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**Understanding Work-Life Interface of Malay Muslim Women Academics:  
An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)**

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**A Thesis Submitted in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy**

**School of Education  
College of Social Sciences  
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## **Abstract**

Women academics in collectivist societies, despite their significant numbers, have been of little concern to researchers. While women's involvement in education and employment opportunities has increased and their economic positions have improved, their role pertaining to domestic responsibilities and care for the family in such societies remains the same. The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological research is to describe the work-life interface as experienced by Malay Muslim women academics. This study also identifies the work environment factors that assist and/or hinder these academics in managing their work-life responsibilities as well as investigating the influence of culture and religion. Diary entries and in-depth telephone interviews with seven Malay Muslim women academics were employed to capture the essence of their daily work-life experiences. Using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis as the research method, the findings of the study are presented under four themes: juggling multiple roles, sources of supports, impact of leadership style, and identity formation.

The participants in this research provided valuable insights based on their many years of experience as academics in higher education institutions besides their roles as mothers and wives. The Malay Muslim women academics' work-life experiences appear to be complex and multifaceted. Negotiating between professional and personal roles has an impact on the careers of women academics, their personal and family lives, and their well-being. In managing their daily work-life responsibilities, an interplay exists between Islamic values and Malay traditional customs. The customary practices which are important in the functioning of the society as a whole contribute in shaping their identity as women, family members and academics. In addition, leadership style can have a significant impact on their work-life management. For these women, the lived reality is that being an academic means having never-ending tasks that sometimes require personal sacrifices which are achieved through the support of family and work colleagues as well as their personal belief systems.

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## **Author's Declaration**

I declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, this dissertation is the result of my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree at the University of Glasgow or any other institution.

Printed Name:        Amelia Ismail

Signature:            \_\_\_\_\_

## **Definitions/Abbreviations**

IPA	Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
MNC	Multinational Corporation
MOHE	Ministry of Higher Education
VITAE	Variations in Teachers' Work, Lives and Effectiveness
CAP	Changing Academic Profession
APA	Academic Profession in Asia
NKRA	National Key Result Areas
GTP	Government Transformation Program
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
NEP	New Economic Policy

# **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

## **1.1 Introduction**

Work and family play prominent roles in the lives of academics and the inability to balance the equally challenging demands of work and personal life will contribute to the detrimental effects on their life and job performance. Currently, the need for academics to balance both work and family / personal commitment is becoming a global issue (Noor, Stanton, & Young, 2009). Furthermore, as academics, they need to have healthy work-life balance because they are a valuable national resource and the key to a successful higher education system in the country. Unlike earlier studies in work-family research, the focus of this research is exclusively on women academics in a non-western country. This chapter presents the scenario of the research and highlights the main gap in the organisational literature on academics' work-life interface. It provides the purpose and focus of the research, the significant aspects of conducting this research, and the overall structure of the thesis.

## **1.2 Background of the Research**

In today's competitive business environment, employees' job performance is a significant element in the workplace. Lack of balance between work and family domains can lead to lower job satisfaction, reduced organisational commitment, higher turnover intention (Anderson, Coffey, & Byerly, 2002; Boyar, Maertz, Pearson, & Keough, 2003; Carlson, Grzywacz, & Zivnuska, 2010) and poor health (Frone, 2000; Greenhaus, Allen, & Spector, 2006). Obtaining and maintaining a work-life balance is therefore becoming a business issue and a heavily researched area of interest (De Cunto, Berti, Minute, & Longo, 2012; Deery, 2008; Guest, 2002) as it has important consequences not only for the employees' work behaviour and wellbeing but also for their organizational commitment (De Cunto et al., 2012; Deery, 2008; Guest, 2002; Scholarios & Marks, 2004) and the long-term effective functioning of the organisation.

Work-life balance is the absence of conflict between work and family or personal roles which helps to balance the emotional, behavioural and time demands of both paid work, family and personal duties (Bell, Rajendran, & Theiler, 2012). If an employee is enjoying a positive work-life balance, he or she will then exert high levels of effort (Bloom et al. cited in (Marafi, 2013). According to Nayeem & Tripathy (2012), work-life balance is a major contributor towards job satisfaction. An organisation that supports good work-life arrangements of its employees is likely to improve their wellbeing, maximise job satisfaction and minimise staff turnover. Those employees who perceive they have more job control, schedule flexibility and support from their institutions experience less work-life conflict and become more healthy and satisfied with their jobs (Kinman & Jones, 2008).

A substantial amount of research has focused on how work and life interference affects employees' life (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Kanter, 1977). The result of a survey conducted by The Work Foundation shows that people felt that time pressure (Jones, 2003) and the difficulty of balancing work and home demands was a major source of stress (Gmelch & Burns, 1994; Jones, 2003). The adoption of technologies such as the many forms of information and communication technologies (ICTs), which allow some employees to be accessible for a 24/7 service, has increased their working time (Galinsky, Aumann, & Bond, 2011) while at the same time, cultural expectations of family responsibilities demand their attention at home (Valcour, 2007). As a result, the lack of a clear boundary between work and family has led to work-life conflict (Devi & Rani, 2013; Nomaguchi, 2009) that can have harmful effects on the employees' mental and physical health as well as their job satisfaction (Bruck, Allen, & Spector, 2002; Kinnunen, Geurts, & Mauno, 2004). Although the issue of work-life balance is quite common in all occupations, the problems are not the same across different contexts and require different types of coping strategies (Roberts, 2007).

### **1.2.1 Work and Family Research in Academics**

Many argue that life in an academic environment is comfortable and special (Fisher, 1994). Academics are said to have a high level of flexibility at work because they have the freedom in deciding where, how and when to work (Rafnsdóttir & Heijstra, 2013). However, though academics were previously considered as working in a low-stress environment (Kinman & Jones, 2008; Makhbul & Khairuddin, 2013), it has now become one of the high work stress occupational groups (Ahsan, Abdullah, Alam, & Yong, 2009; Sigler, Wilson, & Allen, 1991) in which work-life balance is one of the common stressors found in the workplace (Gmelch & Burns, 1994; Makhbul & Khairuddin, 2013; Phillips, Sen, & McNamee, 2007). Nevertheless, there has been less focus on the need to balance work and life among academics of higher education institutions (Ahsan et al., 2009; Doherty & Manfredi, 2006).

The increased diversity of organisations and employee roles in the higher education sector has placed greater demands on the academics where the task of university teaching has been transformed and the student population has become broader and more diverse. For the academics, this represents greater workloads, higher expectations relating to research and increased administrative tasks (Noor, 2011). These significant increases in academic workload have squeezed their time and energy which results in the difficulty of maintaining standards of quality (Bryson, 2004). Academics, especially new staff, will have to face the growing task of teaching with a shrinking resource base and the explosion of knowledge and skills which did not exist before (Amer, 2013) and which they need to draw on in their role.

Most of the studies conducted among academics in higher education institutions reveal that the current environment does not support or contribute to a healthy workforce (Ahsan et al., 2009). These studies indicate that it is still difficult for them to achieve a satisfactory work-life balance due to the intensification of workload and long working hours which stretch to the evenings and weekends (Caproni, 2004; Doherty & Manfredi, 2006; Edwards & Rothbard, 2000; Houston, Meyer, & Paewai, 2006; Jacobs & Winslow,

2004; Jones, 2003). Hence, this will potentially impact on the academics' physical health and psychological wellbeing (Makhbul & Khairuddin, 2013), which can eventually influence their commitment to the organisation and jeopardise their job performance (Fatima & Sahibzada, 2012). Consequently, higher education institutions may not function as well as in the past due to the rising stressors in academia which are eroding the operating capabilities of the workforce (Bell et al., 2012).

### **1.2.2 Work-Life Issues Among Academics in Different Countries**

Makhbul & Khairuddin (2013) argue that academic stress has become prevalent in universities all around the world where stressors such as work relationships, work-life balance, job overload, job control, job security, pay and benefits, resources and communication, dimensions of the role and specific responsibilities are the sources of pressure in the workplace. Studies conducted among university employees in the USA, Canada, and the UK reveal that academics, compared to other employees, scored less for job satisfaction and felt more negatively about their workload and work-family balance (Rafnsdóttir & Heijstra, 2013).

In the UK, maintaining work-life balance is an increasingly difficult issue among academics (Cownie, 2004) due to the profound changes in higher education (Bryson, 2004) which have resulted in high levels of demands from work (Kinman & Jones, 2008). Surveys among the workforce in Britain, France, Finland, Norway, and Portugal show that British respondents reported higher levels of work-life conflict (Crompton & Lyonette, 2006) since stress in Britain has risen sharply, especially among academics in higher education (Kinman & Jones, 2004; Oswald, 2002). A study by Bryson (2004) among UK academics has revealed that the most important priorities identified were 'family' and 'relationships outside work'. However, many lecturers and academics in the UK are working more than a 48-hour week to deal with their work demands. The level of psychological distress among academics is high and there are less clear boundaries between work and home domains. Thus, Kinman & Jones (2008) found that the proportion of UK academics considered leaving the education sector to be high. Similarly, the result of an



international survey on the Changing Academic Profession (CAP) shows that, compared with other countries participating in the study, academics in the UK have a low level of satisfaction and over three-quarters of them are considering making a major job change which includes leaving higher institutions (Locke & Bennion, 2013).

Work and family conflicts among academics in the US are also a serious problem as full-time academics are found to be working in excess of fifty hours per week (O’Laughlin & Bischoff, 2005). Since the 1970s, there has been a steady decline in job satisfaction in the United States and some citizens were found to have severe problems with work-life balance (Oswald, 2002). The Mapping Project Survey conducted at Penn State University identified that problems related to work and family were arose from ‘bias avoidance’, a term which was used to describe the faculty members’ behaviour to minimize or avoid family commitments in order to achieve career success (Schiebinger & Gilmartin, 2010).

Meanwhile, more than 65% of the academics in a study conducted in Kuwait were dissatisfied with their work-life balance since they needed to work hard to achieve high level of performance in order to prove themselves as worthy academics at the institutions of higher education and learning (Marafi, 2013). A study among academics in Singapore also showed that most academics in higher education institutions were undecided about their levels of job satisfaction. The academics considered that autonomy of work and flexibility played important roles which contributed to job satisfaction while heavy workload was one of the factors that contributed to their dissatisfaction with their work (Paul & Phua, 2011).

In Malaysia, the rapid development of the education sector has made ‘job-hopping’ opportunities more possible. There is greater mobility among academics in Malaysia due to intrinsic factors such as achievement, recognition, responsibility and advancement and also extrinsic factors such as company policy, supervision, salary, status and job security (Manickam, Dhanapal, Vashu, Mohd Alwie, & Toh, 2013). The academic staff turnover at Malaysian universities was also reported to be high and the reason for leaving was largely due to job satisfaction (Hashim & Mahmood, 2011). The drive towards achieving the

standing of a developed nation by the year 2020 and becoming a leading education hub in the Asian region has caused a dramatic change to the character and functions of higher education in Malaysia (Arokiasamy, 2010; Ma, Koh, & Kuek, 2012). Many reforms in higher education were introduced with the launch of the National Higher Education Strategic Plan 2020 (MOHE, 2007) that is comprised of several phases of implementation. This has resulted in changes in the regulations governing the academic profession. The Malaysian higher education work environment has been highly affected and this has led to high levels of work stress among the academics (Azman, Sirat, & Samsudin, 2013). Furthermore, the increased number of universities in Malaysia has led to competitive pressure on the management of each university to ensure institutional improvement which subsequently affects academics' lives in order to cope with the organisational needs (Ahsan et al., 2009).

The challenges faced by the higher education institutions, therefore, result in substantial pressure especially among academics. These negative feelings may involve anger, tension, frustration or depression and are generally perceived as constituting a threat to self-esteem or wellbeing. Although most academics have a role which combines research, teaching and administrative responsibilities, their role is similar to teachers in schools. As educators, they are involved in facilitating the formation of an individual and improving the quality of life in society. Thus, as mentioned by Pienaar & Bester (2002: 32), "without well qualified and committed academic staff, no academic institution can really ensure sustainability and quality over the long haul".

### **1.3 Statement of the Research Problem**

Most published research reveals that women experience more difficulties than men in balancing work and personal life and this experience is significantly similar across different countries (Doble & Supriya, 2010). Research on women is warranted because the challenge that women face in managing work and family responsibilities is different from how men handle this issue (Connerley & Wu, 2016). For example, in India, although the involvement of women in employment is increasing universally, there has been little

change in the division of responsibilities around the house. Working parents with young children experienced major problems especially in providing high-quality child care (Doble & Supriya, 2010). Unfortunately, with the double burden of child care and elder care, women suffer a greater emotional burden since they still tend to be the primary caregivers (Fatima & Sahibzada, 2012). As women strive to balance their roles both at work and at home, this gives rise to significant role conflict (Kinman, 2011).

The issue of women academics who were disadvantaged and marginalized began to get the attention of researchers and feminist writers from the 1980s onwards. Contributions from the study of gender issues have highlighted the existence of inequality and exclusion in some related areas such as the wage gap, problems in career development and conflict between work and life commitments (Deiana, 2013). Such studies have shed some light on the hidden difficulties that women academics might face in their career such as the influence of career support, family circumstances and collegiality on productivity and ambition (Baker, 2010). Thus, although their participation in higher institutions has increased, women academics are still less fortunate in terms of their career progression as well as their daily interaction in the institutions (Small, Harris, Wilson, & Ateljevic, 2011).

Family life appears to have an impact on the career development of women academics (Appiah, Poku, & Acheampong, 2014). A study conducted by Acker & Feuerverger (1996) shows that women academics feel that judgment made about them as academics is unfair. It is difficult to meet the standard characteristics that are considered the best by the management upon which is based the achievement of tenure, promotion and merit procedures. In addition, married women academics also feel the burden of having to balance various competing roles such as carrying out their responsibilities as academics, researchers and managing the home and thus suffer greater pressure than their single counterparts (Kinman, 2011). Such tasks can create psychological and physical pressure (Amer, 2013).

Meanwhile, a pattern of gender segregation was observed in a study conducted between August 2011 and January 2012 in Australian universities. The study was conducted to collect information on the working life of university employees. Data was collected at 19 universities which involved 21,991 employees. The Work and Careers in Australian Universities Survey consists of three survey instruments designed for professional/general, academic and sessional teaching staff. The key findings among the professional staff show that men were more likely than women to occupy management positions and were more likely to supervise staff and manage a budget. Among the academic staff, the proportion of women and men who are at Level C (Senior Lecturer) was the same, but men predominated at professorial levels (i.e. Associate Professor and Professor). Meanwhile, for both general and academic staff, the proportion of women who had to work part-time because of caring responsibilities was five to six times that of men. Also, the proportion of women stating that they missed opportunities to apply for career advancement due to caring responsibilities was double that of men (Strachan et al., 2012).

Women are more likely to voice the challenge of finding a balance between work and life since it is still their responsibility to accomplish that even outside paid working hours, such as care for the children and home. A study conducted on Canadian academics shows that women academics emphasized “high-stress levels, exhaustion, fatigue and sleeplessness” in connection with the simultaneous tasks of establishing academic career and child rearing. The situation has caused illness among them and could harm their job satisfaction and performance (Acker & Armenti, 2004: 11). Furthermore, the need to balance multiple roles could lead to detrimental effects on health and family relationships as women continue to commit themselves to the majority share of domestic chores irrespective of their employment status (Doble & Supriya, 2010).

In Malaysia, Khairunneezam (2013) conducted a study among 1,078 academic staff from three public universities. The aim of the study was to explore the antecedents of job satisfaction, overall job satisfaction, and consequences of job satisfaction among Malaysian academics. One of the key findings is that female academics felt a heavier burden on creating the balance between work and life than male academics. When they

were asked by the university to fulfil the implementation of the new Key Performance Indicators (KPI) which involved stringent policies of working, they felt uncomfortable thinking that more time that should be spent with their family would be allocated to the workplace. This shows that women still play the major role in managing their family despite their contribution in the paid labour. Therefore, as the participation of women in the academic profession is increasing, there is a need to understand the challenges and triumphs they face both in their professional and personal spheres as they strive to balance work and family.

Although the biggest obstacle for a woman progressing to a senior management position is due to the double burden issue, the situation occurs particularly in cultures where women are solely expected to bear the responsibilities of managing the family and house chores. A survey conducted on women in Asia discovered that although there was no shortage of female graduates, women would have to put aside the question of work in order for them to pay attention to their family (Dyckerhoff, Wang, & Chen, 2012). Figure 1.1 shows how women become increasingly under-represented at the senior levels of corporation although they account for half of Asia's graduate cohort. Even though women in western countries are also affected with the double burden issue, due to the different cultural norms and other factors, such as lack of government support in providing child care, for Asian women, there appears to be a greater impact of this double burden (Dyckerhoff et al., 2012).

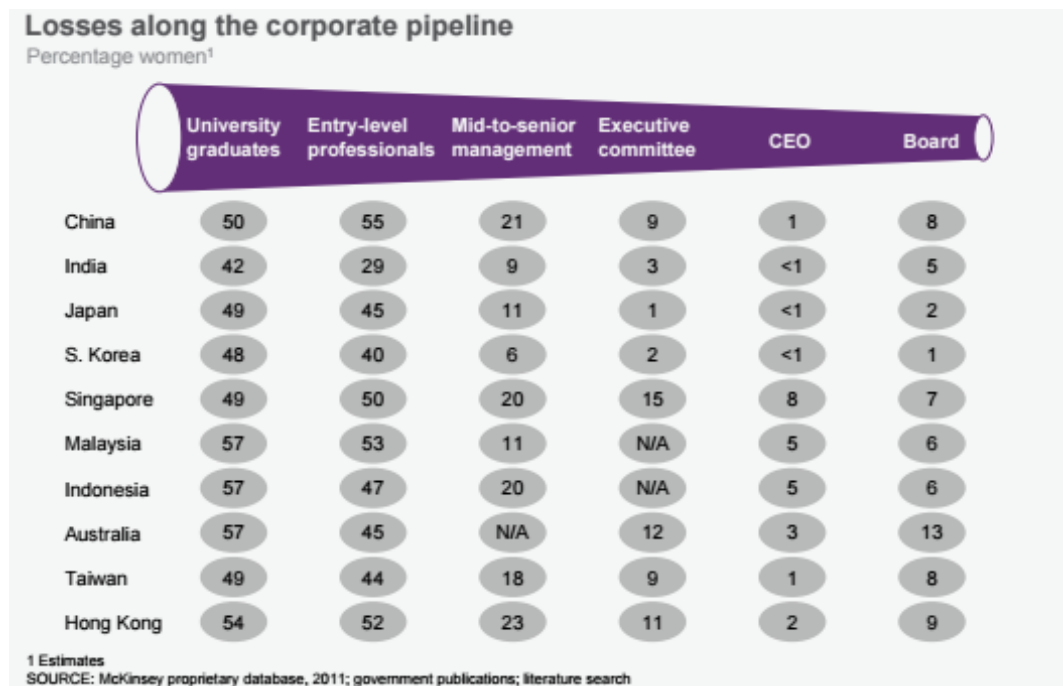


Figure 1.1 Under-representation of women at senior levels of corporations in Asia

Source: (Dyckerhoff et al., 2012).

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Unfortunately, due to the changes in the workforce composition, a substantial number of work-family studies have been focused on western countries using a largely white population middle class sample (Cohen & Kirchmeyer, 2005; Hassan, Dollard, & Winefield, 2010). These countries have different cultural values from non-Western countries, particularly Asian countries (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005). Research on cross-cultural management has also suggested that people from collectivist and individualist cultures demonstrate different work attitudes and work behaviours (Carpenter, 2000; Schwartz, 1999; Triandis & Suh, 2002). For example, an important work-related attitude, that of the decision style, has been found to differ across cultures and organisation. Collectivists emphasise decision styles that maintain and reinforce consensus such as consultative and participative styles while, for the individualists, styles that maximise or serve individual interests are adopted (Ali, Lee, Hsieh, & Krishnan, 2005).

However, Bond and Schwartz (cited in Fontaine & Richardson, 2005: 64) state that “values as broad orientations, are unlikely to be strongly predictive of specific behaviours”. In

addition, studies conducted in non-Western contexts have sometimes resulted in different findings from those conducted in Western contexts (Hassan et al., 2010). For example, a comparative study between Malaysia and Australia which examined the levels of individualism and collectivism of managers in two different cultural environments found that value classifications suggested earlier by Hofstede for Malaysia had changed significantly. This suggests that work-related values and attitudes are subject to change over the years as external environmental changes shape a society (Noordin & Jusoff, 2010). Thus, based on Hofstede's results on the dimension of individualism and collectivism, the findings from the West may not be simply generalised to other countries. Moreover, issues related to work and life have strong relation with cultural beliefs, values, and norms (Lobel, 1991) and cannot be simply assumed as relevant across cultures (Kinman & McDowall, 2009). Unfortunately, the issue of work-life balance has been relatively under-explored in the context of Asian business and society (Cohen & Kirchmeyer, 2005).

Previous studies also show that organisational factors play a significant role in helping employees to achieve satisfactory work-life management (Bond, 2004; Cowling, 2007; Glass & Estes, 1997; Subramaniam & Selvaratnam, 2010; Warhust, Eikhof, & Haunschild, 2008). There are various strategies that a supportive organisational culture can use to accommodate their employees' work/non-work lives. The ways employees manage their professional and personal domains differ and are influenced by various factors. They depend on the type of the organisation, its social and cultural values as well as the country (Blyton, Blunsdon, Reed, & Dastmalchian, 2006; Houston, 2012; Kossek & Lambert, 2005). Thus, research has identified organisational supports, such as work/non-work policies and practices, accommodating superiors and co-workers, occupational support and flexible jobs, to be effective in facilitating employees' work-life management (Allen, 2001; Clark, 2001; Md-Sidin, Sambasivan, & Ismail, 2010; Thompson, Beauvais, & Lyness, 1999). This, too, has raised a question about the role of the organisational structure and culture in facilitating and /or impeding Malaysian women academics in managing their work-life responsibilities.

In the light of all these points, the initial focus had been to examine the question of work-life balance among women academics in a collectivist society. However, as the study progressed, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was selected as the research method and this approach has helped the study to deepen and has given rise to different perspectives. The concept of work-life balance being interrogated enabled the researcher to appreciate that work-life balance is not merely a simple issue of these women 'balancing' their work and life domains. IPA helped to point out the significance of the wider societal and cultural situation of these women academics. Gathering and analysing data using an IPA approach pointed out key factors in this wider context. Their position in a collectivist society made the relationship between the work and life domains very complex. Therefore, living in a society where sets of religious and cultural beliefs and values are strongly upheld is significant in shaping the perceptions of these women academics who seek to manage their daily work-life responsibilities. Further, leaders in both the family and work institutions are important in both the personal and professional lives of these women academics. IPA, therefore, enabled the researcher to delve deeper into the experiences and perceptions of these women in managing their work and life responsibilities and the construction of this work-life interface within a collectivist society. This research examines in-depth the work-life interface of women living in a collectivist culture. This is an area still under-researched, and so this research adds to the organisational literature.

## **1.4 Purpose of the Research**

The purpose of the research is to understand how Malay Muslim women academics in Malaysia make sense of their daily work-life interface. It further seeks to identify work environmental factors that may assist or hinder participants in managing their work-life responsibilities and whether culture or religion is influential in their work-life management. With consideration of the purpose of the research, the overarching open-ended research question is:

1. How do Malay Muslim women academics make sense of their work-life interface?



To inquire further into the academics' perceptions of their work environmental factors that may promote or hinder them in achieving their work-life responsibilities, this primary question is supplemented with two secondary research questions:

2. What are the work environmental factors that assist and/or hinder the academics' work-life responsibilities?
3. Is there any influence of personal or cultural involvement in managing their work-life responsibilities?

## **1.5 Focus of the Research**

In Southeast Asia countries such as Thailand, Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaysia, gender issues and gender equality in the context of higher education institutions are not examined much in their educational literature. Further, in the western literature or the Asian organizational and management literature, the issue of higher education in Southeast Asia has also not been addressed. There is a vast amount of studies on women and higher education which are readily available, but nearly all were produced by western authors and pertain to western higher education. In contrast, studies on women in higher education in Southeast Asia are scarce, especially regarding the role of women in educational decision-making, administration or management (Luke, 2001).

Women's role in public life in Asia is complicated and difficult to resolve within the sometimes opposing systems of religious culture and modern development in the countries (Luke, 2001). Despite high levels of education and career aspirations, women still have to bear the burden of managing and looking after the family and household duties. Women, especially those who are married and have children, are found to be more affected in terms of their career development when it comes to performing professional responsibilities and family matters. They are responsible not only for ensuring the success of their children's education and the transmission of cultural values, but also responsible for the care and emotional support of their husband and parents. At

the same time, they need to develop their own potential and abilities for the development of their professional careers (Luke, 2001).

In setting out some of the issues faced by women, at the outset, the remarkable growth in the numbers of women entering the workplace must be acknowledged. Malaysia as a developing country has grown rapidly in terms of socio-economic development and in various areas of life. A plan of socio-economic development has been formulated to include policies, strategies, and programmes for the advancement of women. The Malaysian government has pledged to increase the participation of women in national development following the declaration of the Decade of Women (1975-1998) by the United Nations. The establishment of various bodies such as the National Advisory Council on Women and Development (NACIWID), Women's Affairs Secretariat (HAWA), the National Policy on Women, Women's Affairs Division and Ministry of Women and Family Development is a testimony of the Malaysian government's efforts to involve the participation of women in their socio-economic development plans (Azmawati, 2006). In order to develop their skills and become more educated than in the past, the government has also encouraged women's involvement in education and training opportunities. This has been emphasized particularly in the introduction of the Tenth Malaysia Plan (2011-2015).

Unfortunately, despite all these efforts, gender differences exist in career aspirations and opportunities, particularly where the work culture is shaped around masculinist values. In Malaysia, the pressures between family role commitment and women's workforce participation are mediated by the customs, traditions, and laws which determine the organisation and structure of Malay society. Furthermore, religion plays a big factor since the majority of Malaysians are Malays (Aziz, 2011; Lunn, 2007). Thus, in the scenario of work-life interface, Malaysian women are considered to have more work-life conflict than men because balancing work and family obligations is assessed in terms of the role obligation perspective (Lewis & Ayudhya, 2006). Work-life balance is achieved only when the job duties and household affairs can be met adequately (Aziz, 2011). However, previous research on women academics in Malaysia has found that their perceptions of

work and family role experiences were influenced by culture and context factors (Aziz, 2011).

This study focuses on Malay Muslim women in Malaysia because of the complex issues in managing their daily work and family/life interface. Furthermore, among the three main ethnic groups in Malaysia, Malays form the biggest group (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2016).

## **1.6 Relevance of the Research**

This research contributes to knowledge in two ways: a) by providing new insights into the work-life experience of Malay Muslim women academics, and b) by using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) in the study of work-family issues. As mentioned above, a number of previous studies on the issue of work-life interface have been carried out in the Western context. Those studies might not be applicable to the Malaysian context because of the differences in cultural background. Malaysia has specific beliefs and values that influence the population's perception in managing their daily work-life responsibilities. Malaysia, as an Asian country with a collectivist society, upholds values and beliefs very different from those of individualist cultures (Hofstede, 1980). Thus, it is valuable to obtain data from this part of the world in order to contribute to the generalization of theories in work-life study.

Another significant aspect of the research concerns the lack of scholarly writing in work-life study using an interpretivist paradigm. This study emphasises this paradigm in order to help deepen the understanding of women academics' work-life experiences as they manage their daily work-life responsibilities. To date, there has been no work-life study using IPA. As the focus of this study is on Malay Muslim women academics in which culture and religion have major influences in their work and life, IPA as a method to understand the academics' work-life experiences, helps to surface a more nuanced understanding of the complexity of Malay women academics' life and identity.

## 1.7 Context of the Research

Malaysia, in an effort to become a centre of excellence in higher education in Southeast Asia, has embarked on a national higher education plan to achieve world-class status among its universities (Muda, 2008). Aligning with the strategy paper under the Eleventh Malaysia Plan 2016-2020, the Malaysia Higher Education Blueprint 2015-2025 sets the way forward for the Malaysian education system. With the notion of educational transformation, 2015 marked a year of building momentum and laying the foundations. 2016-2020 is to accelerate system upgrades and 2021-2025 is expected to move towards excellence with increased operational flexibility. The steps and measures set out in the Blueprint are an upgrade to the 10th Malaysia Plan (2011-2015) initiatives set up by the government to improve the quality of lecturers, to enhance student learning, and to strengthen research, development, and innovation in the Malaysian Higher Education Institutions.

The birth of the Malaysia Higher Education Blueprint (2015-2025) strengthens the Ministry's aspiration to produce a higher education system that ranks among the world's leading education systems and which enables Malaysia to compete in the global economy. The launch of this framework suggests major changes in the way the Ministry and the system will operate to realize its goals. However, these changes gave rise to the assessment of academics' performance. Teaching, supervision, research, consultancy, publications and services to the public have been set as academics' performance indicators (KPIs) in many higher education institutions in Malaysia. In terms of work-life management, this change has had a greater impact on female than male academics.

In this research, the participants involved were seven Malay Muslim women academics working at one higher education institution located in a suburban area in Selangor, one of the states in Malaysia (Figure 1.2). The institution and its other branches were administered by the Higher Education Division of one of the Malaysian government agencies. In total, almost 98 percent of the academics employed at the institution and the other branches are from Malay ethnic groups with Islam as their religion. For the purpose

of this study, all participants involved were married Malay Muslim women academics who have at least one child and have been working for more than 10 years. In Chapter Three, a detailed explanation is given about the participant characteristics and the selection procedure.

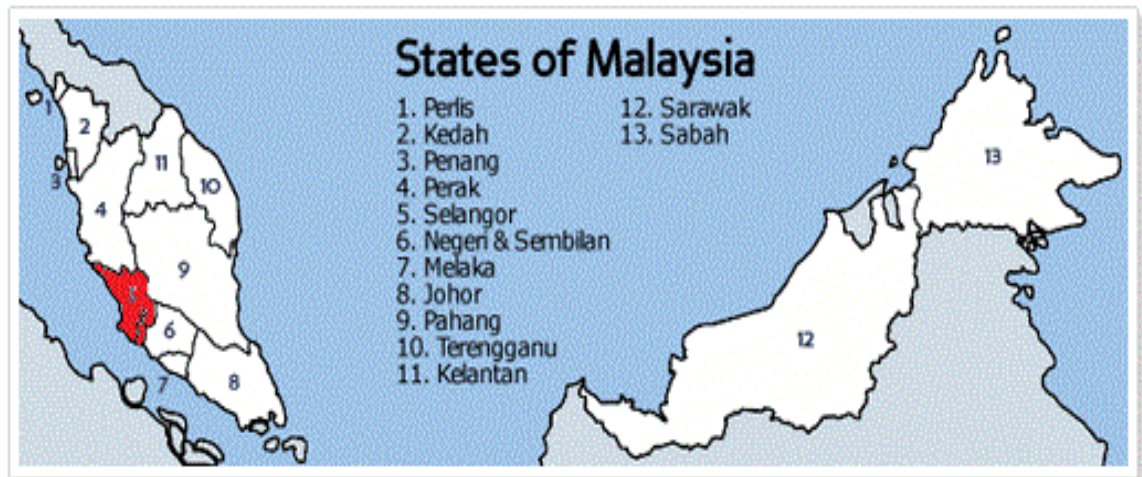


Figure 1.2 Location of research

(source: Map of Malaysia, 2017)

## 1.8 Methodological Orientation (IPA)

This research employs an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) as a distinctive and emerging research approach to qualitative inquiry which originated in the field of psychology but has increasingly been used in human, social and health sciences (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). The approach is grounded in exploring and understanding lived experience. When individuals engage with an experience they have had, they are able to reflect on what it means (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). Hence, IPA was chosen to best access the meanings the sample of women attribute to their lived experiences in managing their daily work and life/ family roles.

The focus of this research was not only to describe the lived experience of the Malay Muslim women academics but also to interpret the meanings these women attribute to

their experiences. Data were collected through a two-week diary written by the participants and followed up with a telephone interview. Thus, the use of IPA as the methodological approach changed the focus from an understanding of work-life balance simply in terms of balance. The process of investigation, as well as the data gathered and subsequently analysis, highlighted the complex nature of the relationship between 'work' and 'life' in the experiences of these women. Managing work and life responsibilities is a complex process for these women because of the importance of religious values, traditional Malay customs and their leaders' attitude at the workplace. Thus, the evolution of this research tracks the way in which work-life balance concept is not merely about a balanced life. Instead, among this group of women, there is a complex interdependency between work and life. Detailed explanation of the methodology of this research is discussed in Chapter Four.

## **1.9 Researcher's Interest and Position**

The researcher previously worked as an academic for 11 years in the same institution. The participants were her ex-colleagues before she was assigned to another position at the Higher Education Division which is located at the headquarters. During her time at the new workplace, two different directors led the institution where she had worked previously. A few years after leaving the academic role, she began to realize the differences in managing her work-life tasks during her period as an academic and after leaving her teaching career. She experienced better work-life satisfaction at her new workplace and this has led her to explore how academics make sense of their work-life experience in juggling their multiple daily roles. Thus, because the research setting was the researcher's previous workplace, the researcher's position here can be described as that of an 'insider researcher' (Shah, 2004) which has both benefits and pitfalls. Being aware of some of the pitfalls, the researcher has taken preventive approaches to avoid them. These are explained in detail in Chapter Four (see section 4.5.3).

## 1.10 Structure of the Thesis

The thesis is organised into seven chapters as follows.

Chapter One provides a comprehensive picture of the research. This includes the background, statement of the problem, its purpose, focus and the relevance of the research. In this chapter, how the research has evolved from the earlier focus of work-life balance to the emerging concept of work-life interface is outlined. This chapter also briefly explains the methodology adopted in this research, the researcher's position in this study and finally the thesis structure.

Chapter Two reviews the literature considered pertinent to the research topic. It discusses the theoretical concepts of this research in which three main key issues are highlighted. The emergence of work-life research and the conceptualisation of work and non-work are first discussed to develop an understanding of the relationship between work and life, which is the main focus of the research. Drawing from previous studies, the relationship between work-life interface with, firstly, gender issues and, secondly, organizational culture will be considered. Gender and organizational culture were identified as key concepts at the outset of the research. However, as the research evolved, the concepts of leadership and identity emerged as key concerns for the participants. Thus, as part of the literature review, the issue of leadership is included to extend the discussion of organizational culture and work-life balance. This discussion of leadership is followed by a discussion of identity which also emerged as a theme from the detailed investigation.

Chapter Three presents the background and context of this research. It discusses the focus of the thesis on Malay Muslim women academics in Malaysia. This chapter discusses the need for research into how the academics experience their work-life interface. Specifically, this chapter examines the key concepts discussed in Chapter Two in the Malaysian context. The discussion is situated in the changing context of Malaysian

Higher Education, the changing nature of academic work, leadership styles in Malaysia and the understanding of who the Malay Muslim women are.

Chapter Four describes the methodological framework of the research, including the philosophical assumptions underpinning the research. The chapter provides the reasons for the choice of IPA in conducting this research and describes the recruitment and data collection procedures. This chapter details the investigation process using IPA including a step by step description of IPA analysis.

Chapter Five presents the findings of the research. The chapter begins by presenting pen portraits of the seven participants to introduce them. Here the findings from both diary writing and telephone interviews are presented as basic themes and emergent superordinate themes. The analysis of the seven qualitative research diaries concentrates on three main ideas, defined by the structure of the diaries: daily significant events, interferences, and emotions. A total of four superordinate themes emerged from the analysis of the interview transcripts: Juggling Multiple Roles, Sources of Support, Impact of Leadership Style and Identity Formation. Extracts from the data from the seven participants are used throughout the chapter in order to preserve the academics' voices and to provide an interpretative account of their understandings of the meaning of their experiences. The aim of the analysis is to demonstrate convergence as well as divergence between the participants.

Chapter Six discusses the findings of the four superordinate themes from the previous chapter. The discussion provides insights into how Malaysian women academics make sense of their daily work-life integration. This chapter consists of two sections. The first presents the synthesis of findings which brings together the relevant themes to provide an account of findings for each research question. This is followed by a section which discusses the findings of this research in relation to the objectives of this study and the relevant literature.



Chapter Seven provides a brief overview of the findings. It discusses the potential limitations of the research and its practical implications. It also considers how the findings can translate into recommendations for practice and future research into the area. The chapter ends with an autobiographical reflection by the researcher.

## **CHAPTER TWO: THEORETICAL CONCEPTS**

### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents theoretical concepts underpinning this research. Three key issues identified at the beginning of the research are discussed in this chapter. The first is the emergence of work-life research and the conceptualisation of work and non-work which is the primary focus of this research. The second is women and the work-life interface. The reasons why women are the focus in this work-life research are also explored. The third key issue deals with organizational culture and its place in work-life balance, particularly the influence of the work setting of the participants in their daily life. A further concept, that of leadership which emerged as significant in the course of this research, is then discussed. The chapter ends with the discussion on identity and work-life interface, another concept that emerged as significant in the findings.

### **2.2 Emergence of Work-Life Research**

Work and family have been traditionally been viewed as separate spheres of life, and the experiences of individuals in one domain were investigated separately from their experiences in the other (Brotheridge & Lee, 2005). Historically, the dilemma between work and family was faced only by the breadwinners, who were mostly men. However, the emergence of work and family research comes about with the increased presence of women in the workforce, dual career couples, and single-parent families in the labour market (Aryee, Luk, Leung, & Lo, 1999; Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Greenhaus & Allen, 2011). These demographic changes have reshaped the gender profile of the workplace. One aspect is that of how dual family earners deal with both work requirements and family responsibilities. These changes have led to an interest among researchers in the relationship between work and family (Parasuraman & Greenhaus, 2002).

Work place and home are two primary domains for employees which require them to perform different and specific roles. In the work place, they have to perform their job requirements and, when at home, they have to perform their responsibilities for the family. Therefore, searching for a satisfactory work-life relationship by minimising the conflict, or reducing the undesirable outcomes caused by an unbalanced allocation of resources between those two domains, has become a key issue for workers.

In the early 1980s, extensive studies were conducted on the negative impact of role conflict between work and family on organisational outcomes such as higher job-related tension and intention to leave, lower job satisfaction and organisational commitment (e.g. Bedeian & Armenakis, 1981; Kopelman, Greenhaus, & Connolly, 1983). Based on the early studies, a wide range of role conflict variables between 'work' and 'outside work' domains were examined. In order to understand how work interferes with family life, for example, Pleck, Staines, & Lang (1980) employed the 1977 Quality of Employment Survey while Staines & O'Connor (1980) used the same survey data to discuss the conflict between work and leisure activities. However, at this point, there was still lack of a structural framework for role conflict studies, although the findings reported many associations between demographic factors (e.g. gender and parental status), job characteristics (e.g. working hours, work demands) and satisfactions (e.g. family satisfaction, general life satisfaction, and job satisfaction).

Since then, the relations between work and non-work have been extensively investigated (Near, Rice, & Hunt, 1980). A system was established to classify earlier research factors into variables that were objective (job type, family size, etc.) and subjective (job satisfaction, satisfaction with life, etc.) based on the previous work by Rice, Near, & Hunt (1979). These studies led to the establishment of a preliminary model of the relationships between work and non-work.

## **2.3 Conceptualisation of Work and Non-Work**

The concept of work/non-work relations is defined by Lambert & Kossek (2005: 515) as “a focus on the relationship between work and personal life”. The following section examines the concepts and linkages between the two domains to help understand this relationship between work and non-work lives which underpins the investigation of this research on work-life experiences of women academics.

