WOMEN LEADERSHIP PERFORMANCE AND WORK-FAMILY BALANCE: POLICY AND RELIGIOUS CONCERN.

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY

Work-family balance (hereafter, WFB) is the degree to which an individual is able to simultaneously balance emotional and behavioral demands of both paid work and family responsibilities. Studies had shown that WFB can lead to Job quality and achievement (JQA) and JQA is determinant for job satisfaction (JS). This WFB, JQA and JS circle is important for women in playing her role as a wife, mother and leader. Due to significant demand on women leadership performance (WLP) and empowerment, quality service and well child upbringing, the role especially as a religious woman to balance up between work and family becoming more challenging. At the same time, studies proved that good policy and religious concern (RC) can ensure WFB but this account is found largely unexplored. Existing WFB discussions are found to be more on western setting. Thus, this report attempts to highlight the religious concern (RC) and Malaysia policy (MP) of which is hoped to enrich dimensions on WFB discussion from non-western setting. Simultaneously contribute to current scenario and empirical analysis. This report is also investigate what are the religious elements in national policy potential for WFB and simultaneously provides local insight on how Malaysia governs for WFB. By using literature review and official documents analysis, this report is hoped to share local insight and contributes to policy and religious concern on WFB. It is found that although many related policies are introduced, their effectiveness in achieving WFB in Malaysia is still an undergoing process. Nevertheless, religious elements embedded in the national policies are viewed as potential in developing RC and good values for Muslim women.

Keywords: Work Family Balance (WFB), Women, Malaysia, religious concern, policy.

INTRODUCTION

Work-family balance (hereafter, WFB) is the degree to which an individual is able to simultaneously balance emotional and behavioral demands of both paid work and family responsibilities. (Moazami-Goodarzi 2018; Clark 2017) Balancing work and family are a delicate task especially for married women because they are closely associated with household cares and chores (Geetha Subramaniam and Doris Padmini Selvaratnam 2010). In Malaysia, working mothers are a dual career. Dual career means the individual has the dual role of a homemaker and a wage earner in the workplace. Currently, 54% of the labour force in Malaysia comprises women which mean they earn their own money and 70% of them are married. (Ministry of Finance 2017) This situation of not rightly balance can contribute to social and work family conflict (WFC) (Sugumar 2013). Whereas WFC can lead to several ‘negative externalities’ such as stress, poor job performance, loss of motivation, burn out, absenteeism, employee turnover, health and social problems among workers such as drug abuse, mental-illness and stress. (Sugumar 2013). Generally, people with mental problems are also associated with family problems and dissatisfaction in the workplace. Generally, women are said to face mental stress 1.5 times more than men. (Stienstra and Gucciardi 2002). Besides, frustration over not achieving work and family balance will likely make employees leave the organization and bring harm to the family and
Employees who are satisfied with their jobs live longer and are less likely to fall ill (Higgins et.al 1991). A study showed that burnout among employees is more common and may affect every aspect of their task, have a harmful effect on interpersonal and family relationships and lead to a negative attitude towards life in general (Lacovides et. al 2003). This implication will therefore be impacted on women leadership (WL), job satisfaction (JS) and job performance (JP).

One common research finding shows that job satisfaction (JS) correlates with family and life satisfaction (FLS) (Wayne 2017; Clark 2017: Rain, Lane and Steiner 1991). This correlation is reciprocal whereby one who is satisfied with her job tend to be satisfied with her life including family satisfaction, and one who is satisfied with life tend to be satisfied with her job. JS and FLS give positive environment and act as good factors contribute to job quality and job achievement (JQA) and reduce possibilities of WFC. Thus WFB, JQA and JS circle is important factors for women leadership performance (WLP). The correlation between WFB, JS, FLS, JQA and WLP is draw as below:

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\text{WFB} \leftrightarrow \text{JS} \leftrightarrow \text{FLS} \leftrightarrow \text{JQA} \leftrightarrow \text{WLP}
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Based on the above background and the fact that many studies in Malaysia have not focused attention on both the policy angle and religious concern, this report attempts to further investigate the WFB related policies and religious concern (RC) in Malaysia governance.

