



## Humanomics

Management and supervisory support as a moderator of work-family demands and women's well-being: A case study of Muslim female academicians in Malaysia

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### Article information:

To cite this document:

Meguellati Achour, Shahidra Binti Abdul Khalil, Bahiyah Binti Ahmad, Mohd Roslan Mohd Nor, Mohd Yakub Zulkifli Bin Mohd Yusoff, (2017) "Management and supervisory support as a moderator of work-family demands and women's well-being: A case study of Muslim female academicians in Malaysia", Humanomics, Vol. 33 Issue: 3, pp.335-356, <https://doi.org/10.1108/H-02-2017-0024>

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# Management and supervisory support as a moderator of work–family demands and women’s well-being

Management  
and  
supervisory  
support

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## A case study of Muslim female academicians in Malaysia

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### Abstract

**Purpose** – This study aims to examine the relationship of work–family demands with employees’ well-being, and the role of management/supervisory support in this relationship. The following hypotheses were proposed: work–family demands would be negatively related to employees’ well-being; management/supervisory support would moderate the relationship of work–family demands with employees’ well-being.

**Design/methodology/approach** – The researchers used 250 working female academicians as respondents, working in the research universities in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Their ages ranged from 30 to 60 years.

**Findings** – The findings of the present study proved that the work–family demands were negatively associated with employees’ well-being. Results also revealed that management and supervisory support strengthens the relationship between work–family demands and employees’ well-being. Thus, management and supervisory support plays an important role in balancing work demands and family roles and also in increasing working female academicians’ well-being.

**Originality/value** – In this study, management and supervisory support was found to be directly related to well-being, including life satisfaction, job satisfaction and family satisfaction. However, the direct relationship between management/supervisory support and well-being was positive and significant. This study also found that management/supervisor support reduced work–family conflict and work–family



The authors would like to thank a Research and Development Division at Academy of Islamic Studies for financial assistance to prepare this article. The grant provided to the authors under research project **RP028B-16HNE** is highly appreciated.

demands. Also, supervisory and management support was found to have a significant and positive relationship with well-being. Given these findings, supervisory and management support plays a very important role as a moderator of work–family demands and in developing and improving well-being in working women.

**Keywords** Supervisory support, Well-being, Work–family conflict, Management support, Work–family demands

**Paper type** Research paper

### Introduction

Work–family conflict (WFC) is a widespread phenomenon of modern life in the twenty-first century, especially in meeting the demands of new economic changes. Globalisation and technological invention have brought about change in the way work is done, and when and where it is performed. It simultaneously affects the life of employees and tends to develop WFC, as the demands of both increase (Hill *et al.*, 2004) and are incompatible in some respects (Samsinar *et al.*, 2010). Globalisation has affected the family as more women are now entering into the labour force (Bahira, 2010), meaning there are more dual-career families (Samsinar *et al.*, 2010). The participation of women in employment may be owing to educational improvement (Irwan and Nor Azaian, 2011). As more women are involved in paid work, there is the propensity for them having less time to spend with family. Subsequently, the discussion on WFC becomes a significant subject for the present environment.

WFC as defined by Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) and Kahn *et al.* (1964) is a type of inter-role conflict in which the role demands from work or family are mutually unsuited in some respect. According to Kahn *et al.* (1964), a predetermined or expected role results from the expectations of others about accurate behaviour in a particular position. Conflict of the role is described as the psychological strain that is brought about by conflicting pressures of role. Both work and family domains have their demands and problems and can result in either work interfering with family life, or vice versa (Aryee *et al.*, 1999; Frone *et al.*, 1997). Such demands include long working hours; extensive, irregular or inflexible work hours; office work overload; extensive travel; unsupportive supervisors and organisation; household work; and matters related to children (Irwan and Nor Azaian, 2011; Achour *et al.*, 2015).

The conflict that employees may face from the demands of work and family could be time-based, strain-based and behaviour-based (Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985). According to Siti Aisyah *et al.* (2011), time-based conflict occurs when the time demand of one role is incompatible with those of another. Strain-based conflict occurs when strain experienced in one role intrudes and interferes with participation in another role, and behaviour-based conflict occurs when behaviour patterns appropriate to one domain are inappropriate in another. She explained these conflicts with examples. Working overtime forces cancellation of family outings, while the stress of tending to a sick child affects one's ability to concentrate at work. Behaviour-based conflict is described as the incompatibility of emotional restrictions at work with the openness expected by family members.

WFC commonly demonstrates negative impacts. It is considered a general difficulty faced by the majority of workers in the world that creates negative outcomes such as stress, anxiety, depression, loss of control, dissatisfaction, absenteeism, tardiness, turnover, decrease in productivity and insufficient personal time (Holbeche and McCartney, 2002; Voydanoff, 2004a, 2004b; Siti Aisyah *et al.*, 2011; Irwan and Nor Azaian, 2011). Allen *et al.* (2000) claimed WFC as one of the main stressors at the workplace in the USA.

All these effects contribute to the employee's well-being (Holbeche and McCartney, 2002; Greenhaus *et al.*, 2003; Siti Aisyah *et al.*, 2011). Hence, support from different parties such as a spouse, children, colleagues and supervisors is vital to assist the employees to perform their job and responsibility properly either in the workplace or at home. Both the availability and the quality of social support are important social assets for individual adjustment and well-being. Social support has consistently been related to increased health and well-being (Cohen, 1988; House *et al.*, 1988; Samsinar *et al.*, 2010; Wan Edura *et al.*, 2012).