### **2.3.1 Work**

According to Ransome (1996), work is normally perceived as “formal paid employment” or “market work” or “work that is performed in return for a wage”. For Geurts & Demerouti (2003:280) work is defined as “a set of (prescribed) tasks that an individual performs while occupying a position in an organisation”. In other words, work means paid work. This current research defines work as paid work, which is the work that the women academics perform for the institution.

### **2.3.2 Non-Work**

Work and family represent the two central domains in the lives of most employed men and women (Acker & Armenti, 2004) where largely the focus of various studies is on how the working parents seek to balance formal work and family responsibilities (Poelmans, 2005). Here, the family is often considered ‘close family’. However, in terms of the family domain, it can be argued that the extended family has not been systematically taken into consideration in these studies. Work can also have impact on the relationship with the extended family specifically in a culture or society where the extended family has an important role. Some individuals may perceive their extended family as their ‘close family’ and so this should be included in the family domain. In this study, the focus was on Malaysian academics living in a collectivist society in which collectivists see themselves as connected to others and define themselves in terms of relationships with others

(Hofstede, 1980) including the extended family. Hence, how the context of the family unit is defined by the individual participants should be examined.

In defining 'non-work' or 'life' domain, Geurts & Demerouti (2003: 280) include "activities and obligations beyond one's own family situation" while, for Ransome (2007: 377), non-work is "a thing that lies outside the work domain, but which falls inside the family or home life domain." This current research of Malay women academics defines non-work as activities that are performed by the academics that are different from their formal academic work at the institution. Such activities include, for example, managing household and child care, conducting activities with families and friends; and performing spiritual activities. Generally, work and non-work life can be both demanding and helpful. To understand better how work and non-work affects one another, it is crucial to examine the relationship between the two domains, which is discussed in the following section.

### **2.3.3 Relationship between Work and Non-Work**

In the literature, the intersection between work and non-work roles is a complex system. However, generally, the work-life interrelationship is discussed from the perspective of role theory which constitutes a conflict perspective and an enrichment perspective (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn, Snoek, & Rosenthal, 1964).

#### **2.3.3.1 Conflict Perspective**

According to Kahn et al. (1964), when people receive incompatible role expectations simultaneously, they will experience psychological conflict. Thus, from their research Kahn et al. (1964) proposed role conflict theory which includes four distinct types of role conflict; namely the intra-sender conflict, inter-sender conflict, inter-role conflict and person-role conflict. For this current research, inter-role conflict was considered as a suitable type to support research into the work-family relationships.

In this view, individuals are considered to have fixed amount of psychological and physiological resources. In order to perform their daily role, they need to use these resources. However, individuals may experience conflict when they are involved in multiple roles and there is an imbalance in role participation in the different domains, especially when both domains are considered important to the individual (Frone, Russell, & Cooper, 1992; Frone, Yardley, & Markel, 1997). Thus, excessive demands in one domain such as work will produce a negative impact on the family domain (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Gutek, Searles, & Klepa, 1991; Shaffer, Harrison, Gilley, & Luk, 2001). Work-life conflict is bi-directional in nature. Work demands which interfere with family demands will lead to work-to-family conflict, while family-to-work conflict occurs when family demands interfere with work demands (Kossek & Ozeki, 1998; Frone, 2003; Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Hammer & Thompson, 2003; O'Driscoll, Ilgen, & Hildreth, 1992; Poelmans, O'Driscoll, & Beham, 2005; Stewart, 2013).

Conflict between these two domains is related broadly to three dimensions; time, strain and specific behaviours (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Griggs, Casper, & Eby, 2013). Hammer and Thompson (2003) argued that the most common type of conflict among these three dimensions is a time-based conflict which, according to Greenhaus and Beutell (1985), is when participation in one role competes for an individual's time in another role which results in a conflict between the roles. For example, an employee has to work extra hours due to unavoidable work task and thus, he/she fails to attend his/her son's school concert. If both events are considered important to him/her, work-family conflict is likely to be experienced by the employee.

Strain-based conflict occurs when an individual has difficulties to perform his/ her role due to the strain felt in the other role (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). For example, when an employee is pressured at his/her work place with the work tasks, he/she will experience symptoms such as anger and worry. He/she might experience negative emotions and might have difficulties in communicating with his/her family members when feeling this type of pressure (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985).

Behavioural-based conflict takes place when the behaviours needed in one role are incompatible with the expected behaviours in the other role (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). For example, employees are expected to be very focussed, determined, firm, and objective at work. However, when they return home, they may have difficulties switching gears to engage in their more compassionate, open and flexible role with their family members. Hence, conflict occurs between work and home domains if they are unable to adjust to the expected or necessary behaviours in the work place or at home.

Researchers working in work-life study have identified the consequences of work-life conflict on health, work, and family. For example, in their review of the consequences related to work-family conflict, Allen et al. (2000) indicated a number of work-related outcomes associated with work-to-family conflict which include job satisfaction, organisational commitment, turnover intentions, absenteeism, job performance and career satisfaction. Numerous studies in varying types of organisations worldwide support these outcomes (Allen et al., 2000; Boyar et al., 2003; Kossek & Ozeki, 1998; Frone, Russell, & Cooper, 1997; Goff, Mount, & Jamison, 1990; Martins, Eddleston, & Veiga, 2002; Netemeyer, Boles, & McMurrin, 1996). Additionally, Bohle, Quinlan, Kennedy, & Williamson (2004) found that the increase of work/non-work conflict was due to high work expectations and excessive long working hours while Collinson & Collinson (1997) emphasized the importance of having supportive organisational policies and cultures. Hence, workers will experience conflict if organisational support is not provided and if paid work and non-work responsibilities are considered as different entities.

Kossek and Ozeki (1999) conducted a meta-analysis to examine work-family conflict and work outcomes which include performance, turnover intentions, absenteeism, organizational commitment, work commitment and burnout. The findings demonstrate that conflict which occurs when one's family tasks interfere with the work domain will result in a negative relationship to work performance and attitudes. In addition, Kossek & Ozeki (1999) found that, regardless of direction, conflict between work and family relates to higher turnover intention, care-related absence, and a lower commitment to organizations and work. In their model predicting turnover intentions, Boyar et al. (2003)

found both work-to-family conflict and family-to-work conflict to be significantly related to turnover intentions.

Meanwhile, Goff et al. (1990) in their study examining the impact of on-site childcare on work-family conflict and absenteeism, discovered that the presence of on-site child-care was not related to levels of work-family conflict and absenteeism. However, reduced work-family conflict was associated with lower levels of employee absenteeism. Findings from Frone et al. (1997) showed that family-to-work conflict related to greater alcohol consumption while work-to-family conflict resulted in depression, physical health complaints, and hypertension. Finally, previous studies have also suggested that the work-to-family conflict relates to family outcomes such as lower family satisfaction and marital quality (Amstad, Meier, Fasel, Elfering, & Semmer, 2011; Matthews, Conger, & Wickrama, 1996; Parasuraman, Greenhaus, & Granrose, 1992). However, a more current perspective on work-life study considers that 'work' and 'non-work' are interrelated and should not be perceived simply as separate domains. This insight has led to the enrichment perspective (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006) in looking at work and family relationships.

### **2.3.3.2 Enrichment Perspective**

Work-family enrichment, like work and family conflict, is also bidirectional (Hill, 2005). Greenhaus and Powell (2006) and Grzywacz and Marks (2000) proposed that individuals can experience satisfaction when the integration of work, home, and self leads to a sense of balance. As explained by Greenhaus and Powell (2006), work-family enrichment occurs when the quality of life in one domain such as the work role becomes better through the experiences obtained in the other domain. In addition, Clark (2002:25) reported that conflict can be managed when individuals communicate across the border from home to work and from work to home domains. Thus, balance can be achieved because an individual is capable of both integrating and segregating the two domains.



Greenhaus and Powell (2006) associate the term 'work-family enrichment' with other related terms such as "enhancement", "positive spillover" and "facilitation". In the work-life literature, the differences between all these terms have not been clearly discussed. However, most terms share a similar definition which explains how the quality of life in one domain is improved through the experiences in another domain. Thus, Greenhaus and Powell (2006) argue that those various terms share a similar idea.

According to Greenhaus and Powell (2006), a resource generated in one role can promote high performance and a positive effect in another role by means of two mechanisms known as 'instrumental paths' and 'affective paths'. Instrumental work-family enrichment takes place when resources in one role such as skills, psychological and physical resources, social capital resources, flexibility, and material resources are transferred directly to another role and increase the performance in the specific domain. For example, when individuals are good at managing their time at their workplace, they will be more efficient in managing household chores and childcare at home. Meanwhile, affective work-family enrichment occurs when resources produced in one role contribute positive affect in that role. As such, positive emotion will be generated in the other domain. For instance, individuals will be in a positive mood and feel happy at home when they are praised for their good task accomplishment at work.

Rothbard (2001) explained that psychological engagement in family life is associated with work engagement for women while psychological engagement such as attention in work was positively related to men's psychological engagement in family life. Research also has indicated the positive impact of work-related effect. For example, employees experiencing work satisfaction at the workplace will contribute to positive parenting by which participants establish a good relationship with their children. This will assist particularly in the positive development of the children's emotion (Stewart & Barling, 1996). In addition, Wadsworth and Owens (2007) discovered that an individual will experience a positive spillover from work activities to the home if more social support is received at work, while support received from the spouse and children is positively related to the enhancement of work.

Researchers agree that support from various groups such as family, community, and organization are needed to allow the integration of work and home. (Abendroth & Den Dulk, 2011; Dale, 2005; Huang, 2006; Md-Sidin et al., 2010; Van Daalen, Willemsen, & Sanders, 2006). Therefore, it is important to understand and look into the meaning of such 'support' because this has a great impact on work-life management by employees (Abendroth & Den Dulk, 2011; Warhust et al., 2008). Dale (2005) and Huang (2006) argued that support from family is significantly important in order to be able to achieve work/non-work integration. A study conducted by Dale (2005) among Pakistani and Bangladeshi workers in the UK on social support had similar findings to a study conducted by Huang (2006) among Taiwanese workers. Both studies discovered that it was easy for these employees to obtain support from their family members due to the collectivistic culture of their social context. In the collectivistic culture, the sense of obligation to provide support among family members is strong. However, according to Abendroth and Den Dulk (2011), other sources of support, such as help from extended family members and friends, are less discussed in work-family research.

### **2.3.3.3 Work-Life Balance**

Work-life balance has become a very popular topic in the work-family literature (Lambert & Kossek, 2005; Maertz & Boyar, 2011; Sturges, 2008). The terms 'work-life balance' and 'work-family balance' are used frequently among researchers but these terms have not undergone a great deal of analysis. Greenhaus & Allen (2011) pointed out that the meaning of work-life balance remains ambiguous. There are multiple definitions used to describe what the term 'balance' refers to (Clark, 2000; Greenhaus & Allen, 2011; Grzywacz & Carlson, 2007; Lobel, 1991) and according to Reiter (2007), almost every article has a different definition. Since most research seems to equate balance with the absent of conflict, Greenhaus and Allen (2011) raise the question of whether the literature needs to include both concepts of conflict and enhancement.

According to Frone (2003), many authors have associated the term 'work-life balance' as a harmonious interface between different life domains. However, the most common

definition refers to “a lack of conflict or interference between work and family roles” (Frone, 2003: 145). Greenhaus et al. (2003: 513) defined work-life balance as “the extent to which an individual is equally engaged in – and equally satisfied with – his or her work role and family role” while Clark (2000: 751) defines work-life balance as “satisfaction and good functioning at work and at home, with a minimum of role conflict”. Greenhaus and Allen (2011) related the term ‘work-life balance’ to the absence of work-family conflict. They also note high involvement and satisfaction across roles when describing the term.

Rather than ‘balance’, some scholars, e.g. Warhust et al. (2008) have preferred the concept of ‘work and personal life integration or interaction’. Warhust et al. (2008) argued that the term work-life balance implies that work and life are two separate domains and, thus, time should be split equally between both domains. Rapoport et al. (2002) argued that people may have different priorities in their life and that the aim is not always an even balance between the two. Clark (2000) pointed out that not all individuals want to integrate both domains. Some might prefer to keep both domains strictly separated. In addition, some might experience work and life as separate and balanceable (Eikhof, Warhurst, & Haunschild, 2007).

In short, although the literature in work-life research has generated various types of work-family constructs, these cannot be used without clear definition. Although the constructs seem related to one another, there are still differences when discussing certain areas of work-family interface. The conflict perspective is mostly referred to when explaining the nature of work and family relationships rather than the enrichment perspective or work-life balance (Greenhaus et al., 2003; Grzywacz & Carlson, 2007; Kalliath & Brough, 2008).

In the current research, the aim is to understand how the Malay Muslim women academics make sense of their daily work-life interface. Thus, this research employs both positive and negative perspectives in order to obtain a more detailed and holistic understanding of the experiences of these academics. Several prominent scholars in the field (e.g. Frone, 2003; Hill, 2005) have suggested focusing simultaneously on both

conflicting and rewarding aspects of work-life interface in order to gain a more complete examination of the issue. This wider concept reflects the evolution of this current research from an initial concern of work-life balance to an exploration of work-life interface and the complex relationships between these two domains.

## **2.4 Women and Work-Life Balance**

There are two very important components in employed women's life: their family, and their work. According to Frone et al. (1992), these two components may represent women's self-identity, that is their understanding of themselves as individuals. Although women are capable of having their own financial resources through their work, family is important to these women as it gives support in their lives. Noor (2006) felt that women still play a major role in the care of families and households although they are now contributing to the national development of the country by participating in the workforce. Thus, the issues affecting the work and family domains among women should be given serious consideration as they have a huge impact on women's lives.

Researchers have found that over the past few decades, the involvement of women in the global labour force has increased (Auster, 2001; Coughlan, 2002; Drew & Murtagh, 2005; Paoli & Merllié, 2001). In managing their careers and their families, there are many challenges that women workers have to face (Fine-Davis et al., 2004; O'Connor, 1998; Volpe & Murphy, 2006). According to Greenhaus and Powell (2003), in today's situation, managing both home and work is a major challenge for employed women and so they may find it difficult to obtain satisfaction in both roles (Auster, 2001; Chalofsky, 2003). The phenomenon of dual career couples has made the situation complicated, especially for women. This situation has put pressure on women in managing multiple roles (Kirrane & Monks, 2004).

Employed women often face a dilemma in choosing between career and family demands (Dex & Joshi, 1999). The study of working women in the United States has found that

there are a large number of employed mothers who choose to stop working in order to focus on child rearing. This phenomenon is now becoming a trend in the United States. In addition, the study also found that the number of long working hours, work intensification and the demands of childrearing have resulted in labour turnover (Jones & McKenna, 2002). At the same time, studies have also found that an organization which supports the employees' management of work and family is beneficial to both employers and employees (Auster, 2001; Drew et al., 2003; O'Connell & Russell, 2005). Bryan (2015: 5) pointed out that "fostering a culture that is supportive of work-life satisfaction promotes employee effectiveness and provides organizations with a competitive advantage, while also alleviating stress within employees' lives".

The involvement of women in the workforce is increasing and this has led to changes in the roles of men and women, especially for dual-career couples (Kirrane & Monks, 2004). However, there is still a lack of understanding of how employed women manage work and family roles (Marcinkus, Whelan-Berry, & Gordon, 2007). There are various factors that need to be examined and one is the meaning or perception that women give towards their roles in work, and in the family. This will aid the determination of how balance or satisfaction can be achieved in both roles.

Kirchmeyer (1992) and Schneer and Reitman (1993) found that working women who have employed spouses and who also have children achieve more satisfaction in their careers. Chusmir (1982) also found that employed women who have small children have a tremendous commitment to the family. Thus, opportunities for the promotion in career are limited potentially for them. Knight (1994) also found that, in managing both family and work, women would consider what was important to them in their lives. In addition, both Clark, (2002) and Knight (1994) reported that the ability and success in managing both family and career roles give satisfaction to employed women.

Auster (2001) found that employed women at mid-career reported that the organization which supports flexible working options could benefit women in their work-life management. Unfortunately, the women rarely used such flexible arrangements. Indeed,

O'Connell and Russell (2005) found that the flexible work arrangements used among employees are too low. The lack of uptake of these arrangements by women is partly because of a concern that the use of such arrangements might be perceived negatively, that the women might be seen as not being committed to their careers. This occurs because the employees feel they will be perceived negatively by the management when selecting such flexible options (Auster, 2001; Drew & Murtagh, 2005; Hochschild, 1997).

Studies have found that women who chose the option of flexible working hours were considered as giving less commitment to the job (Drew & Murtagh, 2005; Hochschild, 1997). O'Connor (2001) believes that women who have aspirations and the potential to advance in their careers should be given the opportunity to achieve these. However, due to various reasons, many women are not able to progress in their career. Among the factors that have been identified include meeting the demands of family, discrimination against women in the workforce as well as involvement in the management of both work and family (Mainiero & Sullivan, 2005; Sullivan & Mainiero, 2006, 2007).

## **2.5 Organizational Culture and Work-Life Balance**

Organizational culture and work-life balance are two concepts related to one another, particularly in the relationship between workplace and employees' experiences of work-life balance (Callan, 2007; Kirchmeyer, 2000; Lewis, 1997). Currently, overwork has been portrayed as the symbol of modern day success (Bunting, 2005; Gambles, Lewis, & Rapoport, 2006; McDowell, 2004; Sennett, 1998). Thus, it has been argued that most work place structures are supporting this idea of 'overwork' as the route to success by implementing or sustaining patterns of long working hours (e.g. Kodz, Kersley, & Strebler, 1998; Paton, 2001). Unfortunately, instead of creating a balance between work and life activities, this scenario is creating 'work intensification' (Brannen, 2005). As such, this might not only negatively impact on employees' well-being, but also on that of their families and communities (Hochschild, 2003, 2005; Sennett, 1998; Voydanoff, 2005a, 2005b, 2005c).

### 2.5.1 Organisational Culture

An early definition of organisational culture by Martin and Siehl (1983) considered organisational culture comprising the shared values, attitudes, beliefs, and customs of members of an organisation. Similarly, Schein (1985) proposed that organisational culture represents the values and assumptions that have long existed in an organization which are widely shared by all employees. Park and Kim (2009) pointed out that organisational culture can influence the behaviour of the organization and its employees. Thus, 'organisational culture' is a concept that encompasses beliefs, ideologies, customs, norms, traditions, knowledge and technology.

Barney (1986) also proposed a similar definition and suggested that organisational culture reflects the way of thinking and performing tasks through unique norms, values, beliefs, and codes of behaviour. Thompson et al. (1999) state that a supportive work-life organizational culture represents how assumptions, beliefs, and values are shared by everyone and where the integration of employees' work and family lives is supported and valued by the organisation. They argue that if a balanced work-family life is not being fostered for employees, the organisation will create tensions in employees' personal lives. The situation will not only produce negative effects for the employees but also for the organisation.

In recent studies on organisational culture, similar definitions of the term have been agreed on by most researchers. For example, Ramachandran, Chong and Ismail (2011) considered that organizational culture helps employees to understand how the organization works through the values and trust that are fostered in the organization. Similarly, Al-Omari, Abu Tineh and Khasawneh (2013) defined organisational culture as the attitudes, experiences, beliefs, and values of an organisation while Tahilramani (2013) viewed organisational culture as a valuable asset that cannot be purchased and a significant factor that can either build or demolish an organisation.

In work-life culture, Thompson et al. (1999) proposed three components. The first component refers to the expectations or pressures encountered in relation to the time in which employees give more priority to work than to the family. This component exists because role theory literature has identified time-based conflict as a major source of work-life conflict which occurs when time pressures exist in one role. The second component refers to the negative perception by the management of the employees who use the work-life benefits provided by the organization. Potentially it might give the impression that workers are prioritizing their family by using this opportunity provided by the organisation. It is a norm in many organisational cultures that the presence of the employees at the workplace or their visibility indicates their contribution and commitment to work. Thus, many employees are 'discouraged' from utilizing the work arrangements offered in the organisation because it may undermine their position as being seen as a committed employee. Finally, the third component concerns support and sensitivity on the part of the management towards employees' family responsibilities. In terms of the work-family benefits which are offered by the organization, the management plays the key role in supporting employees so that they do not feel they will be perceived as less committed.

Thompson et al. (1999) emphasized that an organization can create a desirable workplace for the employees by having a supportive work-life culture. A case study conducted by Eriksson et al. (2008), in an industrial workplace in Sweden, found that a healthy culture with a decentralized structure had been implemented in this organization. Employees were given the opportunity to control their own working conditions. The employees felt well at the workplace because of extensive possibilities for personal development and responsibility, as well as good companionship. This supports the idea of Hillier et al. (2005) about the introduction of a wellness culture in an organisation. According to them, to facilitate employees establishing mutual trust in each other and in engendering a sense of responsibility to control their own work, a conducive and supportive workplace environment should be fostered within an organization.

The importance of addressing employees' work-life satisfaction and effectiveness through the workplace is an international trend (Bryan, 2015). Accordingly, in most organizational



development programs, organisational culture has been emphasised because it can have either a positive or negative impact on both the organization and the employee. For example, motivation and satisfaction are some examples associated with positive outcomes for an individual while job insecurity and stress represent negative outcomes (Balthazard, Cooke, & Potter, 2006).

## **2.5.2 Organisational Culture and Organisational Climate**

In the past, the term 'organizational culture' and 'organisational climate' were often used interchangeably to describe a variety of situations. Thus, various terms such as 'organizational culture', 'organizational climate', 'managerial climate' and 'organisational atmosphere' were accepted (Mahal, 2009). However, a distinction was made between the two terms, 'organizational culture' and 'organisational climate' in the 1960s and 1970s (Mahal, 2009). Organizational climate has gained greater attention and various investigations have been conducted to understand the meaning of this term (Guldenmund, 2000). Oke (2006) explains that organizational climate refers to the quality of the internal environment of an organization. Carlucci & Schiuma (2012) relate organizational climate to some features such as the concept of trust, autonomy, support, recognition, and interaction between individuals and organizations. Peña-Suárez et al. (2013) consider organizational climate as a form of perception that is shared by all employees in the same organization.

The term 'organisational culture' however, gained increasing interest in the 1980s and this term has eventually replaced the term organisational climate (Hale, 2000). Karassavidou, Glaveli, & Zafiroopoulos (2011) propose that organisational culture can be seen as a derivation of organisational climate. However, it is important to acknowledge that the terms 'organisational climate' and 'organisational culture' are two different concepts although there is a relationship between these terms (Mahal, 2009; Oke, 2006). Kagaari (2011) argues that the norms and expectations that describe the expected behaviour of an employee and the tasks that must be carried out within an organization are reflected in the organisational culture. Organisational culture is difficult to pin down

and is always measured qualitatively (McMurray & Scott, 2003). In contrast, the views and feedback provided by employees concerning their work environment are evidence of the organizational climate (Khetarpal, 2010) which is usually measured in quantitative form (McMurray & Scott, 2003). Nevertheless, both organisational climate and organisational culture can have strong influence on employees' attitude in the workplace (Mahal, 2009).

Overall, the difference between organisational culture and organisational climate is not great with several overlapping attributes between these terms (McMurray & Scott, 2003). Thus, Mahal (2009) pointed out that it would be appropriate and safe to consider both terms as powerful variables impacting on employees' motivation as well as controlling the norms that have been adopted as guidelines in the organization.

### **2.5.3 Types of Culture**

In the last three decades, the concept of organizational culture has been used as a way to understand human behaviour and its use has been widely accepted. Schein (1996) explained that, for a long period of time, the term 'culture' has been used to understand the lifestyle of the community. Every aspect of the organizational culture is considered important because it affects the whole system and subsystems in an environment (Ehlers, 2009). In fact, culture has influenced every aspect of human life (Whiten et al., 2011). According to Oke (2006), the attempts made by scholars to define the concept of culture with various categories are beneficial because the wide variation which exists between cultures can be described more clearly.

Hellriegel and Slocum (1994) classified organizational culture into four different categories. Bureaucratic culture, the first category, is an organizational culture which has a low level of adaptation to the environment and a low level of internal integration. This culture portrays an organization that has a strict control, does not promote flexibility and its power lies in centralised decision-making. The second category is competitive culture.

It also exhibits the characteristics of organizations that have a low level of internal integration but with a high degree of adaptation to the environment. This competitive culture “promote[s] cultural identity which is weak and [based on] contract relationship between employees and the organization” (Fard et al., 2009: 54). The third category, participative culture, demonstrates a moderate level of adaptation to the environment and has a high level of internal integration. The features that exist in this culture produce employees who are loyal, have high confidence in the organization and help to create a more stable organization. The fourth category of organisational culture is the learning culture. In addition to its high level of internal integration, the learning culture also has a high degree of adaptation to the environment. Organizations that implement this learning culture will promote learning, innovation, and creativity through a complex and sensitive environment.

In addition, there are several other classifications of organisational culture that have been introduced such as ‘group culture’, ‘entrepreneurial culture’, ‘hierarchical culture’ and ‘rational culture’ (Hartmann et al., 2009). For example, Mahal (2009) distinguished two types of organisational culture; culture leads towards a positive development or produces negative outcomes. Oke (2006) concluded that the differences that exist between the definitions provide an overview of the organisational structure and the underlying principles that form the basis of the organization.

The model of culture introduced by Schein is considered to be one of the most prominent concepts of organizational culture (Harris & Ogbonna, 2002). According to Heracleous (2001), this well-structured model has been very influential in cultural studies as it helps to understand organisational phenomenon. This model is widely-cited in the higher education literature (Kuh & Whitt, 1988; Peterson & Spencer, 1990), and forms the conceptual basis for many studies of the culture of higher education organisations, such as researching how faculty values affect their beliefs about post-tenure review (O’Meara, 2004). Schein considers culture to be a three-layer phenomenon of basic assumptions, values, and artefacts (Ehlers, 2009). Figure 2.1 illustrates Schein’s three levels of culture.

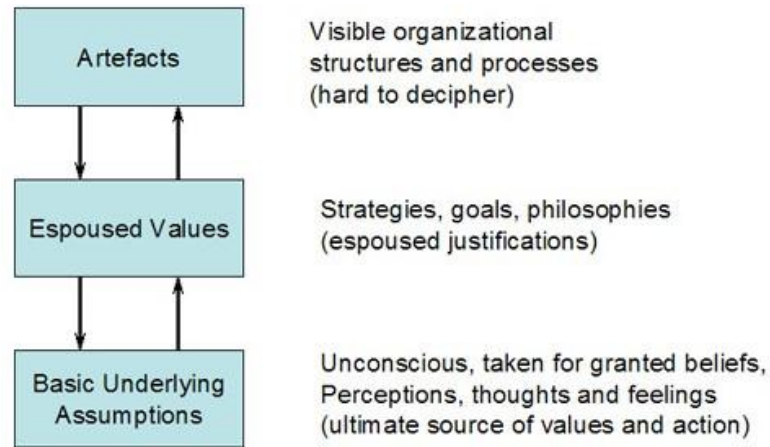


Figure 2.1 Three Levels of Culture

Source: Schein (1985) – Organizational Culture and Leadership

Permission granted if source acknowledged

Artefacts inform others about the organization’s culture (Bryan, 2015). They are visible in that they can be seen, heard and felt and cover aspects such as the dress code, the kind of offices and layout used, how employees address each other and how they communicate internally and externally (Schein, 1985). The second level of culture is the espoused values (Schein, 1985). These espoused values are apparent in, for example, the organizational official objectives, declared norms and operating philosophy. These are the public statements about the organisational values (Ehlers, 2009). Finally, the third level is the basic underlying assumptions. These are the foundations on which culture is based. These underlying assumptions are often difficult to describe, are intangible and are often only really understood by people who have become accustomed to the way the organisation works. Although basic assumptions exist at a largely unconscious level, these provide the key to understand why things happen the way they do. As these values are no longer debated, they may be resistant to change because they have been taken for granted over the years and shared by the whole group (Schein, 1985).

## 2.5.4 Research on Organizational Culture and Work-Life

Researchers have recognized that organisational culture can have a significant impact on the ability of workers to balance their work and family/personal lives. For example, based on the results of a study conducted on companies that had been selected in the '100 Best Companies to Work For', a few elements that symbolize a great workplace culture have been identified such as 'credibility', 'respect', 'fairness', 'pride' and 'camaraderie' (Levering, 2000). A study by Berg, Kalleberg and Appelbaum (2003) also found that organizations that foster a culture which supports the initiative of building a satisfactory work-life balance have resulted in employees who experience a positive work-life balance. Goodman, Zammuto and Gifford (2001) conducted a study to look at the quality of work-life through two different forms of organisational culture. Using Burrell and Morgan's competing values framework, they made a comparison between an organisation with group cultural values and an organisation with more hierarchical cultural values. The results of their study revealed that in the former there was a positive correlation with high satisfaction in work-life balance, while in the latter a negative correlation with high satisfaction in work-life balance.

Meanwhile, Berg et al. (2003) found that the perception of the employees towards the work culture that generates 'high commitment' is based on the attitude of supervisors who understand their employees' need, job satisfaction and work practices that support employees in achieving work-life balance. Bardoel (2003) and Lewis (2001) discovered another direction in which work-life policy that exists in an organization can influence its workplace culture. Bardoel (2003) studied the relationship that exists between the organizational work-life policy and the managerial support finding that the implementation of work-life policies is essential in any organization but that the practice of using the policy will be more effective if it is combined with a supportive managerial structure. Lewis (2001) also found that organizational culture can be transformed to be more positive in supporting work-life balance when there is strong support from the employers.

Finally, Ólafsdóttir (2008) identified some features found in companies which employees consider being very supportive of balancing work, community, family, and self-development needs. Characteristics identified include: 'fun', 'ambition', 'flexibility', 'openness', 'cooperation', 'informality', 'flat organizational culture', 'trust', 'responsibility', 'support', and 'pride'. In order to create the positive work-life culture, she found that the managers and the leaders must understand their employees' needs and concerns, make themselves available to their employees, support their employees when their employees encountered challenges, demonstrate trust to their employees, and give employees feedback on their work. Thus, it could be concluded that fostering a culture that is supportive of work-life satisfaction is likely to promote employee effectiveness and provide organisations with a competitive advantage (Bryan, 2015). The focus of this current research is on women academics at higher institutions and, therefore, it is necessary to examine organizational culture specifically in higher education institutions.

### **2.5.5 Organizational Culture and Higher Education Institutions**

In the early 1980s, the concept of organizational culture emerged as a topic of major concern to administrators and researchers in higher education given its significance to the governance of colleges and universities (Clark, 1972; Deal & Kennedy, 2000; Dill, 1982; Masland, 1985). By taking ideas from the corporate sector (Smart & St. John, 1996), educational researchers have sought to understand the structure and strength of the existing culture in higher education institutions given the important relationship between organizational culture and the attainment of goals and vision of the institutions. Furthermore, higher education institutions operate in many ways similar to the corporate sector. According to various researchers (Bates, 1997; Levine, 2000; Middlehurst & Woodfield, 2004), among the characteristics that reflect the culture of higher education institutions are policy development, demographic changes, internationalization, lifelong learning and a shift of paradigm in teaching and learning into the use of the latest technology.

Therefore, to understand how an academic organization works and how it should be administered, Harman (1989) emphasized that systematic investigation of organizational cultures needs to be conducted as this can help in explaining cultural and academic values. Furthermore, such an investigation can help to foster shared goals in an organisation and can reduce the impact of cultural conflict (Tierney, 1998). Further, Locke (2007) felt that there would be negative consequences if organizational culture was ignored in managing institutional change. In addition, Kniveton (1991) reported that the levels of job satisfaction among academics may be affected due to the challenges in education and wider society. However, the relationship between the organizational context and the subjective experiences of individuals in work and life domains have not been well addressed (Halford & Leonard, 2005). These studies tend to focus on the attitudes of academics toward their work and their levels of job satisfaction or dissatisfaction (Steyn & Van Wyk, 1999) and not on how this might be influenced by the organizational culture. Therefore, an investigation into organisational culture in higher education institutions is as necessary as it is in the corporate sector.

Bryan (2015) explained that, within higher education, the nature of faculty work has undergone numerous changes. Factors that have influenced the work of academics include: “new methods, technologies and venues for knowledge production and disseminations; cuts in funding; competition for grants and other funding; expectations for accountability and transparency as well as higher expectations for research, teaching and service” (Bryan, 2015: 12). In addition, academics are also expected to be available ‘24/7’ for their work (Bryan, 2015). However, the productivity of the institution’s workforce depends upon the academics’ ability to dedicate their time and energy in order to meet the responsibility of the organisation. Furthermore, the impact of long work hours or the need to take work material home has led to a spillover of work into the academics’ life which may interrupt their family life. Thus, given the reasons outlined above, it is critical to examine the organisational culture of the higher education institutions because it is one of the main factors that could either contribute to, or hinder, academics in achieving their work-life satisfaction.

## **2.6 Leadership and Work-Life Interface**

Through the evolution of this research on the work-life interface of Malay women academics, the concept of work-life balance concept has become more complex. This idea is not simply about a balanced life but, among this group of women, work and life are integrated in a multifaceted manner. While organizational culture is part of this complex picture, another element is the influence of organizational leadership. The attitude of the leadership in the workplace was one of the main themes emerging in data collected from this sample of women academics and contributed to the complexity of the relationship between work and life management for the participants in this study. As such, leadership has emerged as an unexpected theme from the findings of this current research.

Thus, to contextualize these findings, it is appropriate to review relevant literature on leadership in this chapter. Moreover, many researchers have made a connection between leadership and organisational culture (Avolio & Bass, 1995; Block, 2003; Fairholm, 1994; Ogbonna & Harris, 2000). For example, Schein (1985) concludes that organisational culture and leadership are two sides of the same coin. He notes that, during the process of organization formation, the founders of a company create an organisation which reflects their values and beliefs. In a way, this shows that the founders create and shape the cultural traits of their organisations. However, as organisation develops and time passes, the leaders are influenced by the organisational culture which then shapes their action and style. In short, leaders create the organisational culture and in turn, the organisational culture shapes them (Schein, 1985).

### **2.6.1 Defining Leadership**

Leadership is a broad subject and has different definitions, theories, and styles. Although there have been thousands of studies conducted on leadership, there is still a lack of clarity about what leadership is and how it can be achieved. Despite many theories which appear to address different aspects of leadership, there is little cohesion among the



theories that have helped to understand how they all come together (Graen & Uhl-Bein, 1995). According to Yukl (2010), most definitions of leadership reflect the assumption that it involves the exercise of influence by the leader in order to guide and facilitate the implementation of activities or relationships between individuals within an organization. Based on early sociological theories, leadership was initially explained in terms of either the person or the environment. Over the past half-century, many of the theories developed emphasize the characteristics of the leader, namely, traits, behaviour, or the style in the exercise of power (Yukl, 2010). Subsequently, leadership has been viewed as an aspect of role differentiation or as the consequences of the process of social interaction (Bass & Stogdill, 1990) and so the exercise of leadership within a particular context has attracted significant interest.

A major controversy has more recently emerged, however, which questions whether leadership should be viewed as a specialized role, 'the leader', or as a shared influence process, such as 'the leadership as a social process' (Yukl, 2010). For example, Northouse (2016) has illustrated leadership as a process and the leader as an individual with the power to convince a group of people to accomplish common objectives. Yukl (2010) and Avolio (1999) defined leadership in organization as an influential process that interprets events for followers, as a motivation for the followers to achieve the objectives, as a way to foster cooperative relationship and teamwork and the involvement of outsiders to support the organization.

Meanwhile, Burns (1979) described leadership as leaders convincing followers to act to achieve certain goals that represent the values and motivations which comprise the aspirations and expectations of both leaders and followers. Similarly, Rost (1991) defined leadership as a relationship which influences both leaders and followers to achieve real changes that reflect their shared purposes. The relationships are often built around common goals and objectives, as well as mutually held values. Drath and Palus (1994) combined two aspects and viewed leadership as a 'dominance cum-social-influence' process. The dominance is about meaning making while social influence is about motivating people to get them going. According to Drath and Palus (1994), most of the

existing theories, models, and definitions of leadership have derived from the belief that leadership is a way to get people to perform certain things.

Bennis and Nanus (2003) also draw from a concept which emphasizes the importance of meaning-making. They contend that leadership relates to the building of relationships that are critical to leader effectiveness and that an essential factor in leadership is the capacity to influence and organize meaning for the members of the organization. Gradually, leaders and followers form and develop ways in which they make meaning of their own, others, and the organizational processes around them. In the constructivist view, meanings are constructed individually and socially by people. Individuals build on their own and share experiences during their lives in order that they can cooperate, communicate and agree about things that happened in their lives. As such, both leading and meaning-making are deeply interrelated because people are closely related to the social system around them (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Drath & Palus, 1994).

While early theories of leadership focused on identifying the characteristics of the leader, the contemporary emphasis is on the idea of leadership which can be perceived as power relations, as a matter of personality, as the focus on group processes, as a form of persuasion, as well as an instrument to achieve identified objectives (Bass & Stogdill, 1990).

## **2.6.2 Leadership Theories**

Various forms of studies have been carried out to understand leadership. These studies depend on the researchers' conception of leadership and their preferred research methodology (Bass & Stogdill, 1990; Northouse, 2016; Yukl, 1989, 2010). This has led to confusion regarding not only on the definition of leadership but also in the theoretical explanations of leadership. One such difficulty has been the narrow focus of most researchers and the absence of broad theories that integrate findings from the different

approaches. The following table (Table 2.1) shows numerous theories that have been developed to understand leadership in an organization.

<b>Evolutionary Stages of Leadership Theory</b>	
<b>Personality Era</b>	Situational Theory (Hersey and Blanchard, 1969; 1977)
<i>Great Man Period</i>	Multiple Linkage Model (Yukl, 1971; 1989)
Great Man Theory (Bowden, 1927; Carlyle, 1841; Galton, 1869)	Normative Theory (Vroom and Yetton, 1973; Vroom and Jago, 1988)
<i>Trait Period</i>	
Trait Theory (Bingham, 1927)	
<b>Influence Era</b>	<b>Transactional Era</b>
<i>Power Relations Period</i>	<i>Exchange Period</i>
Five Bases of Power Approach (French, 1956; French and Raven, 1959)	Vertical Dyad Linkage / Leader Member Exchange Theory (Dansereau, Graen, and Haga, 1975)
<i>Persuasion Period</i>	Reciprocal Influence Approach (Greene, 1975)
Leader Dominance Approach (Schenk, 1928)	Emergent Leadership (Hollander, 1958)
<b>Behaviour Era</b>	<i>Role Development Period</i>
<i>Early Behaviour Period</i>	Social Exchange Theory (Hollander, 1979; Jacobs, 1970)
Reinforced Change Theory (Bass, 1960)	Role Making Model (Graen and Cashman, 1973)
Ohio State Studies (Fleishman, Harris, and Burt, 1955)	
Michigan State Studies (Likert, 1961)	<b>Anti-Leadership Era</b>
<i>Late Behaviour Period</i>	<i>Ambiguity Period</i>
Managerial Grid Model (Blake and Mouton, 1964)	Attribution Approach (Pfeffer, 1977)
Four-Factor Theory (Bowers and Seashore, 1966)	<i>Substitute Period</i>
Action Theory of Leadership (Argyris, 1976)	Leadership Substitute Theory (Kerr and Jermier, 1978)
Theory X and Y (McGregor, 1960, 1966)	
<i>Operant Period (Sims, 1977; Ashour and Johns, 1983)</i>	<b>Culture Era</b>
<b>Situation Era</b>	McKinsey 7-S Framework (Pascale and Athos, 1981)
<i>Environment Period</i>	Theory Z (Ouch and Jaeger, 1978)
Environment Approach (Hook, 1943)	In Search of Excellence Approach (Peters and Waterman, 1982)
Open-Systems Model (Katz and Kahn, 1978)	Schein (1985)
<i>Social Status Period</i>	Self-Leadership (Manz and Sims, 1987)
Role Attainment Theory (Stogdill, 1959)	
Leader Role Theory (Homans, 1959)	<b>Transformational Era</b>
<i>Sociotechnical Period</i>	<i>Charisma Period</i>
Sociotechnical Systems (Trist and Bamforth, 1951)	Charismatic Theory (House, 1977)
<b>Contingency Era</b>	Transforming Leadership Theory (Burns, 1978)
Contingency Theory (Fiedler, 1964)	<i>Self-Fulfilling Prophecy Period</i>
Path-Goal Theory (Evans, 1970; House, 1971)	SFP Leader Theory (Field, 1989; Eden, 1984)
	Performance Beyond Expectations Approach (Bass, 1985)

Table 2.1 Leadership Theory

Source: Seters & Field (1990) – Evolutionary Stages of Leadership Theory

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### 2.6.3 Leadership style: Transformational and Transactional Leadership

In most countries, universities are faced with increasing demands and calls for institutional change which involve a restructuring of the entire system of university education. The change which includes “rightsizing’ and ‘downsizing’ of personnel and academic departments; adoption of business-oriented management approaches;

introduction of new and improved programmes geared towards meeting market demands and diversification of programme provision and student profiles” (Zulu, 2007: 34). These changes will involve the management, curriculum, and students. These changes, therefore, demand effective leadership at institutional and departmental level (Zulu, 2007).