**Women and work policies in Malaysia**

Workforce in Malaysia is governed by several statutes of employment and labor laws such as the Employment Act 1955, Industrial Relations Act 1967, Minimum Wages Order 2012 and Minimum Retirement Age Bill 2012 (for private sector employees), Employees’ Social Security Act, 1969, and Pensions Act, 1980. Malaysian Law also provides special protection for women in the workforce. For instance, Part VIII of the Employment Act 1955 specially highlights that women in the non-professional force are prohibited from night work as well as underground work. On the other hand, women in the professional category are in a different scenario altogether, as dictated by their professions and relevant statutes.

The government in all sorts of instruments approves and encourages women participation in development. The progress in the advancement of the cause of women in Malaysia should be viewed within the context of the overall framework of national development policies, plans, and objectives. This is because efforts and plans to improve the status of women are integrated and incorporated into the various long-term and sectoral planning and the National Five-Year Development Plan. The relevant policies are the New Economic Policy (1971-1990); the National Policy for Women 1989, the contents of which were incorporated in The Sixth Malaysia Plan.
(6MP,1991-95); The National Development Policy (1991-2000), Vision 2020; National Transformation (TN50), National Budget and several Islamic policies and approaches such as the inculcation of Islamic values; Islam Hadhari and Wasatiyyah.

Cited from the 6MP states, “The government recognizes that specific strategies must necessarily be formulated to effectively incorporate women in the process of development. Towards this end, concerted efforts will be made to progressively reduce existing constraints and facilitate the assimilation of women into the mainstream of social and economic activities.”

The primary objectives of the National Women Policy under the 6MP are (KPWKM, 2005):

(I) To ensure equitable sharing in the acquisition of resources, information, opportunities and benefits of development for men and women. The objectives of equality and justice must be made the essence of development policies which must be people-oriented so that women, who constitute half of the nation’s population, can contribute and realize their potential to the optimum; and

(ii) To integrate women in all sectors of development in accordance with their capabilities and needs in order to enhance their quality of life, eradicate poverty, ignorance and illiteracy, and ensure a peaceful, harmonious and prosperous nation.

The government made bold allocations of funds in its budget especially from the Third Malaysia Plan (3MP) for the development of women, primarily in their roles and functions as housewives, mothers, and supplementary income earners. In the Malaysian Budget 2018, a sum of RM20 million is allocated to conduct women training and entrepreneurship programs, which include Performance Empowerment Acceleration Knowledge (PEAK) to enhance the contribution of women in national development (Ministry of Finance Malaysia 2017). These funds were channeled through organizations such as the National Family Planning and Development Board or the ministry dealing with social welfare. For this purpose, the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Affairs set several objectives for its programs as follows:

First: To rigorously implement the Women Directors Program for achieving 30 per cent participation of women in the decision-making group. The government plans to train 125 women directors to fill vacancies on the boards of directors of private and government-linked companies.

Second: To improve opportunities for women to return to work through the 1Malaysia program that focuses on Housewife Support and encouragement for skills training of housewives; and

Third: To encourage Professional Career Women to return to the labour market through a new program called Talent Corp.

In an effort to mainstream gender into national development, women’s empowerment is given special mention in the Tenth Malaysia Plan (2011-2015). As women account for 49.1% of the population, they are recognized as a primary force in contributing to the economy. Realizing this fact, the Government has set a target to increase the participation of women in the labor force.
from 46.1% in 2010 to 55.0% in 2015 (http://www.pmo.gov.my, 4th Annual Young Corporate Malaysians Summit).