Therefore, this study aims to analyse the role of management and supervisory support as a moderator of work–family demands in female academicians' well-being. The research examines the relationship between work–family demands and female academicians' well-being. The study also examines the moderating effect of the management and supervisory support on the relationship between work–family demands and well-being.

## Literature review

### *Work–family conflict and variables*

Previous studies indicated that conflict between work and family demands is higher for women compared to men because women spend more time on work and family activities simultaneously (Frone *et al.*, 1992; Hammer *et al.*, 1997). This happens because women are still principally responsible for the home and family even if she is working (Noor, 2004).

Women normally turn to female-typed occupations to minimise conflict with family roles, as these occupations tend to be more time-flexible. However, status enhancements in these occupations are sometimes more difficult to attain (Moore and Gobi, 1995). In a research in the UK, commitment to family responsibilities was named as a common barrier to women's advancement to senior levels among the managers and CEO (Lyness and Thompson, 1997). In most Western countries, teaching is considered a female profession, particularly in elementary level (Ruijs and Leather, 1993). However, university teaching and administration are domains mostly reserved for males (Ruijs and Leather, 1993). Apart from limiting the career commitment, some women tackle the work demands by opting not to marry or have children (Elisabeth, 2003). This signifies that family demands such as marital status, the number of children and age of the youngest child influence the women's employment pattern, as proven in a study carried out in Norway (Elisabeth, 2003).

The studies of relationship between gender and work–family balance as reported by (Lyness and Thompson, 1997) have mixed results, with some studies reporting greater WFC for female managers than male managers (Gutek *et al.*, 1991) and other studies not finding significant gender differences in work–family balance (Hill *et al.*, 2001; Tausig and Fenwick, 2001) or WFC (Lyness and Thompson, 1997; Siti Aisyah *et al.*, 2011).

Apart from gender, variables that have been studied and discovered to have a relation with WFC are work overload, work hours and work schedules. As high role overload implies that one has too much to undertake in an insufficient period, it may lead to a psychological preoccupation with unfinished tasks even while responding to the demands of another role (Aryee *et al.*, 1999). Hence, work overload and parental overload have been reported to have a significant relation with WFC (Frone *et al.*, 1997). Long working hours also lead to WFC as reported among medical doctors (Phil *et al.*, 2000; Elisabeth, 2003). Hence, reduced working hours is a common preference reported by the respondents, as it facilitates work–family balance and helps reduce WFC (Phil *et al.*, 2000; Elisabeth, 2003).

In terms of family characteristics, Huang *et al.* (2004) found that WFC has a positive correlation with the number and ages of dependent children. However, another study in Malaysia reported that there is no significant relationship between prevalence of conflict

and studied family characteristics, namely, number of children, childcare arrangement and presence of children aged 7-24 years (Irwan and Nor Azaian, 2011).

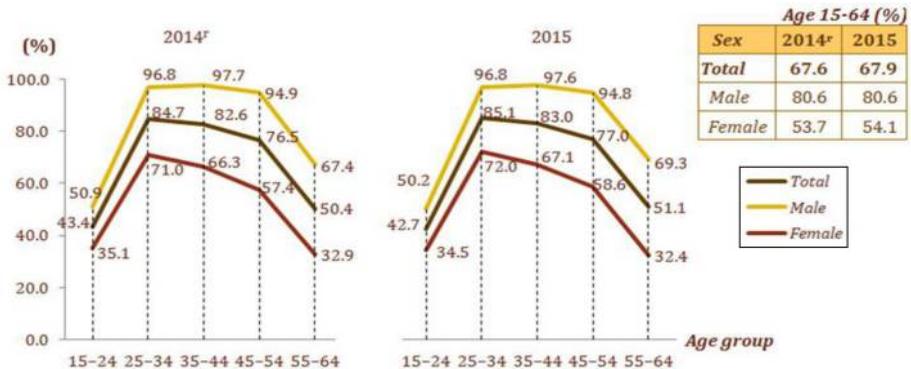
*Work-family conflict: the case of Malaysia*

The Malaysian culture does not impede females from joining a workplace. Its gender relations and the cultural set up are unique and conducive for an increment of female participation and achievement in labour.

The first Malaysian Family Life Survey (MFLS-1) and fourth Malaysian Population and Family Survey (MPFS-4) conducted by the National Population and Family Development Board (NPFDB) disclosed that between 1978 to 2004, there has been a significant increase in the proportion of working women in formal sectors such as professional, technical, clerical and sales workers. This number is expected to increase as the female participation in labour in Malaysia is increasing year by year. According to the Department of Statistics Malaysia, there was an escalation in the number of women participating in labour in as shown in Figure 1. In 2015, the percentage of female participation in labour increased from 53.7 per cent in 2014 to 54.1 per cent in 2015. From the figure, the highest employment of women ranged from the ages of 25 to 34 years in 2014 and 2015.

Married Malaysian women who have taken the initiative to claim a role outside the home may be experiencing difficulties in coping with paid (workplace) and unpaid (domestic chores) work. Although Malaysian men may be supportive of their wives working because of extra family income, they might not accept an equal share of household tasks. Several studies indicated that Malaysian women still bear the major responsibility for doing most household tasks and experience varying levels of WFC (Rahmah and Fatimah, 1999; Roziah, 2003; Noor and Rahamah, 1996; and Noor, 1999). A study on female Malaysian operators, clerks, secretaries, nurses and physicians found that physicians experienced the greatest intensity of the work-to-family conflict. However, operators experienced the greatest intensity of family-to-work conflict (Aminah, 2005).