This research on Malay women academics focuses on the work-life experience of women academics at higher education institutions at a period of significant change. Thus, transformational and transactional leadership theories have been selected to explore this changing academic culture and the experiences of women academics working in this dynamic context. Transformational and transactional theories were conceived by Bass and Avolio as interrelated and are significant in shaping a culture that facilitates work-life satisfaction and effectiveness (Bryan, 2015). Furthermore, both transformational and transactional leadership frameworks have received considerable research support (Bass & Avolio, 1993).

### **2.6.3.1 Transactional Leadership**

Transactional leadership has been the traditional model of leadership but is often considered as the opposite of the transformational approach (Jones, 2008). According to Horner (1997), transactional leadership originates from more traditional views of workers and organizations which involve the power of the leader for the completion of tasks by the followers. Transactional leadership is a process-oriented model of leadership that was developed largely from a social exchange perspective. It often emphasizes the implicit relational qualities of the transaction that exists between leaders and followers (Hollander, 1993). As claimed by Bennis and Nanus (2003), there is a transaction between leaders and followers and neither could exist without the other. Burns (1979) indicated that transactional leaders seek to motivate followers by appealing to their self-interest. They help their subordinates to recognize task responsibilities, identify goals and develop confidence about meeting desired performance levels as a way to motivate them to achieve expected levels of performance (Bass & Stogdill, 1990).

According to Bass and Avolio (1994), there are three factors employed by transactional leaders: (1) contingent reward; (2) management-by-exception active; and (3) management-by-exception passive. In contingent rewards, the followers are motivated by their leaders' promises, rewards, and praises. The leaders then might inspire a reasonable degree of involvement, loyalty, commitment and performance from subordinates (Bass, 1985). Conversely, in management-by-exception, the leader is observant and ensures that followers meet predetermined standards. This may also take the form of passive leadership when the leaders, for example, only wait for issues or problems to surface before taking corrective measure (Burns, 1979; Northouse, 2016).

### **2.6.3.2 Transformational Leadership**

Since the early 1980s, transformational leadership approaches have had a significant focus as one of the current approaches to leadership (Bass & Avolio, 1993; Northouse, 2016; Yukl, 2010). Prior to the year 2001, one-third of the research on leadership was about transformational leadership (Lowe and Gardner as cited by Northouse, 2016). Hence, according to Bass (2008), the transformational leadership approach represents a seminal shift in the field of leadership.

Burns (1979) stated that leaders and followers are often transformed or changed in their performance and outlook. This, according to Burns (1979) reflects leadership as a transforming process. Likewise, Bass and Avolio (1993) described leader-follower interaction as a transformational influence process which is also referred to as transformational leadership. Bass and Riggio (2006) agreed that transformational leadership has much in common with charismatic leadership. However, they considered charismatic leadership as one dimension of a transformational leadership approach. In addition, they claimed that transformational leadership could either be directive or participative and transformational leaders could make use of one or more of the following five factors: (1) idealized influence (attributed); (2) idealized influence (behavioural), (3) inspirational motivation – leader energizes followers with optimism and vision; (4) intellectual stimulation; and (5) individualized consideration.

Compared to other types of leadership styles, transformational leadership generates more of a learning culture because the leaders focus on new norms, creative behaviours and better values (Mannheim & Halamish, 2008; Popper & Lipshitz, 1998). Yukl (1999a) reported that many researchers have identified positive aspects of transformational leadership with this approach considered more effective, productive and innovative. Transformational leadership satisfies followers because both parties, driven by shared visions and values as well as mutual trust and respect (Fairholm, 1991; Lowe, Kroeck, & Sivasubramaniam, 1996; Stevens, D'Intino, & Victor, 1995), work for the benefit of the organization. According to Yukl (1999a, 1999b), the transformational approach also emphasizes the need to understand the role of a leader in an organisation in addition to emotions and values. Indeed, how a leader influences his or her followers to achieve a higher level should be understood (Yukl, 1999b).

Lee (2005) explains that transformational leaders treat their followers as individuals. This type of leader will try to coach and develop the capacities of their followers, which in turn will create a meaningful exchange between them. Indirectly, this suggests a difference between transformational leaders and pseudo-transformational leadership. Transformational leaders believe in sharing of formalized power (Bass, 1985) but according to Bass and Steidlmeier (1999), pseudo-transformational leadership prioritizes their own interests. They are willing to sacrifice their followers for the sake of achieving power and position. In conclusion, the emergence of a transformational approach provides an important contribution to the understanding of leadership (Yukl, 1999a, 1999b, 2010). Furthermore, with a leadership approach such as developmental transformational leadership, leaders are more likely to shape a positive work-life culture because employees will perceive their leaders as being supportive of achieving a healthy balance between their work and personal lives (Bryan, 2015).

According to Dorfman et al. (1997: 233), although Bass argued that transformational and transactional leadership are universal dimensions, there is evidence for the "culture-specific enactment of these dimensions and/ or additional leadership dimensions in other cultures". Thus, this requires a need to discuss the influence of culture in leadership for a better understanding of leadership style.

## 2.6.4 Leadership and the Influence of Culture

Despite being well-established and widely studied, many questions remain about the construct of leadership, particularly how well the application of management practices could be transferred across cultures (Levitt, 1999), how far there are shared understandings of the leadership concept across different cultures (Dickson, Den Hartog & Mitchelson, 2003; Dorfman, 2004) and the various mechanisms through which leaders influence their followers (e.g. Kark & Van Dijk, 2007), both at work and at home (e.g. Heinen, 2009).

Leadership can be assumed to be culturally-linked (Jogulu, 2010). According to Shaw (1990), people from diverse cultures categorize their leaders differently and have different perceptions of the leadership phenomenon which may affect leadership in different ways. These differences will have implications for the leadership of the organization (Alves et al., 2006; Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005). Thus, Dorfman et al. (1997: 233) argue that “while the phenomena of leadership is widely considered to be universal across cultures, the way in which it is operated, is usually viewed as culturally specific”. Therefore, there is a need to understand various types of culture and beliefs about leadership perspectives because this will give a clear idea about the types of leadership style in this expanding global environment (Jogulu, 2010) especially given that values, attitudes, and behaviours of individuals differ across cultures.

Previous studies on leadership have given more attention to the leaders themselves, such as how they act, their philosophies and the types of leadership that are accepted and considered as appropriate by the followers. However, there is a disagreement among some researchers about the previous findings because it was found that the evaluation and interpretation of differences in the behaviour of leaders were influenced by their cultural environment (Jogulu & Wood, 2008; Jung & Avolio, 1999; Yamaguchi, 1999). Indeed, studies have demonstrated that the leadership concept varies in meanings across cultures (Jung & Avolio, 1999; Wood & Jogulu, 2006).

The culture-specific perspective suggests that certain leadership constructs and behaviours are likely to be unique to a given culture (Ansari, Ahmad, & Aafaqi, 2004; Dorfman et al., 1997) For instance, it was found that in collectivistic cultures, leadership effectiveness is an inference based on organisational performance outcomes (Ensari and Murph cited in Dorfman et al., 1997). In addition, the needs of the group, family, and overall community are prioritized in the collectivist cultures when engaging in leadership actions (Jogulu, 2010). Culture also affects the use of power. According to Rahim & Magner (1996), research has shown that there is greater emphasis on expert power in collectivistic cultures. This is based on the subordinates' perceptions that a leader has special skills and experts and knows what is best in any given circumstance.

The importance of paternalistic leadership in Malaysia has been highlighted in few studies. For example, in her study, Abdullah (1996) recommended that a paternal style of leadership be implemented in the Malaysian business context because it fits with the values and expectations of the subordinates. Ahmad (2001) supports this view, given that in Malaysia leadership is still paternalistic because of the hierarchical nature of the Malaysian society. According to Ahmad (2001: 87), the Malays in Malaysia "prefer a leader they can trust, and respect [...], prefer to be led by those whom they feel are committed to their objectives in deed as well as in words". Meanwhile, Ansari et al. (2004) suggested that paternalistic leadership acts as a positive reinforcer in Malaysia because paternalistic treatment is contingent on subordinates' task accomplishment. This current research is conducted in Malaysia and so it would be appropriate to have some understanding of paternalistic leadership. Furthermore, the workplace environment in Malaysia has not yet been fully explored in terms of understanding workplace leadership (Jogulu & Ferkins, 2012).

### **2.6.5 Paternalistic Leadership**

Research on paternalistic leadership is a flourishing area in management literature. The studies which emerged from Asia report that paternalistic leaders provide support and take a personal interest in employees' personal welfare. Padavic and Earnest (1994) argue



that, as an asymmetric power relationship, paternalistic leadership meets the important material, as well as the psychological, needs of the employees. In addition, besides establishing close relationships with their subordinates, paternalistic leaders also get involved in the non-work domain (Aycan, 2006).

The literature on leadership has suggested that paternalistic leadership is an effective leadership style and a valued characteristic in most collectivist cultures (Aycan, 2006; Gelfand, Erez, & Aycan, 2007; Pellegrini & Scandura, 2006). This is because, in the collectivist cultures, the involvement of the paternalistic leader in employees' private lives is desired and expected. In paternalistic relations, the leader who is involved in employees' personal lives has the right to expect personal favours from them while in the individualistic culture, the involvement of leaders in the employees' personal lives can be perceived as a violation of privacy (Aycan, 2006). In the Western context, paternalistic leadership has been equated with authoritarianism. It is negatively perceived in the Western literature as 'benevolent dictatorship' that leads to 'non-coercive exploitation' (Gelfand et al., 2007; Pellegrini & Scandura, 2006). Paternalism contrasts with Max Weber's purely authoritarian view of leadership (Pellegrini & Scandura, 2006). Nevertheless, paternalistic leadership is significant in some Asian contexts.

Kim (1994) discusses two dimensions of paternalistic leadership: authoritative and benevolence. Authoritative paternalism refers to leader's behaviours that assert authority and control. The subordinates are expected to comply and abide by leaders' requests without disagreement. Benevolent paternalism refers to leaders who demonstrate their concern for their subordinates' professional and personal well-being. In return, the subordinates feel grateful and give their loyalty to their leaders.

Although paternalistic leadership is criticized in the Western context, it has positive implications in some cultures and their beliefs such as Confucianism (Farh & Cheng, 2000). Farh, Cheng, & Chou, (2000) explained that, in a paternalistic culture, the leader/follower relationship is similar to father/child relationship. In Confucianism, the father is considered as having the absolute power and thus the children and all family members

obey the command of the father (Farh et al., 2000). Due to their status and legal position, the leader is obeyed without question by the followers (Pellegrini & Scandura, 2008).

Studies have shown that transformational leadership shares similar characteristics with benevolent paternalism such as “individual care” at the workplace (Cheng et al., 2004; Yahchouchi, 2009). However, transformational leadership is more effective in egalitarian low-power distance than in high-power distance countries. Hofstede (2011: 9) defined power distance as “the extent to which the less powerful members of organizations and institutions (like family) accept and expect that power is distributed unequally (...), endorsed by the followers as much as by the leaders”. People in low power distance countries such as in Austria and Denmark expect and accept power relations that are more democratic while a more formal and vertical hierarchy exists in most areas of society in high power distance countries such as Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, and South Korea. For instance, in organisations, the subordinates would let their leader or director make decisions and to decide who is responsible for what (Hofstede, 2011). Therefore, a combination of transformational leadership with authoritarian paternalism will result in followers who are obedient to their leaders (Dickson et al., 2003; Kirkman et al., 2009).

## **2.7 Identity Formation**

This research seeks to understand how women academics in Malaysia make sense of their work-life responsibilities. However, the women’s perceptions of the meaning of work and non-work and how they experience their daily work-life interface are shaped by, and indeed shape, their sense of themselves, their self-identity. Identity emerged as another unexpected theme from the data as this research progressed and so now this section looks at identity formation. The focus is on two specific facets of the broader construct of identity: those of gender and identity, and of teacher identity in order to explore this work-life issue among women academics.

We often ask about who we are, what we believe, how we feel about ourselves, and how we want others to think of us. In recent decades, interest in the subject of self and identity has flourished. Joas (1987: 2) described 'self' as "one of the greatest discoveries in the history of social science," and this construct of 'self' has been studied through the diverse lenses of different disciplines in humanity and social science. According to Hobson (1996), self is a socially, culturally and historically constructed phenomenon. Through certain social and cultural systems, norms, values, and languages are learned while building a particular belief/habit system. It is a very complex process that leads to the understanding of ourselves.

In the theory of identity, self is considered as a collection of identities. It refers to the various role positions that an individual holds in his/ her social framework. According to social identity theory (Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel & Turner, 1979), each individual falls into various social categories such as citizenship, class, gender, profession, and others which will give him or her a sense of belonging. Each social category will describe who the individual is and provide the person with a social identity that is evaluative, normative, and prescriptive (Hogg, Terry, & White, 1995).

Blumer's symbolic interactionism theory (1969), which examines the individual's construction of meaning through interaction, argued that, while individuals are influenced by cultural and social institutions, they are also crucial in producing culture. Morrow, Mead & Morris (1935), who suggested that 'self' is created through social interactions, distinguish two different 'selves' in each individual. An 'unsocialized self' is about the desires and needs of the self while the 'socialized self' is concerned with the self within the frame of society (Elliot, 2001). Goffman (1959) also emphasizes these two aspects of self in an individual as 'I' and 'Me' (Gubrium & Holstein, 2002). In addition, the literature on one's self and identity has not only emphasized interactions but the tensions that exist between self and society (Bosma & Gerlsma, 2003; Giddens, 1991; Kroger, 2004; Morrow et al., 1935; Stryker, 1987; Stryker, 1980). This happens due to the fact that society does not exist independently without the individual. The individual lives and acts within society. It is in the society that an individual is surrounded and encompassed by culture (Hossain & Ali, 2014). Hence, there will not be a straightforward influence of

societal culture and self-identity but each individual will experience the interaction between self and societal understandings and expectations differently.

From the social construction perspective, throughout life, identity is considered as something which is constructed and reconstructed in daily social interaction. The identity of a person will be open to change when it is exposed to uncertainty in life. This change takes place through a process of reflection upon past and future (Lindgren & Wåhlin, 2001). In this research, the lives of the participants can be seen as an ongoing process of identity construction, where the Muslim Malay academics define themselves from the various social situations to which they were exposed.

Identity construction can be analysed through “institutional identity”, a concept such as a professional identity, gender identity, ethnic identity and so on. When, for example, identity is analysed based on profession or gender, this ‘institutional identity’ is “seen as central in order to be able to define and understand identity construction” (Lindgren & Packendorff, 2008: 2). On the aggregate level, such as society, organization, clan, and others, these socially determined identities are valid to a certain extent. However, on the individual level, they can be demonstrated in many ways, depending on how each individual describes themselves. Each different individual is not just inclined to create his or her identity from different institutional sources, but also vary according to the extent he or she uses the established categories to construct it.

According to Lindgren & Wåhlin (2001), besides linking identity construction with cultural values such as history, art or literature, individuals can also link their identity construction according to their religious beliefs, political ideologies or lifelong traditions. Hence, each individual is a unique combination of influences. For example, analysing the interaction of basic identities of a Malay woman academic contributes to understanding who the person is. Moreover, men and women vary in terms of class, personality, value, interest and social networking and, consequently, also show differences in their relationships with structures such as gender. This view was supported in gender research (Alvesson &

Billing, 2009; Bird & Brush, 2002; Nicholson, 1994; Scott, 1988) which aims at identifying gender differences.

### **2.7.1 Gender and Identity**

Approaches highlighting both the elements of change and continuity in adulthood particularly focusing on research with women have gained increased support among researchers examining issues of personality (Helson, Pals, & Solomon, 1997; Helson & Soto, 2005; Roberts, Helson, & Klohnen, 2002; Vandewater & Stewart, 1998). Not only did they find that women's personality developed after the age of 30 (Helson, Jones, & Kwan, 2002) but researchers also highlighted the impact of social roles such as wives, mothers, and career women on women's personalities (Vandewater & Stewart, 1998) as well as the effects of major social events and changes in social environments (Helson, Mitchell, & Moane, 1984; Helson et al., 1997; Stewart & Vandewater, 1993). In addition, Neugarten, Moore, & Lowe (1965) argued that "social hours," or normative times to carry out social roles such as wives and mothers can lead to further personality development. They assert that there are many beliefs and conventions that shape the ideal lifestyle that women aspire to. For instance, they noted that there were social beliefs which appoint the appropriate age for certain life changes among women such as getting married, having children, and retiring from paid work.

According to Erikson (1968), the emphasis on the formation of a person's personal identity based on the individual's personal knowledge and how he/she adapts to the context of larger society is often associated with adolescents and early adulthood. However, the identity of a woman is seen as provisional until she begins to have a commitment such as having a more intimate life (see Franz & White, 1985). Thus, (Helson, Stewart, & Ostrove, 1995) argued that, if a woman can make individual choices about their family and career, the identity of the woman has been influenced by the social role.

The participants in this research were working mothers. Unfortunately, research conducted on the formation of women's identity often focuses on adolescents and does not discuss either the world of work in adulthood or the complexity of the multiple roles faced by women. While women's involvement in various types of work is increasing, expectations about the role of the mother have not changed to the same extent. The role of mothers living at home is still considered the norm and is particularly important in bringing up well-adjusted and healthy children (Hattery, 2001; Jackson, Tal, & Sullivan, 2003; Stebbins, 2001). For some women, the question is how to develop an individual's career identity while satisfying social and individual perceptions of the identity of a fairly traditional mother. For others, the possibility of career development is more interesting and the obligation towards the family falls second. For some other women, having a career and succeeding in developing a family are both elements in their aspiration. For many women, their main involvement in the workforce is also to meet the needs of the economy and so career aspiration only has a limited impact on their personal identity. Unfortunately, there are very few qualitative studies and no quantitative research known to the researcher that look at the process of female identity in relation to the tensions between career aspirations and motherhood.

A preliminary investigation was conducted by Raskin (1996) to find out if work-family conflicts could be identified as a component of identity formation among working mothers. He recorded various forms of thinking styles among them on work-family issues. Some women can effectively manage both their career and family obligations while others try to minimize the demands of a career at home or/ and the demands of motherhood at work. Another group of women had to struggle for full involvement in performing their role both for the family and career. It was concluded that having to perform multiple roles in life influences women's identity development. Therefore, since the participants of this research are women academics, the literature on teacher identity could assist to understand better their identity formation.

## 2.7.2 Teacher Identity

In a range of research studies, varying definitions of teacher identity are to be found. However, they share a common idea that the construction of teacher identity is a process (Beijaard, Meijer, & Verloop, 2004). Identity is not an attribute but an ongoing process of interpreting and reinterpreting one's self as a particular kind of person. According to Danielewicz (2001: 4), identity is something that "is renewed, added, eroded, rebuilt, integrated, dissolved, or expanded". Alsup (2005: 236) suggests that identity is a process: "identity is shaped and redesigned through discourses where teachers are involved". According to him, every teacher has a variety of identities which includes identities forged out of school and in school. Alsup (2005) argued that, in various groups or communities, each individual is involved in a particular discourse and this contributes to the process of identity. He further explained that every community an individual belongs to has a specific discourse. Alsup (2005) identified the space that exists between these discourses as "borderlands", a term which he borrows from Gee (1999). For instance, if a teacher attended an event which is also attended by the bank employee, there would be a "space" between the discourse known by the teacher and a foreign discourse of those working in the banking sector. The space that exists between a common and unknown discourse may cause disagreement. This disagreement can lead to metacognitive awareness of tension between discourses and potentially altering the identity of the teacher. Indirectly this indicates that without any dissonance and tension between discourses, there is no change in identity. Accordingly, Alsup (2005: 236) suggests that "identity is activated when the conflict occurs ... self-activation is an event required to produce a self-image". Thus, identity is a continuous process influenced by the discourse in which an individual is involved and how it affects the individual. In addition, based on Vygotsky's view that human consciousness can be found in a culturally-inhabited environment, Smagorinsky et al. (2004 : 9) proposed the construction of teacher identity as "a function of action within social settings whose values embody the settings' cultural histories".

There are various theoretical approaches to the formation of teacher identity. Some emphasize the social and cultural identities, while some focus on its discursive and

narrative nature (Rodgers & Scott, 2008). According to Thomas and Beauchamp (2007), the development of professional identity is a continuous and dynamic process which involves the interpretation and understanding of one's own value and experience. Clarke (2008) suggests that teachers exercise agency and so they look for ways to determine their identity and how they are done through negotiations. A common theme in contemporary approaches is that identity is built in the social context. Construction of identity is unstable as it is constantly shifting and dynamic (Rodgers & Scott, 2008). Thus, when a person builds an emotional perspective in relation to his or her role as a teacher, the role then becomes part of who he or she is because it becomes the organizing element in the person's life (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011; Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009). Although the development of teacher's identity is sometimes described as uncomplicated, most researchers agree that it is difficult because teachers often give meanings to different perspectives that are sometimes conflicting (Beijaard et al., 2004).

Van Lankveld et al. (2016) conducted a systematic literature review to understand what contributes or impedes the development of teacher identity in the context of higher education institutions. They identified five psychological processes involved in the development and maintenance of teacher identity: a sense of appreciation, a sense of connectivity, a sense of competence, a sense of commitment, and a reflection of future career trajectories. They further suggested that the development of teacher's identity in the context of higher education is not a smooth process. While the staff development program and the relationship between teacher and student were found to support strengthening teacher identity, the broader context of higher education itself was found to have given a negative impact. Indeed, it was found that the immediate impact of the work environment could determine the strengthening or constraining of different facets of teacher identity depending on whether teaching is valued or not institutionally as well as societally.



## 2.8 Chapter Summary

This chapter has reviewed the related literature to establish the theoretical basis for this research. The concepts of 'work' and 'non-work', of work-life interface and of organizational culture were identified in the early stages of this research as significant ideas in the study of women academics' understanding of their work-life balance and these are the first key issues examined in the review of the literature. However, as the research progressed, other concepts surfaced as significant in the ways in which women academics made sense of their work-life interface. Two central concepts, 'leadership' and 'identity', were therefore included subsequently in this review of literature. These sets of concepts provide a way of interrogating findings in subsequent chapters when the data is examined systematically using an IPA approach. One of the issues looked at in this discussion of the literature is the importance of culture and the wider societal expectations. Therefore, the discussion now examines the context of this group of women academics.

## **CHAPTER THREE: BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT**

This chapter presents the background and context of this research. It narrows the focus of the thesis to the Malay Muslim women academics in Malaysia and discusses the need for research into how the academics experience their work-life interface. This chapter builds on the discussion in the previous chapter by examining the need for, and the value of, understanding Malaysian women academics' work-life experiences. There are two key issues discussed in this chapter. Firstly, the current context of higher education institutions and the nature of academic work in Malaysia is presented. This is followed with a brief discussion on leadership in Malaysia as leadership in the workplace was found to be a significant influence in participants' work-life management. Secondly, there follows an exploration of the circumstances of Malaysian Malay Muslim women. Culture and religion are significant aspects of the lives of Malay women in Malaysia and so this discussion of the women's circumstances is followed by a discussion of the nature of 'work' from an Islamic perspective.

### **3.1 Introduction**

The socio-economic environment, national and family cultural differences within Malaysia in contrast to other countries have become increasingly important in Malaysia. This has resulted in an increase in the need to carry out more research on work-life balance in Malaysia. In addition, the work-life balance situation in western countries does not reflect the situation in other countries, particularly the non-western countries (Epie & Ituma, 2014). In Malaysia, various studies have been conducted on work-life issues. For example, Samad (2006) conducted a study on married working women and found that employees' work/ non-work conflict decreased because of family and job satisfaction. Ngah, Ahmad and Baba, (2009) discovered that less work/ nonwork conflict has been experienced by single mothers aged 40 years and above because during that particular period their children's age had increased which led to decrease in childcare responsibilities. Md-Sidin et al. (2010) conducted a study on the quality of life in Malaysia and discovered the significant role of social supports in the lives of employees. Social support from spouse

and supervisors was considered as the most significant. However, the study did not include factors such as the role of management in facilitating the employees' work-life management. Further, in most of the studies that have been conducted on work-life issues, the important features of Malaysian society such as ethnicity and religion have not been taken into consideration. Ethnicity and religion should be considered important because Malaysia is a pluralist society with different cultures and religions which may have an influence on the work-life interface.

Gartner (1995) pointed out the need to conduct specific studies in other non-Western countries because they can provide insights into how the workers from different cultures balance between their work and lives and the challenges that they have to face. This current research provides a specific investigation in a non-western country, Malaysia, in order to bridge this research gap and add to the Malaysian work-life balance literature as well as the wider body of literature on this topic.

This thesis focuses on understanding the work-life experience of women academics in Malaysia, specifically the Malay Muslim women academics. This raises a few questions, such as: to what extent do organizational and social supports assist women academics in Malaysia managing their work-life responsibilities? Do culture and religion influence the women academics when negotiating between their professional and personal roles? Due to the lack of knowledge relating to how Malay Muslim women academics in Malaysia experience their daily work and non-work tasks, it is important to understand how women academics in Malaysia manage their work and non-work responsibilities in their daily lives and the challenges that they have to face.

### **3.2 Changing Context of Malaysian Higher Education**

The drive towards Malaysia becoming an economically developed nation by the year 2020 and becoming a leading education hub in the Asian region has brought about significant change to the character and functions of higher education in Malaysia (Arokiasamy, 2010;

Ma et al., 2012). Many reforms in higher education were introduced with the launch of the National Higher Education Strategic Plan 2020 on 27<sup>th</sup> August 2007. The plan was divided into four distinct phases:

- Phase 1 – Laying the foundation (2007-2010)
- Phase 2 – Strengthening and Enhancement (2011-2015)
- Phase 3 – Excellence (2016-2020)
- Phase 4 – Glory and Sustainability (beyond 2020)

The plan was considered as the most significant strategic move in higher education thinking undertaken by the Ministry of Higher Education in Malaysia (MOHE). Careful attention was given to planning and strategizing the strategic plan which focuses on seven strategic thrusts:

1. Widening access and enhancing quality
2. Improving the quality of teaching and learning
3. Enhancing research and innovation
4. Strengthening institution of higher education
5. Intensifying internationalization
6. Enculturation of lifelong learning
7. Reinforcing Higher Education Ministry's Delivery System

Meanwhile, in 2013, the Ministry began to develop the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2015-2025 (Higher Education) also known as MEB (HE). The process began with a review of the National Higher Education Strategic Plan 2020 which involved three phases. In developing the blueprint, the Ministry had received a variety of inputs from Malaysian and international education experts, leaders from Malaysian higher learning institutions and also from the public. Specifically, the Ministry aspires to:

- Foster an entrepreneurial mindset in the entire Malaysia's higher education system, and to create an education system that produces entrepreneurial graduates, rather than graduates who only seek for jobs;
- Develop a system that focuses not only on a traditional, academic pathway, but also emphasizes a TVET route (technical and vocational training);
- Focus on outcomes over input, in addition to using technology and innovation to meet the students' needs and improve their learning experience;

- Harmonize how public and private institutions are regulated, and shift from highly-centralized governance system to a model based on earned autonomy within the regulatory framework;
- Ensure the financial sustainability of the higher education system by reducing higher learning institutions reliance on government resources and ensuring all the stakeholders who directly benefit from higher education will also contribute to its development.

The transformation of the higher education system was believed to lead to a collective set of desirable benefits, rights, and corresponding responsibilities for each stakeholder group which comprises the students, the academic community, the leaders of higher learning institutions, the industry and the Ministry officers. In terms of the academic community, it was proposed in the policies that academics would enjoy more attractive differentiated career pathways and performance-based rewards; they would have the support they need to succeed in their new roles through targeted professional development programmes; they would enjoy greater decision-making rights in areas such as curriculum, financial management, and talent management; and they would benefit from closer integration with industry as well as local and international communities.

Nevertheless, it was also mentioned that, in return, the academic community would be asked to stay open to and adopt these new ways of working; to work collaboratively with all stakeholders during this transformation journey; and to model the holistic, entrepreneurial, and balanced mindsets, values, and behaviours expected of students. The government aspiration to create a higher education system that ranks among the world's leading education systems has involved a massive reform of its current education system. Arguably, this major shift has created more work for academics.

In addition, after the 12<sup>th</sup> General Elections, the Government Transformation Program (GTP) was introduced to the country (PEMANDU, 2010). The GTP was introduced in April 2009 by the Prime Minister of Malaysia, Dato' Sri Najib Tun Razak, with the mission of achieving Vision 2020. Several National Key Result Areas (NKRAs) were outlined in the GTP. The NKRAs were designed to advance the nation toward developed status as the Vision 2020 draws near. All the actions introduced by the Malaysian government,

however, have led to additional auditing activities and performance measurement systems (Pang et al., 2011). For instance, the Key Performance Indicators (KPI) for NKRA in the Higher Education Sector were introduced which encompass the quantity and quality of research grants and publications such as citation indices and impact factors. The introduction of these KPIs has impacted on the workforce, especially the academicians and the support staff (Masron, Ahmad, & Rahim, 2012).

The reforms have indirectly changed the norms and regulations which have served as guidelines for the academic profession. This has had an effect on all aspects of the work environment in higher education institutions in Malaysia. (Azman, Sirat, & Samsudin, 2013) argued that the main effect is the pressure of work among academics. They agreed that the reforms in the higher education contributed to the high levels of work stress among the academics (Azman et al., 2013). As academics, they are responsible for shaping the future generation. Similar to teachers in schools, academics are involved in facilitating the formation of an individual. As a key group of workers, more research is required to understand the impact of this fast-changing culture on Malaysian academics' work-life interface.

### **3.3 Changing Nature of Academic Work**

The globalisation and development of information and communication technology have impacted academics in higher education. The major structural development of higher education globally as well as in Malaysia has changed the nature of the academic profession and its culture. The academics are having to address a new set of values and changes in their position, tasks, and roles (Altbach, Reisberg, & Rumbley, 2009; Kwiek, 2003). These changes have also resulted in globalisation in teaching and research, a decrease in public funds for higher education, emphasis on privatization, managerialism, accountability and consumerism of higher education (Kwiek, 2003). Along the same lines, Altbach et al. (2009) claimed that academics also need to respond to the demands of massification, the diversity of student population, the increase of private higher education institutions and the increasingly globalised academic labour market which have

put them under pressure. In addition, the roles of the academic profession are becoming diversified, specialised and subject to varied employment contracts as the academic profession becomes more internationally oriented and mobile.

The main tasks of academics traditionally were teaching and researching where both were interrelated and formed the basis of academic scholarship. According to Perkin (1969) and Clark (1987), academics are responsible for shaping other professions in society and thus being an academic can be regarded as the 'profession of the profession'. The academic profession has been perceived previously as a stable profession. However, Enders and Weert (2009) emphasized that the academic profession has been shaped and changed by the construction of the major structural development of higher education institutions. Academic roles have been extended to administer the institution and contribute to the industry, the economy, and society as consultants and public intellectuals. Academics are also now expected to foster an entrepreneurial spirit to raise funds for research, publish findings and commercialize products (Azman, Jantan, & Sirat, 2011).

In 2007, a cross-national study of Changing Academic Profession (CAP) was conducted. As one of the countries that participated in the study, a sample of 1,130 Malaysian academics was investigated to find out whether the academic profession was still considered attractive to them. This quantitative study involved public and private universities in Malaysia and used stratified random sampling. The study looked at various aspects such as the academic's work, working conditions, and beliefs about decision making. Through this study, it was found that gender-based differences occurred across most of the variables. One critical factor of the survey showed that less than 50% of women among academics agreed that the working conditions had improved. However, the results overall indicate that the academic profession remains attractive among the academics. They are still satisfied with the academic profession even though the aspects of infrastructure and service provision showed their dissatisfaction (Azman et al., 2013).

The level of satisfaction among academics in Malaysia (i.e. state or centralised control) demonstrated in the CAP survey might be related to Malaysia's collectivistic culture. Despite the disagreements among academics of all countries on the intrusion of administrators and bureaucratic accountability, the state control mechanism is obvious in Malaysian universities. This reflects the practice of bureaucratic administrative style and it is notable that some public universities are happy to be under state control (Sirat & Kaur, 2010).

As a continuation of the CAP 2007 survey, the Academic Profession in Asia (APA) project was initiated by Hiroshima University with a special focus on Asian countries only (Huang, 2015). Ten Asian countries, including Malaysia, agreed to participate and the Hiroshima International Workshop on July 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup>, 2011, was held to establish the methodology and survey method for the project. The study has given a better understanding of the roles and responsibilities of academics, academic freedom, training and continuous professional development, resources, curriculum implementation and assessment, and mentoring.

From the survey, the Malaysian results showed that, in terms of promotion, female academics tended to lag behind men in their career progress. It was anticipated that the issue was due to their family commitment particularly with the difficulty of hiring live-in maids and the lack of good day care centres. As academics, they may have to work long hours, travel to other places such as attending conferences or work during weekends. Thus, day care centres that operate according to normal office hours may not help to overcome the problem. Furthermore, Md. Yunus and Pang (2015) showed that, in Malaysia, most working women have more than three children. Hence, the commitment of bringing up the children may slow down their career development.

The surveys conducted in 2007 and 2012 have given a better understanding of the academic profession in Malaysia. The former shows how working conditions were less conducive for the women academics while the latter 2012 survey indicated that female academics were still slow in moving up the career ladder. Based on the existing empirical



evidence mentioned above, the changing roles of academics in Malaysia have had a negative impact especially on women academics' work-life management. This scenario suggested that further investigation should be conducted among women academics in Malaysia. However, the progress of this current research on the work-life interface of Malay women academics has data which shows that, additionally, leadership style has had a major influence in these women's work and life. Hence, it is appropriate now to look at previous research on leadership in Malaysia.

### **3.4 Research on Leadership Styles in Malaysia**

Selvarajah and Meyer (2006) argue that historical, social and cultural factors contribute to the way management is practised in Malaysia. According to Kennedy and Mansor (2000), Malaysian leaders are still governed by the key cultural and religious values which underpin their behaviour, beliefs and attitudes. Further, Ahmad (2001) argues that, in the Malaysian context, leadership refers to the attribute that one has to inspire others to want to do things. It is the power to ensure the employees follow their leader's vision (Selvarajah & Meyer, 2006).

However, until recently, there was no conclusive evidence on Malaysian leadership styles. Ahmad (2001) states that there is no one distinct style of management that can be clearly identified in Malaysia. This can be seen from various findings of leadership research conducted in Malaysia. For example, Abdullah (1992) discovered that, generally, Malaysians do not favour overt displays of anger and aggressive behaviour. This was also found in Gill's (1998) study which suggested that Malaysian managers are found to be more direct, delegate less and are more transactional. In contrast, Govindan (2000) reported that Malaysian leaders lean towards participative and consultative styles.

Malaysia is considered as a collectivist country. In Western leadership research, in a collectivist setting it would be assumed that decision-making has to be consultative (Lim, 2001). According to Lim (2001), the leadership styles in Malaysia have traditionally been

top-down and Kennedy (2002) supports this view through his finding that the Malaysian managers found it difficult to practise a participative style of leadership although it was considered more effective compared to autocratic styles. Nevertheless, Malaysian leaders are urged to establish a higher level of employee involvement particularly in the current scenario in which Malaysia is progressing towards a knowledge economy. It is believed that employee engagement will keep talented high performers interested, challenged and satisfied (Gharibvand, Mazumder, Mohiuddin, & Su, 2013).

Selvarajah and Meyer (2008) identified two attributes that are considered important for Malaysian leaders: knowledge and trust. The attributes can be gained by sharing knowledge and experience with the subordinates (Gharibvand et al., 2013). Ahmad (2001) found that while keeping authority and mutual respect intact, leaders in Malaysia took account of the needs and concerns of their subordinates. Malaysian leaders were found to be generous, compassionate, patient (Kennedy, 2002), and genuinely to care for their employees' well-being (Gharibvand et al., 2013). Most importantly leaders were guided by social, religious and cultural principles (Selvarajah & Meyer, 2008). The leaders acted as a role-models (Rashid & Ho, 2003) by remaining diplomatic and avoiding internal disputes particularly when conducting business (Kennedy, 2002). In their research, Selvarajah and Meyer (2006) identified that effective leaders in Malaysia practised a paternalistic leadership style and were driven by advocating the strategic vision, continuous improvement, and recognition for better organizational performance.

Research on transformational and transactional leadership styles also gained interest among scholars in the Malaysian leadership studies. Lo et al. (2009) conducted a study using the example of higher education institutions in Malaysia. They found that transactional leadership produced better commitment to change compared to transformational leadership. However, they found a contrasting finding in a study conducted in the context of multinational corporations (MNCs). The results showed that, instead of transactional leadership style, the commitment to change was significantly higher when a transformational leadership style was employed. The differences in their findings imply that the traditional values were more likely to remain superior in the local

organizations. Meanwhile, the work culture in MNCs was more likely to be affected by global corporate influences and therefore aided adaptation to change more rapidly.

Malaysia is multi-racial, multi-cultural, and multi-religious which makes the country complex. The literature on leadership research in Malaysia has proved that culture does have an influence on the outcomes of different leadership styles for employers. This current research was undertaken in an institution which comprises 99 percent of academics of Malay ethnicity with Islam as their religion. The findings of this research have highlighted the impact of leadership styles in academics' work-life management. Based on the literature review, only a few studies have looked at the role of specific leaders' behaviours in their followers' home lives (Culbertson, Huffman, & Alden-Anderson, 2009; Heinen, 2009). Thus, there is a need for more cross-cultural research on leadership in an attempt to fill this gap in knowledge. Specifically, the role of the leader in their employees' work and non-work lives has not been studied until now (Heinen, 2009). The understanding of the academics' perception of leadership styles in this current research is significant as it adds to the literature on leadership and its relation to employees' work-life management within the context in Southeast Asian countries, specifically among Malay Muslims.

### **3.5 Malay Women: Identity, Family and Work**

This research on Malay women academics aims to see how women academics manage their work and life responsibilities. The academics are married women who have children and at the same time are developing their academic careers. The focus of this research is on women because women still play a major role in the care of children and families despite their role in the work domain and this is particularly evident in Malay society. In addition, women have different experiences from men in managing multiple roles (Drew et al., 2003; Drew & Murtagh, 2005; Fine-Davis et al., 2004). As a central focus of this study is the Malay Muslim women academics, the issue of identity construction is significant. Identity construction concerns a number of facets such as gender, profession, and ethnicity. The participants in this research are women who are subject to gender

expectations of what they are supposed to do and how they should behave. They are also academics, a profession that also has its own identity. Meanwhile, the construction of a Malay identity is often associated with ethnicity (Malay Bumiputera), religion (Islam) and language (Malay). Therefore, in addition to exploring how identity is constructed in relation to the institutional identity categories (in this research the categories relate to gender and profession) it also takes into account the Malay customs (or culture).

