854	0.969	0.969	0.960
Mean value	4.410	4.529	3.774	5.565
Standard Variation	2.433	2.148	2.070	2.232

Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization

We have performed an EFA to find out the minimum number of factors that have maximum variance in the data collected. The KMO value of greater than 0.6 indicates sample adequacy. The KMO value indicates that the 29-item sample was adequate for factor analysis (KMO measure = 0.928). Bartlett's test of sphericity showed a significance or p-value <0.05 meaning that the questions are correlated, and we can proceed with further analysis. There are four factors with Eigen values between 1.253 – 16.689. Referring to the Eigen values given, 77.714% of the variance could be explained. The normality of this study's variables was established by evaluating the data distributions for skewness and kurtosis. Based on the results of these tests, the histograms for the independent variables have normal distributions.

Next, the Varimax rotation method was used to produce the matrix that contains the coefficients or loading factors which represent the correlation between the factors and variables. The results show that all items are genuine as they have a capacity of more than 0.30 at only one factor. The genuine variable factor 1 consists of six items with a load factor between 0.434 - 0.648, factor 2 is made up of eight items with a load factor between 0.526 - 0.789, factor 3 consists of eight items with factor loadings between 0.708 - 0.868 and factor 4 consists of seven items with factor loadings between 0.690 – 0.880. To fulfil the purpose of this study, these four factors are encoded with new names. Factor 1 is encoded as Coping Strategies, factor 2 as WFC, factor 3 as FWC and factor 4 as Well-Being.

Confirmatory Factor Analyses

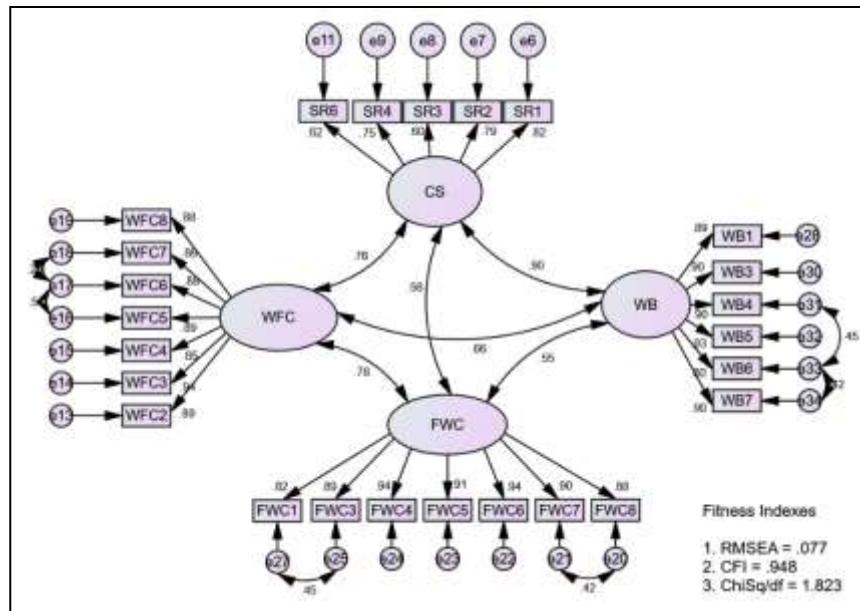


Figure 2: Factor loading for all items of the respective constructs

Name of Category	Goodness-of-fit Measures	Acceptable Value	Index Value
Absolute fit	RMSEA	< 0.08	0.077
Incremental fit	CFI	> 0.90	0.948
Parsimonious fit	ChiSq/df	< 3.00	1.823

Table 3: Goodness-of-Fit Indices

Table 3 indicates that the goodness-of-fit indices of the proposed model of well-being fit the data reasonably well as confirmed by the RMSEA = 0.078, CFI = 0.948 and ChiSq/df = 1.823.