In studies conducted on married working women in Malaysia, women not only experienced WFC (Fatimah, 1985; Aminah, 1995) but WFC was shown to lead significantly to lower job satisfaction and life satisfaction (Aminah, 1996a, 1996b). WFC also significantly leads to lower family satisfaction (Aminah, 1996a). The findings of Aminah (1996a) and other studies conducted on 86 female researchers (Aminah, 1995) and 100 professional women (Fatimah, 1985) showed that married working women in Malaysia experience WFC.



**Figure 1.**  
Labour force participation rate by sex and age group, Malaysia, 2014<sup>a</sup> and 2015

A more recent study conducted in Malaysia reported that ethnicity, age and employment are the main factors related to the prevalence of WFC among working mothers in Malaysia (Irwan and Nor Azaian, 2011). Chinese and Indian mothers are more likely to have WFC compared with Malay mothers. Mothers in their 30s are more likely to have a WFC as do those working in the formal sector. Chinese and Indians in their 30s have the highest probability of having a conflict, with the probability of 0.6 and 0.4, respectively. In other words, for every ten working Chinese mothers aged between 30 and 39 years, on average six of them will experience WFC. Moreover, for every ten working Indian mothers, on average four will experience WFC. However, type of occupation, number and ages of children and type of childcare arrangement do not have a significant relationship/association with the prevalence of conflict.

#### *Role of management and supervisory support on employees' well-being*

Social support to female employees is vital to assist them to manage the conflict that arises from work and family demands. Social support can be defined as an informal social network that provides individuals with expressions of emotional concern or empathy, practical assistance, informational support or appraisal (Samsinar *et al.*, 2010). WFCs create some problems for family members, which can also affect work demands. Work for women at home can create behaviour-based conflict, as the pressure to complete work tasks is likely to conflict with demands for attention from the spouse and/or children. Therefore, for most women, help is acquired from husbands, children and housemaids. At work, assistance and support are necessary from the supervisors, co-workers and management or organisational policies (Samsinar *et al.*, 2010).

Several studies found that WFC is more prevalent than family–work conflict (Jeffrey *et al.*, 2004; Siti Aisyah *et al.*, 2011), and that the role of supervisor and management is very important to facilitate employees in delivering better service and achieving satisfaction in family and job and thus increase well-being (Wan Edura *et al.*, 2012). A few studies found that supervisory support is an important source of social support in coping with problems associated with WFC (Anderson *et al.*, 2002; Burke and Greenglass, 1999; Duxbury and Higgins, 1994; Thomas and Ganster, 1995). Some researchers believe that the well-being of a family lies largely in the hands of high-level supervisors (Rodgers and Rodgers, 1989). In a preliminary research, it is shown that the more employees perceive their work environment as family-supportive, the less they experience WFC (Laurent *et al.*, 2008).

Supervisor support means that managers provide emotional and instrumental support to workers on balancing job and family responsibilities. Management support can be defined as employee's perception towards the value that the organisation contributes and to what extent the organisation is concerned with its own employees' well-being (Eisenberger *et al.*, 1997; Lynch *et al.*, 1999). House (2003) views supervisor's social support as involving four important psychosocial aspects, namely, emotional support (esteem, trust, affect, concern and listening), appraisal support (affirmation, feedback, social comparison), informational support (advice, suggestions, directives, information) and physical support (aid-in-kind, money, labour, time and environmental modification). Other than that, family-supportive supervisors engage in a variety of behaviours such as providing instrumental support, role modelling and "creative" work–family actions that should increase employees work–family balance (Greenhaus *et al.*, 2012). This support may increase employees' predictability, purpose and hope while handling upsetting and threatening situations in the workplace (Mansor *et al.*, 2003; Simpson, 2000).

Also, one of the major management practices and support systems that have the propensity to reduce work–life conflict is flexible or alternative work schedules (J.D. Nixon, undated, EEO Trust, 2006; Conger, 1998; Irwan and Nor Azaian, 2011). Policies such as

flexible work can allow individuals to integrate between work and family demands that lead to work–family balance. Many organisations believe that a flexible work arrangement helps their employees to overcome the problem of conflict between their work and their family (Almer *et al.*, 2003; Cohen and Single, 2001; Hill *et al.*, 2001; Meyer, 1997).

Apart from that, family-friendly policies, such as job sharing, unpaid family leave, on-site childcare, support group for working parents and others, can promote work–family balance (Rozanti and Salmiah, 2014). Studies revealed that employees are increasingly turning to organisations with greater family-oriented benefits, as it evidently has increased life satisfaction and organisational commitment and reduced absenteeism and turnover intention (Samsinar *et al.*, 2010).

Most previous research on supervisor support and work–family outcomes has been based on general measures of emotional support, as opposed to the identification of specific supervisor behaviours that are supportive of the family role (Kossek *et al.*, 2007). Also, based on a review of the literature, we conclude that there is a lack of measures of behavioural supervisor support. Given that this measure is not specific to support the family role, we still see a need to provide management with prescriptive information about what supervisors should do to be more supportive of workers with work–family demands. Hence, more research is needed to develop measures that enable researchers to assess supervisor support for the family, distinctive from work–family culture and climate (Hammer *et al.*, 2009).

In this study, as shown in Table I, supervisor/management support consists of two main dimensions and focuses on measuring management/supervisor support especially from manager/supervisor in the workplace. First, supervisor support consists of seven items. Second, management support and policies of institutions contains six items pertaining to the policies and practices of management towards employees. However, the researcher in this study focuses on social support from management and supervisor support, because several studies found that supervisor support has a direct positive relationship with subjective well-being. For example, Deborah *et al.* (2007) found that levels of supervisor support had a primary effect on the levels of well-being.