### **3.5.1 Malay Identity**

Identity makes a person unique and different from others. It is interconnected to the perception that individuals have about themselves, their being and their role in society. In a way, identity denotes how strongly individuals feel a sense of belonging to a particular ethnic group or culture that shares certain elements such as cultural practices, language, interactions with society and ethnic peers, as well as preference for same-ethnic friends or colleagues. Thus, social, psychological, and consumer behaviour are reflected through ethnic identity (Constant, Gataullina, & Zimmermann, 2006).

Malaysia is a plural society. The country promotes a diversity of religious and faith through its three main ethnic communities: the Malays, the Chinese and the Indians. The separate identities of these three ethnicities are reflected in their languages, codes of dress, customs, and behavioural norms and patterns (Gomez, 1998). Kumagai (1995) states that, in the study of the Malay family and its ideology, there are three inter-related basic foundations that must be understood. The foundations are: 1) Malay customs; 2) the impact and accommodation of Islamic religious principles; and 3) the influence of British colonial legislative laws. The lived experiences of family life for Malays today is the result of the interaction of these basic influences from outside and inside the society.

In 1786, the British colonial government introduced a divide-and-rule policy in Malaysia which resulted in a society that was very much multi-layered and segregated economically and racially. This practice positioned the majority of Malays on the bottom

rung (Ahmed, Mahajar, & Alon, 2005; Hamidon, 2009; Omar, 2006; Shome, 2002). During the British colonization, there were various factors that contributed to the low Malay enrolment in the English schools. Firstly, the Malays, compared to the wealthy Chinese, could not afford the high costs of education; thus, the majority of the English school enrolment came from the Chinese population (Omar, 2006). Secondly, during that period, the English language schools were run by the missionaries and the British administration. Hence, fearing the influence that Christianity might have on their children, the Malays were reluctant to send their children to these schools (Ali, 2008).

The divide-and-rule policy ended in 1957 after Malaysia gained its independence from the British. However, the impact of the Western political and economic systems has continued to significantly influence and shape Malaysia. In the late 1970s, the Islamic resurgence became a powerful new force shaping Malay culture. The phenomenon can be attributed to the growing desire among Muslims to protect their culture from the perceived threat of non-Islamic elements (Muzaffar, 1987; Peletz, 1997; Shamsul, 1997). According to Nagata (1994), in the 1970s, the Islamic opposition party demanded explicit government reform of society corresponding to Islamic values and teachings such as through the introduction of Islamic banks, Islamic insurance companies, and Islamic universities which all supported and contributed to Islamic revival in Malaysia.

Malaysia is known as an Islamic country and the Malays are the largest ethnicity in Malaysia which constitutes about 50 percent of its population (Nagata, 1974b). Article 160 (2) in the Malaysian Federal Constitution defines Malays as people who embrace and adhere to Islam, practise Malay customs and usually speak the Malay language as their first language (Federal Constitution, 2009: 168). Thus, all born Malays are Muslim by constitution (Nagata, 1974b).

Through this constitutional provision, a Malay identity can be defined based on three main symbols: religion, culture, and language. These symbols which shaped the identity of the Malays have helped to unite the Malay people (Andaya & Andaya, 2001; Henderson et al., 1970). The Malays are expected to be raised and governed by Islamic

teachings. As such, Islam plays a primary role in the Malay culture. There are different dialects and cultural practices among Malays in different states in the country. However, under the constitutional provision, they are seen as a homogeneous group (Gomes, 1999).

The intertwining of two identities of Islam and Malay has shaped the identity of Malay Muslim in most of their daily activities (Derichs, 1999; Nagata, 1986; Rahim, 2005). According to Nagata (1986: 37), the Islamic religion is “the tone of life” and “one of the principal sources of identity of Malay Muslims”, while Aziz & Shamsul (2004: 351) described Islam as an “ethnic identifier” for every Malay individual. Martinez (2006) supported these notions when he discovered that more than 50% of Malaysian Malays claimed their primary identity as Muslim. Therefore, due to the religious construction of Malay identity, the term ‘Muslim’ has been used by the Malays when talking about themselves while the non-Malays use the term when referring to the Malays (Beng, 2000; Frith, 2000; Yousif, 2004).

Another defining element of Malay identity is known as ‘*adat*’ or the Malay traditional culture which controls values, norms, and behaviours of individuals (Mutalib, 2008). According to Karim (1992: 14), *adat* is defined as “the total constellation of concepts, rules, and codes of behaviour which are conceived as legitimate or right, appropriate or necessary”. As for Omar (2003), *adat* refers to a custom and tradition which serves as the basis for appropriate human behaviour. In the Malay society, the custom existed in the 12<sup>th</sup> century long before Islam was introduced to the country (Mutalib, 2008). Before the introduction of Islam, the state religion was Hindu. As such, some Malays were influenced by animism (Ng, 2012) and this led to the influence of Hindu culture in some of the practices in Malay custom which clash with Islamic values (Ahmad, 2009). However, Islam has played a crucial role in restructuring Malay custom after the spread of the religion in the country. Islam allows the practice of Malay customs as long as they do not contradict Islamic teachings (Nicolaisen, 1983). Both Islam and Malay customs are very influential in Malay culture (Karim, 1992; Sloane, 1999) and eventually shaped the Malay way of life (Kling, 1995; Nagata, 1974a, 1974b, 1994; Omar, 1996).

An understanding of Malay identity is relevant in this research because, in Malay society, a woman's identity is largely tied to the identity of the extended family (Noor, 2006). As in many other countries of the world, the work-life balance of the female employees has become an issue in Malaysia (Lingard, 2007). This research explores how Malay women academics experience their daily lives in managing both work and life roles. However, their identity may have an influence on them such as when making a decision in prioritizing their tasks between work and family domains. As mentioned earlier, a person's identity describes his/ her behaviour and how he/she believes the role should be performed.

In this research, the participants' identity as an academic is seen as 'relational, negotiated, constructed, enacted, transforming and transitional' (Miller, 2008: 174). This identity as an academic is not static but a process that changes and indeed can become very different as they gain experience; combine professional knowledge and practice, and follow personal and professional development plans and aspirations. This process is greatly influenced by the culture and socio-political context in which the participants live and work (Tsui, 2003).

Hence, the life of the participants can be seen as an on-going process of identity construction in which the Malay Muslim women academics are defined from the various social situations to which they were exposed. It could be argued that the Malay Muslim women academics have constructed their identity and negotiated their space in the surroundings based on a mixture of being a Malay Muslim, a woman and an academic.

### **3.5.2 Malay Women and Family**

Several studies suggest that society and religion play vital roles in shaping the role of women (Noor, 2003). Hofstede and Bond (1988) observed that all Asian cultures are 'collective and familial' and women are strongly committed to family responsibilities prescribed by their gender role. In many Asian countries, men are considered as

breadwinners and heads of households while women are expected to assume the responsibility for the home and children (Noor, 2003).

The meaning of family in the context of Malay society is based on Islam. In the Holy Qur'an, there are many verses that emphasize marriage, family and the relationships between men and women. In Islam, marriage is a form of worship which leads to the formation of a family institution and it is reinforced by the rights and responsibilities of each individual in the institution (Ismail, 1991; Rahman & Nor, 2002). However, 'family members' refer not only to the spouses and children in the nuclear family but also include the extended family members (Elsaie, 2004; Mat, 1993).

According to Noor (2006), women's lives in Malaysia are complex. Their lives can be positively or negatively affected not only due to the factors within the immediate work and family domains but also outside these domains such as the extended family members and friends. The majority of Malay women are still highly responsible for housekeeping, childcare, and all other aspects of running a home. As noted by Juhari, Yaacob and Talib (2013: 3), "culturally Malay families have always been patriarchal." In a patriarchal system, the men's position in the family is emphasized and their traditional roles have given them the authority in family decision-making (Mashral & Ahmad, 2010; Noor, 1999b; Omar & Hamzah, 2003; Shah, 2010; Shariff, 2002).

Despite the traditional structure of family roles in Malaysia, a number of women have now entered the workplace (Noor, 2006). This has made men's decision-making power less absolute because most working women have become more independent and their self-confidence has increased. Malay husbands and wives are still bound by their religious and cultural rules. From the perspective of Malay society, it is not acceptable for wives to become dominant over husbands (Harun, 1991). Moreover, societally, there are negative perceptions of men who fail to fulfil their responsibilities as the breadwinner of the family (Ariffin, 1986; Mashral & Ahmad, 2010; Noor, 1999a). Besides, traditional masculinity is still strongly defended and men are seldom seen performing domestic tasks (Carsten, 1989; Ong, 1990). In addition, Abdullah (1987) states that husbands often face negative



sanctions from their relatives and friends when assisting their wives with the house chores. The progress of Malay women in the society is summarised by Abdullah, Noor and Wok (2008) in their research findings:

Women's role is oriented more towards family matters rather than self-fulfilment implying that when faced with having to make a choice between career and family, family is always given priority. In a way, the present Malay women are caught in a dilemma between the modern challenges of life and traditions. While many are now employed, they are still expected to be responsible for the family and to maintain the traditional perception of a woman (Abdullah et al., 2008: 454)

As discussed above, Malaysia is an Islamic country with more than half of its population embracing Islam. Therefore, it is crucial to understand the Islamic approach on various aspects of its people's lives particularly in understanding the structure of the Muslim family. Although Islam emphasizes the importance of marriage, both men and women should learn and understand the rights and duties of a husband and a wife. The Holy Qur'an is a source of guidance for all Muslims covering all aspects of human lives. In the marital relationship, the Holy Qur'an clearly explains that both husbands and wives have similar rights and shared duties in a marriage:

They are clothes for you, and you for them (Al-Qur'an, 2:187)

In this verse, God reminds people that each spouse has equal responsibilities. The word 'clothing' stands for the responsibility of guarding and protecting one another and also suggests that men and women have complementary qualities.

In Islam, what truly matters is not whether someone is a male or female. Muslims believe that God is concerned only with a person's true and heart-felt belief. People should not strive for wealth and property, or fame and status, but rather for the fear and respect of

God. Indeed, Muslims believe that God reveals in the Holy Qur'an the qualities that all Muslims, male and female, should have:

The men and women of the believers are friends of one another. They command what is right and forbid what is wrong, keep up prayer and give the alms [*zakat*] and obey Allah and his Messenger. They are the people or whom Allah will have mercy. Allah is Almighty. All-Wise (Al-Qur'an, 9:71)

Men and women are the two basic pillars of a family in Islam where it is believed that no institution works well without a clear leader and thus, there should be one in every family because marriage is also considered as one of the most virtuous and approved institutions. Thus, it is stated in the Holy Qur'an that God regards men as the leaders and guardians of their families:

Men are the protectors and maintainers of women, because Allah has given the one more [strength] than the other, and because they support them from their wealth. So righteous women are devoutly obedient, guarding in [the husband's] absence what Allah would have them guard (Al-Qur'an, 4:34)

The interpretation of this verse is that men are assigned the duty of protecting, helping and supporting women. Therefore, men are seen as having a greater and more difficult responsibility in supporting their families. As for women, they are expected to obey their husband in his role as the head of the family. This is the meaning of obedience in the context of marriage in Islam in which a woman should protect her honour, treat her family kindly and protect her husband's wealth when he is absent.

Until recently, most Malay women still held strongly to their roles in the family even though they have started to make adjustments between their changing situation in employment and social beliefs. As women who adhere to the teachings of Islam, they believe that by performing what is required in Islam and by pleasing their husband and children, they will gain blessings from God. They also believe that a good woman will

always be responsible for managing family matters. Researchers have acknowledged that such perception is still strong among Malay women although their situation has changed compared with the position of women in the past (Harun, 1991; Hassan, 1998; Shah, 2010). Therefore, Malay women do not feel that it is a burden for them to be responsible for managing home and family (Hashim & Omar, 2004; Omar & Hamzah, 2003).

Abdullah et al. (2008) conducted a study with 1,000 employed and non-employed Malay women from urban and rural areas in Malaysia. The purpose of the study was to understand how the participants perceive their role as women, their perceptions about the meaning of progress, as well as factors that help or hinder them to progress. The study found that, after more than 50 years of independence, Malay women still held strongly to their traditional cultural values as mothers and, at the same time, being feminine and obedient wives. The study also found that the reason given by the majority of working women was that they were satisfied by their current work position. They were not interested in advancing in their careers because of the need to balance the responsibilities of both work and family roles. Although they could achieve and do more in their careers, they did not have the time or energy to perform both roles equally, particularly with the traditional expectations in the Malay culture that consider that, no matter how high a woman's education is, she is still responsible for performing domestic tasks. Thus, according to Abdullah et al. (2008), similarly with findings from previous studies, despite their managerial positions, Malaysian women still have to shoulder the responsibilities assigned to them by tradition and religion which have resulted in role conflict and related stress.

Based on the literature discussed above, this raises the question of how women academics manage their work and family roles because of the interplay between culture and religion which influences their lives. What then are the factors that influence them when prioritizing between the two domains? Do they have a choice or do they have to sacrifice one of them? How do they feel and how do they cope with the situation? Further investigation needs to be undertaken to understand the views and experiences of this group of women academic because of the complexity of cultural and religious factors they must manage when attending to their work-life responsibilities.

### **3.5.3 Malay Women in the Malaysian Workforce**

Female participation in the Malaysian workforce has been rising since Malaysia gained its independence in 1957. Between 1970 and 1999, particularly with the introduction of the New Economic Policy (NEP) in 1970, more women, especially Malays, joined the Malaysian workforce at the same time as economic development and urbanization were taking place (Ali, 2014). Women were engaged in various sectors such as manufacturing, business, services, and agriculture. In line with this changing economic structure of the country, the employment pattern of women also changed (Othman, 2006).

Several studies have been conducted on the participation of women in the Malaysian workforce (Abdullah et al., 2008; Amin & Alam, 2008; Mashral & Ahmad, 2010; Noor, 1999a). Factors that contributed to the women's participation as full-time employees in the paid labour force were the impact of the introduction of NEP; wider educational and better job opportunities; economic constraints and increases in life demands. Noor (2001) identified that the implementation of the NEP by the Malaysian government in 1970 was the primary reason that led to the increase in women's participation. The policy was introduced to eradicate poverty and rebuild Malaysian society. As a result of changes from an agricultural-based to industrial-based society, various jobs were created due to rapid economic growth. This widespread increase of employment opportunities led to women's greater participation in the paid labour force. Noor (2001) also explained that the equal access to educational opportunities enabled more women to achieve higher educational attainment which resulted in the advancement of Malaysian women into the paid labour force.

Salih (1994: 13) conducted a study in Malaysia on the participation of Muslim women in the paid workforce. He identified nine reasons for Muslim women's decision to work: "to accept the notion that working is a common thing to do, to support themselves and their dependents, to earn extra money to supplement family finances, to fulfil their parents' wishes, to enjoy working, to pursue a career and to insure against unexpected events such as the death of their husbands".

In 2011, the women's labour force participation rate in Malaysia was 47.9% (MWFC, 2014). Therefore, the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development (MWFC) in Malaysia and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) embarked on a project to support the Government of Malaysia's target to increase women's participation in the workforce to 55% by the end of 2015, as stated in the 10<sup>th</sup> Malaysia Plan. The project combined research and stakeholder consultations to ascertain what factors contribute directly and indirectly to the low participation rates so that specific policies and programmes could be implemented to achieve the substantial increase of women in the labour force. At the time the MWFC study was conducted, there was no comprehensive picture as to why there was a large proportion of women 'missing' from the labour force, despite the fact that women's gross enrolment ratio in tertiary education (certificate, diploma, and degree) increased by nearly 20% between 2000 and 2009 (in 2010, the enrolment of females in public tertiary institutions was at 60.1%) (MWFC, 2014).

The findings from the study on women's participation in the workforce showed that the majority of the women wanted to work, whether or not they had worked before. The findings also indicated that a majority of the women had difficulties in balancing work and life. A large majority of the respondents interviewed were found to be doing care work in the family particularly for children and the elderly. Among women who were not working, the percentage of them doing care work in the family was higher than those who were not doing care work and this same pattern was observed among women who were working. The MWFC study indicated that women had a greater tendency to do care work in the family regardless of their work status (MWFC, 2014).

According to Othman (1998), the participation of married women in the paid workforce, whether they were from working-class or urban middle-class households, was needed to meet the daily basic expenditure of the family because their husbands' incomes were insufficient. Therefore, the contribution of women to the family finances was seen as crucial and, at the same time, they also had the opportunity to gain their own income. Combining full-time work and family obligations is not an easy task. Various studies have shown that the possibility of Malaysian women participating and succeeding in their

careers fundamentally depends on their ability to manage multiple roles as a wife, mother, and worker (Hughes, 2004; Ismail & Ahmad, 1999; Ismail & Rasdi, 2006). Ali (2014) claims that although it is already accepted as a common feature in today's capitalistic and materialistic global environment, combining full-time work and family obligations can create new challenges in the women's lives. The women have to face the strains of maintaining their challenging triple roles as wives, family manager, and career women.

Westman (2005) reported that ideologies of appropriate gender role remain more traditional in many non-western countries including Malaysia. For example, Yacob and Noor (1993) pointed out that not all women expected an equal sharing of household responsibilities between husbands and wives. The findings from their study, which involved 951 female adults in Malaysia, implied that the women themselves recognized the different gender roles in society. In her study, Noor (1999) found that, if the traditional gender roles are still pervasive in society and work arrangements are too limited, this will pose a challenge to the employed women who at the same time have to manage the family and household chores. To balance their roles in both work and family domains, women may experience conflict and pressure. This could have a negative impact, particularly in their work performance. In the opening speech of the Women Talentship 2016 seminar in Malaysia, Dr Wee Ka Siong said that the irony in Malaysia was that although there was a huge number of women graduates entering the workforce, they leave at the peak of their careers owing to family responsibilities (HRinAsia, 2016).

The latest statistics of labour force participation in Malaysia show that the increase of female employed persons contributed to the increase of overall labour force participation rate in Malaysia (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2016). Figure 3.1 shows the labour force participation rate in Malaysia between the years 2014 and 2015. The participation rate of females had increased by 0.4 percentage points reaching 54.1 per cent in 2015 compared to 2014 and female participation in the labour market for the prime age groups, namely 23-34, 35-44 and 45-54 years was high, exceeding 58.0 per cent. The male participation in the labour force was unchanged compared to the previous year. Nevertheless, the labour force participation rate of males was still higher than for females

for every age group (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2016). Hence, this scenario poses the question of why the participation rate of females is still lower than the male rate despite the increased participation of females in the labour force. Does this imply that women are not able to continue remain in the workforce because their role in managing home and family forces them to resign?

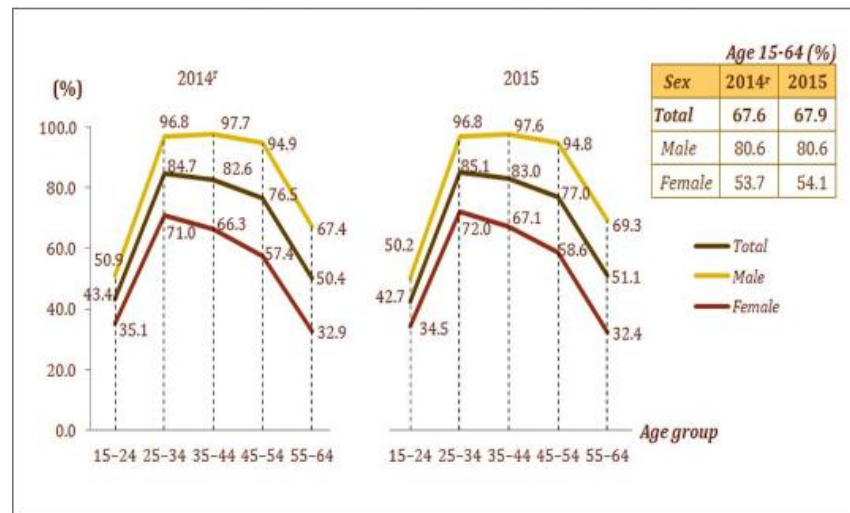


Figure 3.1 Labour force participation rate by sex & age group, Malaysia 2014-2015  
(source: Department of Statistics, Malaysia)

Permission granted if source acknowledged

Ali (2014) argued that, in the eastern cultures, no matter how successful women are in their career, their roles at home continue to be the most important among the family members and even from societal perspectives. Despite their contribution to the family income, women are still considered to be “the economic backbone to the husband” (Mashral & Ahmad, 2010: 175). According to Noor (2006), the need to juggle work and family is less apparent for men given that their role as the primary breadwinner justifies their lesser participation and involvement at home. Thus, women always have to make sacrifices, be it at home or at the workplace although the husbands may contribute partly in doing the house chores (Ali, 2014). Ali (2014) stated, therefore, that in struggling to balancing career and family life, women have to sacrifice their career for a better family life and to reduce stress.

In Malaysia, the Malays make up the majority of its population. They are also the main contributors to the labour force, instrumental in driving the nation's economic growth and prosperity. Current social problems among the younger generation and increasing divorce cases, especially among Malays, have been effected by dual career parents who fail to balance family life with career life (Ali, 2014). Hence, the issue of work-life balance, particularly among Malays in Malaysia, is considered as a serious issue which needs further investigation.

### **3.6 Idea of Work from Islamic Perspectives**

In this current research, all the women academics are Muslims. Thus, it is appropriate to consider how the nature of work is viewed from the perspectives of the Islamic religion in managing their daily work-life responsibilities. Religion in Malaysia can play an important role in people's lives and is closely associated with work and family which is particularly true for practising Muslims (Sav, Harris, & Sebar, 2013). However, in the literature of work-life research, religion is one of the important domains of non-work that has been overlooked (Sav et al., 2013). Islam lays great emphasis on work and in many places in its scriptures it is made clear that time should not be wasted. A message to the people is that they should contribute positively to the earth or, in other words, to make use of what is created for its benefit (Al Qur'an, 53: 39-41).

In Islam, work is given special importance to the extent that it is considered as an act of worship in itself (Ahmad & Owoyemi, 2012). Work and effort are described as a struggle (*jihad*) in the way of God. The Prophet says, "One who tries for his family, is like a soldier who does Jihad in Allah's way" (Khanifar et al., 2011: 249). Meanwhile, in the culture of Islam, work is considered as the superior prayer. The Prophet says, "Worship of God has seventy parts which is the best of this is solvent business" (Khanifar et al., 2011: 249). Islam also values the quality of work and so emphasizes the necessity of endurance and perseverance in work and the importance of working conditions and justice, for example, a fair payment to the employees (Khanifar et al., 2011).



In addition, in Islam, work is also considered as a means of maintaining a balance in one's individual and social life: balance and equilibrium are maintained in the work ethics of Muslims. In other words, work should be moderated to the extent that it does not disturb one's responsibilities to God, family and the society and that it does not lead to personal abandonment which could affect one's health (Ahmad & Owoyemi, 2012). In order to evaluate action, Muslims believe that the spirit of action is formed by intent. A true intent means that any work performed is based on sincerity, that is for the sake of God (Khanifar et al., 2011; Uygur, 2009). Islam also focuses on the importance of spiritual quests more than the material quests. Thus, if work is intended to be performed because of God and not because of material values, it would be considered as worship (Azmi, 2009).

Sav et al. (2013) conducted a study on Australian Muslim men's work experience and found that managing work, family and also religious obligations were central themes. This finding suggested that religious involvement could provide people with resources that might help them achieve work-life balance rather than conflict (Sav et al., 2013b). Although there is a lack of literature on work-life enrichment from Eastern perspectives across different cultures and faiths, Zaiton, Dollad and Winefield (2009) did conduct a study in Malaysia which highlighted enrichment in the work-family context. The main finding of the study indicated that among employees who have strong faith and consider themselves pious, there was a strong correlation between the importance of work and family enrichment. Accordingly, when a person is in a negative state, religion acts as a buffer. Religion was considered an effective coping strategy when facing difficulties or problems (Zaiton et al., 2009).

With particular reference to the context of this current study, a study conducted on Malaysian women across all three ethnicities, i.e. Malays, Chinese and Indians, found that religion was an aspect of life that could not be ignored (Noor, 2006). Beit-Hallahmi et al. (as cited in Noor, 2006: 3) explained that "religion gives meaning and purpose to life by structuring one's experiences, beliefs, values, and behaviour. It has also been shown to reduce stress and increase well-being". According to Noor (2006), despite their ethnic and religious diversity, many Malaysian women find that religion provides the strength to cope when faced with adversity and hardship. In addition, being part of a faith

community provides other benefits, such as prayer and contemplation, time away from everyday tensions, the opportunity for socializing and fellowship, education, and it promotes a healthy lifestyle by prohibiting drugs, smoking, and alcohol.

The preceding discussion and previous research on the participation of Malay women in the Malaysian workforce underscores the need to explore and understand how Malay Muslim women academics experience their work-life interface.

### **3.7 Chapter Summary**

This chapter has discussed the background and context of this research. The discussion has looked at the changing context of the Malaysian Higher Education and the changing nature of academic work in Malaysia which has included an overview of the leadership research in the country. This has provided a broad outline of the current circumstances of the life of academics in Malaysia. This is an area, however, that needs further investigation. This chapter has ended with the review of Malay Muslim women which incorporates the understanding of their identity, their family and their involvement in the Malaysian workforce. In addition, the Islamic perspective on work was also included in the discussion because past research pointed to the importance of culture and religion among Malaysians. The discussion in this chapter provides a broad framing for the investigation of the experiences of Malay Muslim women academics in Malaysia in managing their work-life responsibilities.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: METHODOLOGY**

### **4.1 Introduction**

Managing work and personal responsibilities is a challenge for academics in higher education institutions. While significant research on academics in the developed countries is readily available on the topic of work-life interface, there remains a dearth of studies related specifically to Malaysian academics. The focus of this research is to understand how Malay Muslim women academics experience their work-life interface. Additionally, the research aims to identify the work environmental factors that assist and/or hinder the academics in achieving their work-life balance responsibilities and whether personal or cultural engagements influence their daily work-life interface. According to Silverman (2000), a methodology underpins an overall research strategy. Selecting a suitable methodology is often influenced by the kind of questions the research is seeking to address, in a sense the nature of the 'problem' or 'phenomenon' under discussion. Therefore, taking into account the purpose of this research, it is considered appropriate to employ qualitative data analysis.

### **4.2 Research Paradigm**

According to Crotty (1998: 8), epistemology is about "how we know what we know" or, as defined by Guba & Lincoln (1998: 201), "the nature of the relationship between the knower or would-be knower and what can be known". This includes identifying a philosophical ground for deciding what kinds of knowledge are possible and how to ensure it is adequate and legitimate (Maynard, 1994). Epistemology is also philosophically linked to ontology, "the study of being" (Crotty, 1998: 10) or "the nature of reality" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985: 37). From the 1930s through to the 1960s, positivism was the dominant paradigm in social science. Its main argument is that the "social world exists externally to the researcher, and that its properties can be measured directly through observation" (Gray, 2009: 21). In contrast, subjectivism suggests that meaning does not

emerge from the interaction between the subject and the outside world but, rather, meaning is imposed on the object by the subject. The object as such makes no contribution to the generation of meaning while the subject constructs meaning from within the collective unconsciousness such as from dreams and religious beliefs (Crotty, 1998; Gray, 2009).

The interactive epistemology of constructionism is applicable to the social world because the foundation of constructionism is that “reality is socially constructed” (Mertens, 1998: 11). The focus of this epistemology is that:

Truth, or meaning, comes into existence in and out of [one’s] engagement with the realities in [one’s] world. There is no meaning without a mind. Meaning is not discovered, but constructed. In this understanding of knowledge it is clear that different people may construct meaning in different ways, even in relation to the same phenomenon. In this view of things, subject and object emerge as partners in the generation of meaning (Crotty, 1998: 8).

Hence, truth and meaning are created by the subject’s interactions with the world. Meaning is constructed in an interrelation of objectivity and subjectivity (Gray, 2009). The mind is therefore actively involved in this process while individual’s perspectives, perceptions, and experiences play a vital role in constructing one’s reality (Blumer, 1994). The paradigm of constructionism argues that the individual is not a passive recipient of a set meaning but an active, resourceful and reflective participant in the construction of meaning. Each individual will make use of a range of attributes and skills as part of the process when encountering the world. Thus, this type of engagement occurs as objects and events can be attributed to an individual’s concept of things and events, and how the individual relates and directs attention to them (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994).

The philosophical perspectives “should be evident in all aspects of the research design” because they are the foundations of the study (Jones, Torres, & Arminio, 2006: 39). Thus, constructivism, which places emphasis on “the meaning-making of the individual mind”

(Crotty, 1998: 58), is chosen as the epistemological foundation for this current research. The interaction between the researcher and the participants is significant to this worldview, as the meanings of the participants' work-life experiences are constructed between the participants and the researcher. Moreover, Crotty (1998) claims that the constructionist stance maintains that meaning is constructed through the mind interacting with the world which indicates that people in different cultures or generations may construct meaning in different ways even in relation to the same phenomenon. This current research seeks to understand how the participants interpret their work-life experiences in their roles as academics and working parents and, thus, constructivism is considered as the suitable epistemological foundation.

### **4.3 Qualitative Research Methodology**

This current research seeks to examine the complexities of human experiences as they relate to work-life interface (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). It intends to understand how the women Malay academics perceive, describe, feel about, remember, judge, and make sense of their work-life interface (Patton, 2002; Ray, 1994). Researchers who undertake qualitative research aim to understand the meanings that participants attribute to their behaviours and actions, how they interpret events and what their perceptions are of certain issues. Therefore, according to Miles and Huberman (1994), the strength of qualitative data analysis is based on its rich and holistic nature with strong potential for revealing complexity nested in a real context. Creswell (1998: 15) wrote:

Qualitative research is an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem. The researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyses words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting.

Qualitative research design also focuses on a bounded system, usually under natural conditions, so that the system can be understood. Without understanding initially the framework to interpret thoughts, feelings, and actions, one will not be able to understand

human behaviour (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Qualitative research also depends entirely on the fact that human behaviour is significantly influenced by environmental surroundings (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). According to Patton (1986), qualitative research explores detailed and in-depth experiences of an individual's life in their own words and on their own terms, resulting in rich information. In addition, participants also are viewed subjectively on an individual basis. Thus, qualitative research is designed to capture the meaning of the experience for the participant while at the same time maintaining a holistic perspective. Thus, it appears to be the best method of analysing the gathered data concerning personal experiences and behaviour.

#### **4.4 Phenomenology**

According to Creswell (1998), there are various types of qualitative research and there is no agreement about the structure in their design. Until recently, the positivistic paradigm has been dominating the work-family interface research. Radcliffe (2013) pointed out that the focus of work-life research had been concentrated on the antecedents and outcomes of work-family conflict which are seldom the objective characteristics of the individual, their family or their work. However, in reality, managing work and family involves complex processes in which reconciling different interpretations of events is a daily occurrence. Thus, researchers began to engage more with phenomenology in order to understand the processes which underpin how people manage both work and family domains (Popperton, Briner, & Kiefer, 2008).

A phenomenology attempts to understand the experiences of individuals and to discover a perspective on their lives in relation to particular phenomena. In addition, it endeavours to reveal what matters to people within their lived worlds (Smith et al., 2009). The purpose, therefore, is to highlight and identify how a specific phenomenon or phenomena are perceived by the individuals. The perceptions that the individual holds regarding their life world are viewed as the main psychological processes to underpin what people think, feel and do (Barker, Pistrang, & Elliott, 2002). Moreover, because phenomenology tends to be matched with the inductive collection of abundant data, one

of the advantages is that this is more likely to pick up factors that were not part of the original research focus (Gray, 2009). Indeed, this is a powerful way to understand subjective experience and to gain insights into people's motivations and actions (Lester, 1999).

The goal of phenomenology is to focus on the participants' lived experiences with regard to seeking to explore its central meaning or 'essence' for the participant (Moustakas, 1994). It is therefore useful in producing thick descriptions of people's 'experiences and perspectives' within their 'natural settings' (Gray, 2009). Furthermore, according to Jurema et al. (2006: 1):

Phenomenological research entails unravelling the internal structures of meanings, not proving or demonstrating. There are no hypotheses that guide the work and which demand support. There are no truths to be confirmed. Phenomenological research begins with lived experience, the concreteness of life, and the unique. This is the essence which is explored.

Therefore, a phenomenological and qualitative framework was used for this research. Phenomenology is appropriate for this research because its purpose is to understand how the academics experience their work-life interface, not to prove that certain circumstances exist. By privileging the participants' stories, their lived experiences were brought to the forefront, enabling others to understand the work-life experiences of Malay Muslim women academics. Hence, an accessible and flexible phenomenological approach that attempts to get closer to the personal world of the participant, while privileging the individual voices of the participants, is to be found through the use of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) which is discussed in the following section.

## 4.5 Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)

IPA engages with the participants' subjective accounts of their experience (Reid, Flowers, & Larkin, 2005). Smith and Osborn (2007) explained that IPA is appropriate in investigating how individuals perceive particular situations and make sense of their personal and social world. The process of analyzing the raw data is iterative and continuous in which the overall goal of IPA is to produce an interesting narrative account of the emerging themes (Seamark et al., 2004). The philosophy foundations of IPA are informed by three key fields: phenomenology, hermeneutics, and idiography.

The first theoretical field of IPA is that of phenomenology. Husserl, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, and Sartre are some of the leading figures in phenomenology relevant to IPA. The phenomenological aspect of IPA derives from the work of Husserl (1925) which involved a process of conscious reflection upon specific experiences. Meanwhile, the position for the other three theorists is more interpretative and focuses on individuals' relationships to the world and other individuals. Willig (2008) states that individual persons and the world they experience are inseparable and thus, phenomenology does not make objective claims about the world. The world can only be understood in terms of how each person perceives it. Thus, 'experience' is a complex concept as it is "a lived process, an unfurling of perspectives and meanings, which are unique to the person's embodied and situated relationship to the world" (Smith et al., 2009: 21). IPA is interested in the experience that is significant for individuals, how they reflect upon and make sense of this.

Therefore, in IPA, research is "experience close" since experience is not accessible due to its existence in the past (Smith et al., 2009: 33). The meaning which the individual gives to the experience can represent the experience itself because the individual is seen as a sense-making person (Smith et al., 2009). Smith et al. (2009: 34) briefly framed the relationship of IPA and phenomenology as:



[...] rather than trying to operationalize or privilege one particular phenomenology or phenomenological theorist, IPA is influenced by the core emphases of the approach [...]. Thus, IPA is concerned with human lived experience, and posits that experience can be understood via an examination of the meanings which people impress upon it.

The second major theoretical underpinning of IPA is from the field of hermeneutics which is the theory of interpretation. The interpretative element of IPA has its roots in the work of the theorist Heidegger (1972). Heidegger argued that our access to lived time and engagement with the world is always through interpretation. The researcher has an active role in IPA (Braun and Clarke, 2006) which makes it possible to uncover the deep meanings which phenomenology seeks to achieve (Pringle et al., 2011). Smith (2011: 35) states that IPA involves a “double hermeneutic” which means that individuals are trying to find meaning in their experience and the researcher is trying to make sense of individuals’ interpretation of their experience. This process lies in the researcher’s own preconceptions and experiences and the influence these have on her role in the interpretative process. Smith et al. (2009: 37) summarize:

[...] IPA requires a combination of phenomenological and hermeneutic insights. It is phenomenological in attempting to get as close as possible to the personal experience of the participant, but recognises that this inevitably becomes an interpretive endeavour for both participant and researcher. Without phenomenology there would be nothing to interpret; without hermeneutics, the phenomenon would not be seen.

Idiography is the third theoretical aspect in IPA. In contrast to a nomothetic approach which attempts to establish general laws and generalisations, IPA tries to make statements about the understandings and perceptions of a particular group of people (Smith & Osborn, 2007). The idiographic approach focuses on the detailed analysis of individual accounts of a particular experience which involves a thorough and systematic analysis of the texts by the researcher (Smith, 2011). Since IPA aims to understand how a particular experience has been understood from the perspective of a particular person, the sample size is small and purposively selected. As a new developing approach, IPA

provides researchers with clear and systematic guidelines to identify and integrate themes which makes IPA a phenomenological methodology that is accessible to those who do not have a philosophical background (Willig, 2008).

#### **4.5.1 Rationale for Choosing IPA**

IPA is a relatively recent in qualitative research. Although it has its roots in health psychology, recently there is also an emerging use of IPA within the field of education (Biggerstaff & Thompson, 2008; Creanor & Trinder, 2008; Smith et al., 2009). IPA aims to capture the lived experiences of an individual (Reid et al., 2005). Through IPA, participants are able to describe their experiences without losing their essential quality. The purpose of this research is to understand the work-life experiences of the women academics of higher education institutions. By privileging the participants' stories, their lived experiences are brought to the forefront, enabling others to understand better the work-life experiences of Malay Muslim women academics which have been relatively under-explored. This seems particularly pertinent to this current research, as Reid et al. (2005) argue that it is useful to adopt IPA when researching an area that has previously lacked exploration.

Since the focus of IPA is on the in-depth exploration of participants' individual experiences and meanings, its goal is to construct a rich and detailed picture of the phenomenon under investigation through an idiographic lens (Lyons, 2007; Smith, 2011). This differentiates IPA from other qualitative ways of research such as grounded theory which generates a theory from the data and involves the sampling of large number of participants (Payne, 2007). Thus, it was felt that grounded theory was not suitable to the aims of this research although these ways of research share some similarities. For instance, they both use thematic analysis as an analytic technique and also analyse individual accounts in the beginning of the analytic process which then leads to the integration of multiple accounts (Willig, 2008).

Discourse analysis focuses on the dialogue and how people use language in telling their story. In other words, discourse analysis is concerned with the description of the language in use while IPA focuses on the participant's perceptions of a particular lived experience. Hence, it was felt that IPA sits better with this current research than discourse analysis because it is concerned with describing the meaning of the lived experience of a particular phenomenon. IPA also shares lots of similarities with narrative analysis. However, the main difference that distinguishes IPA from narrative analysis is its prime focus. The main focus of narrative is on lived experiences and identity construction rather than the meanings that individuals attach to experiences (Crossley, 2007).

For a novice researcher using IPA, the guidelines and the structure provide some reassurance. The use of IPA supports the necessary deep immersion in the data through its cyclical, interactive process. Most importantly, IPA suits as the methodology of this research because it provides a voice to a group of people who do not typically have a strong voice, and who, framed by their cultural expectations, are typically considered to be 'subdued', 'quiet' and 'withdrawn' (Larkin, Watts, & Clifton, 2006; Luke, 2001). Thus, to understand better the experiences of how women academics manage both their work and family domains, IPA has been adopted in this research.

#### **4.5.2 Reflexivity**

It is argued that all qualitative researchers should engage in reflexive practice as it is necessary for researchers to reflect on how they might impact the research process when gathering data and during the analysis process (Shaw, 2010). Interpretative phenomenological research stresses the importance of acknowledging the role of the researcher in the analysis as dynamic and reflecting the researchers' attempt to explore and understand the participants making sense of their experience (Smith et al., 2009). Using IPA, an interpretative methodology researchers are encouraged to acknowledge that they can impact the research process, and that any analysis is shaped by their experience and preconceptions (Shaw, 2010).