**Women & Family Friendly Work Policies in Malaysia**

Malaysia is a developing country. Statistics issued by the Department of Statistics in 2010 showed that the total population of men and women was 28,908.8 million. Of this, 14,712.6 million were men and 14,196.2 women (Statistics, http://www.kpwkm.gov.my). The population of Malaysia is estimated in 2018 to be around 32.04 million. (http://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/malaysia-population/) More than half of university first degree holders in Malaysia are women. Women contribution to employment and the economy in Malaysia is an undeniable fact. Even at the lower levels and in minor roles, their contribution is significant. Extensive research has determined that companies with more women do better especially in terms of sales performance at more than 50 percent. Thus, without women in workplaces, Malaysia would not be able to achieve its goal of becoming a high-income country by the year 2020. At the same time, the importance of work-family balance has been given prominence since the Sixth Malaysia Plan and even more from the Ninth Malaysia Plan (2006-2010). The successful implementation of these policies could contribute towards higher organizational commitment, reduced turnover intention, and lower level of absenteeism in the workplaces (Hamid & Mohd. Amin 2014).

Furthermore, under the Economic Transformation Program, women are recognized as potential human capital to be leveraged on to increase productivity. Various measures have been outlined to promote greater participation of women in economic activities and which at the same time are beneficial for WFB. These include the following suggestions (BERNAMA News April 2015):

(I) Implement workplace policies to allow greater flexibility in working hours and the provision of child-care support;
(ii) Introduce policies that require all ministries and agencies to ensure gender issues are part and parcel of their policy design. In other words, all programs must incorporate the gender element; and
(iii) Encourage private sector firms to place more women executives in decision making positions. Women ‘s special capacity for recognizing talent and building a culture to sustain teamwork, contributes significantly to higher productivity.

Year 2018 is also announced as the Women Empowerment Year. In this respect, several initiatives will be implemented including proposing maternity leave for the private sector to be increased from 60 days to 90 days as implemented by the public sector; and encouraging women
who have been on a career break for at least two years to return to the workforce, the government proposes that their earnings on a maximum of 12 months consecutive salary received be given personal income tax exemption. The incentive is available for women who return to the workforce between 2018 and 2020. (Ministry of Finance Malaysia, 2017). Besides, there are five women and family friendly related work policies that support WFB in various forms in Malaysia. They include;

1. Leave Entitlements

Annual leave, emergency leave, unpaid leave, maternity and paternity leave are allocated under the Malaysia Policy. Examples of some of the provisions are listed below:

For Maternity Leave Facilities, Public Service Circular, Number 14 of 2010 provides;

`In line with the Government's intention of caring for the welfare of officers, feasibility and ease regulations on maternity leave are determined as follows:

1. For an officer who is eligible for maternity leave, Full Pay maternity leave for as long as 300 days during her tenure;
2. The employee is given the flexibility to determine her own maternity leave from 60 days to 90 days for each birth; and
3. Maternity leave commences on the date of delivery of the officer. However, an employee may choose to use maternity leave earlier than the date of delivery at any time within 14 days of the expected date of childbirth’. For paternity leaves, fathers employed within the public sector are entitled to seven days of paternity leave, in contrast with three previously. In the private sector, leave granted may range from one to four days, depending on the company’. (Employment Act 1955; Amendment 2012)

2. Childcare/ Daycare Policy

Incentives are provided to encourage the establishment of childcare centers at the workplace in the public sector and in the community. Employers in the private sector that set-up a specific building for a childcare center are also given tax exemption of 10 per cent of the total cost for a period of ten years.

The Government, through the 2014 Budget speech, has agreed to increase the eligibility of monthly household income of civil servants from RM3, 000.00 to RM5, 000.00 for the purpose of providing fee subsidy for childcare centers at the workplace of the public sector. Fee subsidies for childcare centers were enjoyed by civil servants provided through Circular No. 4 of 2007 and Circular No. 13 of 2008. In terms of fee assistance as well as tax exemptions and double deduction incentives, the Service Circular Number 4, 2007 (Public Service Department of Malaysia, 2007b) offers a new initiative for civil servants whose monthly household income
is below RM2000 to claim up to RM180 in subsidized childcare fees per child. This initiative was extended in 2009 to include those whose monthly household income is below RM3000 (United Nations, 2011). Malaysia Budget 2013 provides double deduction on childcare allowance for employees, in which they can be exempted from tax up to RM2400 per year. In the 2018 budget, the local authorities are required to ensure that childcare facilities are provided in all new office buildings, starting with Kuala Lumpur. (Ministry of Finance 2017)