#### *Family well-being and family well-being in Islam*

Family is a core unit in a community. It is a very important unit to be secured and maintained to ensure that the society is in a stable and harmonious condition. The role of family is very crucial, as in the Islamic perspective, men and women are urged to marry to build better generations which will lead to a better nation, as the Prophet Muhammad says, “Get married, for I will boast of your great numbers before the nations.” (Ibn Majah, 1846). Its fundamental has been stated in Quranic verses, such as:

And of His signs is that He created for you from yourselves mates that you may find tranquillity in them; and He placed between you affection and mercy. Indeed in that are signs for a people who give thought (Quran 30:21).

Even though the meaning of family well-being in Western and Muslim literature differs in terms of aims and spirituality (Abdel Nasir and Kahree, 2015), they share certain ideals such as respectful cohabitation between couples and family members. In Western research, Fahri and Mary (2004), through their study, have identified that family well-being indicated some dimensions related to good relationship with family members and how they are spending quality time together, good emotion and health, high quality in communication, support, child care, education and satisfaction with work and work load at home. Judith *et al.* (2015), through their study, have concluded that well-being is mostly related to marital satisfaction

No.	Items	Factors		Alpha ( $\alpha$ )
		F1	F2	
1	My supervisor is supportive when family problems arise	0.845		0.901
2	My supervisor allows for flexibility in my working arrangements to enable me to handle my family responsibility	0.805		
3	My supervisor gives advice on how to handle my work and family responsibility	0.752		
4	In the event of a conflict, managers understand when employees have to put their family first	0.698		
5	In this organisation, employees can easily balance their work and family lives	0.661		
6	My supervisor understands that I have to meet family responsibilities as well as those related to my job	0.637		
7	In this organisation, it is generally okay to talk about one's family at work	0.579		
8	Managers in this organisation are sympathetic towards employees' childcare responsibilities		0.758	
9	This organisation is supportive of employees who want to switch to less demanding jobs for family reasons		0.715	
10	In this organisation, employees are encouraged to strike a balance between their works and family lives		0.715	
11	Management in this organisation generally encourages heads of department/dean to be sensitive to employees' family and personal concerns		0.700	
12	In general, managers in this organisation are quite accommodating of family-related needs		0.685	
13	This organisation encourages employees to set limits on where work stops and home life begins		0.580	
Coefficient alpha ( $\alpha$ )		0.845	0.839	
Eigenvalues		5.025	4.838	
% of variance (total = 84.37%)		44.254	43.254	

**Table I.**  
Varimax rotated  
factor loadings of the  
factor items  
( $N = 250$ )

and job satisfaction which is linked to income, health (Ryan and Willits, 2007) and lower WFC. Muslim women participation in the workforce which is being reported by the Library of Congress, Washington D.C., is likely the same with other non-Muslim women (Offenhauer, 2005). Likewise, Muslim women were found to be similar to non-Muslim women in terms of seeking family well-being, that manifested when they obtained education and achieved self-independence (Spellings, 2014; Ayesha, 2015) and achieved health safety and financial stability (Spellings, 2014; Md. Ismail *et al.*, 2015). However, Philip *et al.* (2016), through their study results, suggest that even though there are a number of studies on well-being, there is considerable disagreement regarding how to properly understand and measure well-being.

Nevertheless, the concept of family well-being in Islam is mentioned to a greater extent. This is recorded in the Quran:

Whoever does right, whether male or female, and is a believer, We will make him live a good life, and We will award them their reward for the best of what they used to do (Quran 16:97).

Thus, Kharofa's (1982) observations on Islamic well-being of man include to abstain from everything that Allah has forbidden and to do everything that God has commanded man to do (Abdel Nasir and Kahree, 2015). Thus, to obey the command of Allah is the ultimate goal

of achieving well-being of a Muslim, as an individual or as a member of his family or nations.

#### *Family functioning and working wife in Islam*

Islam has laid down a comprehensive system not just on leading a country but on how to manage a small unit such as a family. The roles of man and woman or husband and wife have been clearly mentioned through the verses of the Quran and the Prophetic traditions. For example, the men in the family or the husband is obligated to provide food and security to the wife and children.

Men are in charge of women by [right of] what Allah has given one over the other and what they spend [for maintenance] from their wealth. So righteous women are devoutly obedient, guarding in [the husband's] absence what Allah would have them guard. (Quran 4:34).

And Upon the father is the mothers' provision and their clothing according to what is acceptable. No person is charged with more than his capacity. No mother should be harmed through her child, and no father through his child. (Quran 2:233).

Whereas, the obligation or core duty of a wife is maintaining the household, bringing up the children and caregiving. As stated in the hadith, Prophet Muhammad says, "All of you are guardians (in trust of something or someone) and are accountable for your flock" (reported by Muslims). Thus, the Islamic expectation is that individuals should work to support themselves and their family, and that family finances should be managed effectively. It is also the person's duty to enhance his or her skills and talents to enhance production and productivity (Abdel Nasir and Kahree, 2015). Thus, the separation of roles and duties of husband and wife is not a part of bringing down women or identified as part of the patriarchal system in Islam as reported by some researchers like Anna (2009), but the role has been exclusively given by the creator of men and the women for them to best meet their full functioning as individuals and as part of the family or nations.

As times change and challenges increase throughout life, Muslim women are urged to work to help their family financially. No verses or prophetic traditions (hadith) are recorded that prohibit women from working if there is a need and the orders and rules set by Syariah are followed, such as covering their awrah, observing their dignity and not staying with an unknown man alone in an enclosed space (Abd Karim, 1993). This is keeping in mind that the primary responsibility of a wife is to concentrate on her home and family, and she is permitted to work outside if it does not clash with family matters (Abd Karim, 1993).