In order to aid reflexive practice, the researcher maintained an informal research diary. The researcher made notes immediately following the interview about how she experienced the event, how she felt the interview had progressed, what areas she felt could be improved upon for subsequent interviews, and some initial thoughts as to what interesting topics had arisen in the interview. The research diary represented a space where she could consider the observations that she had made, and what impact her own personal experience would have on my interpretation of the data. She also took notes to capture her thoughts and reflections during the data analysis process. To further encourage a reflexive approach, she joined the Scottish-IPA group and discussed her IPA journey with the group for constructive feedback.

As discussed in the introduction, being an academic in the previous institution, the researcher had to be aware that her own preconceptions might influence how she approached this piece of work. The research diary aided her in the bracketing process of analysis as it helped her focus and set aside her preconceptions and focus on what the participant was telling her. As a result, her understanding of IPA, interpretive research and data analysis, in particular, developed considerably during the doctorate process. The notes she captured in her research diary represented her reflexive thoughts through the data collection and data analysis stages and were particularly helpful as she experienced the various levels of interpretive analysis (Smith et al., 2009).

#### **4.5.3 Researcher's Role**

Being an insider researcher has advantages and disadvantages which can impact on research. The status of the researcher may be considered as that of an insider because the research setting was her previous workplace. The participants were her ex-colleagues and had known her for more than ten years. The positive aspects of the insider role that she acknowledged when conducting this research benefited her in terms of having easy access to the academics and greater ease with the interviewees who were her ex-colleagues. This is due to the fact that she already had a greater understanding of the organisational culture and had established good relationship with all her participants. In a

way, this offered her a greater understanding of the individual's viewpoint or the organisational principles of (social) groups from a member's perspective" (Flick, 2009: 119).

Similarly, Shah (2004: 556) stated that "a social insider is better positioned as a researcher because of his/her knowledge of the relevant patterns of social interaction required for gaining access and meaning-making". This is also in accordance with what Smith et al. (2009) claimed, that a researcher using IPA seeks to be able to grasp the perspective of an insider not only from observing what it is like to be in their shoes, but also to stand next to them, and enquire from a new perspective. The clear interaction between the participants and the current researcher was achieved by knowing them as individuals. It is an advantage for the researcher to give rich descriptions of each participant, especially when writing the *Pen Portraits* in the Findings chapter. Having the experience of working for 11 years at the previous college (the research setting), she was also aware of the college organisational culture both from the aspects of its formal hierarchy and also how they are managed. This is useful with regard to the objective of this research (Smyth & Holian, 2008).

On the other hand, there are also pitfalls of being an insider-researcher (Herrmann, 1989; Rooney, 2005; Sikes & Potts, 2008; Smyth & Holian, 2008). In conducting this research, the negative aspects that she was aware of include bias in which the researcher unconsciously makes wrong assumptions about the research process based on the researcher's own experience. This situation can become more constrained by the perceptions of the participants towards the researcher which will shape the revealing of experiences and the sharing of information. The researcher tried to overcome these disadvantages by taking preventative measures especially in regularly challenging her own assumptions and beliefs in my reflective log. She has tried her best to collect the data without prejudice in order to get the overall dimensions of the bigger picture. In shaping her world view, she brings her professional experience of being an academic and personal experience as a wife and a mother with multiple responsibilities.

Her task as a researcher was to explore much information that she herself may have not encountered and so she had to remain very aware of her own 'lenses' through which she viewed the scenarios she was investigating. Using IPA in this research has led her to a strong emphasis on reflexivity. All her thoughts and feelings were expressed in a research diary throughout the entire process of data collection and analysis. As noted by Smith et al. (2009), by keeping a research diary, the researcher becomes more aware of his or her own thoughts and feelings, their relationship to the research participants and their experience of the interviewing process. Moreover, researchers are urged to talk about themselves, "their presuppositions, choices, experiences, and actions during the research process" in order to make visible to the reader the constructed nature of research outcomes (Mruck & Breuer, 2003 : 3).

Besides being aware of bias, she was also aware that her position as an insider might hinder the participants in sharing or revealing their stories. They may not share certain information with her for fear of being judged (Shah, 2004). However, although she knew the participants as her previous colleagues, she was not an integral part of the college anymore. Her current position as an officer at the headquarters also does not give her the power and authority over the participants which can affect the data collection process negatively (Smyth & Holian, 2008). Her rank is similar to theirs and the difference is only the job specification. In order to prevent a negative effect, she needed to orient the participants to her role as a researcher and her part in the research process. She understood that they may have greater anxiety after the diary has been submitted and the interview has been conducted; worrying about how they will be represented in transcripts or on interview tapes (Darra, 2008; Twigg, 2005). The researcher considered all ethical issues and assured the participants that the full raw data would only be seen by her and would not be included in the final research project. Any data used would be made anonymous. Further, in order to build the participants' trust in her during the research process, the researcher explained to them that she would not reveal any observations that she made with any participants but would keep her feelings, impressions, and thoughts in her research diary.

From the experience of the researcher, there are advantages and disadvantages to being either an insider or outsider. In conducting this research, she experienced many advantages being in an insider position and she believes that she has overcome the few disadvantages.

#### **4.5.4 Limitations in IPA**

IPA has limitations which must be examined. IPA is relatively new in qualitative research. Therefore, this may lead to a certain degree of uncertainty regarding its utilisation. Given its idiographic nature, Smith et al. (2009) recommend a smaller research population and, therefore, it must be acknowledged that sample size will result in limitations in terms of generalizability. However, the current study overcomes this limitation by the following means. Having a small sample size, with seven participants, allows the researcher to privilege each participant's individual account of experiences and then to make comparisons across cases (Smith & Osborn, 2007). As the work-life experience of Malay Muslim women academics in Malaysia is still under-researched, it is essential to obtain rich in-depth accounts of their work-life experiences. Moreover, the issue in IPA is quality and not quantity (Smith et al., 2009) and so the use of a large sample size could cause a hindrance to the collection of a rich and in-depth descriptive and interpretative account of each participant (Pringle et al., 2011) because larger data sets may inhibit successful analysis which require "time, reflection and dialogue" (Smith et al., 2009 : 52).

#### **4.6 Ethical Considerations**

Ethical approval was sought and granted from the University of Glasgow, College of Social Science Research Ethics Committee. The development of the research design and the selection of research methods were developed according to the consideration of the ethical obligations outlined by the University of Glasgow Ethics Committee Guidelines. The participants were fully informed about the aims of the research and the right to withdraw at any time without giving any reasons. They were fully informed about all

aspects of the research through the participant Plain Language Statement (see Appendix 2). Participants were given time to process and reflect on the information before agreeing to participate. They were encouraged to ask questions and talk about their concerns prior to their agreeing to take part in the research. As part of the process, written consent was obtained from each participant before taking part to indicate that they had read the participant Plain Language Statement, understood that their participation was voluntary and that their responses would be anonymised. All participants were assigned pseudonyms and any identifying details were masked or removed to protect their privacy. Personal information that could identify the participants remained strictly confidential and only the researcher and the supervisors had access to that information.

## **4.7 Quality Issues in Qualitative Research**

In both quantitative and qualitative approaches, the key issue is the validity of the methodology selected. There are four broad principles suggested by Yardley (2000) as cited by Smith et al. (2009) which are considered to be more appropriate when assessing the quality and validity of qualitative studies than those designed for quantitative research.

### **4.7.1 Sensitivity to Context**

There are several ways to demonstrate sensitivity to context which include reviewing existing literature on the research topic, consideration of socio-cultural issues, and appropriate conduct of the research such as in interviews and dealing with the collected data from the participants (Smith et al., 2009). In conducting this research, the chapter on literature review supports the orientation of the research while the discussion on the findings refers to the relevant literature. Smith et al. (2009: 180) state that sensitivity to context is also produced through the data analysis process in which “making sense of how the participant is making sense of their experience requires immersive and disciplined attention to the unfolding account of the participant and what can be gleaned from it.”



Thus, in this research, sense-making was achieved through the transparent detailing of the analytic method which includes presentation of the excerpts from the data collection process and the use of quotations from the participants themselves in the findings chapter.

#### **4.7.2 Commitment and Rigour**

Commitment is said to be demonstrated in a number of ways which include the manner that the researcher employs to ensure the participants are comfortable during the interview process and also attending to what the participants are saying. In order to ensure this, participants were fully informed about the conduct of the research. Participants were given the choice to select the time which suited them best. Although there was a difference in time between the researcher and the participants, due to the geographical location when conducting the telephone interviews, the agreed time was based on the participants' own choice so that they would be more comfortable during the interview. The participants were approached in a friendly manner and careful listening during the interview was of central significance.

The rigour and the thoroughness of the research were achieved through the selection of an appropriate and reasonably homogeneous sample, the quality of the interview and the completeness of the analysis. The number of participants involved was in accordance with what Smith et al. (2009) suggest as appropriate when using IPA in doctoral research. Moreover, all participants fulfilled the criterion listed to establish homogeneity. During the interview process, probing questions were asked only when it was appropriate to pick up hints which were perceived as being significant. An interview protocol was prepared as a guideline so that all important questions were covered during the interview. Participants also agreed to, and welcomed, being contacted again if further details needed to be obtained from them. In assessing the issue of the rigour in data analysis quality, it was decided that evidence of interpretative activity is more significant than descriptive analysis. The quality of the interpretative approach can be assessed through the detailed analytic process of IPA discussed here. Smith et al. (2009) also state that the

rigour of the analytic process within IPA can be assessed by whether there is a similar recurrence of themes in more than 50 percent of the participants. This recurrence of themes among participants is presented in the Findings chapter.

### **4.7.3 Transparency and Coherence**

Transparency relates to the clarity of the steps followed in the research process until the completion of the study. As a novice researcher using IPA, in order to gain a deeper overall understanding of IPA and the steps applied in conducting the research, besides reading books and journals on IPA, the researcher participated in a few IPA workshops such as London IPA Training conducted by Dr Kate Hefferon and Dr Elena Gil-Rodriguez; an IPA analysing data workshop conducted by Professor Paul Flowers at Glasgow Caledonian University; an IPA workshop conducted by Dr Kirsty Darwent at the University of Stirling and also attended regular meetings with the Scottish-IPA group at Glasgow Caledonian University. Regular meetings with her supervisors also ensured that this research remained credible through discussion and evaluation at all stages from the beginning until completion. In order to verify the analysis of data, all the steps for data interpretation and formation of themes were discussed during meetings with supervisors and the Scottish-IPA group. Efforts have been made at all stages within the research process to explain matters carefully and clearly to ensure transparency. All chapters have been redrafted many times to ensure a sharper analysis after every redraft process.

### **4.7.4 Impact and Importance**

The measure of validity in this approach to qualitative research is based on whether readers gained something interesting, important or useful from the research. This research aimed to explore the experience of women academics in managing their work-life responsibilities. Although studies on women academics have been widely conducted, nearly all have pertained to western higher education while women academics from the non-western countries are less represented (Luke, 2001). By using IPA in this study, the

women academics were able to describe their experiences without these experiences losing their essential quality. In addition, the lived experiences of these women were brought to the forefront. Although IPA attempts to explore understandings and perceptions of a particular group or people through in-depth analysis of a small number of cases, rather than making general claims, further studies with other groups should gradually complete the picture and lead to more general claims (Smith & Osborn, 2007).

## **4.8 Research Methods**

Diary writing and telephone interviews were chosen to collect data from participants who shared their experiences in managing work-life interface as academics at higher education institutions. The rationale for choosing both methods in work-family research is discussed below.

In qualitative research, the procedures in data collection mainly involve four basic types: observations; interviews; public or personal documents such as diaries and journals; and also audio or visual materials such as photographs, art objects, video-tapes or any forms of sound recordings (Creswell, 2009). In the organisational and management research, the diary method is increasingly gaining attention and recognition (Eerde, Holman, & Totterdell, 2005). Diary, as one type of personal document, may be defined as “any self-revealing record that intentionally or unintentionally yields information regarding the structure, dynamics, and functioning of the author’s mental life” (Allport, 1942: xii). It is, therefore, appropriate to use diary studies in exploring the work-family interface issues because both the work and family domains are dynamic and change daily (Butler, Grzywacz, Bass, & Linney, 2005). Moreover, the development of the participants’ responses and thoughts can be explored over time and not just in the snapshot of a single episode.

#### 4.8.1 Diary Classification

This current research employed the use of diary as a method of data collection. A structure was devised for the diary and a sample of participants was asked to complete the different elements. Allport (1942) classified three groups of diaries: the intimate journal; the memoir; and the log (or inventory). The intimate journal contains “uncensored outpourings, the entries being written discontinuously, either daily or at longer intervals of time” Allport (1942:100). The memoir is an “impersonal diary”. It may be written all in one setting and may tell little about the writer. The log records or lists, for example, the writer’s expenditures, illnesses, reading and other aspects.

In conducting this research, the type of diary used does not fit with the three broad types as classified by Allport (1942) but it was designed based on characteristics to be found in each of these to suit the purpose of the research. Elliot (1997) defined this kind of diary as one of the ‘research-driven diaries’ also known as ‘solicited participant diaries’ or ‘solicited diaries’ (Jacelon & Imperio, 2005). Wiseman, Conteh and Matovu (2005) described the solicited diary as a research tool in which daily lives and experiences are being regularly recorded by the participants in the research at the researcher’s request (Kenten, 2010). The design may be tailored to elicit specific information which is often related to the specific research purposes (Elliot, 1997). The research-driven diary or solicited diary can be used as a method of data collection either for quantitative or qualitative analysis. Quantifiable data is more appropriate with the structured diaries while rich qualitative data can be obtained with less structured or open solicited diaries (Elliot, 1997). According to Zimmerman & Wieder (1977), open solicited diaries are a kind of empowering method because the participants play the role of both observer and informant.

#### 4.8.1.1 Advantages of Using Diary Methods

In order to understand an individual in a society, it is necessary to know the particular individual's mental state in particular societies (Allport, 1942). Allport (1942: 56) pointed out that "acquaintance with particulars is the beginning of all knowledge – scientific or otherwise". Moreover, he stressed that "psychology needs to concern itself with life as it is lived, with significant total-processes of the sort revealed in consecutive and complete life documents" (Allport, 1942: 56). Blumer (cited in Allport, 1942) defined the human document as "an account of individual experience which reveals the individual's actions as a human agent and as a participant in social life" (Allport, 1942: viii). The use of human or personal documents in documenting the particulars of life has improved considerably over the years. One of the many reasons psychologists have recourse to personal documents is to study the "complexities of phenomenal consciousness" (Allport, 1942: 37). Diaries, as one type of personal document, provide the field of psychology with "a powerful set of methods for studying various human phenomena, including personality processes, marital and family interaction, physical symptoms, and mental health" (Bolger, Davis, & Rafaeli, 2003: 582). The essential benefit of diary methods is that they capture the practices and emotional experiences of participants' daily life in their natural and spontaneous context which is not possible using traditional designs (Bolger et al., 2003; Kenten, 2010; Radcliffe, 2013). Furthermore, the use of diaries is a "more ecologically valid method" because the participants are located in their natural environment, unlike other research methods such as in the setting of a researcher-led interview (Farrelly, 2000: 13).

Plummer (cited in Andy, 2006: 36) argued that a "diary is the document of life par excellence, chronicling as it does the immediately contemporaneous flow of public and private events that are significant to the diarist. The word 'contemporary' is crucial here, for each diary entry, unlike life histories is sedimented into a particular moment in time". Thus, diary studies can provide a sense of 'immediacy' which allow current events to be recalled in sufficient detail in order to provide new insights into complex phenomena (Poppleton et al., 2008; Radcliffe, 2013). Moreover, diaries are written "under the

immediate influence of experience, and for this reason is particularly effective in capturing changes of mood” (Allport, 1942: 96).

Memory errors or trying to recall past events can be minimized by using solicited diaries (Kenten, 2010). For instance, a problem could appear when participants ‘self-censor’ or cannot recall accurately when the research is conducted using a traditional method such as interview. Thus, as mentioned by Elliot (1997: 4) “there is a perception at least that diaries are less subject to the vagaries of memory” because they enable the possibility of documenting the present. In addition, Corti (1993) also argued that diaries which record immediate events are more reliable for phenomena which are difficult to be recalled or are easily forgotten rather than using the traditional interview method.

Events which are recorded in a diary over a few days or longer offer chronological aspects that help to highlight important issues either for the participants or those requested by the researcher for the participants to focus on in certain areas (Kenten, 2010). A diary method offers the researcher an understanding of how the participants perceive their surrounding events and provides a link between the public and the private domain. In other words, it provides the researcher with an insight into the participants’ lives (Kenten, 2010). Moreover, the researcher could explore the participants’ thoughts and feelings, and also understand a phenomenon without having to be present with the participants at times or events of interest to the researcher (Farrelly, 2000). Diaries are also appropriate to be used in research that needs to capture sensitive data. Meth (cited in Kenten, 2010) used diaries to explore women’s fear in violent contexts which was quite difficult to encapsulate with other methods. Through this research on women’s fear, it was found that participants were able to present their own experiences and used diaries as a space for reflections.

Diary method is also known as a tool for organisational learning and intervention (Plowman, 2010). This method gives access to the participants’ experiences over time and generates large amounts of information which usually takes hours of interviewing. Furthermore, a qualitative diary also includes discussion as well as writing (Plowman,

2010). Thus, Symon (cited in Plowman, 2010) emphasizes the importance of the qualitative diary method for researching internal processes and practices in organisations. Plowman (2010) conducted a 'diary project' to show how an application of the qualitative diary method reveals the gendered nature of an organisation. Plowman's project was conducted by case-study in which she was addressing wider questions about gender, change, and organisation. The staff and managers of the company were given diaries to record their individual self-reflection about the workplace daily events. Through her diary-project, Plowman revealed what goes on in the unofficial sphere of the organisation which usually remained undiscovered. This shows the benefits of qualitative diaries in uncovering the internal workings of organisations.

#### **4.8.1.2 Diary as a Research Method in Work-Life Interface**

Extensive research has been conducted in the area of work-life balance. However, numerous criticisms have been raised on methodological issues in previous research in that particular area (Radcliffe, 2013). Some of these issues are concerned with "over-reliance on single source self-report survey data", "a lack of triangulation" and "overemphasis on the individual level of analysis" (Radcliffe, 2013: 164). Casper et al. (2007) in their research on these issues found that qualitative methods of data collection had been used infrequently in this area. They suggested that, in order to improve the theory development in this particular area, qualitative methods should be used widely. In addition, while there have been calls for more longitudinal studies, there have also been suggestions that the use of diary studies is a more strategic way forward for work-life research (Frone et al., 1992; Jones & Fletcher, 1996).

However, most diaries used in previous work-life research have been quantitative diaries (Radcliffe, 2013). These diaries are similar to surveys which request participants to complete them at the end of each day. Although quantitative diaries are useful in capturing the dynamic nature of work and family roles, they may overlook other factors that are also important in managing daily work-life balance and may also neglect other valuable insights that participants may have to offer. This is due to the self-report scales

in which each consists of a small number of items that focuses upon certain pre-defined factors only (Radcliffe, 2013).

A study by Poppleton et al. (2008) is one of the few which used qualitative diaries in this research area. Diaries were used to collect data from participants in two different organisations. The purpose was to explore the frequency of nonwork-to-work facilitation, conflict, and spillover in the two organisations. It was also intended to find out how experiences were shaped by the different organisational contexts. Poppleton et al. (2008) gained valuable insights into how nonwork-to-work relationships were shaped by context through the employment of qualitative diaries as the data collection method.

Radcliffe (2013) explores how couples managed their work-life balance on a daily basis by allowing the researcher access to rich episodic data through the use of qualitative diary methods followed by a semi-structured interview. Although the use of the qualitative diary method can entail numerous challenges in exploring the work-life interface, she argues that the benefits outweigh the problems. Radcliffe (2013) suggests that qualitative diaries are extremely useful tools which should be considered by researchers looking to add new and valuable contributions to the existing management literature on work-life balance and especially on work and family roles.

#### **4.8.1.3 Diary Methods Limitations**

Like other methods, diaries also are not without limitations. Keeping a diary requires the participants' time commitment and their willingness to complete the diary as requested by the researcher (Kenten, 2010). However, the primary concern is the issue of fatigue because participants may become tired in recording the entries as the diary period lengthens. This may lead to the participants to becoming thorough in completing their diaries. In addition, there is the question of how long diaries should be maintained by the participants (Wiseman et al., 2005). Farrelly (2000) has recommended that the keeping of a diary for a research project should not exceed one month.



Marino et al. (cited in Farrelly, 2000) identified and summarized five potential shortcomings on the use of diaries as a tool for research method. These are: “(i) time needed to train the diary keepers, (ii) variable response rates, (iii) complexity of data-collection and analysis, (iv) the conditioning and increasing fatigue of the diary-keepers; and (v) limitations specifically related to the topic under study” (Farrelly, 2000: 12). Nevertheless, the limitations do not apply only to diary methods but are evident in other tools used in qualitative data collection.

In order to minimise such potential limitations, a researcher can employ appropriate strategies. For instance, a deficient data set may appear when there are incomplete or unclear diary entries. The problem then is ‘recall error’ if participants are contacted by the researcher to obtain or clarify the entries as they would then be relying on memory (Farrelly, 2000). Thus, effective training for the participants in the diary entry procedure makes it more likely that the diary procedures will be effectively and correctly followed (Farrelly, 2000). Researchers who employ a self-administered questionnaire as a data collection tool also face a similar problem of missing or incorrect data if the questionnaire is not properly designed. Therefore, a diary with a well-designed structure helps researchers avoid or limit the problems of having incomplete or incorrect entries.

For this research, three open questions were included in the diary entry (see Appendix 3). The questions were constructed to generate material that would contribute to an understanding of the work-life experiences of women academics. As discussed in the literature review chapter, work-life interface refers to that of two main domains, the work domain and the family/ life domain. Thus, the questions in the diary entry seek to find out significant events, as perceived by the participants, which happen in their daily life, the interference of work tasks in the family domain or *vice versa*; and their feelings when experiencing these events. The questions were deliberately ‘open’ to balance a small degree of direction with the scope for each participant to decide what was important or significant for her. Thus, the design of the diary entry was premised on the aims of this research and so helped to align the participants’ responses with these aims.

## **4.8.2 Qualitative Interview**

In order to obtain a rich description of the research phenomenon, diary studies are often used in conjunction with other research strategies such as questionnaires, observation, interviews and critical incident analysis. The combination of strategies provides a means of triangulation (Altrichter & Holly, 2005). Corti (1993: 1) states that “where the diary keeping period is followed by an interview asking detailed questions about the diary entries is considered to be one of the most reliable methods of obtaining information”. Although solicited diaries can be used as a single strategy to obtain data from the participants, a greater depth of understanding can be gained by having a follow-up interview (Milligan, Bingley, & Gatrell, 2005). Thus, Rubin and Rubin (cited in Kee & Browning, 2013) explained that “qualitative interviewing is a way of finding out what others feel and think about their worlds. Through qualitative interviews you can understand experiences and reconstruct events in which you did not participate”.

Zimmerman and Wieder (1977) used a diary-interview strategy in which the statements produced by the participants in the diaries were used to generate questions for the subsequent diary interview. According to them, the diary interviews “were a process of expansion, i.e., filling in details that were omitted. In another aspect, they led beyond the particular events recorded, touching on attitude, belief, knowledge, and experience of a more general character” (Zimmerman & Wieder, 1977: 491). In other words, the interview enabled the researchers to clarify and draw out selected diary entries. The diary entries can be employed as ‘a point of departure’ (Altrichter & Holly, 2005) to explore in-depth the topics written by the participants. Thus, the interview becomes a powerful tool to explore what was not recorded in the diaries.

### **4.8.2.1 Qualitative Telephone Interview and its Advantages**

Researchers use qualitative telephone interviews for a variety of reasons in their research. For instance, qualitative telephone interviews may have been planned in the

research design as recurring follow-up activities in a longitudinal study. There are also times when qualitative telephone interviews are required due to the practical constraints such as bad weather that do not allow the researchers to travel. In addition, there are some ethical considerations that support the use of qualitative telephone interviews. For example, a participant with certain mental health conditions may find it difficult to have a face-to-face interview (Irvine, 2010).

Although used less often than face-to-face interviews in qualitative research, telephone interviews offer a range of potential advantages (Novick, 2008). When compared with face-to-face interviews, telephone interviews reduce the need to travel and increase access to geographically distant subjects (Irvine, 2010; Novick, 2008). Telephone interviews also permit more anonymity and privacy for the participants and also decrease social pressure. This may help the participants to feel that the experience is less emotionally intense or intrusive. In addition, participants also may be more relaxed on the telephone and willing to talk freely and disclose intimate information (Irvine, 2010; Novick, 2008). Thus, data collected through qualitative telephone interview have been judged to be “rich, vivid, detailed, and of high quality” (Novick, 2008: 393).

Telephone interviews may also offer physical safety advantages for both researcher and participants (Irvine, 2010; Novick, 2008). Moreover, for researchers, they have the advantage of being able to check their progress through the interview guide without this being noticed by the participants, as well as having the opportunity of taking notes unobtrusively (Irvine, 2010; Novick, 2008).

#### **4.8.2.2 Telephone Interview Limitations**

There are also limitations or disadvantages with the use of telephone interviews. Technically, problems do arise when telephone connection is disconnected unexpectedly, especially when the participant is speaking on a mobile phone. Problems may also include a lack of telephone coverage for some participants (Irvine, 2010; Novick, 2008). Another

limitation on the use of telephone interview may be the restriction on taking breaks during the interview. However, the flow of the interview could be planned earlier with participants being asked at the beginning of the interview whether they are anticipating any interruptions or the need to take a break at any point (Irvine, 2010).

The use of the qualitative telephone interview has traditionally received negative reviews in methodological literature (Irvine, 2010). The main issues highlighted concern the difficulty in achieving rapport and the loss of visual or non-verbal cues. These are considered crucial because they are thought to assist better communication and understanding of meanings conveyed by the participants. However, according to a study by Irvine (2010), based on previous researchers who have published first-hand reflections, the concerns about rapport or loss of meaning are somewhat exaggerated. Moreover, preventive measures could be employed prior to the telephone interviews by establishing rapport in person and using a prepared script to introduce the study (Novick, 2008). In addition, Carr (2001) argues that the few studies which have directly compared between the use of telephone and face-to-face interview conclude that both methods produce data which are comparable in quality.

## **4.9 Participant Recruitment**

The goal in IPA research is to gain insight into a particular shared experience. Therefore, in order to select participants “who ‘represent’ a perspective, rather than a population”, Smith et al. (2009: 49) recommend purposive homogeneous participant selection. Through purposive sampling, the selection of individual participants helps to provide information-rich cases (Patton, 2002). Participants are recruited because they are experts in the explored phenomenon (Reid et al., 2005). Thus, the understanding of the particular phenomenon under investigation can be extended and enhanced. In addition, IPA researchers are advised to have a small sample size so that the detailed similarities and differences of the participants can be examined, and a total of 10 participants is at the higher end of the size recommended in IPA (Smith et al., 2009).

The sample for this research was drawn from academics working in one of the higher education institutions under the supervision of one of the Malaysian government agencies. The agency expected and had given consent for the researcher to approach participants. Initially, the researcher had identified 10 academics who met the criteria necessary and who would be possible participants. The researcher approached the selected academics and outlined the purpose of the research and explained the criteria. The academics were then invited to participate. The academics were informed that they were free to withdraw at any time without giving reasons and their names would not be known to the management of the organization nor those who participate. All 10 academics agreed to participate and necessary documents were given to them. The consent forms were signed by both researcher and participants and a copy was kept by both parties. The overall process included: establishing contact, obtaining informed consent, ensuring confidentiality, agreeing to date and time commitments, and obtaining permission to record and publish data (Moustakas, 1994). The selection criteria applied in this study were:

- Muslim female
- Age between 30 – 45 years
- Has at least one child
- A full time academic
- Has been teaching at least for 3 years
- Is responsible for at least 1 non-academic college activity

Unfortunately, due to personal commitments, two participants had to withdraw from the research during the first phase of the data collection which was the diary writing stage, and another participant moved to another institution during the data collection period. Being in a different environment would affect the homogeneity of the sample and so the participant did not continue which led to the final number of seven participants.

#### **4.9.1 Participant Characteristics**

The selected participants are teaching at one of the higher education colleges in Malaysia. All the participants have been teaching for periods ranging from 10 to 20 years and all have 1-6 children aged 2-16 years. All the participants are married Muslim women of Malay ethnicity, the largest ethnic group in Malaysia. Each participant has been appointed as an advisor at least in one committee/ society besides having the role as an academic advisor or a mentor to their assigned group of students. The number of unit committee/ society assigned to each participant was decided at the college management level. Participants' details are presented in Table 4.1. Pseudonyms are used to protect the identity of the participants and to maintain confidentiality.

Name	Age	Number of children	Length of service	Committee / Society Involved
Iman	40	2	12 years	2 college unit committee Academic advisor
Layla	45	1	20 years	3 college unit committee Academic advisor
Farah	44	2	17 years	2 college unit committee Academic advisor
Zahra	45	4	17 years	1 college unit advisor Academic advisor
Maria	36	3	10 years	4 college unit committee Academic advisor
Aisha	41	2	10 years	3 college unit committee Academic advisor
Salma	36	6	12 years	2 college unit committee 1 college unit advisor Academic advisor

Table 4.1 Participants' characteristics

#### 4.10 Data Collection

This research involved telephone interviews with each participant as the primary data source to obtain the participants' own accounts of their work-life interface experiences. Prior to the telephone interviews, the participants contributed two-week diary entries recording their daily experiences as they fulfilled a range of roles at home and at work which gave the researcher a brief understanding of their daily work-life activities.

#### **4.10.1 Diary Writing Procedure**

The diary consists of two parts; i) participant general information and, ii) a two-week diary entry. The participant completed both parts. To complete the diary entry, a template of each day entry which comprised three open questions was given (see Appendix 3). An email was sent to each participant allowing them to choose whether to complete the diary online or writing on hard copy. All participants selected to complete the diary online because they felt it would be safer to keep. As requested by participants, a reminder to complete the diary was sent every evening to the participants through the *WhatsApp* application. After two weeks, the diary entry was returned online to the researcher to be analysed. The instruction and questions in the diary template were given in both English and Malay (the participants' first language). In order to ensure the questions were clearly understood by the participants, the diary template had been given previously to one of the academics from the same institution to be completed as a pilot test. After a thorough discussion with this academic, several amendments had been made to restructure the questions in Malay in order to ensure clarity among participants.

#### **4.10.2 Telephone Interview Procedure**

The aim of the telephone interview was to get in-depth details of the participants' work-life experiences. All questions were thoughtfully worded to elicit rich data (see Appendix 4). The interview protocol was developed to ensure that issues of work-life interface that need to be discovered were thoroughly explored with each participant. The semi-structured interview protocols are a systematic but flexible approach to interviewing. This is to allow the researcher to probe and explore the subject matter when necessary (Patton, 2002). Moreover, semi-structured interviews are commonly used in IPA as participants are able to provide rich data through the combination of the researcher's guidance and a more open-ended framework (Eatough & Smith, 2008).



Each interview was planned to last one hour which is considered as an appropriate length time for a semi-structured interview (Smith et al., 2009). With the consent of the participant, each interview was tape recorded in order to produce a verbatim account of the interview for data analysis. Prior to the interviews being conducted, each participant was briefed on what could be expected within the interview. The participants had also been given in advance a written summary of the scope of the research as part of the consent gathering process. The right to withdraw was also made clear to each participant through the consent letter (see Appendix 1).

An interview was firstly conducted with the academic who completed the pilot study of the diary writing. This allows the research questions to be tested and for the researcher to practice the interview technique to ensure it was within an IPA framework. Conducting the pilot study in context benefited the researcher in shaping the approach for the following interviews. Based on the pilot interview, the process was discussed with this academic to identify any refinements or changes that needed to be made. Through the discussion and researcher's own reflection, the approach was considered as being in keeping with the IPA method and questions posed related to the aims of the research. The interviews were then conducted with all participants and only one interview was conducted in a day. Although some participants were fluent in English, they were given the choice to discuss in the language which was more comfortable to them. Using the language which was comfortable for them would allow them to express their views, especially on a sensitive topic such as their negative emotional experiences when dealing with leadership issues, more easily and freely. Thus, Malay and a mix of English were used during most of the discussions by the participants.

#### **4.11 Data Analysis**

Two forms of analysis were carried out. The first was on the qualitative research diaries followed by the telephone interview.

#### 4.11.1 Analysis of Qualitative Research Diaries

Seven diaries were analysed. The process included open coding and creating categories. This was done by reading the text several times and creating tentative labels while reading. Notes and headings were written in the text while reading them. The text was read and re-read several times. Simultaneously, necessary headings were written down in the margins to describe all aspects of the content. In the next step, the headings were transferred from the margins on to coding sheets using Microsoft Excel. The codes were transferred into a table focusing on three main areas which were defined by the structure of the diaries. A column for the researcher's own reflection was included in each entry. The three main categories were 1) significant events, 2) interference and 3) emotions. A summary of a total number of significant events related to work and personal tasks, types of interference and emotions, was produced after each analysis (see Table 5.1 in Chapter 5). An example of the analysis from a participant's diary is given in Table 4.2.

Analysis of the diary was conducted looking at each participant's diary entries. The length of the diary differed between participants. A few participants stated that, due to their work-life commitments, they could only provide the main points or significant events without elaborating on them. Based on the reflection of each participant's diary, the descriptive profile of the participant from part 1 of the diary and through the researcher's own knowledge and experience as the participants' past colleague, a *pen portrait* of each participant was developed to illustrate the participants' experiences and feelings in a lively manner (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000). These pen portraits were introduced to provide a better understanding of the context of each participant and their work-life experiences in their two-week diary writing (see Chapter Findings).

Day	Significant events	Interference	Emotions	Reflection:
1	<p>i) Death in the family (unde)</p> <p>ii) Called her department leader to request for a leave</p>	<p>i) Receiving call from her cousin while at college (family - work)</p> <p>ii) Went to the hospital during office hours (family - work)</p> <p>iii) Marking test papers at home (work - family)</p>	Exhaustive, Sad	A close-knit culture: <i>'a shock in the family'</i> (1;23). She gained support from her department leader to request a leave <i>'called my HOD. Inform her the news'</i> (1;26). Marking papers at home is a common task among teachers; <i>'very popular with teachers'</i> (2; 38). Both types of interference occur in the day.
2	<p>i) Both she and her husband were on emergency leave</p> <p>ii) Called colleagues to pick up messages for her</p> <p>iii) Sent children to school and picked them up</p> <p>iv) Preparing working clothes for the following day</p>	i) Attending burial (family - work)	Worried for not finish marking the papers; <i>'bothers me a lot'</i> (3;83)	She is being responsible managing the house chores; <i>'preparing the working clothes'</i> (3;79) and the children; <i>'rush to school to send my kids...fetch the kids'</i> (2;64, 3;72) despite the husband is also on leave. She sought support from her colleagues for her work tasks.

Day	Significant events	Interference	Emotions	Reflection:
3	i) Contact with classes	Receiving text messages concerning assignments from students at night (work - family)	Exhaustive; <i>'too tired...today'</i> (4;126)  Feeling successful; <i>'feel quite accomplished today'</i> (5;134). <i>'students are awesome'</i> (3;98),  Satisfaction; <i>'retired happy'</i> (5;144)	Reflects the traditional perception of a woman as being responsible for the well- being of the family. Despite her tiring day at the college: <i>'hectic'</i> (3;91), she still managed the home and family; <i>'cook dinner tonight'</i> (5;140); <i>'[second child] not having tantrum'</i> (5;137); <i>'[first child] manage to [completing his task]'</i> (5;138).

Table 4.2 Example of participant's diary analysis

#### 4.11.2 Analysis of Telephone Interviews

The data analysis started with the downloading of the participants' interviews and discussions onto the computer as digital audio files. While listening to the audio data, the interviews were fully transcribed into Microsoft Word files to provide a verbatim account of the exchange. During the transcription, the names of all people involved or being mentioned, colleges or workplaces and locations, were made anonymous. Any information which was considered as possibly leading to the identification of the participant was removed from the text. This was to ensure that the identity of the research participants cannot be revealed.

According to Smith (2008: 66), "the assumption in IPA is that the analyst is interested in learning something about the respondent's psychological world". The analysis does not necessarily seek to count the frequency of the topics but to comprehend the story and the meaning of the conversation (Smith, 2008). In other words, meaning is crucial in IPA and not frequency. Thus, it is significant according to Smith (2008: 66):

[...] to learn about their mental and social world, those meanings are not transparently available – they must be obtained through a sustained engagement with the text and a process of interpretation

There is a wide range of approaches within IPA from the descriptive to the interpretive and from the particular to the shared (Smith et al., 2009). The IPA idiographic approach suggests moving from the detailed analysis of the first single case on to the analysis of the next case and so on. Smith et al. (2009) however recommend beginning the analysis of the item which is considered the most engaging, detailed and complex. After listening to the recordings several times, transcribing and reading the transcripts, the analysis of the interview with participant Farah was selected for the first analysis because it was the most engaging, compared to the others.

The interviews were transcribed into Microsoft Word using line numbers in the left margin. Using an A3 size sketchpad booklet, the transcripts were pasted on the left side of each page of the booklet so that there would be a wider space on the right column to write the initial comments (see Figure 4.1). Each transcription was analysed completely before continuing to the second transcription in another booklet. The step-by-step analytical process described by Smith et al. (2009: 82) was adopted in this research because it provides clear stages of analysis and interpretation which is preferable for a novice researcher.

### **Step 1: Reading and re-reading**

This step involved the researcher immersing herself in the data through listening to and transcribing each individual script. Every interview recording was listened to several times before the process of transcribing began. The recording was listened to attentively during the transcribing process in order to check for its accuracy and to get a 'feel for the data' (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). This enabled the researcher to imagine the participant's voice, an aspect that would support a more complete analysis (Smith et al., 2009). The transcripts were then re-read many times. According to Conrad (1987), it is possible to immerse oneself in the original data and gain the crucial 'insider's perspective' by reading and re-reading the transcripts and listening to the recordings. In addition, this approach of reading and re-reading prevents the researcher from summarising the data prematurely and making quick conclusions. Additionally, initial thoughts about the transcripts as a 'whole' (Van Manen, 1990) were recorded because part of the process of being transparent and reflexive is about understanding what is brought to the analysis. This is where Husserl's 'essence' begins and having these initial thoughts about the data also relates to Gadamer's hermeneutic circle ('parts' and 'whole'). This process, therefore, ensured that first ideas, impressions, and possible connections were not lost and the focus could remain with the data.

## **Step 2: Initial noting**

The second step was initial noting, which was the most time-consuming step. It involved a detailed examination of semantic content and language use on an exploratory level after the researcher was familiar with the 'whole' transcript data. A very close line-by-line analysis was conducted which summarised and captured the essence of what was being said by the participant and everything of interest was noted. This process helps to "identify specific ways by which the participant talks about, understands and thinks about an issue" (Smith et al., 2009: 83) by examining the 'whole' via the constituent 'part'. To accomplish this, initial comments were added on the right-hand margin. This initial coding comprised three stages. Descriptive comments summarized the main issues or what had been said by the participants. Linguistic comments, in the second stage, focused on the specific use of language. During this stage, it is also advisable to pay attention to the meaning and significance of metaphor and imagery. The third level was for conceptual comments which focused on engaging at a more conceptual level. This stage is interpretative in nature and often takes an interrogative form.