Table 4: The CFA Report for every construct in the model

Constructs	Item	Factor Loading	CR (minimum 0.6)	AVE (minimum 0.5)
WFC	WFC2	0.89	0.962	0.783
	WFC3	0.94		
	WFC4	0.85		
	WFC5	0.89		
	WFC6	0.88		
	WFC7	0.86		
	WFC8	0.88		
	FWC	FWC1		
FWC3		0.89		
FWC4		0.94		
FWC5		0.91		
FWC6		0.94		
FWC7		0.90		
FWC8		0.88		
CS		SR1	0.82	0.842
	SR2	0.79		
	SR3	0.60		
	SR4	0.75		
	SR6	0.62		
	WB	WB1	0.89	
WB3		0.90		
WB4		0.90		
WB5		0.93		
WB6		0.8		
WB7		0.9		

The Composite Reliability (CR) for all factors ranged from 0.842 to 0.967. The results indicate that internal consistency was achieved because all CR values are greater than 0.6 (see

Table 4). Convergent validity was assessed using the Average Variance Extracted (AVE). The convergent validity of items were confirmed by the sufficiently large factor loadings ranging from 0.521 to 0.806. The results indicate that the measurement model was achieved because all values of AVE exceeded 0.50. Confirmatory factor analyses successfully validated the items used to measure the WFC, FWC, CS and WB.

Structural Equation Modelling

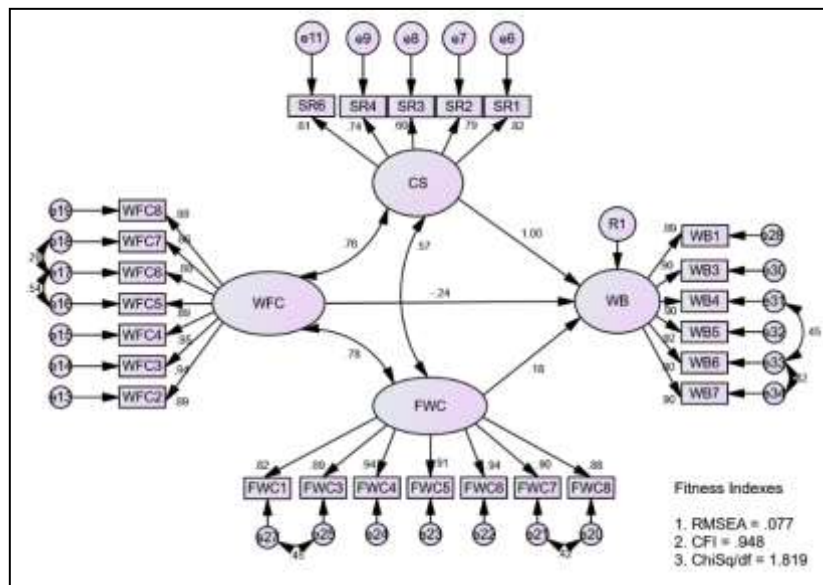


Figure 3: The standardized path coefficients between constructs (direct relationship)

Table 5: The Standardized Regression Weights and Its Significance

				Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Results
H1:	WB	<---	WFC	-.239	.117	-2.051	.040*	Significant
H2:	WB	<---	FWC	.184	.090	2.040	.041*	Significant

Notes: N=140; *Significant at the p<0.05

Figure 3 and Table 5 show the regression path coefficients of the direct relationship between constructs. The results show that there is a significant relationship between WFC and WB, and between FWC and WB. This indicates that the influence of WFC is significantly negative for WB ($\beta = -0.239$, $p < 0.05$) with an R^2 value of 0.76. Besides that, the influence of FWC on WB is also significantly positive with R^2 value of 0.18 ($\beta = .184$, $p < 0.05$). Therefore, hypothesis 1 and hypothesis 2 are supported. With regards to the first study objective, the results indicate that both WFC and FWC have positive relationship with WB.

Testing the Mediation Effects

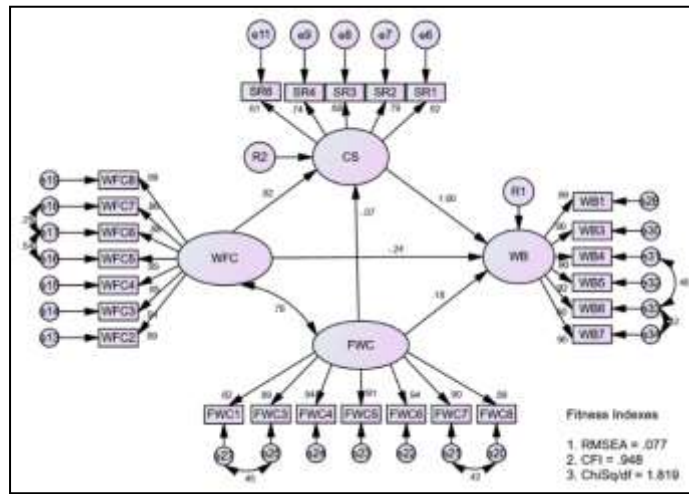


Figure 4: The Standardized Path Coefficients between Constructs

Table 7: Testing Coping Strategies as a Mediator in the Relationship between WFC and WB.