This is a functional distribution of roles and activities between husband and wife and is regarded as essential for the proper functioning of the family institution in Islam for its moral and social health and well-being. However, according to the condition and needs, it is possible for the spouse to share household roles and duties if the wife needs to work outside. Husbands and wives need to balance between rights and responsibilities and ensure they suit the nature and character of each person. This could mean that the working mother should be supported by her husband in performing household tasks and raising their children accordingly in a fair manner. This is to ensure that the WFC can be managed and is handled wisely and accountably.

#### **Conceptual framework**

The literature discussed has been used as a foundation for developing a conceptual framework in this study as shown in Figure 2. Based on the framework, it can be hypothesised that:

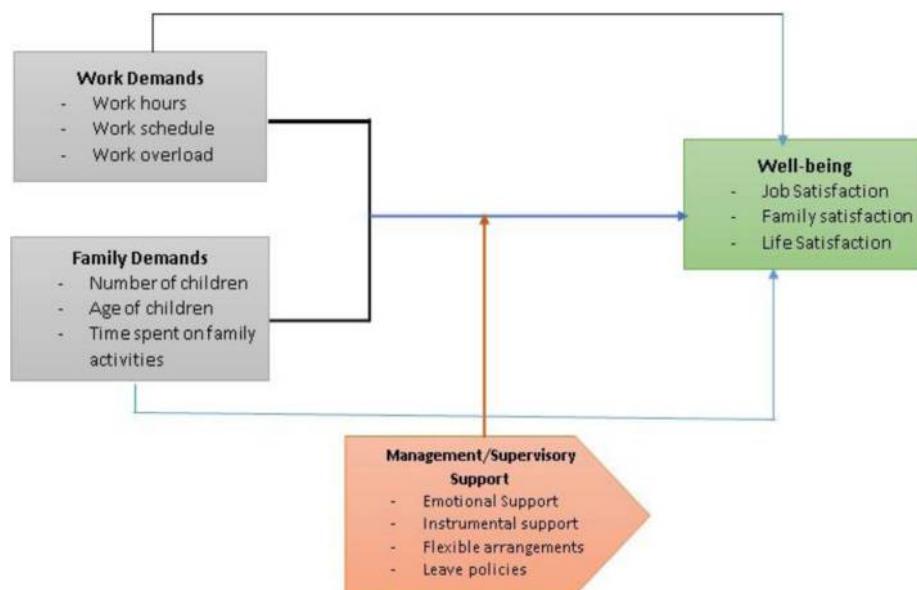


Figure 2.  
Conceptual model

H1. Work–family demands are negatively related to employees' well-being.

H2. Management/supervisory support moderates the relationship of work–family demands with employees' well-being.

In the perspective of behavioural science, well-being has been defined as satisfaction of an individual's goal, wants and needs through the actualisation of their abilities and lifestyle (Emerson, 1985). Well-being is sometimes used in association with other terms such as happiness, quality of life and satisfaction. The meaning of objective well-being and subjective well-being depends on the discipline and can vary when discussed in the fields of ethics, theology, politics, economics and psychology (Fahri and Mary, 2004). With various interpretations and lack of a universally acceptable definition, the well-being concept is ambiguous and difficult to measure (Achour, 2013). However, the bottom line is well-being is generally viewed as a description of the state of people's life situation (McGillivray, 2007).

In this article, the measurement of well-being is based on a subjective approach which focuses on human feelings (Achour, 2013; Alicia *et al.*, 2011). An objective approach which measures well-being through certain observable facts such as economic, social and environmental statistics thus is not applied (Achour, 2013). Following the subjective approach, well-being is assessed based on the respondent's self-reported experiences and not based on the researcher's judgement (Rojas, 2013). People who experience more positive and less negative feelings tend to be more satisfied with their life (Alicia *et al.*, 2011; Rojas, 2013). The respondents' affective state, which is studied to understand their satisfaction with life and well-being, is valued by their experience of being well (Rojas, 2013).

In this research, the subjective well-being facets studied are job satisfaction, family satisfaction and life satisfaction. Job satisfaction derived from career development and success had been reported to increase subjective well-being (Alicia *et al.*, 2011). Other than that, several studies had revealed some important factors to job satisfaction, which include

supervisory role, type of employment, work commute and also working hours (Martin and Pablo, 2015). Employees reported to have higher satisfaction with jobs involving greater autonomy, more supervisory roles and well-paid positions. By contrast, their satisfaction is negatively affected by boring job, insecure job, long working hours and long traveling time to work (Martin and Pablo, 2015). Working conditions were also found to impact life satisfaction in European countries, as studied by Drobnič *et al.* (2010).

Family satisfaction is the individual attitude or expression towards family life (Wan Edura *et al.*, 2012). As the core unit in society through which basic human needs are met, the quality of family life was consistently reported to significantly influence subjective well-being (Fahri and Mary, 2004). Fahri and Mary reported that the most salient dimensions of family well-being are gaining a sense of satisfaction from the family work and being comfortable with the work load, having personal time and spending quality time with family members.

The overall satisfaction with life has a significant positive relationship with quality of work life and quality of non-work life, as discussed above and also reported in other studies (Samsinar *et al.*, 2010). Life satisfaction means persistent contentment – the degree to which people consider the overall quality of their life in various aspects of life experiences. Previous studies implied that quality of work life affects life satisfaction stronger than the quality of non-work life. This denoted that satisfaction at the workplace plays a vital role in promoting overall life satisfaction (Samsinar *et al.*, 2010).