Following the suggestion by Smith et al., (2009), three different colours were used to distinguish these three types of comments. Red was used when writing the descriptive comments, black for linguistic and blue for conceptual. In order to maintain the meaning of the discussions, the transcripts were not translated into English. The analysis was conducted and comments were written in English based on the Malay transcripts. The analysis was done using the Malay transcripts because this stage involved analysing the semantic content and language use. Thus, to avoid potential distortion of meaning, it was found more appropriate to analyse directly from the Malay because a lot of words or phrases in Malay do not have direct translation in English. Furthermore, Reiss and Vermeer (as cited in Gutt, 1989; 155) argued that "since text are parts of larger wholes, that is of culture and language, their transfer into other cultures and languages will change the texts themselves". Hence, to avoid losing the meaning of the data, as the researcher shares the same culture with the participants, she found that interpreting directly from the Malay transcript was the most appropriate approach in order to stay as

close as possible to the rich accounts of the participants. Figure 4.1 shows an example of the extract from one of the participant's transcripts which was analysed manually.

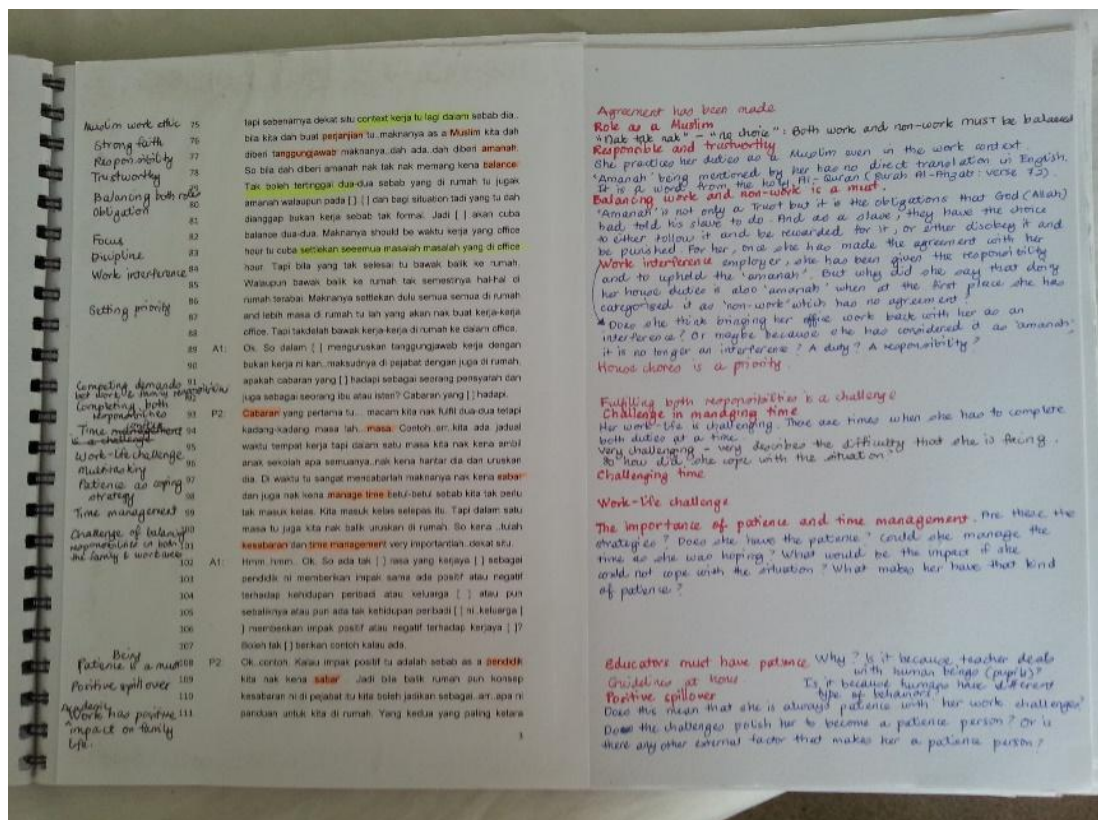


Figure 4.1 Example of participant's analysis sheet

In addition, the central parts of the interviews which were used as direct quotes in this thesis were then translated into English. According to Gutt (1989: 252), “direct translation cannot be understood in terms of resemblance in actual language properties, for the simple reason that languages differ in their linguistic properties”. Thus, it is necessary to find the correct English tone when translating the transcripts (Kelly, 1994). However, a lot of words and phrases in Malays do not have a direct translation in English. In order to overcome this situation, the researcher tried to be authentic in the translation process by transferring the meaning in the accounts in a way that made them understandable for English speaking readers.

Table 4.3 gives an example of descriptive comments selected from one section of the interview transcript with the participant Farah. The extract taken from the original sheet



of the analysis was transferred into a table format using Microsoft Excel in order to give a clear presentation of this Stage 2 data analysis. It illustrates how descriptive, linguistic and conceptual comments were employed. Therefore, in this electronic version of data analysis, the key used to differentiate the exploratory coding is:

- Underlined text is used for descriptive comments
- Italic text is used for linguistic comments
- Bold text is used for conceptual comments

However, to ensure the anonymity of the participant, any comments which would enable a direct reference to location were removed. The insertion of ellipsis ([...]) within the comments was used to protect the identity of the participant or organisation. The original document will be made available only if it is required for verification of authenticity or clarification of the context of quotations.

As Table 4.3 shows, Farah was asked to describe her experience when she was having difficulties managing her work-life responsibilities and how the role of the college leader or her colleagues in giving assistance to her during that time shaped or influenced her professional thoughts and behaviour. In her reply, Farah commented on how a leader should understand the staff before implementing any policy. In the descriptive comment, I had summarised what Farah had said as: Leader should understand employees' problems. From this point, I moved towards processing interpretative understanding by the language use of *'tapi' (translated as 'but' in English)*. The use of *'but'* in this context demonstrates Farah' disagreement that not all policies should be implemented although stated in the college rules and regulations. This led me to consider further interpretation by engaging at a more conceptual level which often took interrogative form. As such, making a possible link between the descriptive comment and the language use, I came to a question of: **Is there a problem with the new leader?**

By first emphasizing the leader's role, the interpretation of Farah's dissatisfaction with the way policies were implemented, and also the researcher's understanding about the presence of a new college leader from the interview, contributed to the formation of the

question. Overall, at this particular stage when writing the exploratory comments, the descriptive comments remained close to what the participants said by summarising or paraphrasing the text. The linguistic comments involved not only in looking at the language or metaphor use but also the repetition and words that trigger emotions. Finally, the conceptual level included more of the reactions and thoughts of the researcher and what she felt was being said by the participants.

Original Transcript	Exploratory comments (descriptive, <u>linguistic</u> & conceptual)
<p>I: Dari segi bantuan atau pun peranan rakan-rakan atau pun pihak pengurusan semasa [ ] ada masalah tersebut bagaimana peranan tersebut mempengaruhi cara pemikiran dan tindak tanduk profesional [ ] di tempat kerja?</p> <p>R: Pada [ ] sebagai seorang policy maker atau pentadbir, dia perlu menyesuaikan policy yang dia nak implement dengan keadaan staf dia. Mungkin ada polisi-polisi yang ditentukan memang arr by book lah. Mengikut seperti di dalam buku. Tapi ada masa- masa polisi tersebut boleh err boleh difleksibelkan, boleh diubah suai mengikut kesesuaian arr apa ni..masalah kesesuaian staf pada masa tersebut. Sebab kalau sebagai manusialah, kita kadang memang kita sukakan ketegasan dan juga err apa ni err undang-undang. Kena ada peraturan semua-semua tu tapi bila peraturan tu sampai mengongkong.. ..mengongkong pihak staf, peraturan yang pentadbir nak</p>	<p><u>Leader should consider employee's problems</u></p> <p><i>Tapi (But): Emphasizing that not all time policies are relevant, depends on the situation</i></p> <p><b>Is there a problem with the new leader?</b></p> <p><i>mengongkong' – no freedom, being controlled</i></p> <p><u>Staff are negatively affected with the new rules</u></p> <p><i>'mengganggu', 'menipu' : use of negative verbs</i></p>

jalankan tu mengganggu staf, jadi dia akan jadi satu yang errr tidak memotivasikan pekerja even pekerja mungkin akan lebih stress. Dan dia menggalakkan arrr staf untuk menipu. Menipu maksudnya arr macam contohnya (...) dia pun dah berkorban (...). Tapi ada staf yang berbeza-beza. Dia punya situasi dia. (...). Jadi benda tu tak..tak puas hati. Dan sampai boleh menyebabkan staf ni jadi kreatif tu kata nak menipu tu (...).Haa jadi tak.. suasana tu jadi tak sihat. Daripada dia seorang pekerja lah yang jujur membentuk dia untuk menipu. Jadi, tu lah, polisi tu tidak digunakan dengan sesuai. Kita perlu bertolak ansur di beberapa keadaan sebab staf tu pun dah arr ada beberapa staf yang betul-betul dah bertungkus-lumus (...),jadi why not arr bagilah macam reward walau pun reward tu bukan dalam bentuk duit ke apa kan (...).Jadi benda-benda macam tu, polisi-polisi yang macam itulah yang menyebabkan staf-staf bawahan ni jadi ..dia rasa demotivate sebab tindakan tu agak drastic. Kalau dulu, mungkin pihak kitorang sendiri arr selama ni dah

*reflecting how academics are negatively affected*

### **Poor leadership?**

#### **Who is 'dia'? New leader? New policies?**

menggalakkan (encourage): encouraging in a negative way

#### Work-life situation among people varies

*berkorban (sacrifice): The staff has given the best in order to be considered by the leader*

#### **Does this mean the management is ignorant about staff personal problems?**

*kreatif: being creative for negative purpose*

#### **Does this mean leader's decision influence / shape the academics' behaviour?**

#### **Does leader's decision-making matter?**

Academics' efforts are not being appreciated

#### **Does reward / appreciation matter?**

terlalu rehat. Rehat in a way in the sense that macam... macam apa..manjakan. Bukanlah manja tapi dah terlalu fleksibel sangat dengan pentadbiran yang lama, jadi bila pentadbiran baru yang secara drastic macam ni, dia jadi semua terkejut. Jadi.. ibarat macam orang dah lama tak bersukan tetiba suruh lari 100 meter sprint tu. Jadi dia terkejut. Jadi dia lagi serik. Serik untuk bekerjalah sebab dia dah ... dia dah terluka hati dia sebab dengan apa arrr kesungguhan dia buat itu buat ini, end up dia dapat macam tu. Jadi benda tu mungkin kena dekat beberapa orang tapi bila.. ye lah nature manusia bila dia tak puas hati, nak tak nak ermm dan memberi kesan yang mendalam kepada dia,

Too long being flexible

*terlalu rehat: comfortable with previous leadership*

Difference of leadership style between two leaders

*use of metaphor "macam..100 meter sprint" reflects*

*difficulty in managing change/ leaving the comfort*

zone

*"terkejut", "serik": the academics' negative*

*experience*

*"terluka hati", "kesan yang mendalam": emotionally*

*hurt and will leave deep impact towards the staff*

**Should the policy be revised or have the academics been too long in their comfort zone?**

**Or does this reflect an ineffective leadership?**

Table 4.3 Examples of exploratory comments presented in an electronic version

### **Step 3: Developing emergent themes**

This step involved a higher level of abstraction. The notes which were previously written on the right-hand margin now formed the starting point for the interpretation which was about creating the emergent themes. At this stage, the amount of data and the volume of details were reduced, while complexity was maintained. Smith et al. (2009: 92) suggested mapping interrelationships, patterns and connections between exploratory comments in which, “the main task in turning notes into themes involves an attempt to produce a concise and pithy statement of what was important in the various comments attached to a piece of transcript”. Thus, if comprehensive exploratory commenting had been conducted systematically, the link between the participant’s original comments, the researcher’s exploratory notes, and the emergent themes would be maintained.

This process of re-organization of data, however, breaks up the narrative flow of the interview into discrete chunks or parts and so may cause discomfort to the researcher. The researcher might feel that the participant’s experiences have become fragmented. Smith et al. (2009: 91) stated that, during this level of interpretation, “the original whole of the interview becomes a set of parts as you conduct your analysis, but these then come together in another new whole at the end of the analysis in the write-up”. At this stage, the theme labels do not have to be definitive as these may well change later. The main task was to transform the notes into specific themes and phrases, capturing what was crucial at that particular point in the text.

The emergent themes were documented in the left-hand column. During this stage, short phrases were created which the researcher considered captured the essence of the notes that had been produced. Table 4.4 presents the emergent themes from Farah’s transcript. The first emergent theme, ‘Dissatisfaction with leadership style’, illustrates the initial exploratory notes concerning Farah’s comment about leader and policy implementation. At this stage, however, the emergent themes were tentative rather than firm labels. Analysing in this way, is an iterative process with increasingly deeper levels of interpretation at the work progresses (Smith et al., 2009).

Emergent Themes	Original Transcript	Exploratory comments (descriptive, <u>linguistic</u> & conceptual)
Dissatisfaction with leadership style	<p>I: Dari segi bantuan atau pun peranan rakan-rakan atau pun pihak pengurusan semasa [ ] ada masalah tersebut bagaimana peranan tersebut mempengaruhi cara pemikiran dan tindak tanduk profesional [ ] di tempat kerja?</p> <p>R: Pada [ ] sebagai seorang policy maker atau pentadbir, dia perlu menyesuaikan policy yang dia nak implement dengan keadaan staf dia. Mungkin ada polisi-polisi yang ditentukan memang arr by book lah. Mengikut seperti di dalam buku. Tapi ada masa- masa polisi tersebut boleh err boleh difleksibelkan, boleh diubah suai mengikut kesesuaian arr apa ni..masalah kesesuaian staf pada masa tersebut. Sebab kalau sebagai manusialah, kita kadang memang kita sukakan ketegasan dan juga err apa ni err undang-undang. Kena ada peraturan semua-semua tu tapi bila peraturan tu sampai mengongkong..</p>	<p><u>Leader should consider employee's problems</u></p> <p><i>Tapi (But): Emphasizing that not all time policies are relevant, depends on the situation</i></p> <p><b>Is there a problem with the new leader?</b></p> <p><i>mengongkong' – no freedom, being controlled</i></p> <p><u>Staff are negatively affected with the new rules</u></p>

<p>Loss of motivation</p> <p>Negative behaviour</p> <p>Family matters were not taken into consideration</p> <p>Unhealthy work culture</p> <p>Lack of understanding</p>	<p>..menggongkong pihak staf, peraturan yang pentadbir nak jalankan tu mengganggu staf, jadi dia akan jadi satu yang errr tidak memotivasikan pekerja even pekerja mungkin akan lebih stress. Dan dia menggalakkan arrr staf untuk menipu. Menipu maksudnya arr macam contohnya (...) dia pun dah berkorban (...).</p> <p>Tapi ada staf yang berbeza-beza. Dia punya situasi dia. (...).</p> <p>Jadi benda tu tak..tak puas hati. Dan sampai boleh menyebabkan staf ni jadi kreatif tu kata nak menipu tu (...).Haa jadi tak..</p> <p>suasana tu jadi tak sihat. Daripada dia seorang pekerja lah yang jujur membentuk dia untuk menipu. Jadi, tu lah, polisi tu tidak digunakan dengan sesuai. Kita perlu bertolak ansur di</p>	<p><i>'mengganggu', 'menipu' : use of negative verbs reflecting how academics are negatively affected</i></p> <p><b>Poor leadership?</b></p> <p><b>Who is 'dia'? New leader? New policies?</b></p> <p>menggalakkan (encourage): encouraging in a negative way</p> <p><u>Work-life situation among people varies</u></p> <p><i>berkorban (sacrifice): The staff has given the best in order to be considered by the leader</i></p> <p><b>Does this mean the management is ignorant about the staff personal problems?</b></p>
<p>No appreciation</p>	<p>beberapa keadaan sebab staf tu pun dah arr ada beberapa staf yang betul-betul dah bertungkus-lumus (...),jadi why not arr bagilah macam reward walau pun reward tu bukan dalam bentuk duit ke apa kan (...).Jadi benda-benda macam tu, polisi-polisi yang macam tulah yang menyebabkan staf-staf bawahan ni jadi ..dia rasa demotivate sebab tindakan tu agak drastic.</p>	<p><i>kreatif: being creative for negative purpose</i></p> <p><b>Does this mean leader's decisions influence / shape the academics' behaviour?</b></p> <p><b>Does leader's decision-making matter?</b></p> <p><u>Academics' efforts are not being appreciated</u></p> <p><b>Does reward / appreciation matter?</b></p>



<p>Feeling demotivated with leader's decision</p>	<p>Kalau dulu, mungkin pihak kitorang sendiri arr selama ni dah terlalu rehat. Rehat in a way in the sense that macam... macam apa..manjakan. Bukanlah manja tapi dah terlalu fleksibel sangat dengan pentadbiran yang lama, jadi bila pentadbiran baru yang secara drastic macam ni, dia jadi semua terkejut. Jadi.. ibarat macam orang dah lama tak bersukan tiba tiba suruh lari 100 meter sprint tu. Jadi dia terkejut. Jadi dia lagi serik. Serik untuk</p>	<p><u>Too long being flexible</u> <i>terlalu rehat: comfortable with previous leadership</i> <u>Difference of leadership style between two leaders</u> <i>use of metaphor "macam..100 meter sprint" reflects difficulty in managing change/ leaving the comfort</i></p>
<p>Emotionally hurt</p>	<p>bekerjalah sebab dia dah ... dia dah terluka hati dia sebab dengan apa arrr kesungguhan dia buat itu buat ini, end up dia dapat macam tu. Jadi benda tu mungkin kena dekat beberapa orang tapi bila.. ye lah nature manusia bila dia tak puas hati, nak tak nak ermm dan memberi kesan yang mendalam kepada dia,</p>	<p><u>Zone</u> <i>"terkejut", "serik": the academics' negative Experience</i> <i>"terluka hati", "kesan yang mendalam": emotionally hurt and will leave deep impact towards the staff</i> <b>Should the policy be revised or have the academics been too long in their comfort zone?</b> <b>Or does this reflect an ineffective leadership?</b></p>

Table 4.4 Example of emerging themes

It was decided that at this stage to make these themes tentative. After the transcripts were read and re-read, this would allow sufficient time between readings to absorb and reflect on more further related and relevant themes. Moreover, this process of identifying some provisional themes helped to ensure the themes represent the participants' voice and experiences.

#### **Step 4: Searching for connections across emergent themes**

The next step involved looking for connections across themes to produce master themes that would describe a cluster of themes. This is a process of mapping of how the themes fit together. This was fairly a difficult task because of the need to identify the relevant themes which had been established in a chronological order on the left-hand margin. The process demands moving backwards and forwards between the list of themes. As this process developed, one idea was connected to another. An interpretative summary was also written to help look for themes that seemed to be emerging and to check the interpretation within the grouping of themes. This task was completed as a paper-pen exercise rather than utilising a qualitative data analysis software package.

Using paper and pen enabled the researcher to engage with the data at a deeper level and this facilitated a richer analysis of the data. Furthermore, Clarke (2009) recommended that manual coding can facilitate the development of intimacy with the data. All emergent themes were first recorded chronologically into a table format using Microsoft Excel, including the page and line numbers as well as the keywords. The themes were then printed and cut up so that each was set out on a separate piece of paper. Working on a large area, these themes were moved around to match a number of themes together in a possible group (see Figure 4.2).



Figure 4.2 Process of connecting themes for participant Farah

Smith et al. (2009) suggested that an analyst should be innovative in looking for patterns and connections across themes. One form of identifying emergent themes, as suggested by Smith et al. (2009), was employed in searching for the themes in this study, that of 'abstraction'. For example, from Farah's interview extract in Table 4.4, there was a series of emergent themes around the impact of leadership style such as 'loss of motivation', 'negative behaviour', 'demotivated', and 'emotionally hurt'. These themes, together with few other similar themes from other pages of the transcript, were clustered in a group under a super ordinate theme. This superordinate theme was labelled as 'Negative impact under new leadership'.

Another example of process employed in identifying a super ordinate theme is the 'subsumption' process (Smith et al., 2009). One theme in the cluster acquires a superordinate status to bring together a series of related themes. For example, in the analysis of Farah's transcript, 'Negative work culture' became the higher level superordinate theme for a collection of themes related to the adverse work environment such as the attitude of the staff and the less preferred leadership style. Table 4.5 presents part of the master table of themes from Farah's transcript (see Appendix 6 for a complete table). Following on from this table, a summary table was then produced. Overall, this was a time-consuming process because there were instances when it was difficult to decide in which group the themes should be included. The process involved categorising and re-categorising of themes in an explicitly interpretative process in order to reflect both the commonalities and differences in the data from the individual transcripts.

<b>Emergent themes</b>	<b>Page/ Line</b>	<b>Keywords</b>
<i>Negative work culture</i>		
Lack of cooperation from other staff	2; 68-69	<i>no cooperation</i>
Disturbed by the new generation of academics' attitude	12; 426-427	<i>no commitment</i>
New generation of academics have negative work behaviour	13;436-437	<i>arrogant</i>
A drastic change of leadership style results in negative work environment	19; 649-653	<i>stress, fear</i>
One way communication between management and academics affects academic work performance	19; 661-662	<i>relationship</i>
Power and rank create gap between leader and academics	19; 663-666	<i>too formal</i>
<i>Negative impact under new leadership</i>		
Extra workload affects her in managing home	3; 98-102	<i>tired at home</i>
Pressure from management in completing tasks	2; 68	<i>pressured</i>
Pressured by work affects family	2; 70-74	<i>unable to control</i>
Work overload affects academic personal well-being (stress)	4; 113-116	<i>stressed</i>
New working hours give negative impact in work-life management	5; 172-180	<i>incomplete tasks</i>
<i>Man is the breadwinner, woman is the homemaker</i>		
Managing home and family tasks are both duties for a woman	1; 18-26	<i>tasks</i>
Managing family has less challenge than work	3; 80-81	<i>not that great</i>
Woman is responsible for children's upbringing	3; 102-108	<i>homework</i>
Woman is a homemaker	3; 102-112	<i>manage home</i>
<i>Challenges in work-life</i>		
Difficulty in managing multiple roles at early career	1; 34-38	<i>balancing both</i>

<b>Emergent themes</b>	<b>Page/ Line</b>	<b>Keywords</b>
Bringing up small children influence work-life management	1; 35-37	<i>very small</i>
Managing work-life in early career involves lots of sacrifices to the family	2; 38-42	<i>a sacrifice</i>
Time management is a challenge at early career	2; 38-41	<i>dividing time</i>
Completing tasks that requires new skills and knowledge is a challenge	2; 61-64	<i>takes my time</i>
<i>Priority of work in non-western culture</i>		
Doing office work at home is a routine not an interference	6; 185-187	<i>usually at night</i>
Religious belief that work is a responsibility that needs to be performed	14; 482-484	<i>common belief</i>
<i>Coping</i>		
Reduced workload promotes better work-life management	2; 47-51	<i>time for family</i>
Grown-up children support work-life management	3; 81-82	<i>less challenge</i>
Spouse support contributes to positive work-life management	3; 83	<i>Understanding</i>
Applying soft skills from work to home	3; 92-97	<i>apply at home</i>
Support and trust received from understanding spouse	4; 120-124	<i>give support</i>
Prioritizing work tasks according to its urgency as coping strategy	5; 151-152	<i>follow due date</i>

Table 4.5 Superordinate themes and themes for Farah

#### **Step 5: Moving to the next case**

The next step involved moving on to the next case and so focused on a new transcript. Following the idiographic principles of IPA, steps 1 to 4 were repeated for each individual account. It was crucial at this point, however, to set aside ideas which emerged from the analysis of the first transcript as far as possible in order to do justice to the individuality of each case and to accord with IPA's idiographic commitment (Smith et al., 2009). In this

research, only one transcript was analysed in any one day to allow space to view each transcript in its own right and to reflect on this text.

#### **Step 6: Looking for patterns across cases**

This final step involved looking for patterns across cases by comparing the summary tables for each participant. This required further reflection and analysis. Table 4.6 shows the summary table of themes for all participants. This process of looking for cross-case patterns involved comparing individual cases to find commonalities and sometimes necessitated some reconfiguring and relabelling of themes. While undertaking this reconfiguring, the notes from the initial coding of each participant's material and the summary background for each participant, produced from the diary, were referred to in order to ensure that the themes stayed in touch with each participant. Some of the original themes were brought together while other sub-themes were expanded to become a new theme. For example, in Table 4.6, the themes 'Dissatisfaction with leadership style' (Iman), 'Leadership style' (Layla), 'Negative impact under new leadership' (Farah), 'Preferable leadership' (Zahra), 'Differences in leadership style' (Maria), 'Dissatisfaction with leadership style' (Aisha) and 'Impact of leadership on work-life management' (Salma) were grouped together with the superordinate theme, that of 'Impact of leadership style in work-life interface'.

Another example is the sub-theme of 'integration' from the theme 'support system' (Iman), 'segregation' from the theme 'coping' (Layla), 'segregation' from the theme 'coping' (Zahra), 'segregation' from the theme 'coping' (Maria) and the theme 'segregation between work and life' (Salma) which were then developed into a new superordinate theme, 'Managing Identity'. This process of moving themes and forming new themes continued until the most common recurring themes which had connections across cases could be identified. After an overall structure emerged, master tables were created to illustrate patterns across cases. The transcribed extracted from each participant were included to support each of the emerging themes.

This final process of analysis in developing themes completed the hermeneutic circle, as recommended by Smith et al. (2009). The analysis of the 'whole' has led to the understanding of the 'part'; that is the individual participant's experience. Thus, IPA enables the privileging of the voices and the words of these under-researched non-western women academics who might otherwise be silenced. This was achieved by drawing on their understandings of their lived experiences and using the words they used to describe their experiences.

<b>Iman</b>	<b>Layla</b>	<b>Farah</b>	<b>Zahra</b>	<b>Maria</b>	<b>Aisha</b>	<b>Salma</b>
Work comes first	Work-life challenges	Challenges in work-life	Autocratic leadership	Resistance to change	Women bear the responsibilities of the family's well-being	Work-life integration (pros & cons)
Satisfaction in teaching	Leadership style	Priority of work in non-western culture	Preferable leadership	High organizational commitment	Challenges	Role of work in collectivist culture
Challenges	Coping (Colleagues, Family, Segregation, Time management, Religion)	Negative work culture	Work-life challenge	Differences in leadership style	Teaching satisfaction	Role of a mother/wife
Dissatisfaction with leadership style	Work is a worship	Man is the breadwinner, woman is the homemaker	Coping (religion, family, segregation)	Influence of religion	Dissatisfaction with leadership style	Segregation between work and family life
Woman as a homemaker (integration)	Work life satisfaction	Coping (Family, Colleagues, religion, working hours)	Resistance to change	Coping (segregation, family)	Support systems (Family, Colleagues, D/leader, Culture, Religion)	Sources of support (colleagues, family, religion)
Support systems (Family, colleagues, religion, culture)		Negative impact under new leadership		Gender role expectation / Collectivist culture		Impact of leadership on work-life management
Coping strategies (experience & planning)				Work-life challenge		
				Well-being & Relationship		

Table 4.6 Summary table of themes for all participants



## **4.12 Transferability of Research Findings**

The intention of this research was to develop a greater understanding of the work-life experiences of Malaysian women academics. Whilst it is impossible for these findings to be universally transferable, they contribute to the identification and shaping of future research including research that uses quantitative methods which should increase generalisability. Through the relevant background information of the research, the transparent detailing of the analytic method employed and the findings, future researchers should have a clear insight into the degree of transferability from this present research and this should help shed light on further research questions (Malterud, 2001).

## **4.13 Chapter Summary**

This chapter has outlined the methodology that guides the research. It has explained every aspect of the research design including the research paradigm, the selection of IPA as the research methodology and the strengths and limitations of this research approach. The chapter has also considered methods of data collection and data analysis used in the research along with the ethical considerations and the issues of quality and validity in qualitative research. The use of IPA and the in-depth investigation undertaken in this research has helped illuminate not only the significant themes but also some unexpected themes. The IPA process helped to crystalize the idea that work-life balance is not merely a simple question of balance for the participants but relates to the complex nature of the relationship between work and life in the experiences of the participants. The findings of this research are presented in the following chapter.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: FINDINGS**

### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the findings of the research in a manner consistent with the methodological approach outlined in Chapter Four. The purpose of the research was to understand how Malaysian women academics experience their work-life interface. Participants were selected through purposeful sampling and data were gathered through two consecutive weeks of diary writing and followed by a telephone interview. Open coding was used to analyze the diary data while Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was used to analyze the interview data. Consideration of the themes in relation to the literature are discussed in the next chapter.

### **5.2 Qualitative Research Diaries**

The qualitative research diaries were used to obtain information about the significant events of the participants' work and nonwork experiences. In addition, each diary provided the researcher with a brief insight into how each participant managed, and felt about managing, their daily work-life responsibilities. The events covered in the diaries happened on a day-to-day basis during a two consecutive week period in which participants filled in the diaries. The diaries were analysed to gain an understanding of which roles were of the most significance to the participants. Upon completion, a pen portrait was developed. These pen portraits were also based on each participant's background information from the first part of the diary writing and from the researcher's own knowledge through her relationship with the participants. The participants had read and agreed with the descriptions given in the pen portraits. The pen portraits helped to illustrate the participants' perceptions and feelings in a lively and meaningful manner which gave a better understanding of how they experienced and managed their daily

work-life interface. Thus, the pen portraits are presented first to give a better understanding to the readers of who the participants are.

### **5.2.1 Pen Portraits**

#### **Iman**

Iman's diary begins with the death of one of her close family members which impacts on her managing her work tasks. The interference causes her to seek help from her understanding Head of Department and colleagues. In her other days, Iman usually takes her work home and completes this as best as she can. Although she is occupied at her workplace, Iman also has a responsibility in managing her family's well-being. She manages the household chores and looks after her two kids as well. Iman appears to be very concerned with the well-being of her youngest child who is a special needs child. Apart from her daily busy schedule at work and domestic tasks at home, Iman's time is dedicated to managing the therapy session for her special needs child. Iman has a very close relationship with her family members, especially her mother, uncle, brother and sister. Although her work-life is very busy, Iman is still capable of spending her time looking after her unwell sister and helping her mother managing personal tasks. Iman is always satisfied with her life despite her daily hectic activities.

#### **Layla**

Layla is always wrapped up with work from morning till evening at her workplace. She seems engaged with both her academic and non-academic tasks. For Layla, work is a responsibility and a trust from God as well as a duty from the organisation that she has to fulfil. Layla often takes home her work tasks and, for her, those are the sacrifices she has to make. She also believes that it is a norm for academics to take home their work tasks. Although Layla has only one child, her life is still busy at home. She manages all the house chores alone and is also responsible for her son's study. She gets good emotional support from her spouse and she will only request help when she really cannot cope with the tasks. In her diary, Layla never misses including her daily prayers and described how that

helps her when she is stressed and extremely tired of her work tasks. She sometimes wonders why the delegation of work tasks has been unfair to her but she manages to overcome the feeling with the support from her colleagues, spouse and her belief that trials and tribulation are tests from God. She never describes any negative feeling towards managing all the domestic tasks and bringing up her child, although most of the time those were done by her alone.

### **Farah**

Farah is an experienced senior lecturer. She has two grown-up children studying at a boarding school in one of the states in the country. During the diary writing activity, Farah is in charge of one of the main college annual events. As a member of the main committee, she has been assigned an abundance of urgent tasks required by the management. Quite often Farah expresses her dissatisfaction towards the delegation of tasks and how the immediate instruction from the management interferes with her academic work tasks. Farah is also disappointed with the negative attitude of students who are under her pastoral care. She was asked to prepare the students' report by the management which has added to her work overload. In addition, she is also frustrated with some of her colleagues who did not give full cooperation in preparing examination questions. The delayed tasks caused her to reschedule all her planned activities. Currently, one of her nieces is staying with her. Although Farah is committed to sending and picking up her niece from school, plus managing the daily house chores, she always feels happy being involved in family matters.

### **Zahra**

Throughout the first week of the diary writing, Zahra is entirely busy completing her non-academic tasks as well as her ordinary academic work tasks. Simultaneously, at home, she has to give extra attention to her children who are sitting their examinations in the same week. Even though it is a tiring week for her at both workplace and home, Zahra has a busier life at her workplace compared to home. Additionally, her emotions are negatively affected by her students' attitudes who are not serious with their study because she feels her full commitment has not been appreciated by them. She is also disappointed when

finding out about an unethical attitude of one of the department leaders. For Zahra that would cause other academics not to respect the particular leader anymore because a leader should set a good example to subordinates. Despite the abundance of work tasks to be accomplished, Zahra is still able to devote her time to her family. She manages to arrange a family holiday and enjoys doing activities with her spouse and children. In addition, Zahra also attends a class every weekend for her own personal interest.

### **Maria**

Maria's life in the two consecutive weeks is filled with negative emotions. She is ultimately pressured by the extra non-academic tasks that needed to be completed in this particular period of time. Maria senses that the work tasks have been unequally distributed among the academics by the Head of the Committee. Her daily unfinished work tasks worry Maria when she was at home. Furthermore, she is not able to complete the tasks at home due to her routine work in managing the home and family. Maria believes that doing housework and looking after the children are her responsibility. Additionally, Maria is also pursuing her study for her future career development. Maria, however, always feels disappointed at not being able to fulfil her personal commitment, which is finishing her part-time study assignment. She claims that her time is allocated more to the family commitments at home and she has a lack of time to manage her own personal commitment. Maria is dissatisfied with her performance and points to issues related to her personal well-being. Being exhausted every day results in stress which finally causes her to have a migraine. Maria, however, believes with God's help, she will overcome the hardship. In order to regain self-control and calm down herself, Maria will always recite or listen to a recitation of the Holy Qur'an.

### **Aisha**

Aisha's colleagues usually share their problems with her and she feels happy when that comforts them. Aisha is very committed to her work especially when it involves students. She will always try her best to return the students' assignments or quizzes as fast as she can and she conducts enrichment classes for weak students. Aisha usually takes home her work tasks but never mentions that this causes interference in her family time. Moreover,

she feels incomplete if she has forgotten to take home her work. Although Aisha appears to be deeply engaged with her work tasks, she will also try to spend time with her family. Doing the housework is also part of her responsibilities. When the academics are instructed to work during the weekend, Aisha is sad and feels guilty about her family. The last-minute instruction caused her spouse to cancel their family vacation and this has resulted in an angry reaction from the family. At her workplace, Aisha is disappointed with the unethical behaviour of her students. A few of them have admitted forging the date on their medical certificates. Surprisingly, no stern action was taken by the college management. In addition, she is taken aback by the college leader's decision who has supported their wrongdoings.

### **Salma**

In her diary, Salma seems engaged in managing her non-academic tasks as a member of the committee for the college event. For few days, she is a bit disturbed and worried, thinking that she will not be able to complete all her tasks before the event begins. Accordingly, Salma brings home and completes her work tasks as best as she can which causes her to feel exhausted at the end of the day. Salma is able to handle all her classes and finishes marking all her students' assignments even with the extra non-academic tasks that she has to accomplish. As a mother of six young children, surprisingly, Salma does not mention anything about managing her children or home in her diary. She only writes once recording that she has to assist her special needs child doing his homework. Indeed, she feels guilty leaving her children unattended for their school revision when she is instructed by the management to attend a course for a few days.

### **5.2.2 Diary Analysis**

The analysis of the seven qualitative research diaries concentrated on three main ideas, defined by the structure of the diaries: daily significant events, interferences, and emotions. Table 5.1 summarizes the significant events in the two-week period of diary writing of the seven participants. Two broad significant events were identified and have

been categorised as work-related tasks and family/ personal related tasks. The types of interference experienced by the participants were divided into work tasks that interfere in the family/ personal domain and family/ personal tasks that interfere in the work domain. Finally, the participants' feelings were classified as negative and positive emotions.

	Iman	Layla	Farah	Zahra	Maria	Aisha	Salma
Work-related tasks	11	15	24	19	14	14	13
Family/ personal related tasks	10	16	5	8	7	5	2
Work interference	8	9	7	4	4	7	5
Family/ personal interference	1	0	1	0	5	2	0
Negative emotions	6	16	18	8	13	13	8
Positive emotions	8	14	3	7	1	4	2

Table 5.1 Number of significant events, interferences and types of emotions

### 5.2.2.1 Significant Events

The significant events mentioned by the participants in their diary entries were divided into two groups: work-related tasks and family/ personal related tasks. It was found that work-related tasks were described more frequently than family/ personal related tasks. Figure 5.1 demonstrates that almost all participants experienced more work-related tasks than family personal related tasks.

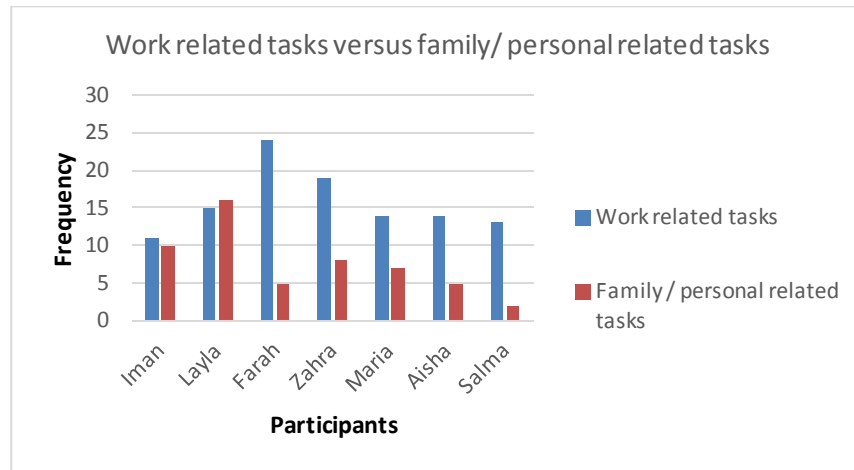


Figure 5.1 Work related tasks *versus* family/ personal related tasks

Figure 5.2 illustrates the types of tasks that occurred in both work-related tasks and family/personal related tasks.

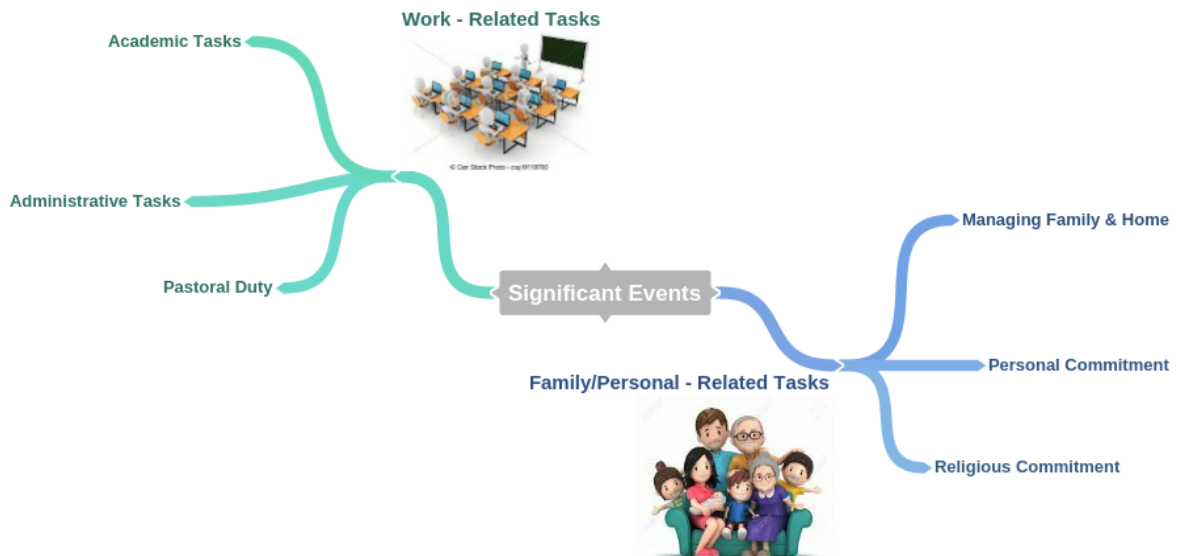


Figure 5.2 Types of tasks

**Work-related tasks**

Work-related tasks described by the participants were categorised into three: academic tasks, administrative tasks and pastoral duty (mentor-mentee). Almost all participants



experienced these work tasks during the two-week diary writing period. Managing college events is one of the main administrative tasks that was assigned to the participants to be completed. These tasks were mentioned many times in their daily entries by most of the participants.