3. Flexible Work Arrangements

Providing opportunities for flexible work arrangements - such as flextime, compressed workweek, part-time, job share and telecommuting - can create a more productive and effective work environment and help workers, especially caregivers, to experience less stress than those without such arrangements. In Malaysia, flextime is applied for civil servants where the employee can choose starting and ending hours based on the time provided, but usually must be at work during a core period when all employees are present. (Service Circular Number 2, 2007). The Employment Act 1955 also prohibits female employees to work in any industrial or agricultural undertaking between 10.00 pm to 5.00 am and to start work again the next day without having had a period of 11 consecutive hours free from such work.

4. The Provision of Training Opportunities for Up-Skilling and Re-Skilling

This provision is to equip women with the necessary skills and technology know-how. It is also to diversify their economic activities instead of concentrating on certain sectors such as manufacturing. In response to the economic crisis, the Ministry of Human Resources has organized various skills training and entrepreneur development programs for retrenched workers including women. (Training of Human Resources Public Sector, Service Circular Number 6, 2005. Recruitment Policies and Procedures Daily Time Employees, Service Circular Number 3, 2011).

5. Religious Concern and Value Policy

Government has introduced several value and Islamic-based policies and approaches including Inculcating Islamic Values Policy, Islam Hadhari (Civilizational Islam) and Wasatiyyah (moderation). Malaysia also form the Institute of Wasatiyyah Malaysia (IWM) to carry out government mission in instilling moderate and tolerance approach in nation-building (Sharifah Hayaati et.al, 2016). In Civilizational Islam approach, there are ten Islamic spiritual principles underlined:

• Faith and piety in Allah
• Just and trustworthy government
• Freedom and independence to the people
• Mastery of knowledge
• Balanced and comprehensive economic development
• Good quality of life for all
• Protection of the rights of minority groups and women
• Cultural and moral integrity
• Protection of the environment
• A strong defense policy

Several other values are embedded and fixed to the core values of public service including in the Public Service Ethos 2012, the Public Service Circular Guidelines and objectives of the Department of Public Service and government agencies themselves. In fact, this Islamic spiritual value-based service has also become the basis for the Training of Human Resources in the Public Sector under Circular No. 6 of 2005. It is designed to meet the following objectives:

a. To provide qualified personnel, capable and competent;
b. To achieve high quality work;
c. To enhance competence and productivity;
d. To shape values and positive attitudes;
e. To create value-creation added-value in the public sector; and
f. To provide direction for career advancement.

In the Vision 2020, the government identifies values as a challenge for the public service. The main objective of Vision 2020 is to make Malaysia a fully industrialized and developed nation. The government envisions that by the year 2020, Malaysia will become a united nation, with a confident Malaysian society, infused by a strong moral and ethical values, living in a democratic, tolerant, caring, economically just and equitable society, progressive and prosperous and in full possession of an economy that is competitive, dynamic, robust, resilient and socially just. Indeed, in protecting as well as enhancing Muslim women, government through its Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (Jakim) has formed a Panel Committee on Current Issues for Muslim Women (PISWI) in 2010. This Panel is established to:

a) Generate thoughts and formulate strategies to increase the awareness on the rights and responsibilities of women in Islam;
b) Identify and correct the misunderstandings and confusions in all women-related aspects, and harmonizing inter gender relations from the Islamic perspective; and
c) Advice policy makers and all stakeholders involved with current issues related to women and Islam.

There are at least eight major frameworks that enable religious concern and Islamic values to be inculcated effectively in Malaysia. They include; (Sharifah Hayaati, 2007)

1) Federal Constitution legislative provision that Islam is a national religion;
(2) Malaysia as an Islamic country;
(3) The inculcation of Islamic Value Policy
(4) The Malaysia Plan and Vision 2020
(5) National Integrity Plan (NIP);
(6) Civilizational Islam (Islam HadharI) as the government approach to bring the Islamic civilization glory in Malaysia;
(7) Wasatiyyah as the approach and mechanism for development especially under the NKRA (National Key Reformation Area);
(8) National Budget

The 2018 Malaysian budget stressed on upholding the greatness and integrity of Islam in its Eight Thrust: Balancing between the Par Excellence of Worldly and Hereafter.