This argument signifies that supervisor and management play a significant role in employee's well-being, especially in promoting work–life balance. Supervisor and management role is among the coping strategies discussed to deal with WFC together with other coping strategies such as personal coping strategy, professional coping strategy and social coping strategy (Achour, 2013). This study emphasises supervisor and management role as a social support to the employees, especially women, as they hold the authority in the workplace which can influence the quality of work life. In general, the empirical evidence on subjective well-being confirms that the quality of working conditions is important. A study done by Namkee (2007) revealed that work flexibility, work independence, trust in superiors and pleasant and low-stress work environment play a significant role in promoting job satisfaction and influence life satisfaction. On the other hand, irregular working schedules and long working hours have a negative impact on the employees' subjective well-being, as they reduce their level of job satisfaction (Martin and Pablo, 2015).

Other studies also support this argument. Laurent *et al.* (2008) claimed that a family-supportive work environment can increase life satisfaction by reducing work–family incompatibilities that reduce their satisfaction at work and home. This indicated that employees' perception of their work environment's family supportiveness may play an important role in their overall level of enjoyment in life. In Fahri and Mary's (2004) research, it is argued that a reduced workload may or may not be helpful to family well-being because the challenges are not so much related to time as to inter-relationships between family members. But they agreed that a reduced workload seems to facilitate employees to find time for their own personal leisure activities and allow them to work at a calmer and more relaxed pace and easier inter-linking with others. This positively contributes to ultimate collaboration and compromise with others in the family and has an impact on family satisfaction or well-being.

What can be concluded here is supervisor and management may help employees in achieving work–family balance, which depends on managing the conflict between work and family roles. This has been supported by Greenhaus *et al.* (2012), who showed that family-supportive supervision positively related to employee's feelings of work–family balance.

What is meant by work–family balance is “the degree to which an individual is able to simultaneously balance the temporal, emotional and behavioral demands of both paid work and family responsibilities” (Karen and Marcia, 2005). Work–family balance is also perceived by Clark (2000) as “satisfaction and good functioning at work and at home with a minimum of role conflict” (Greenhaus *et al.*, 2003). Previous studies maintain that work–family balance is assumed to promote well-being, and it is proposed that organisational change approach consider promoting work–family balance through their policies (Greenhaus *et al.*, 2003).

## Method

### *Participants and procedures*

The population of this study was working female academicians, working in research universities in the Klang Valley, including University of Malaya (UM), National University of Malaysia (UKM), and Putra University (UPM). Their ages ranged from 30 to 60 years. Rapport was established by explaining the importance and the relevance of the study. Participants were assured that their answers would be kept confidential and used only for the study purposes. Random sampling technique was used, and the data were collected through questionnaires that were distributed personally to each respondent at their respective workplace. In total, 600 questionnaires were distributed to all universities, of which 250 were returned, resulting in a response rate of 41.66 per cent. A majority of the respondents are from Malay (82 per cent), followed by other ethnicities (12.8 per cent), Indian (4 per cent) and Chinese (1.2 per cent). Most of the respondents (36.8 per cent) were between 31 and 40 years old, 35.26 per cent are between 41 and 50 years, 14 per cent are below 30 years and 13.94 per cent are 51 years and above. In all, 40.4 per cent of the respondents had more than three children, about 19.6 per cent had two children, 26.8 per cent had one child and 13.2 per cent did not have any children.

### *Measures*

*Work–family demands.* Family demand was measured by a three-item scale developed by Yang (1993). The Cronbach’s alpha reported was 0.77, and work demands were measured by a five-item scale by Spector (1975). The Cronbach’s alpha was 0.81. A sample item includes “My family’s responsibilities make me feel tired” (Item 6).

*Work–family conflict.* WFC was measured using two subscales (five items for WFC and five items for family–work conflict) and included ten items developed by Netemeyer *et al.* (1996). The Cronbach’s alpha was 0.77. Sample item includes “The amount of time my job takes up makes it difficult to fulfil family responsibilities” (Item 2).

*Supervisory/management support.* Management support was measured by a six-item scale developed by Houston and Waumsley (2003) and the researcher modified and deleted some items. Supervisory support was measured by a seven-item scale developed by Galinsky *et al.* (1996). The Cronbach’s alpha was 0.84. Sample item includes “This organisation is supportive of employees who want to switch to less demanding jobs for family reasons” (Item 9).

*Well-being.* In this research, the major components of well-being that were considered were job satisfaction, family satisfaction and life satisfaction. Family satisfaction was measured using three items developed by Hackman and Oldham (1975), and the Cronbach’s alpha was 0.68. Job satisfaction was measured using five items developed by Hackman and Oldham (1975). The Cronbach’s alpha was 0.83. Life satisfaction was measured using five items developed by Diener *et al.* (1985), and the Cronbach’s alpha was 0.87. Sample item included “Generally speaking, I am very satisfied with my job” (Item 1).

H  
33,3*Reliability results*

The reliability test for this paper was conducted. Coefficient Cronbach's alpha is a measure of reliability or internal consistency. A value of Cronbach's alpha of 0.50 or above is consistent with the recommended minimum values stated by Nunnally (1967) (Reliability results: see Table II).