Farah: *"Completing tasks related to [the college event] although the event had already been conducted last week."* (4;98-99).

Zahra: *"I still have to complete this [administrative] task."* (1; 9-10).

Maria: *"I am fully occupied as the committee for [the college event] this week."* (1; 31-32).  
*"My focus at workplace today is the preparation for this Saturday [college event] and all my work that involves teaching and learning will be abandoned."* (7; 214-216).

Salma: *"I need to go to [a place] today to buy all the presents for this college event."* (4; 106-107).

Although teaching and other related academic activities are primary tasks for academics, these tasks were less mentioned compared to the administrative tasks as their significant events.

Layla: *"A lot of work tasks still have not been completed [...] marking all the assignments."* (21; 685-686).

Iman: *"Today is hectic. I have a direct 4 hours of [subject] class to teach."* (3; 91-92).

Aisha: *"A tiring day. Feeling not enough time because there are a few more topics that I have not completed.."* (2; 48-49).

Farah: *"...finishing the syllabus and marking those stacks of test papers. Feel like having a day off."* (1; 16-17).

Besides being assigned administrative tasks and managing their academic-related tasks, Farah and Aisha also included performing their pastoral duties as part of their daily significant events.

Farah: *"I have to prepare a report for my mentee since they have missed their classes more than 20%."* (1; 16-17).

Aisha: *"[...] quite busy preparing the mentee report."* (10: 321-322).

#### **Family/ personal related tasks**

Besides work-related tasks, family/ personal related tasks were also mentioned as significant events in their daily work-life interface. Three types of family/ personal related tasks which were mentioned as significant events were identified as: managing family and home; religious commitment; and personal commitment. Managing family and home were the most common among all participants. Performing religious commitments occurred many times in the diary written by Layla and Maria. Meanwhile, managing part-time study (personal commitment) was described by Maria many times as part of the significant events in her daily life.

Interestingly all participants described managing household responsibilities, which included tidying up the house, doing the laundry, cooking, handling children and taking care of family members, as significant events.

Iman: *"Busy looking after my sister and her newborn baby." (11; 34). "Busy preparing dinner for my [unwell] sister and family." (10; 323-324).*

Farah: *"Managing the house chores and there are a few tasks concerning my niece that need to be settled." (7; 216-217).*

Salma: *"Manage to tidy the house and cook for my children. Assist [her special need child] with his homework." (4;121-122).*

Maria: *"I arrived home at 5.40 pm and immediately tidy the house and prepared for dinner...did the laundry and left to dry at 9.30 pm." (4; 103-108). "[...] do the laundry and manage the house." (13; 426-427).*

Layla: *"I haven't got time to cook today because I need to utilize the time helping my son for his coming examination." (3; 98-100).*

Zahra: *"I need to use the time at home to check [daughter's name] since she is now sitting for her examination". (2; 35-37). "Reach home and rearrange the furniture in the living room [...]" (9; 281-282).*

Aisha: *"[...] tidy up the house, do the ironing and prepare for a one week meal – to be frozen." (13; 400-401).*

As for Layla and Maria, performing their religious commitments seems significant in their life. Layla especially always relates things that she does with God's blessing.

Layla: *"This is the time that I enjoy the most. Prayer keeps me calm."* (1; 19-20) (3;82-83).  
*"Prayer helps me overcome my problems with the work tasks."* (3; 82-84). *"Prayer controls my anger."* (9;274-275).

Maria: *"Pray and hope that Allah will ease my difficulties."* (5; 139-140). *"[...] listening to the Quran recitation from YouTube to keep me calm."* (13; 412-414).

Managing part-time study, although does not seem significant to other participants, is among the significant tasks in Maria's daily life.

Maria: *"[...] attending my [part-time class] in the evening."* (10; 313) *"[...] need to search references for my assignment."* (15; 492-493). *"Today I'm going to give full attention to my assignment."* (19; 606-607).

## **Conclusion**

Performing work-related tasks and family/ personal related tasks are both considered as significant events among most of the participants. However, work-related tasks were mentioned more frequently than family/ personal related tasks.

### 5.2.2.2 Interference

Participants described a few events that interfered with their work domain or family/ personal domain. The events were divided into work → family/ personal (work tasks interfere family/ personal domain) and family/ personal → work (family/ personal tasks interfere work domain). Figure 5.3 shows that during the two-week diary writing duration, work interference occurs greater than family/ personal tasks interference for almost all participants.

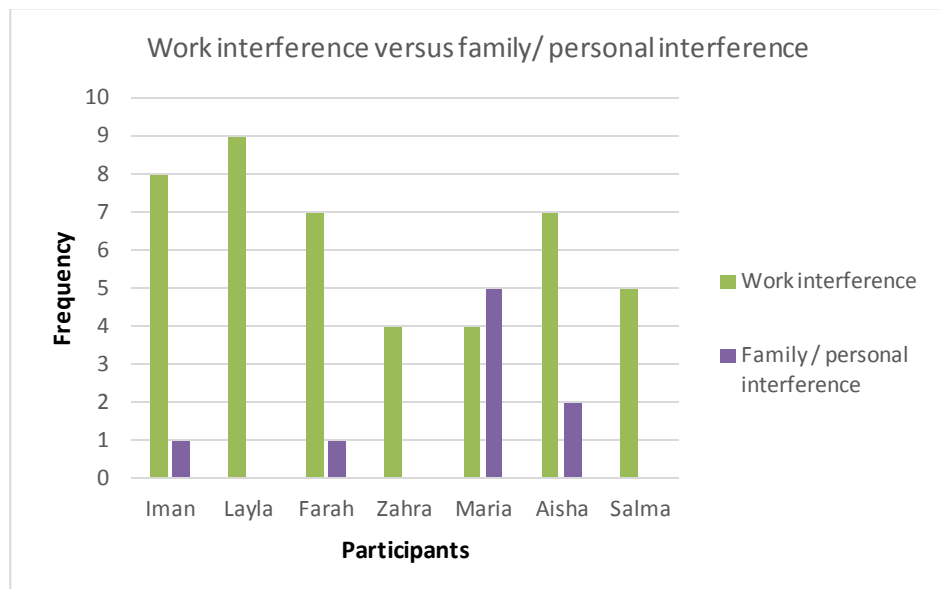


Figure 5.3 Work interference *versus* family/ personal tasks interference

Figure 5.4 illustrates the types of interferences experienced by the participants.

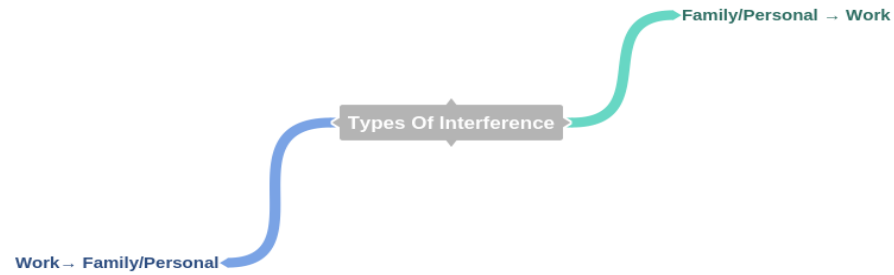


Figure 5.4 Types of interference

### Work tasks interfere in family/ personal domain

Almost all participants experienced more work tasks interference than family/ personal interference. Some types of interferences result in completing work-related tasks at home and working after office hours or during weekends and also being away from home for work.

Utilizing time at home for completing work –related tasks is one of the common work tasks which interfere the participants’ family or personal life.

Layla: *“Since I was not able to mark the quizzes at my workplace, I have to do my best completing this task tonight. I feel that I have neglected the primary work task.”* (4; 107-109). *“Done with the house chores and now continue with these unfinished quizzes.”* (6; 188-189).

Farah: *“Have to complete the answer scheme tasks at home since I was asked to complete the [administrative task] during office hours.”* (5; 146-149). *“There are a few unfinished work tasks and I have to take home with me.”* (4; 115-116). *“Students keep on sending text message/WhatsApp asking when they will be getting their test results.”* (8; 222-223).

Zahra: *"Quite a lot of work tasks that I need to take home [...] I will try to complete and it means 'staying up' tonight."* (13; 393-397). *"The test papers that I have brought with me must be completed by Monday."* (17; 537-538).

Iman: *"Every time I went home I would bring the papers with me".* (2; 39-40).

*"After office hours [name of student] texted me and discussed his mixed feeling..."*  
(6; 173-174).

Some participants also seem dissatisfied at having to work during weekends or after office hour, being away from the family for work or spending time too long at the workplace which causes adverse effects to their family or personal life.

Aisha: *"Working on Saturday absolutely interferes my family time."* (7;199-200).

Layla: *"[...] too many weekends have been sacrificed for the college."* (14; 469).  
*"Although it is weekend, I have to forget my family time because I have to be at the college as early as possible."* (12; 383-384). *"It has been 3 weeks that I went back late. [...] I have spent less time with my family."* (6; 169-185). *"The meeting was too long. I had to pick my son late. Almost 2 hours he waited for me at the school bus stop."* (7; 226-228). *"I feel less time has been given to my family after two consecutive weeks I have been focusing on college events."* (10; 324-325).  
*"Because there are lots of tasks need to be completed, I have to sacrifice my time from being at home."* (15; 501-502). *"I have to sacrifice his tuition class for the sake of my work task."* (18; 574-575).

Farah:*"A weekend but still have to come to work. Have been working for few Saturdays."*  
(6; 186-187).

Maria: *"Although today is Saturday, I still have to work because of the[college event]."* (11; 385-386). *"I have got no choice but to attend the convention..and I won't be able to assist my children tonight for their examination."* (24; 786-792). *"I have to do all the laundry because I will not be at home from Saturday until Monday. I have to attend a conference [...]. During those days all my work tasks and my assignments for my study will be affected."* (20; 640-646).

Salma: *"My house chores have been abandoned and less time to spend with my children."* (4; 112-113). *"I need to invigilate standardized test tonight."* (3;79).

### **Family/ personal tasks interfere in work domain**

Although most participants experienced more work than family/personal tasks interference, there are a few participants who experienced the interference of family/personal tasks in their work domain. The events relate to picking up children from school during work hours, being unwell or being distracted by family home matters during work, and applying for work leave to manage family/personal tasks.

Managing children in the middle of office hours was experienced by Farah, Zahra, and Layla.

Farah: *"Rushing to pick up my niece from her school at 12 noon and take her to the college."* (6; 169-170).

Zahra: *"At 12.30 pm I went back for a while to manage my children and then came back to the college".* (7;207-208).



Layla: *"It's my lunch hour but I have to sacrifice the time to manage my children."* (16; 521-523).

Having to take leave from work because of family/personal commitment was described by Maria and Iman in their diary.

Maria: *" This morning I went to [a place] searching for my study materials."* (15; 492-493).  
*"I am applying for unrecorded leave today because I need to go to [the university]."* (10; 306).

Iman: *"I leave the hospital at almost 2 pm to rush to my class.[...] he passed away [...] I would have to take a leave tomorrow."* (1; 18-27).

Meanwhile, Farah and Aisha were not comfortable at their workplace due to their personal well-being.

Farah: *"I don't feel well. Maybe I was exhausted with the college event on weekend. Really disturbs my teaching activity because I need my voice to teach."* (1; 4-7).

As for Aisha, receiving a call from her daughter while she was at the workplace telling her that she was going to her friend's house distracted her because she kept thinking about her daughter's safety.

Aisha: *"[her daughter's name] called [...].This worries me because I am worried for her safety"* (1; 25-27).

## Conclusion

Almost all participants experienced both types of interference: either work tasks interfered in their family/ personal life or family/ personal tasks interfered in their work life. However, during the two-week diary writing, work tasks seem to interfere more with their family/ personal life.

### 5.2.2.3 Emotions

In the third section of the diary writing, participants described how they felt at the end of each day. Figure 5.5 demonstrates that almost all participants encountered more negative than positive emotions in the two consecutive weeks.

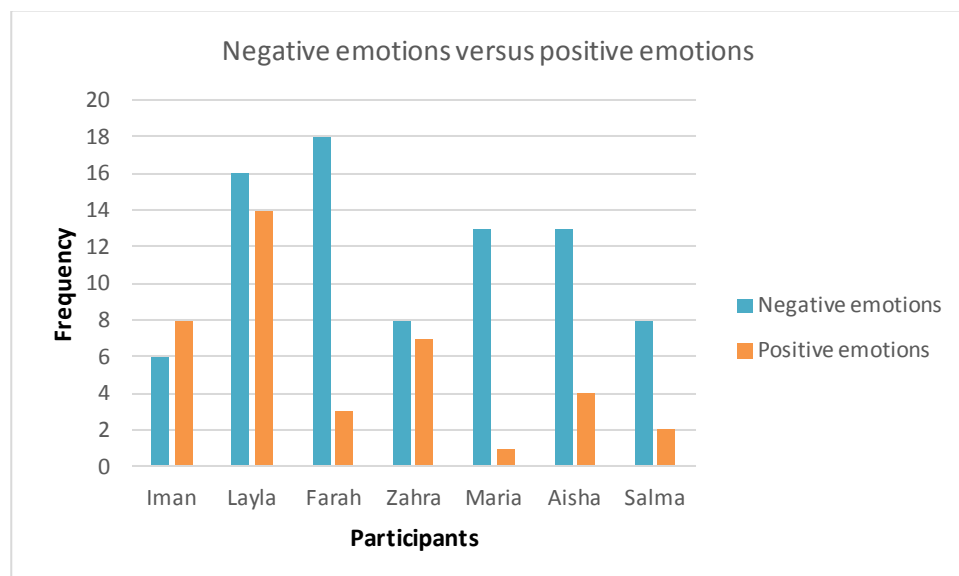


Figure 5.5 Negative emotions versus positive emotions

Figure 5.6 illustrates the types of emotions experienced by the participants

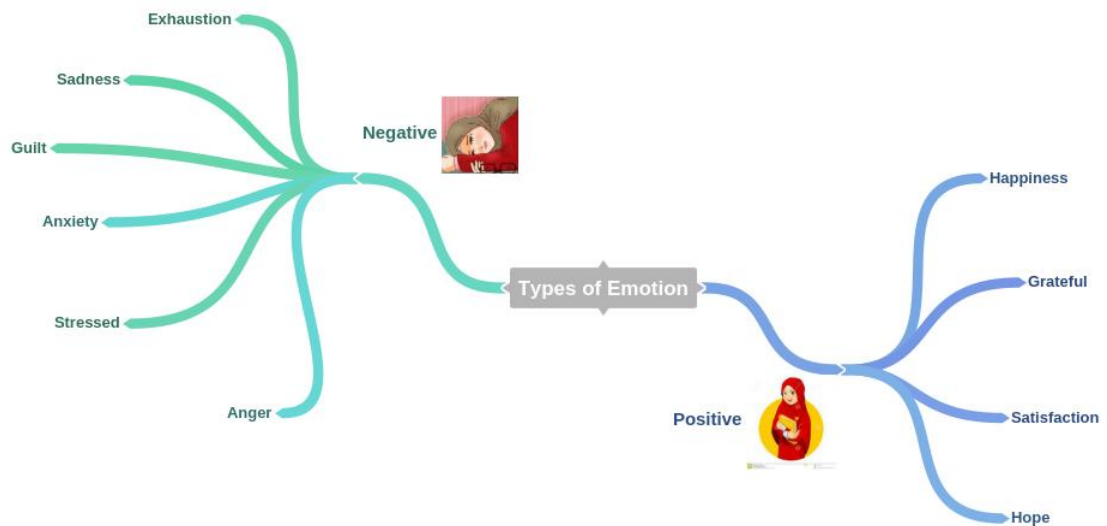


Figure 5.6 Types of emotions

### Negative emotions

Negative emotions were experienced more than positive emotions by almost all participants during the diary writing activity period. The types of negative emotions experienced by the participants are mostly associated with exhaustion, sadness, anger, guilt, anxiety and stressed.

Aisha: *"I am pressured having to work this coming Saturday [...]. I worked on last Saturday too."* (2; 35-36). *"[...] raised anger among the lecturers."* (6; 191-192). *"It is uncomfortable because lots of work is left undone."* (12; 365-366).

Iman: *"The fact that I still haven't finished marking bothers me a lot."* (3;83). *"I didn't cook today and only bought some food for dinner because I feel extremely tired."* (14; 129-130). *"I am not very happy about going off to work on a Saturday when the previous Saturday was also a [college event] day."* (9; 269-270).

Layla: "I feel guilty when the primary task which is teaching becomes 'number two.'" (7; 208). "Only Allah knows how extremely tired I am. But I will do my best because this is my primary work task." (4; 113-114). "Frustrated. And I feel guilty about my son [...] waiting alone for 2 hours." (8; 268-269). "I feel so sad. But the program has just ended and I hope I could have a better life." (13; 423-424). "I am frustrated because he needs the tuition. And I have to cancel it just because of the short notice of a meeting from the management." (18; 603-604). "I wonder why some other lecturers were not being burdened with the tasks like I am having." (2; 151-152). "Exhaustive. My mind is still thinking what else would be assigned at the very last minute." (7; 232-233). "I have mixed feelings of anger and frustration." (8; 261-262).

Maria: "I feel upset with some of the students' attitude [...]" (1; 4-6). "I am pressured with these non-academic tasks." (2; 52-53). "There is no satisfaction for me. A lot of my tasks were not completed due to my well-being." (4; 129-130). "I could not continue with my tasks because I feel so sleepy and exhaustive." (6; 182-184). "I feel frustrated unable to complete my assignment (part-time study)." (4; 125-127). "The tasks for this week [college event] burden me." (9; 285-286). "I am worried because my assignment has still not completed." (14; 474-475). "I am not going to cook today [...] I am tired." (19; 638-639).

Zahra: "I feel sad and disturbed with some of the staff attitudes [...]" (4; 109-111). "I feel demotivated to continue working." (5; 146). "It's tiring because lots of work and family tasks need to be done." (6; 180-181). "Time is wasted because the time management of this [college unit] is not systematic." (8; 237-238).

Farah: "A bit frustrating when you didn't get cooperation from your colleagues." (9; 266-267). "I hate when something is asked from me suddenly [...] at least give some time" (13; 388-391). "[...] worried because there are lots of unfinished tasks." (14; 422).

Salma: *"Exhausted and pissed off."* (1; 21). *"Worried. Hope I manage to settle all the tasks for the event."* (2; 41-42). *"Worried [...] exhaustive [...]"* (7; 227).

### **Positive emotions**

In the two consecutive weeks of diary writing, less positive emotions were experienced by the participants. However, among them all, Iman experienced more positive than negative emotions. The types of positive emotions experienced by the participants are mostly related to happiness, calmness and being grateful. These positive feelings were mentioned mainly when the participants managed to complete their work tasks and when their minds were not thinking about their work tasks.

Iman: *"No work commitment this week, during the weekend, thank God."* (14; 451). *"[...] retired happily."* (5; 144). *"I sleep soundly that night."* (6; 192). *"I feel quite accomplished today as I have finished my final syllabus of one subject. It was a relief."* (5; 134-135). *"I feel satisfied to have helped my mum [doing her task]."* (6; 188). *"Relief. Got some well-deserved rest after 2 weekends working."* (14; 453-455). Interestingly, among all participants, her students' positive attitude also contributes to Iman's positive emotion: *"[...] my students are awesome."* (3; 98-99). *"As usual, my [class] are awesome."* (4; 118). *"I am very happy with the lesson today, the students are very attentive, inquisitive and ready to learn."* (5; 153-154).

Layla: *"I am grateful to Allah that I manage to complete the syllabus this week."* (23; 759-760). *"I am happy and grateful that I don't have any college event this weekend."* (26; 867-868). *"I went to class feeling calm and happy because the college events have reduced a bit lately."* (20; 671-672). *"My life is back to normal and may Allah ease all the difficulties."* (29; 942-943).

Maria: *"I feel better today for not thinking about my work tasks at home and it gives me time to recite the Qur'an to keep myself calm."* (14; 441-442). *"I am satisfied today because I manage to mark the quizzes."* (3; 77-78).

Zahra: *"I am happy although some of my tasks are still not completed."* (14; 437). *"It's fun because for quite some time we have not had our family vacation."* (19; 595). *"What a relief when all tasks are settled."* (2; 40).

Aisha: *"I am grateful that I have completed marking the students' tests."* (13; 419).

Farah: *"I will continue living with the best that I could."* (12; 361).

## **Conclusion**

The analysis of the two-week diary writing demonstrates that all participants experienced more negative feelings than positive. The negative emotions were described through their experience of not being able to complete their work tasks, dissatisfaction with their colleagues' and students' attitude, exhausted, feeling sad and guilty towards their family members. Their positive feelings were mostly described after they have completed both their work and administrative tasks.

## **5.3 Telephone Interview**

A telephone interview was conducted due to the geographical distance between the researcher and the participants. The telephone interview was used as a follow up to the diary writing to gain a deeper understanding of how the academics experience their work-life interface. In addition, the interview was conducted to explore the participants'

experiences with their work environmental factors that assist and/ or hinder them in achieving their work-life balance responsibilities and to identify whether personal or family involvement influence their daily work-life interface.

Before the interview took place, there was, however, a change of college leadership which had impacted the participants in terms of their experiences in managing their daily work-life since this change in leadership also brought a different approach in the style of leadership. This scenario bridges a critical change of culture and leadership. It demonstrates the significance of leadership culture in influencing the academics' work-life interface.

A total of four superordinate themes emerged from the analysis of the interview transcripts. Figure 5.7 shows the map of the superordinate themes that connect all the participants to varying degrees. The four superordinate themes are: Juggling Multiple Roles, Sources of Support, Impact of Leadership Style and, Identity Formation.

These themes are presented from the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. This gives primacy to the academics' voices and provides an interpretative account of what their experiences mean. The aim of the analysis is to demonstrate the convergence as well as divergence between the participants (Smith et al., 2009).

The criteria suggested by Smith et al. (2009) have been applied in order to come up with the master superordinate theme. The criteria indicate that to produce a master superordinate theme across the participants, the recurrent themes must be present in at least half of the participants. A table of each superordinate theme and the prevalence of each subordinate theme for each participant is given at the beginning of the presentation of each finding. These themes are described with reference to their prevalence amongst the participants. The participants' quotes link themes directly to the data and elaboration of these illustrates the commonalities and divergences across interviews.

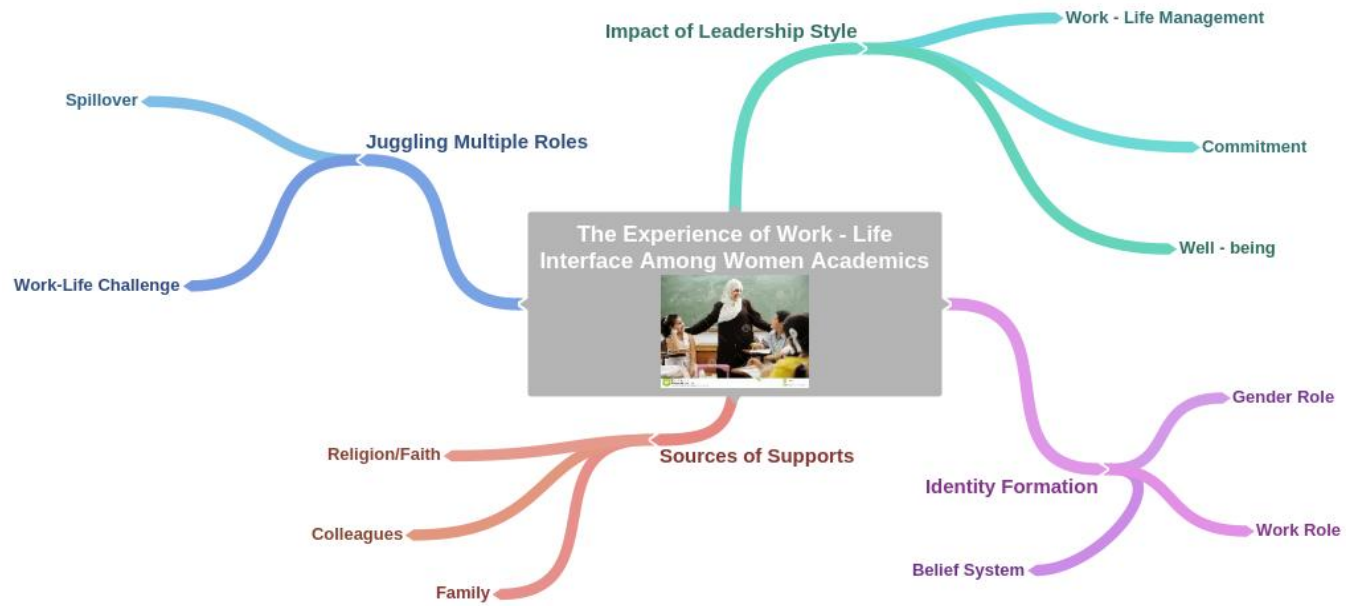


Figure 5.7 Map of Superordinate Themes and Theme



### 5.3.1 Superordinate Theme 1: Juggling Multiple Roles

Themes	Iman	Layla	Farah	Zahra	Maria	Aisha	Salma
Work-life challenge	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Spillover	√	√	√		√	√	√

The first superordinate theme details the participants' experiences in managing their daily work and life responsibilities. Being an academic, a mother and a home manager, each participant holds multiple responsibilities in her daily life, especially when work and family are the two most fundamental elements of life.' Juggling Multiple Roles' comprises two themes: Work-Life Challenge and Spillover.

#### Work-life challenge

In their normal working days, all participants begin their daily routine activities in the morning and the majority of them finish their tasks late at night. Their tasks begin with the traditional gender perception of the role of being a mother and a homemaker which includes managing children to get to school and preparing breakfast for the family. Besides their primary tasks as an academic, these women were also assigned with administrative tasks at their workplace such as managing the college events and activities. Their role as a 'woman' continues after the end of their office hours at the workplace. This role involves them doing the household chores and managing the children at home. Some of the participants would also complete their academic work tasks at home.

Thus, in managing their work-life responsibilities, all participants experience work-life challenges by negotiating the intersections between paid work and other areas of life. However, the types of work-life challenges differ among the participants. Layla, for example, shared her experience about the challenge she had in managing her school children while at the same time, fulfilling her work commitment. According to Layla: "We

*have our work schedule but at the same time, I have to pick my child from his school, to send him and to manage him. It is so challenging at that moment because I have to be very patient and have to manage my time efficiently. I have a class after that. But at that time also I have to go back and manage him at home”* (Layla, 3; 94-100). This experience, which is a routine activity for Layla, portrays a difficult task that she has to face in her daily life. The adverb ‘*challenging*’ is used by Layla described her obstacle in managing her work-life responsibilities. Performing two different tasks simultaneously is taxing. Moreover, being an academic and a mother, she is accountable for both tasks.

Meanwhile, Aisha, Salma, and Maria shared their work-life challenges which occurred during an unexpected event at the college. As for Aisha, she faced challenges when a sudden change interrupted her normal schedule. *“The meeting was dragged on until 6.30 pm. The problem is I had to pick my child from the nursery and the school. So, it has interrupted the ordinary schedule and I had to ask for my husband’s help. And my husband said he could not because he was also at the office and his office is in the city centre. So, I had to start thinking of plan A or plan B. It was really really really disturbing”* (Aisha, 20; 730-741). The repetition of ‘*really*’ illustrates how the sudden event, which interferes in her routine schedule, is a hassle to her. It is a challenge to Aisha because she has to take quick action to overcome the hurdle. Moreover, Aisha was left alone to solve the problem when she says, *‘So I had to start thinking for plan A or plan B’*.

Salma also experienced the difficulty of managing her work-life when there is an unexpected work task to be completed. *“It’s already like a norm in this college. [the new leader] loves giving orders at any time [the new leader] likes”* (7; 224-226). *When that kind of thing happens, it is quite disturbing. Or sometimes suddenly we were asked to replace somebody else attending a course. We were not ready because we have not arranged for a class replacement and we also have not prepared anything for the home and family.”* (Salma, 7; 235-239). The situation discussed by Salma illustrates the type of work-life challenge that she has been experiencing a few times. The phrase ‘*Like a norm*’ symbolizes typical activity or attitude which has been a practice in the college. In addition, ‘*loves*’ was used ironically to represent an activity which was liked by the college management culture. However, the activity has a negative impact on the academics’ life.

This is evident from the phrase *'quite disturbing'*. The academics were not comfortable with the disruption.

Likewise, Maria shared her dilemma when it involved both work and family commitment. *"Like recently, it was compulsory for us to go and break our fast at the college because it was a fasting month. But I had to cook for my husband and my children. You feel unhappy because you have to be at the college."* (Maria, 5; 152-155). The experience shows how the situation creates a dilemma for her when she had to perform her responsibilities in both roles. As an academic, it was an order for her to be at the college. The word *'compulsory'* tells that she has no choice but to attend. However, being a mother and a wife, Maria feels that it is her responsibility to cook for the family. The use of *'But I have to'* also signifies that she has no choice because it is her responsibility. Furthermore, in the interview, Maria indicates that she sees doing the house chores and looking after the family well-being is a responsibility (page 3, line 92). Thus, having to sacrifice one of her roles is difficult for Maria because she bears responsibilities in both roles.

Dealing with a new unfamiliar task is a great challenge to Farah. Learning and adapting to a new work task will take up her family time and thus would have a negative impact, *"When a new task is given and which is unfamiliar to me, there are lots of things to be asked and learnt. I have never done that task. So, it takes a while to adapt with the new task. And sometimes it will take my time with my family. When I couldn't complete the task on time plus with the pressure from the management and without cooperation from the subordinate, it affects the home. I am scared of the consequences [...]"* (Farah, 2; 61-71). Farah's expression clearly describes that she is not comfortable with the situation and fears that her uncontrolled emotion when handling the task would jeopardize her relationship with her family. Farah is not only having difficulty handling unfamiliar tasks only but also dealing with the negative attitude that she received from other staff.

## Spillover

In juggling their daily work-life responsibilities, most of the participants described how their work tasks have influences on their family/ personal domain or vice versa. The influences that they encounter involve either positive or negative influences.

Iman and Salma shared how they experienced positive spillover from home to their workplace. *"I notice when I have [special needs child], he makes most of my decisions. Like in the past, when I was searching the right school for him I picked up the phone and called everybody. And that taught me how to deal with my work at the office. If I want something, I just have to pick up and do it myself"* (Iman, 10; 345-351). Having and managing a special needs child gives advantages to Iman in organizing her work tasks. Her special needs child is influential in shaping her life through her phrase, *'he makes most of my decisions'*. Her previous challenges bringing up her child are noted in, *'Like in the past'* and by using the verbs *'searching'*, *'pick up the phone'* and *'called'* which shows her struggles and dedication finally benefit her in managing her work tasks. The expression *'And that'* clearly emphasizes how the challenge has a significant role in her life.

Organizing six young children is not an easy task especially for a full-time working mother. However, managing six young children at home for Salma benefits her in managing her work tasks at her workplace. *"I am always organized when doing the housework and even my children's stuff are well organized. I apply the same way also when I am at the office. It is already a habit because whatever I do at home has become a habit. So, it influences me when I am at my workplace"* (Salma, 9; 317-322). Salma is used to bringing up all her six children alone. When describing her daily routine, Salma is fully occupied from early in the morning even until she comes back from her workplace and she will usually go to bed at 12 midnight (page 2, line 61-85). Her routine as she describes as *'habit'* and although it seems exhausting it has a positive influence in organizing her work tasks.

Besides being responsible for domestic labour and children, women also perform most of the emotional work in families such as listening to and comforting children. However, in the lives of these women academics, the positive experience they gained at their workplace assisted them in dealing with the situation. Layla and Aisha described their positive spillover experiences from the workplace to their home. The positive experiences in managing and controlling students are applied when managing their own children or family at home. According to Layla, *“As an educator, we must be patient. So, when at home, the concept of being patient at the office can become our guideline for managing our family”* (Layla, 3; 108-111). The soft skill that she applies at her workplace which is being patient with the students becomes her *‘guideline’* when managing her family. It acts as guidance and gives her the right direction in performing her role at home. The same goes with Aisha when she explains that, *“When managing these grown-up students we have to know how to be nice with them and also to control our anger. Indirectly we will learn how to control and tackle our own children. It really gives a positive impact.”* (Aisha, 9; 302-307). Being *‘nice’* and managing how to *‘control’* her anger shows the positive impact that she obtains in her professional life. The positive impact benefits Aisha in her personal life which is managing her children’s upbringing.

Meanwhile, Maria had a different experience when she had a negative spillover from home to her workplace. *“I have the experience of feeling stressed with my children and dispute with my husband. It was in the past and it had a deep impact towards my career. I became like [pause] I was too lazy to go to work. I was having a baby during that time. My mind kept thinking about my baby at the nursery because she was having a problem when it comes to feeding time. She didn’t want to use the bottle. She only wanted to have me. She wanted to be breastfed. I was really upset during that period. My work was badly affected”* (Maria, 5; 165-175). Maria’s experience portrays how managing a baby while being a full-time academic can have a negative impact on the professional career. As for Maria, it was a painful experience for her. The expressions such as *‘feeling stressed’*, *‘dispute’*, *‘lazy’* and *‘disturbed’* reflect her depressing situation, which finally affected her career, as indicated by the phrase *‘deep impact’*.

Farah, however, described both her positive and negative spillover experiences from work to home. *“When dealing with problematic students or the support staff, we can also apply the soft skills in managing family and home. That is good.”* (Farah, 3; 91-94). The experience in handling her students and other staff at her workplace benefits Farah when she is at home. It gives her an advantage in managing her own family. *“However, if sometimes we are too stressed with the tasks assigned to us, for example when we can’t handle it or the tasks were assigned only to us, the impact will be on us, the women and to our family. We are extremely tired when at home. So, in that kind of situation, if we have children at home, it will have a negative impact on them. We will neglect their homework or they may need to share their problems with us but we won’t bother.”* (Farah, 3; 95-108). There are disadvantages to the family when she is pressured at her workplace. Farah believes that women are mainly responsible for domestic labour and children when she emphasizes that the negative impact will be on *‘the women’*. Thus, the negative episode that they encounter at the workplace will have an adverse effect when managing the family.

### **Conclusion**

In managing their work-life responsibilities, almost all participants experience work-life challenge and spillover. It is a challenge particularly when both domains of work and family have to be fulfilled simultaneously. In addition, the challenge could result in positive and/ or negative spillover. The spillover can be either from work to home or vice versa. Although the women are seen as being responsible for maintaining smooth, or preferably imperceptible, transitions between the worlds of home and work life, there are sources of support that play an important role in assisting them in juggling their roles which are discussed in the following superordinate theme.

### 5.3.2 Superordinate Theme 2: Sources of Support

Themes	Iman	Layla	Farah	Zahra	Maria	Aisha	Salma
Family/Spouse	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Colleagues	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Religion/Faith	√	√	√	√		√	

In the interviews, the participants discussed how support plays an important role in grappling with varied aspects of their roles as academics and as mothers. The superordinate theme, Sources of Support, presents how different types of support contribute to the participants' management of work-life responsibilities. Three themes which comprise this superordinate theme are: Family/ Spouse, Colleagues, and Religion/Faith.

#### Family/ Spouse

All participants report that spouse and/ or family members support them in managing their work-life responsibilities. Iman and Salma were grateful for the support they received from their family members. According to Iman, *“And when at home, I am lucky because I have my mum to look after my children. So, I feel it really helps me a lot if I need more time at the office”* (Iman, 4; 115-118). Iman understands her responsibilities and commitment towards both her professional career and her family (page 3, line 77 and 82). The role of her mother in giving support to Iman is significant in helping her managing her work-life interface. The word *‘lucky’* represents how fortunate she is since it gives her the advantage in completing her work tasks. It reflects her appreciation towards her mother because her responsibility for the family includes taking care of them and with her mother's help, she could manage her professional tasks. In such a way, it also leads her to spend extra time at her workplace than home.

Salma states that “[...] my sister in law is very helpful. She really gives full support to me because at the moment almost 50% of the housework is managed by her. [...] I am grateful because she is willing to look after my children. With my current situation, it is difficult for me to manage them. I am not worried going to work anymore because I know there’s someone looking after my children at home” (Salma, 16;572-579). In the interview, Salma acknowledges that she is responsible for taking care of the children and chores at home (page 5, line 160-162). Thus, support from the extended family plays an important role for Salma. ‘*I am not worried anymore*’ she indicated and this support gives her the security and relief because there is someone whom she trusts looking after her children. Moreover, the housework that she feels responsible for was partly managed by her sister in law.

Layla, Aisha, Farah, and Maria describe the importance of support given by their spouse. Layla managed to complete her work tasks with the support given by her spouse. Layla describes that “*Marking those papers. [...] I really need the time during that moment. At that time my husband seems to understand. So, it’s like that.. it’s fine if I don’t cook [...] just buy some ready food. It means he is giving me the chance finishing my work because he knows work has a deadline*” (Layla, 10:360-364). Layla seeks support when only it is crucial for her to have it. ‘*At that time*’ presents a period that Layla really needs help. Layla has difficulty in performing her routine role at home which is cooking for the family when simultaneously she needs the time to complete her academic tasks. The ‘*chance*’ implies that cooking is her responsibility but she was given the break by her husband in order to complete her work. This indicates that her husband understands her work tasks and allows her not to cook during the crucial time. The support given by her husband allows her to complete her work tasks during the particular time that she requires. The support that Layla receives from her husband was emotional support rather than instrumental support. It was understanding from her husband rather than performing or taking over the task at home. Nevertheless, the emotional support that she receives contributes to managing her professional life.

Similarly, Farah feels that having her husband’s permission is important for her. According to Farah, “*Husband’s role is crucial. Crucial in supporting. Support us to manage our role.*



*It's not comfortable if we are not happy. Doing tasks without our husband's permission [...]”* (Farah, 18:631-634). Although it is an emotional support, it means a lot to Farah's professional life. Farah's emotions will be affected at work if she does not have her husband's permission first. The permission given by her husband indicates that her husband agrees and supports her pursuits.

As for Maria, encouragement from her husband supports her in managing her work-life responsibilities especially in her career. Her spouse encouraged her to be serious with her work tasks. Maria shares that *“Through my experience, my family never stops me from working. In fact, my husband will get angry if I don't go to work [...] For him, we should complete our work tasks”* (Maria, 9:320-322, 326). The encouragement received from her husband supports her in completing her work tasks since in Maria's view, managing the family is not considered as 'work' but the responsibility of a wife and a mother (page 3, line 91-94).

Whereas it was emotional support received by Layla, Farah, and Maria, Aisha, on the other hand, experienced receiving instrumental support from her spouse. Aisha depends a lot on her spouse in managing her work-life responsibilities. Aisha relates that *“I feel my husband plays an important role as a backup for me. He gives me strength. [...] sometimes he can clock in late at the office so in the morning he can help me at home”* (Aisha, 6; 192-195). The expressions 'backup' and 'strength' portrays the importance of her husband's role in assisting Aisha coping with her work-life interface. Without the help from her husband, Aisha might have to struggle in managing her multiple roles as mentioned by her by the expression, 'He gives me strength'.