	Standardized (β)	P-value	Results
WFC \rightarrow CS (a)	.690	***	Significant
CS \rightarrow WB (b)	1.167	***	Significant
WFC \rightarrow WB (c)	-.239	.040*	Significant
(a) x (b)	0.805		
(a) x (b) > (c)	Mediation occurs		

Notes: N=140; *Significant at the $p < 0.05$, *** Significant at the $p < 0.01$

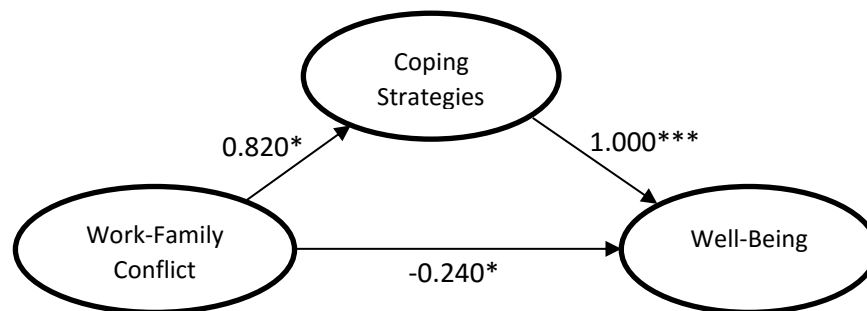


Figure 5: The Standardized Regression Weights for the Model

As can be seen in Table 7 and Figure 5, the results show that the influence of WFC on CS is significantly positive with R^2 value of 0.820 ($\beta=0.690$, $p < 0.01$). The results also indicate that the influence of CS on WB is significantly positive with R^2 value of 1.000 ($\beta = 1.167$, $p < 0.01$) and the relationship between WFC and WB is significantly negative with R^2 value of -0.240 ($\beta=-0.239$, $p < 0.05$). The results of the mediation effect in Table 6 and Figure 5 indicate that CS does mediate the relationship between WFC and WB. Thus, the type of mediation here is partial mediation

since the direct effect is still significant after the mediator enters the model. Therefore, hypothesis 3 was supported.

Table 8: Testing Coping Strategies as a Mediator in the Relationship between FWC and WB

	Standardized (β)	P-value	Results
FWC \rightarrow CS (a)	-.063	.534	Not Significant
CS \rightarrow WB (b)	1.167	***	Significant
FWC \rightarrow WB (c)	.184	.041*	Significant

Notes: N=140; *Significant at the $p < 0.05$, *** Significant at the $p < 0.01$

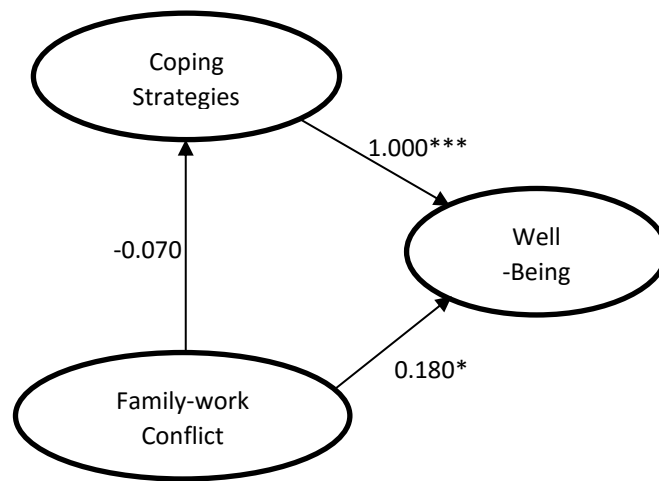


Figure 6: The Standardized Regression Weights for the Model

As can be seen in Table 8 and Figure 6, the association between CS and WB is significantly positive with R^2 value of 1.000 ($\beta=1.167$, $p < 0.01$). Meanwhile, the relationship between FWC and WB is also significant positive with R^2 value of 0.180 ($\beta=0.184$, $p < 0.05$). However, the relationship between FWC and CS was not significant with R^2 value of -0.070 ($\beta=-0.063$, $p=0.534$). The results of the mediation effect in Table 8 and Figure 6 indicate that CS does not mediate the relationship between FWC and WB. Therefore, hypothesis 4 was not supported.