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*Correlation analysis*

Table III shows the correlation coefficients among all variables. All independent variables are correlated, but not all are significant to well-being. The correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). The criterion used for the level of significance was set a priori. The relationship must be at least significant at  $**p < 0.01$ . Table III shows that there is a strong positive and significant correlation between work–family demands and WFC ( $r = 0.568, p = 0.000 < 0.01$ ). There is also a negative and significant correlation between WFC and management and supervisory support ( $r = -0.329, p = 0.000 < 0.01$ ) and well-being ( $r = -0.311, p = 0.000 < 0.01$ ). There is a positive correlation between well-being and management and supervisory support ( $r = 0.482, p = 0.000 < 0.01$ ), and a negative correlation between well-being and work–family demands but not significant ( $r = -0.103, p = 0.104 > 0.01$ ). There is also a negative correlation between work–family demands and management and supervisory support but not significant ( $r = -0.178, p = 0.05 > 0.01$ ).

*Multiple regression analysis*

In this paper, a regression analysis was also used to test the hypothesis that management and supervisory moderates the relationship between work–family demands and well-being. All variables were entered into the regression equation as recommended by Rose *et al.* (2004). In Step 1, work–family demands were entered. In Step 2, we entered management and supervisory support, and in Step 3, interaction of management and supervisory support and work–family demands was entered and well-being was entered as a dependent variable. The results of the moderator analyses are presented in Table IV. Results revealed that management and supervisory support strengthens the relationship between work–family demands and well-being. Thus, it is the management and supervisory support that plays an important role in balancing work demands and family roles and increases working female academicians' well-being.

**Table II.**  
Reliability results

Variables	Alpha ( $\alpha$ )
Work–family conflict	0.91
Work–family demands	0.81
Management and supervisory support	0.90
Well-being	0.83

**Table III.**  
Correlation matrix

Variables	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
WFC (1)	1			
WFD (2)	0.568**	1		
Man supp (3)	-0.329**	-0.178	1	
Well-being (4)	-0.311**	-0.103	0.482**	1

Note:  $**p < 0.01$

## Discussion

Previous research on WFC has found that this variable (WFC) influences a variety of outcomes, including psychological well-being, such as depression, marital satisfaction, life satisfaction (Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985; Gutek *et al.*, 1991; Voydanoff, 1988), job satisfaction, organisational commitment, burnout, emotional exhaustion, mental health and turnover (Burke, 1988; Frone *et al.*, 1992; Greenhaus, 1988; Pleck *et al.*, 1980; Tayfur and Arslan, 2013; and Siti Aisyah *et al.*, 2011). Tayfur and Arslan (2013) found that workload increases WFC among physicians, which directly increases their emotional exhaustion. Whereas, Siti Aisyah *et al.* (2011) identified the existence of a significant relationship between WFC, mental health and turnover intention.

Allen *et al.* (2000) linked WFC to three categories of outcomes: work-related (e.g. job satisfaction), non-work-related (e.g. life satisfaction) and stress-related (e.g. depression). Several studies have supported the outlook that long working hours are negatively related to personal and family well-being (Cooper, 2000; Charlesworth *et al.*, 2002; Dawson, McCulloch and Baker, 2001; Pocock, 2003; Glezer and Wolcott, 1999), as well as workload and work commitments (Sanz-Vergel *et al.*, 2015). However, as Spurgeon *et al.* (1997) note, much of the research fails to differentiate between long working hours and change work, which can be very disruptive, and between long working hours and work overload, which may be both highly stressful and an essential reason for long working hours. Barnett (1998) arrived at a similar conclusion that there is evidence that negative impacts of long working hours on well-being may be restricted to very long hours.

Many studies have in fact shown WFC to mediate the stress-strain relationship, acting as a mechanism through which work and family demands influence well-being (Eby *et al.*, 2005; Frone *et al.*, 1997; Noor, 2003). The number of children has also been associated with increased work and family demands, leading to higher levels of WFC (Noor, 1994) and, consequently, to reduced well-being (Kinnunen and Mauno, 1998). Wagner *et al.* (2014) also found that surface acting during a day's work (which is associated with greater number of negative work-related outcomes than is deep acting) is also one of the variables which influences strain-based work-to-family conflict experienced at home after working hours.

Gordon and Whelan-Berry (2004) added that the support provided by husbands and partners provides a critical complement to family-friendly programs offered by many organisations to facilitate the balancing of work and family demands and results in the greater well-being of women. A study conducted in Malaysia found that spouse support and supervisor support are essential to improve the overall well-being of an individual (Samsinar *et al.*, 2010).

Variable	( $\beta$ )	$R^2$	Adj. $R^2$	$F$	$R^2$ .change	$p$
D.V: Well-being						
<i>Step 1:</i>						
Work-family demands	0.951	0.011	0.007	2.668*	0.011	0.004**
<i>Step 2:</i>						
Management/supervisory support	0.836	0.232	0.226	71.396**	0.222	0.000**
<i>Step 3:</i>						
WFD $\times$ M. supervisory support	-0.022	0.264	0.255	10.421**	0.031	0.001**

Notes: \* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$

**Table IV.**  
Results of multiple  
regression

*Relationship between supervisory/management support and work–family conflict*

This present study examined the relationship between supervisory or management support and WFC and reported a negative and significant relationship between them. The results suggested that when the supervisory or management support increases, then there is an expected decrease in WFC. Several studies found that supervisory support was an important source of social support in coping with problems related to WFC (Greenhaus *et al.*, 2012; Tang *et al.*, 2014; Irwan and Nor Azaian, 2011; Laurent *et al.*, 2008). Greenhaus *et al.* (2012) reported that employees who report to family-supportive supervisors experience high levels of balance because they experience relatively little WFC. Tang *et al.* (2014) found that women who had quality relationships with their superiors also had a low conflict at work and were satisfied with their jobs. Their results show important associations among social relationships at home and work related to the quality of life.