**Religiosity For WFB**

What is important to balance between work and family according to the previous studies is emotions. Theories assert that spill over emotions between work and family systems or disappointment one may experience in one system may affect individual performance in the other system. Some studies however asserted that emotions can be balanced through the element of religiosity. In simple words, religiosity is the degree of being religious (De Run et al. 2010; O’Connell 1978). Religiosity is the extent to which an individual is committed to his religion, reflected in his/her attitudes and behaviour (Johnson 2001). Whereas spirituality has been described to include a broad range of concepts and values such as transcendence, balance, sacredness, altruism, meaning in life, living with a deep connectedness to the universe, and the awareness of something or someone greater oneself (God, or an energy force) that provides energy and wisdom that transcends the material aspects of life (Klerk 2005).

Religiosity in Islam comprises 3 dimensions; belief, commitment and behavior dimensions,(Ghozali (2002). Religiosity in Islam is always referred as al-tadayyun (Sharifah Hayaati 2017). Islam comes with belief (tawhid), practices (Ibadan) and values (Aklan). The combination of these three practices brings into the religiosity and spirituality in oneself. For example, having good faith and belief in Allah, pray five times a day and fasting during Ramadan.

Islam recognizes the importance of women in nation-building and therefore allows and supports their essential roles including in career and family building; (al-Hassan, 2010) Allah Said;

“And as for the believers: both men and women are in charge (or protectors) of one another, they (all) enjoin the doing of what is right and forbid the doing of what is wrong, and keep up prayers and render the purifying dues, and pay heed unto God and His apostle. It is they upon whom God will bestow His grace….,” (al-Quran 9:71)
Islam highlights the unique creation of man and woman and therefore they compliment and support each other in practicing their roles; The Qur'an states that;

"On mankind, indeed we have created you from male and female and made your nations and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most notable of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous to you." (al-Quran 49:13)

Previous studies also proved positive relationship between religiosity and job quality and job achievement (JQA) (AAhad M. Osman-Gani, Junaidah Hashim and Yusof Ismail 2013; Inasoria (2014); Benefiel, Fry and Geigle (2014). Thus, religious concern through the work of religiosity and value policy have a potential influence to one emotion to work for balance between work and family.

CONCLUSION

Women in Malaysia play a primary and traditional role of looking after the family, especially their children and aging parents. There are five related WFB policies in Malaysia. They include Leave Entitlements; Childcare/Daycare Policy; Flexible Work arrangements; The Provision of Training Opportunities for Up-Skilling and Re-Skilling and religiosity and values; This framework is further solidified with federal Constitution; National Pillars or `Rukunegara’ and Islamic value principles. These policies not only to achieve WFB but also aimed as a cause for women enhancement and leadership. Although there are many work-family friendly policies in Malaysia, studies also showed that current work-life practices in Malaysia fall short in a number of ways. Study by Rozita (2014) showed that Malaysian employees are still struggling to find a balance between work and family life. Moreover, the absence of child care centres at the workplace, inequitable distribution of work and the inequitable division of care tasks between women and men in the household have left women with a disproportionate double burden at home and in the work place. This results in work–life imbalance, stress and stress-related sicknesses, overwork, workplace absenteeism, less knowledge of children’s experience, and child neglect. Studies also showed that religious concern through religiosity is a potential way to balance emotions that lead to WFB. It involves faith and believe that upholding work and family chores with sincerity and good values is a Muslim responsibility and will be rewarded by Allah the Almighty. Religious concern also means that consciousness in bringing family close to the practice of Islam. Thus, bring to a conclusion that policy and religiosity contribute to positive environment for WFB and WFB contributes to quality and potential element for WLP.

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