Discussion

The major objectives of this study were to determine the relationship among WFC, FWC and WB, as well as to identify the indirect relationship between those relationships through CS as a mediator. Therefore, this study has examined the effects of WFC and FWC on women's well-being and testing the mediating role that is played by coping strategies on the relationship between WFC / FWC and women's well-being using SEM-AMOS. Consistent with previous studies (Kelly et al., 2014; Noor, 2010; Sarwar, 2013), the results of this study showed that there were significant relationship between WFC, FWC and well-being. This finding suggests that women who face the WFC and FWC will experience impaired well-being. Therefore, hypothesis 1 and hypothesis 2 were supported.

Also, consistent with the self-determination theory, the results showed that coping strategies had significant indirect effects on the relationship between WFC and well-being. Specifically, coping strategies partially mediated the relationship between WFC and well-being. It implies that when women experience WFC, they will seek strategies to cope with the conflict which in turn will enhance their well-being. The results indicate that for married working women with suitable coping strategies, their well-being increased despite an increase in WFC. Therefore, hypothesis 3 was supported.

Contrary to what was expected, the results revealed that there was a positive relationship between FWC and well-being. This result, however, is consistent with previous findings that the effect of WFC on impaired well-being is greater than the effect of FWC (O'Driscoll, Michael, 2004). The current data also provided no support for the direct association between FWC and coping strategies. Due to the lack of significant association between FWC and coping strategies, the H4 was not supported in the present study. In sum, a total of four hypotheses relationships were tested in this study, in which the empirical analysis shows support for three of four hypotheses proposed.

The findings of this study have several implications. First, the results provide some support to the idea that imbalance between work and family will be experienced by most married working women regardless of their employment status (Adisa, Osabutey, & Gbadamosi, 2016; Tabassum, 2017). These findings, therefore, provide some support to the self-determination theory. Current studies have found that WFC encourages efforts to resolve conflicts using specific strategies, which in turn enhances women's well-being. In addition, this study adds to the body of knowledge by identifying the coping strategies used by married working women, particularly among academicians in solving the imbalance of work and family.

Second, the findings of this study also provide some support related to FWC. As compared to the negative effects of WFC, this study found that FWC had a positive impact on women's well-being. The probable reason for this finding may be due to dual-earning couples who both have a mutual understanding of their partner's aspirations, values and concerns, resulting in a shared accommodation system. This system allows married women to get help from their husbands in managing household chores and caring for children (Boyles & Shibata, 2009). Hence, future researchers should include social support (such as spouse's social support, family support, neighbourly support, and community support) as mediator variables of the relationship between FWC and women's well-being.

There are some limitations in the study therefore these results need to be supported by further studies. One of the most significant issues pertains to the importance of the cultural context. Due to time and cost constraints, our research was only carried out at Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Pahang Branch where our respondents were women academician staffs. Indeed, there have been relevant differences demonstrated between the workload of UiTM lecturers and the workload of lecturers at other public institutions of higher education in Malaysia. Most of our respondents have a workload of between 12 to 24 hours per week compared to lecturers in other public universities who have a workload of less than 10 hours in a week. This may be the reason why WFC to has a negative impact on women's well-being. Therefore, generalizing our results to other cultural contexts should be done with caution. In order to generalize the result obtained, it is highly recommended that the sample should be taken from lecturers from UiTMs throughout Malaysia.

Conclusion

It is clear that in order to improve well-being, individuals and organizations must continue to work to alleviate WFCs. In order to improve work-to family conflicts, the organisation should intervene in employee matters, for example by conducting interviews and providing support groups especially for working couples (Yu, Wang & Zhang, 2017). The organisation should help them to cope with the job requirements and help them evade depression, stay healthy and perform well in the organisation. Prominently, it is worth it to emphasize the role of non-work social support that married working women can rely on such as elderly parents and domestic helpers to ease family tensions (Lo Presti, D'Aloisio, & Pluviano, 2016). Married working women will eventually benefit from the extra helping hands that they receive. Since the coping strategies used are dependent on environmental factors (Farran et al., 2016), it is important that women work on trying different strategies to achieve well-being. It is encouraged for women to try positive strategies (such as planned problem solving, positive reappraisal, and seeking social support) in dealing with work-family imbalances, as these have been proven to improve women's well-being (Farran et al., 2016). In sum, this study has achieved all the research objectives and tested all the research hypotheses..

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