Previous research indicated that the positive relationship between abusive supervision and WFC. Carlson *et al.* (2011) matched a set of 280 subordinates and partners and found that abusive supervision contributes to work-to-family conflict and relationship tension. Abusive supervision can be understood as subordinates' perceptions of the extent to which supervisors engage in the sustained display of hostile verbal and nonverbal behaviour, including physical contact. Examples of abusive supervision include tantrums, rudeness, public criticism and inconsiderate action (Carlson *et al.*, 2011). Additionally, Neves (2014) found that workers who received less support from co-workers or colleges and have low self-evaluations tend to be more exposed to abusive supervision. These research works (abusive supervision) supported and reinforced the result that when supervisory or management support increases, there is an expected decrease in WFC and vice versa.

The present study also discusses supervisory support as an antecedent variable for WFC. Some studies have found that supervisory support is an important variable and source of social support in coping with problems related to WFC (Anderson *et al.*, 2002; Burke and Greenglass, 1999). In this study, supervisory support is divided into instrumental and emotional support (Frone *et al.*, 1997). Emotional supervisory support refers to more listening, and understanding, sensitivity towards the issues related to WFC and real anxiety for the well-being of the employee and his or her family (Frone *et al.*, 1997). Instrumental supervisory support refers to direct advice and assistance provided with the intent of helping an employee meet his or her family responsibilities (Frone *et al.*, 1997). Supportive supervisors are instrumental in making and interpreting an organisation's work–family policies (Eby *et al.*, 2002).

For management support, Magnini (2009) reported that without suitable and proper management, WFC could create a series of unfavourable issues, including decreased employee performance, reduced job satisfaction, high absenteeism and high turnover. Major and Lauzun (2010) offered recommendations for the management in their role to decrease WFCs such as managerial training, motivation, informing and empowering managers to negotiate the type of work–family inference, as the supervisor or immediate manager is in a critical position to influence WFC.

*The effect of management/supervisory support as a moderator of the relationship between work–family demands and well-being*

The second aim of the study is to examine the effect of management and supervisory support as a moderator of the relationship between work–family demands and well-being. This research found that management and supervisory support is negatively associated with work–family demands and positively related to job, family and life satisfaction. This is in line with previous research that indicated the positive relationship between supervisory support and female well-being. Towler and Stuhlmacher (2013) found that women who had

a quality relationship with their superiors at work had a low conflict at work as well as at home and were satisfied with their jobs and life. Additionally, studies in China and Malaysia reported that employees who received support from co-workers experienced increased jobs satisfaction and family life (Tang *et al.*, 2014; Ismail *et al.*, 2013).

This study suggested that management support would help working women to balance their work demands and family life and achieve more well-being. The result in Table III shows the model is statistically significant. This result supports the presence of a moderating effect, or in other words, the moderating effect of management or supervisory support explains 26.4 per cent of the variance in well-being. Several studies have examined the relationship between WFC and an individual's general well-being (Chou, 2004; Huang, 2005; Towler and Stuhlmacher, 2013; Tang *et al.*, 2014).

#### *Work schedule flexibility and support from supervisors lead to greater well-being and reduced levels of work–family conflict*

Results of this research also reported that those who have more work schedule flexibility and support from supervisors would experience greater well-being and reduced levels of WFC. This supports the previous results from Duxbury and Higgins (1994) and Thomas and Ganster (1995) who found that if the supervisor provides flexibility to his employees even when unofficial in the case of the absence of an organisational policy, employees can balance between work demands and family roles more easily. Ferguson *et al.* (2015) found that work schedule flexibility relates not only to positive outcomes at work such as affective commitment but also with family functioning. Radcliffe and Cassell (2015) reported evidence suggesting WFCs are experienced and resolved differently, depending on whether it is the male or the female who works flexibly within dual-earner couples. Additionally, Allen *et al.* (2013) examined and suggested flexible work arrangements in dealing with WFC.

The present study examines the indirect effect of management and supervisory support as a moderator of the relationship between work–family demands and employees' well-being. In other words, working women's well-being will not emerge from WFC, except those who have more flexibility and unlimited support from supervisors and managers. If the female academicians have limited flexibility, then work–family demands will increase, and WFC will affect their well-being. Therefore, the management and supervisory support plays an important role as a moderator with work–family demands in developing the well-being of working female academicians.

#### **Conclusion**

This research focused on work–family demands among female academicians in Malaysian universities. The present study highlights the main sources of WFC, including long working hours, office work overload, household work and matters related to children. Both work–family demands and WFC were found to have significant and negative correlations with well-being. Also, in this study, management and supervisory support was found to be directly related to well-being, including life satisfaction, job satisfaction and family satisfaction. However, the direct relationship between management/supervisory support and well-being was positive and significant. This finding also found that management/supervisor support reduced WFC as well as work–family demands. Also, supervisory and management support was found to have a significant and positive relationship with well-being. Given these findings, supervisory and management support plays a very important role as moderator of work–family demands and in developing and improving well-being in working women. These findings were supported by relevant literature and were consistent with previous research in local and international settings. Several recommendations and

limitations have been identified through this study that may direct future studies. The findings of this study can be applied in both public and private institutions, especially in educational institutions. More research should be conducted especially among Muslim women in Muslim countries. This study suggests that supervisory and management support with a more flexible work schedule would help female academicians create a balance between their work demands and family responsibilities, and consequently improve their well-being. This study also suggests lifting some responsibilities from staff that have full working hours and distribute the workload among them evenly to reduce work overload. Social support, flexibilities and family-friendly policies are important factors to deal with work–family problems that need to be taken into consideration in future research.

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