Zahra also received great support from her spouse and from her children. She believes that work tasks could be accomplished if tasks are shared among family members. Zahra states that *“We usually manage the house together. Those grown-up children can be taught what to do. And my husband usually helps to do the laundry [...] If there is a support from family, it means that our work tasks at the office will not be disrupted”* (Zahra, 10; 345-348, 355-356). Zahra might have some difficulty accomplishing her

multiple roles in the past when her children were still small and young. However, having '*grown up*' children benefits her in the current situation because they could assist her with the housework. Zahra is also fortunate because she used to get the instrumental support from her husband. As mentioned by Zahra in the interview, the help that she received from her spouse and children allows her to have ample time to rest at home which results to her feeling fresh going to her workplace every day (line 11, page 360-362).

### **Colleagues**

The role of colleagues also supports the participants in managing their work-life responsibilities.

Iman shared how colleagues enlivened her when she is pressured with her workload. *"Since I started working I feel my colleagues really make me happy. They are [...] very supportive when we are overload with work, or we have been overworked. We will laugh together to reduce the stress"* (Iman, 7; 246-251). Colleagues are significant in her professional life because they support her during her difficult times. They were a positive influence from the beginning of her career as an academic. The expression '*very supportive*' illustrates the significant role of colleagues which gives her strength to survive in the profession. Indeed, the word '*together*' explains how they share their feelings with each other to overcome the tensions that they are experiencing with their work tasks.

Farah too finds that support from her colleagues is important especially when she is having difficulties at her workplace. *"Until now, if I have any difficulties such as my children are sick or I need to have emergency leave, I will always get support especially either from my friends or my department leader."* (Farah, 8; 268-270). The phrase '*until now*' describes that Farah has been receiving the positive support for quite some time in her academic life. Thus, colleagues play an important role in Farah's professional life

because she has been relying on them in managing her work-life interface especially when it involves personal matters.

Likewise, support received from colleagues motivates Layla and Maria with their work tasks. Layla describes that *“There are times when we could not attend a course. So, when we ask our colleagues they are willing to go and replace us. So, when they do this, we could see that they are giving us something. And there are times that we help them back. There is give and take. That gives the spirit to help one another and motivates us with our work tasks.”* (Layla 5; 180-189). Layla finds the support that she receives from her colleagues during her hard times not only helps her in her personal problem but contributes to her work commitment. The colleagues help each other and the positive relationships that they have influenced them to be responsible with their academic role.

Similarly, support received from her colleagues inspired Maria at her workplace. According to Maria, *“I feel motivated working here because all my friends are good. They support me. Whatever I do they will support.”* (Maria, 7; 253-255). Support seems crucial in Maria’s professional life especially when she is responsible for managing certain tasks. This is evident from her past experiences when she described, at the beginning of the interview, how she badly suffered at her previous workplace when none of her colleagues supported her with whatever tasks she did (page 7, line 248-250). In contrast with other participants, Maria needs the support for the sake of her career rather than helping her with her personal or family issues.

Aisha and Salma also agree that colleagues’ support is crucial for them in managing their work-life responsibilities. *“I feel grateful having good friends. If I had to take a leave when my son was sick, they helped me to be in my class. At least they can assist the students with their exercises. Students can ask them anything they don’t understand. That is the best part. That is great.”* (Aisha 12; 410-415). As for Aisha, she needs the support from her friends to ensure that her responsibility towards her students is performed when she is facing a difficulty with her personal problem. Aisha regards students as her priority in her professional life (page 4, line 134-135) and thus it is important for her that the

students are being taken care of when she is not with them. The expression *'That is the best part. That is great'* signifies how she really appreciates when her colleagues were there to assist her students.

*"The college environment is great. It is not burdensome because my colleagues are helpful. Because my office is full of senior lecturers. They have lots of experiences. So, in a way, it helps me how to manage my family and home. It's easy when I have any difficulties. Those friends [...] thanks to God [...] they are really really helpful."* (Salma 10; 350-358). Salma finds that senior colleagues support her in terms of their wide experiences in managing work-life responsibilities. Learning from their experiences helps Salma in dealing with her work-life interface. Expressing *'thanks to God'* implies how she is grateful for having the senior colleagues, who she emphasizes are *'those friends'* around her. In addition, she emphasizes *'really'* twice which reflects the level to which colleagues are valuable to her.

Interestingly, only Aisha and Salma shared how the support received from their department leader benefits them. They both found that their department leader understands their situation when they were having difficulties dealing with their personal/ family commitment. According to Aisha, *"My department leader is very understanding because she allows us to have emergency leave, to go out and to have time off when we have this kind of sudden emergency matter. She is very understanding."* (Aisha 11;384-387). Aisha's department leader can be negotiated with. Having a lenient and tolerant leader facilitates Aisha in managing her work-life responsibilities. As for Salma, she benefits from the two-way communication style practiced by her department leader. *"If I have any family problem I can speak directly with my department leader. She is very kind. If there is any difficulty she will give good advice about how to settle it."* (Salma, 10;336-340). Besides having the freedom to discuss her personal problems with her department leader, Salma also receives guidance in solving her problems.

## Religion/ Faith

Besides having family and colleagues as sources of support, all participants except Maria and Salma shared how religion or faith assists them in organizing their work-life responsibilities.

Iman had an awful experience working at her previous organization. She found that the staff were all outspoken and she even cried during her first management meeting. Iman recalled, *“The first time I joined the meeting I cried because they were like cursing among each other...”* (Iman, 15; 541-542). Eventually, she was used to the work culture and it pressured her to behave in the same way in which she later finds herself uncomfortable being in the group, *“I behave like them [...] it’s not good [...] you don’t care other people’s feelings [...] and it affects the family life too.”* (Iman, 15; 544-548). Iman believes how she behaves will finally influence her way of life especially in managing her family. Thus, Iman finds that she feels much better at the current organization which practices the moral values that are emphasized in religion. According to Iman, *“However when we work at a company or an organization that stresses more on religion, I think I will be calmer [...] it guides you not to offend others”* (Iman, 15;548-553). All religions believe in compassion and respect for everyone. As for Iman, the new work environment which holds to religion as a guideline leads her to have a better life and becomes a better person.

As for Layla and Zahra, challenges are tests given by God to them. The belief helps them better in overcoming all the obstacles in their life. *“Allah has positioned us as lecturers. This is the trust of Allah that we must obey despite all challenges or obstacles. If Allah wills, we will be the best because we trust that Allah has positioned the best for us”* (Layla, 12;431-435). Layla strongly believes that all the difficulties that she has to face were trials and tribulations from God to see how patient she is with those challenges. The *phrase ‘we must obey’* depicts that she has no choice but to perform her best as an academic although she has to struggle with some of the difficulties in managing her professional life. Having strong faith in God’s plan, Layla believes that the end result will promise a positive outcome as long as she manages to overcome all the barriers.

Zahra also has a strong faith in God and this influences her to become a resilient person especially in managing challenges in her professional life. As mentioned by Zahra, *“If we don’t have faith, we won’t be able to accept changes. We won’t. If we accept we must always have a good thought of what Allah has planned. We presume there will be something good for us. Just wait and see. There must be a reason for any changes so we have to adapt ourselves to the changes”* (Zahra, 9;306-314). Zahra is hoping for a brighter work-life interface with the sudden change in the work environment. She is struggling to adapt to the new work culture. The expression *‘If we don’t have faith, we won’t be able to accept changes’, ‘Just wait and see’* and the repetition of *‘we won’t’* imply how Zahra has strong faith with God’s plan and she is very patient in waiting for the miracle to happen. In addition, Zahra emphasizes the phrase *‘There must be a reason for any changes’* which reflects that she believes that the transformation which happened in the work environment was God’s plan. This reflects on her position as a religious Muslim since the expression is commonly used by a pious Muslim that holds tightly to verse 286 of *Al-Baqarah* (abbreviated as 2:286) from the Holy Qur’an. As promised in the verse, it gives Zahra the strength to acclimatize to the changes.

Meanwhile, religion also aids Farah and Aisha in better managing their work-life responsibilities. Religion acts as a guide for them. According to Farah, *“Religion provides us guidelines. A wife is subjected to her husband’s command no matter how high her rank is at the workplace. So, we need religion to guide us in managing our work-life.”* (Farah, 16;563-566). Farah’s explanation reflects her role as an obedient wife who believes in the principles of marriage in Muslim teaching. Farah is quoting verse 34 of *An-Nisa* (abbreviated as 4:34) from the Holy Qur’an concerning the issue of marital relations in Islam. The verse describes how women are given the autonomy over their own income and property but obliging them to comply with the husband’s wishes. The expression *‘how high her rank is’* describes how religion leads Farah on the right way to perform her responsibility both as an academic and as a wife or mother. As a devout Muslim, Farah knows her limits at her workplace and helps her better in managing multiple roles.

Aisha also shares her experience of how religion shapes her behaviour. Aishah states that *“Religion educates us to be patient. When you feel angry take a deep breath, recite the*

'syahadah' (a key phrase in Islam) and then only you speak. So, that will stop you from getting angry because you remember Allah" (Aisha, 16; 585-588). Juggling multiple roles and responsibilities could lead to a stressful life which can sometimes negatively affect the surrounding people such as students and family members. Thus, being religious and practicing religion as her way of life helps Aisha, especially in controlling her emotions.

## Conclusion

The academics need either emotional or instrumental support in managing their daily work-life responsibilities. Based on the participants' responses in the study, spouse/family support refers to support received from their husband or family members which also include extended family members. In the interviews, colleagues are mostly the academics who work in the same department with the participants. Colleagues who provide support become good listeners or offer help when needed by the participants. Finally, some participants have a strong faith in the Islamic religion which supports them especially when experiencing hardship in managing their work-life responsibilities. Support from these various sources is crucial in helping them in their career such as professional development and in their personal life. This becomes more significant when the participants experience a change of work culture that has an impact on their work-life interface, as presented in the following superordinate theme.

### 5.3.3 Superordinate Theme 3: Impact of Leadership Style

Themes	Iman	Layla	Farah	Zahra	Maria	Aisha	Salma
Work-life management	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Commitment	√	√	√	√			√
Well-being		√	√	√	√		√

This superordinate theme details the participants' experiences of managing their work-life responsibilities under a new leadership style. This superordinate theme, Impact of Leadership Style comprises of three themes: Work-life Management, Commitment, and Well-being.

### **Work-life management**

The current work culture has a significant impact on the participants' work-life management. Iman and Zahra experienced greater work-life challenges under the new leadership. Iman described the difficulties of managing her special needs child, *"I have to send my [special needs child]. His class starts at 8 am. So, if I go, I also need to clock in at 8 am. But if I go earlier it is still close. Now I can't run away anymore. Because [...] insists. The new boss insists. [...] doesn't want... [...] doesn't want anyone who can simply clock in at 8 am or at 9 am. Even if we meet her personally and give all the medical reference letters, [...] won't. [...] won't bother"* (Iman, 6;193-200). The expression *'I can't run away'* describes the difficulty Iman is facing under the new work culture. She has no choice and there is no negotiation with the new director particularly with the repetition of *'doesn't want'*. *"Now it's making me more difficult to go and have my family time, not the family time for having fun but in picking up [her special needs child] and handling [her special needs child] and fixing things."* (Iman, 18; 646-649). *'Now'* indicates that it is the current work culture that makes it more *'difficult'* in managing her work-life responsibilities. This suggests that managing her previous work-life did not cause her problems although she had to manage her special needs child. However, the current work culture expectations have resulted in great changes in organizing her work-life responsibilities.

Likewise, Zahra faced challenges under the new management when it involved personal commitment during work hours, *"If I have other personal commitment such as attending my child school meeting, I could rearrange the time and request to meet in the afternoon. So, it won't involve my annual leave. However, under the new leadership, if it involves personal commitment, I don't have a choice but to take a leave."* (Zahra, 4;141-147). *"In the past, we could do other tasks during lunch time. But not now. When you go back after*



5, *lesser things could be done.*" (Zahra, 1; 27-29). The new work culture gives no flexibility to Zahra in managing her work-life responsibilities. Zahra emphasizes *'But not now'* which indicates the comparison between the previous and current work culture which currently impacts on her managing her work-life responsibilities.

According to Aisha, *"Previously when I went home at 2 pm or 4 pm I still feel relaxed. There's still time for me to relax before I continued with the house tasks. But now [pause] once I arrive home, I have to pick my child. I can't spend my time first at home before picking her [...] then I have to cook [...] non-stop [...] It is now a routine."* (Aisha, 6; 199-205). Managing her time becomes more difficult for Aisha under the new work culture too. The phrase *'But now'* marks the point when her work-life begins to change. The pause represents her reflection on her previous life and how this led to the current situation in which she no longer has time for herself. Time has been too limited for her. The phrase *'routine'* indicates that the difficulty she is currently experiencing has now become her daily tasks that need to be performed.

Salma mentions that *"With this new college director.. arrrgh...we have to ...have to clock in at 8am, and go home at 5pm every day [...] you don't have any more time to complete your tasks with this new director [...] have to stay longer at the office so that I could complete my work. I try not to take home with me."* (Salma, 6; 179-192). The new work culture has taken her family time from her. Salma seems dissatisfied and uncomfortable with the new working hours implemented by the new management. The pause made by her with the sound *'arrrgh'* suggests that she is not comfortable with the changes which cause her to spend more time at her workplace.

### **Commitment**

All participants except Maria and Aisha shared how their commitments were negatively affected because of the new current work culture expectations. The current work culture causes Layla and Iman to become very particular about what they are doing. According to

Layla, *"I work as if according to the exact working hour only. I was not that particular with time in the past, whether I was asked to come at any time, had to work overtime or even stayed at the office until late evening. But with this kind of situation, the change has made me become very particular. So, I feel like... hey, I am not going to continue. Once it is time to go back, I will stop. I will continue tomorrow. That's it [...] which disturbs my commitment"* (Layla, 7;228-235). Layla enjoyed her professional life during the previous management. She was willing to participate and spend her time late in the evening, indicating that spending more time at the workplace was not an issue to Layla. However, her dissatisfaction with the new college culture affects her commitment towards the management and leads her to behave in a different way. Nevertheless, Layla's commitment towards teaching is not affected. Layla states that *"My commitment towards teaching is still the same."* (Layla, 7; 239-240). In the interview, Layla explains that work means she has made an agreement with her employer and she has been given the trust to perform the responsibilities. Layla states that *"[...] as a Muslim you are given the responsibilities once you have made the agreement [...]"* (Layla, 3; 76-77). Respecting the contract is compulsory in Islam. The Holy Qur'an says, 'O believers! Fulfill [all] your obligations [...]' [5:1]. Thus, although the current work expectation has an impact on Layla's commitment towards the organization, her teaching commitment was not affected because of her strong belief in her religion.

Likewise, Iman explains that *"I feel like not to give more than what should be given. I mean I don't want to give too much. I will give based on what [...] had asked for"* (Iman, 20; 715-717). Iman is currently particular about what she is giving or contributing towards the college. Feeling frustrated and dissatisfied with the new work culture has affected her commitment towards the management. However, since Iman views teaching as her responsibility, she is still committed to her teaching profession for the sake of her students' success. As described by Iman, *"I'm still teaching and planning and do whatever I am instructed to do. I still make sure it is done [...] I am responsible towards my students."* (Iman, 14; 490-495). Although Iman is unhappy with the new work culture, her responsibility towards her students keeps her committed to her teaching profession.

Meanwhile, both Zahra and Farah report that their level of commitment is decreasing compared to the previous management. Zahra says, *“In terms of commitment, it is no longer as before. In the past, once in a while if we had to attend an event, we would go and commit ourselves. But now it is enough. From morning till evening, morning till evening and then another evening ... arrghh ... everyone will search for a reason not to come.”* (Zahra, 7; 237-242). The expression *‘no longer as before’* illustrates the comparison of Zahra’s commitment with two different types of leadership. Zahra was committed during the previous leadership when she indicated that, *‘we would go and commit ourselves’*. Nevertheless, her commitment decreased under the new leadership. The repetition of *‘morning till evening, morning till evening’* describes how exhausted she is when there are too many activities that require her attention. Her expression of *‘arrghh’* portrays her dissatisfaction and frustration with the new implementation.

Farah, who shares the same situation, explains that, *“Currently, if there is a graph, I’d say my level of commitment is decreasing. Because what I notice at the moment, these leaders are now aiming for their own KPI. What I meant as KPI here is they are targeting how many activities that should be conducted in this college, how many achievements they have obtained without bothering the capabilities of the lecturers, the ones who have to manage those activities.”* (Farah, 11;385-392). Farah clearly states that her level of commitment is decreasing because of the attitude of the management. The expression *‘aiming for their own KPI’* reflects that Farah is dissatisfied with the selfish attitude of the management level. She feels that they are mainly concerned with their own benefits and demonstrate a lack of consideration of others. The phrase *‘without bothering’* indicates how Farah perceives that the management ignores the power or the ability of the academics to manage the activities prior making decisions. Farah’s commitment was affected because she considers that the current culture expectation is beyond the academics’ capabilities.

## Well-being

Besides work-life management and commitment, few participants shared how their personal well-being is affected by the new work culture. Maria was pressured under the new leadership style. *“This new leader, if [...] feels [...] gives order [...] will instruct you to do the work even the time given is just in a week. [...] will call me, [...] will ask me to do the paperwork and find a person to complete the task. I went haywire to finish the work. I got stressed because of that”* (Maria 4;140-148). Given a short time frame to complete a task bothers Maria. The phrase *‘because of that’* indicates the situation that pressurizes her. Maria seems to have difficulty in handling impromptu tasks. Furthermore, Maria describes how the new management tends to give instructions very suddenly at any time when she says, *‘if [...] feels’*. Maria’s well-being is negatively affected by that kind of situation.

Meanwhile, according to Zahra, *“I now started searching good reasons for not coming because I am already too tired staying at the office from morning till evening [...] maybe I am stressed [...]”* (Zahra, 7; 229-236). Zahra is exhausted with the new work culture. The adverb *‘now’* indicates the current work situation that has a negative impact on Zahra’s well-being and influences her behaviour. Feeling tired and pressured from working long hours leads Zahra to find excuses to escape from the college activities.

Farah states that *“As humans, sometimes we love being firm with the rules. All things need rules and regulation. However, if the rules which will be implemented by the leader will ultimately restrict the employee, it will create a situation that demotivates them. They get stressed and this encourages them to tell lies.”* (Farah 8;288-295). *“[...] the negative impact is when there are too many tasks being assigned in a short period of time, that will give impact [...] stress and emotion. Your attention to your family will be disturbed by this kind of emotion.”* (Farah, 4; 112-116). Farah believes that being too strict with rules will have a negative impact on employees. Using the third personal pronoun *‘They’* in her discussion, Farah seems to indicate that all academics were not comfortable and were negatively affected by the implementation of the new rules under the new management.

Similar to Maria's situation, Farah also shares their dissatisfaction when there are too many impromptu tasks assigned to the academics. The scenario creates an unhealthy work culture among the academics. Besides feeling pressured and exhausted, it leads them to become dishonest in their work. In addition, Farah relates that family members too will be affected when the academics are emotionally affected by the current work expectation.

As for Salma, she was unhappy and feels disturbed with the new leadership style. *"We want our previous leader. [the current leader] is not like our previous leader. [the current leader] is inconsiderate [...] there is no give and take. All these are disturbances because our previous leader was not that particular"* (Salma13; 456-496). *"These kinds of things that [the current leader] did pressured me because our previous college director was not that particular."* (Salma, 14; 494-496). Feeling dissatisfied, Salma makes a comparison between two types of leadership styles. The phrases *'inconsiderate'*, *'no give and take'* and *'particular'* describe the current leadership styles that have an impact on Salma. Salma is pressured by the new college culture and seems not able to accept the changes. By emphasizing *'We want'* implies that not only Salma but all academics are uncomfortable with the new work culture and are hoping for a return to the previous leadership style.

Despite the fact that experiences shared by the participants on how their personal well-being has been affected with the new work environment, it was Aisha who discussed how the current leadership style had negatively impacted on her marital and family relationships. Although Aisha was the only participant who experienced the situation, it is significant to have her voice heard about the predicament to give justice to her in sharing her painful experiences.

Aisha described how a leadership style can have a negative impact on her marital relationship. She explained how the decision made by the leader affects her relationship with her husband. *"The impact now is I have to lie and sometimes retaliate with my husband [...] He is quite mad at me. He said that there is no such company who could*

*simply come out with that kind of instruction” (Aisha 10;350-362). Aisha is not comfortable with how college events are organized by the management. Simply changing the dates with short notice and making compulsory attendance creates a difficult situation for Aisha when planning family outings with her family. According to Aisha, “It’s difficult. I don’t know how to be specific with the dates and sometimes we have rows because of this [...]” (Aisha, 10; 366-367). The improper planning by the new management does not create trouble for Aisha alone but also drags her into arguments with her husband. In addition, Aisha also started telling lies to her parents due to the new leadership style. “My God, because of that I have to bluff with my parents. I don’t want to hurt their feelings. I don’t know what else to say.” (Aisha, 10;370-373). The similar situation that she is facing also put her in a difficult situation to negotiate with her parents. She feels guilty whenever she has to break her promise with her parents due to the sudden event organized by the college management.*

### **Conclusion**

Under the new leader, participants shared their experiences and the impact this leadership culture is having on them in managing their work-life responsibilities. This shows how the impact of the new leadership style on the work culture eventually impacts also on the work-life management of the participants. The effects that they are experiencing include an impact on their work-life management, commitment, and personal well-being. In juggling their work-life responsibilities, the perception that the participants have towards each of their roles forms their identity. This is presented in the following superordinate theme.

### 5.3.4 Superordinate Theme 4: Identity Formation

Themes	Iman	Layla	Farah	Zahra	Maria	Aisha	Salma
Gender Role	√		√		√	√	
Work Role	√			√		√	√
Belief System	√	√	√				√

During the interviews, participants discussed what work and nonwork mean to them. Work referred first to their academic tasks and non-related academic tasks performed within the boundary of their organizational management while nonwork was referred to all tasks performed out of their organizational management such as performing household duties and managing family and personal commitment. Their perceptions of the meaning of work and nonwork and how they experience their daily work-life interface contribute to their explaining of their self-identity. It reflects how gender role, work role, and belief system influence the formation of their self-identity. This superordinate theme is comprised of three themes: Gender Role, Work Role and Belief System.

#### Gender Role

The traditional view of the feminine gender role prescribes that women should behave in ways that are nurturing, such as managing the home and family. In addition, the gender system in the Malay community is very much influenced by religion, custom, and culture which shape the thoughts and viewpoints of the society. As a mother and a wife, almost all participants view their roles as the traditional tasks of being a female which leads to their daily work-life responsibilities.

According to Iman, *“When you are at home you are still working. You work for your children, for your uncle, for your mum and others [...]. If I am at home, although I am working, I am happy because I love doing the tasks and I do it for the people I love.”* (Iman,

15; 565-570). Iman's explanation portrays the traditional role of a woman in a non-western culture in which the domestic tasks that she performs serve not only her family but also her extended family such as *'uncle'* and *'others'*. Non-western cultures are more collective in that they value doing things for others and not so much for themselves. This seems to be suggested when Iman describes that she feels happy doing the housework for the *'people [she] love[s]'*.

Aisha states that *"[...] as a mother, I guess the work will never end. It is 24 hours. You will never stop."* (Aisha, 5; 165-166). *"[...] we need to think. We are women and it is our task in managing our children. It is already our responsibility whether you have the time or not to do it. So as a mother you have to accept. Whether you like it or not, you must accept."* (Aisha, 16; 595-593). Aisha's perception on the traditional role of a woman is very explicit when she says *'we are women', 'our task', 'our responsibility', 'have to accept', 'must accept'*. To Aisha, as a woman, there is no choice because women bear the responsibility for managing the family. The role of a woman as perceived by Aisha could never be set apart, which she relates with *'24 hours'*. For Aisha, the responsibility assigned to the women should never be argued with. In addition, Aisha states that *'we need to think'* which suggests that being a woman it is well understood that work responsibilities should be performed.

Farah views non-work as related to female tasks when she describes that: *"Non-work refers to tasks besides your profession or career such as the role of a mother, a wife, a daughter [...]"* (Farah, 1; 22-25). This is evident from her own experience in bringing up her children. *"Between the first to sixth year of working, I was in the process of balancing between my role as an academic and as a mother with small children."* (Farah, 1; 34-36). Being a mother, it was her responsibility in managing her children because Farah views that the task is unrelated to her academic work and thus she has to perform the duty. Moreover, Farah states that *"[...] 70% to 80% of tasks are done by a wife at home compared to the husband. Maybe the contribution from the husband is not in physical form but in terms of finance. But the management of the house is usually being handled by the wife [...] maybe the kitchen is already like her own office [...]"* (Farah, 15; 532-537). Farah seems to agree that the proportion of domestic tasks should be more on the



women's responsibilities. Furthermore, she associates 'kitchen' with a woman's 'office' in which this means a woman is responsible for maintaining both family and work tasks.

Maria shares the same view with Farah. According to Maria, *"At home, I don't consider that as work. I take that as the responsibility of a wife and a mother."* (Maria, 3; 91-93). Maria is highlighting her perception of women's role. She believes that women are accountable for all tasks related to home. This reflects the traditional view on feminine gender role.

### **Work Role**

The pattern of employment is one of the factors that shape a person's identity. The participants' perception of their work role as an academic has a significant impact on their work-life management. Aisha had no interest in teaching at the beginning of her career. However, perceiving that teaching as a career would give more time with family has attracted her to switch her job to teaching. Aisha states that *"My first view [...] teaching is not a stressful job. I didn't have any interest at all. I was only thinking about spending time with my children. That's it. But since I started teaching, I notice that I slowly enjoy the task. [...] I guess I was actually born to become a teacher."* (Aisha, 1; 21-32). The way Aisha describes that she was 'born to become a teacher' implies that teaching is now her vocation. Teaching is the profession that suits her best although she did not have the interest at the beginning. In addition, she even plans to continue to retirement working as a teacher. *"[...] I don't mind being a teacher forever in my life [...] My family too is happy with me being a teacher because I have lots of time with them. I think I will retire as a teacher [...] I never want to become a college director."* (Aisha, 22; 800-817). Nevertheless, Aisha was very firm with her decision not to become a college director in the future. The scenario depicts how Aisha's identity was dynamic at the early stage. Her identity was influenced by the pattern of employment. However, the development of her passion for teaching and the support that she receives from her family influenced Aisha to become clear about her needs and actions. Through her experiences of dealing with the work culture, Aisha is being specific with her future career.

Similar to Aisha, Salma began her teaching career by chance. It was not because of a passion for teaching. According to Salma, *“My first intention in becoming a teacher was not because of interest but to pay back my study loan. But after some time, I became interested in teaching.”* (Salma, 1; 27-29). Salma was transparent when telling her actual motive of becoming a teacher. However, through time she develops the passion and remains in the career. In contrast with Aisha, Salma is looking forward to her career development. Salma seems positive about becoming a leader. *“I don’t think I’ll be teaching in the future. I may be positioned at the management level. Let’s say in another 10 years, my teaching hours may have reduced. Maybe I will involve more with managerial tasks. I may become a leader. As a leader, you will be responsible for the whole organization”* (Salma, 17; 614-626). Managing the role as a full time academic and the role of a mother with six young children, Salma seems confident to be able to bear the responsibility as a future leader.

Iman was aiming for a better work-life balance when she started her teaching career due to her previous experience working in a private sector. Iman recalls that: *“Come to think about it [...] I was searching for a more lenient work-life balance. So, I need to be teaching.”* (Iman, 1; 11-12). *“Frankly speaking, at that moment I only wanted more time for myself. But once I had joined this college, it was fun. They are grown up students and a bit easier for me. And so, end up [...] I now love teaching”* (Iman, 2; 63-71). Although Iman did not have interest in teaching at the beginning of her teaching career, she finally enjoys and loves teaching. With her interest in teaching, Iman has decided to remain with her current career. *“As long as I can do my work without any disturbance [...] but from the management, I understand there is a clear cut what can or cannot be done [...] I like to stay a few more years [...] continue to the benefit of my organization in the future.”* (Iman, 20; 723-733). However, Iman is aware of the current work expectations when she mentions these are ‘clear cut’. Under the new work culture, Iman faces difficulties when she has to reorganize her work-life management since she has to manage her special needs child. It was a challenge for her but Iman seems to understand and could accept the implementation of the policy by the new management. Teaching is a vocation for Iman. Despite some of her dissatisfaction with the work culture, she still strives to work

for the benefit of the organization. This clearly reflects how the work role contributes to the development of her identity.

In contrast to the other participants, Zahra finds that life gets more difficult. Zahra describes that *“I’ll try to survive [...] maybe for another 12 years more. Or I may retire early. Maybe because it is hard to predict. The system will keep on changing and we do not know what will happen in another 7 or 4 years time. It gets challenging from time to time.”* (Zahra, 11; 378-384). The phrase ‘survive’ implies that Zahra is struggling in her teaching career. She is undecided about her future career whether she will sustain or leave her profession early. Zahra is not comfortable with the ‘system’ which reflects the management of the organization in implementing the new policy. Zahra states that *“Currently, I have not seen any positive side of the new system because before this it was flexible [...] but the negative aspects are obvious.”* (Zahra, 4; 137-140). The comparison between two different types of work culture shows that Zahra was more comfortable with the previous management than the current. The change of system has a huge impact on Zahra’s future career. It makes Zahra foresee that there will be many obstacles for her to face in the journey of her academic life.

### **Belief System**

Every human being has a belief system that they employ and through which they individually make sense of the world around them. Our beliefs define who we think we are and what we believe we can and cannot do which in turn shape our identity. Most of the participants discussed their perceptions of work and non-work based on their belief system.

Iman states that *“[...] work means I have my responsibility towards my employer. I have a due date, submission date, and others.”* (Iman, 3; 86-88). *“And my mum [...] she has this kind of old-school upbringing. If you are working, you must settle your work. Whatever it is don’t worry about your children. Mum will settle that for you [...]”* (Iman, 4; 118-122).

Work is highly valued not only by Iman but also her mother. The phrase *'old school upbringing'* reflects Iman's mother's belief system. Beliefs arise from experience and this represents what Iman's mother had gone through in the past. Iman's mother believes that work is a priority when she mentioned *'must settle'*. Completing work tasks is an obligation. Similarly, Iman also believes that, as an academic, she has a set of responsibilities towards her superior. *'Due date'* and *'submission date'* present work as a serious business that needs to be performed. Holding tight her belief in performing her work finally develops Iman's commitment to her work as an academic. *"Now I feel I'm kind in love with the job and I feel because I have the responsibility towards these students."* (Iman, 14; 494-495). Her accountability as an academic and the years she devoted to teaching shape her from viewing teaching as a chance of occupation into a vocation.

Likewise, work influences Maria's life. According to Maria, *"I don't have any motivation when at home. When I am at work, working, I gain the spirit. The spirit to live exists because of work."* (9; 321-323). Work seems to be one source of motivation in Maria's life. She feels indebted to the organization which gives her the opportunity to be part of them. Maria explains that *"[...] I got this job from [name of organization] and I feel that [...] my appreciation towards this organization will remain forever. I admit that sometimes I am dissatisfied with certain things. But the truth is I love [name organization] and I will never resign."* (Maria, 7; 223-238). Her strong belief in the organization which acts as her source of income leads her to value her career. On top of that, Maria's husband urges her to be serious with her work. Maria states that *"He will say [...] mc mc [getting medical certificate]. Go to work. Unless you really feel unwell [...]"* (9; 321-323). In addition, her father-in-law plays an important role in her professional life. As mentioned by Maria, *"My father-in-law always advises me. He said, when you are working, perform the best. He doesn't like if we slack off because he said that God will not bless what we earn from our work."* (10; 337-343). Maria's father-in-law has a strong belief in the Muslim work ethic. He believes that it is *'haram'* or unlawful to accept payment for imperfect work.

As for Layla, work means worship. It is her obligation to God. *"The reason why we work is because of 'amanah' [an Arabic term which means the moral responsibility of fulfilling*

*one's obligations due to Allah]" (Layla, 8;273). "When we name it as work and we consider it as 'amanah', and like why we become a lecturer...we strongly believe that Allah has destined us to become a lecturer. This is the 'amanah' from Allah that we have to perform despite the obstacles and difficulties that we face." (Layla, 12; 421-423). Layla regards the responsibility of the work that was given to her as an obligation which she has to complete. The repetition of 'amanah' in her discussion shows the strong influence of religion in her understanding of how work should be performed in life. In Islamic teachings, 'amanah' should be fulfilled and not betrayed, as stated in the Holy Qur'an [8:27]. Her belief system shapes her worldview on the righteous way of performing her academic work.*

Meanwhile, Farah believes that, in managing the home, all religions share the same views that both husband and wife should share the work tasks together. *"All religions seek for the collaboration between both husband and wife. In Islam specifically, there are verses from the Holy Qur'an that describe the responsibilities of both partners. In addition, there are also limitations that both husbands and wife should comply with." (Farah, 16; 549-555). Farah seems to have the set of beliefs as her guidance in managing her work-life responsibilities. Farah is aware that there are verses from the Holy Qur'an as references.*

Salma was uncertain when defining work and non-work tasks. *"Those tasks at home [laughing] not sure but I don't think those are work. That is responsibility. Work means you get paid. You are paid to perform the task. But when you are at home, it is a kind of responsibility. You must do although you didn't get paid because it is a responsibility." (Salma, 5; 156-152). Although she was undecided to consider managing those as part of work, Salma was confident when she says 'That is responsibility'. It represents her strong belief that women are accountable for managing home and family by emphasizing 'must do' and the repetition of 'responsibility'. Delivering her ideas in a firm manner reflects how her strong belief influences her in juggling her work-life responsibilities especially in managing all her six young children.*

## **Conclusion**

Identity is complex because of the interweaving of few factors. In managing their daily work-life responsibilities, the participants' experiences and their perception of their role as a mother and a wife, an academic and their belief systems form their identity as women academics in a non-western culture.

## **5.4 Chapter Summary**

In the two consecutive weeks of diary writing, almost all participants considered work-related tasks to be more significant than family related tasks. In addition, they reported work interference as greater than family/ personal tasks interference. Almost all participants also experienced more negative feelings than positive. Based on the interview with the participants, four emerging superordinate themes were identified: Juggling Multiple Responsibilities, Sources of Support, Impact of Leadership Style and, Identity Formation.

# CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION

## 6.1 Introduction

This research explores how Malaysian women academics make sense of their daily work-life integration. It has been acknowledged that the relationship of female academics with work and family involves problematic issues in both western and non-western countries. In the previous chapter, the academics shared their experiences in balancing the conflicting demands of their various roles, such as carrying out their responsibilities as academics and managing the home. The data shows that, living in a predominantly collectivist society with Islam as the official religion, for these women both personal and public life are complicated since their roles and behaviours are framed by cultural and religious expectations.

This chapter consists of two sections. The first section presents the synthesis of findings which brings together the themes relevant to each research question. The intention is to weave and connect the emerging themes to form a synopsis for each research question. This sets out the key ideas emerging from the data before moving into the discussion of each research question in relation to previous related literature. In the second section, the findings of this research in relation to its objectives and the relevant literature are discussed.

## 6.2 Synthesis of Findings

The findings of this research reveal how Malaysian women academics in a collectivist culture experience their work-life interface. Although the findings indicate that their experience is quite similar to previous findings on work-life research among women, the use of IPA in conducting this research uncovers an important issue related to the leadership style and culture in the workplace which has an impact on both the

professional and personal lives of these Malaysian women. This was emphasized throughout the interviews by most participants, particularly how different leadership styles affected their work-life management. In addition, this research shows that, for these women managing their multiple responsibilities, an interplay exists between Islamic values and Malay traditional customs.

In conducting this research, the overarching open-ended research question is:

1. How do Malaysian women academics make sense of their work-life interface?

To inquire further into the academics' perceptions of factors in their work environment that may promote or hinder them in achieving their work-life responsibilities, the primary question was supplemented with two secondary research questions:

2. What are the work environmental factors that assist and/or hinder the academics' work-life responsibilities?
3. Is there any influence of personal or cultural involvement in managing their work-life responsibilities?

The synthesis presented here uses the aim and the research questions to frame the account of the academics' experiences in managing their work-life interface, in particular how their work environmental factors assist or hinder them in achieving their work-life responsibilities; and how culture and religion influence their roles in both work and family domains.



### 6.2.1 Work-Life Experience

This section draws together some of the themes from the previous chapter which summarize the participants' work-life experiences. The themes involved are: Work related tasks, Family/ Personal related tasks, Spillover, Work-life Challenge, Work interference, Family/ personal interference, Negative emotions, Positive emotions, Family, Colleagues, Religion/ Faith, Work-life management, Commitment, Well-being, Gender role, Work role and Belief system.

From the findings of this research, it is evident that the experience of managing both roles as an academic and as a mother is difficult. Academic tasks are challenging while fulfilling domestic roles is a never-ending story. Besides teaching, the findings indicate academics also are responsible for administrative tasks which take substantial amounts of time during their working day. In addition, they have to maintain their home and raise children (Work related tasks and Family/Personal related tasks). The participation of these women academics in work and family domains in this research reflects their struggles in juggling multiple roles and incompatible demands from both domains (Spillover, Work-life Challenge, Work interference and Family/ personal interference). Thus, the data typically shows that, due to their strong work commitment, the academics take home their work tasks in order to accomplish them. At the same time, they continue with their 'second shift' at home because managing family and doing domestic chores are considered women's work. Those are responsibilities that need to be performed or else these women would be considered as not being proper women in the traditional Malay culture. Hence, women academics expressed mixed emotions when dealing with their daily work-life interface. Being able or unable to complete their work tasks influences their positive or negative feelings. Feeling pressured and exhausted is more common than being happy in their life (Negative emotions and Positive emotions). Nevertheless, with the strong support which comes from different sources, they are strengthened to overcome the difficult situation (Family, Colleagues and Religion/ Faith).

One finding emerging unexpectedly was the way leadership styles can have great impact on the academics' life. From the findings, it is evident that not only work but personal life gets more difficult and complicated when there is a more directive leadership style in the organization and that this has a huge impact in managing their daily work-life interface (Work-life management, Commitment and Well-being). Yet, performing the range of domestic responsibilities does not seem as a burden to these women because, living in a collectivist culture, they strongly believe these demands are appropriate. Moreover, because teaching is their passion, they still have a strong commitment towards their professional career. Eventually, their beliefs and daily work-life experience shape their identity as Malay Muslim women academics (Gender role, Work role and Belief system).

### **6.2.2 Environmental Factors**

The relevant themes that describe the participants' perceptions of environmental factors include Work-life management, Commitment, Well-being, Colleagues, Work-life Challenge, Work related tasks and Family/ Personal related tasks.

The work environment is an important influence in the academics' lives. Flexible working hours, at first glance, might seem to contribute to the academics' ability to manage their work-life interface. Flexible working hours could allow the academics to accomplish their personal or family related tasks and their work tasks. However, the new work culture created difficulties for the academics in managing their daily work-life routine as a new policy introduced non-flexible working hours. Therefore, leadership style appears to have a great impact in both the academics' professional and personal life (Work-life management, Commitment and Well-being). The leadership style and culture can either assist or hinder the academics to achieve their work-life responsibilities.

Colleagues play an important role in helping the academics during difficult times in their professional sphere (Colleagues and Work-life Challenge). The data indicates that colleagues not only assist when the academics are experiencing a hard time dealing with

professional or personal matters but they also influence the academics' attitude towards their future career. The academics believe that having good colleagues around them help to support when dealing with their professional tasks (Work related tasks and Family/ Personal related tasks). Colleagues are also 'shoulders for them to cry on'. Sharing problems with colleagues and seeking advice from them helps the academics to remain committed to their future career. Furthermore, having good colleagues motivates the academics to think positively about their future in their teaching life, albeit their feelings of dissatisfaction where there is a more directive leadership style.

### **6.2.3 Culture / Religious Influences**

Gender role, Work role, Belief system, Work related tasks, Family/ Personal related tasks, Spillover and Work-life Challenge are themes that emerged from the participants' reflections on the influence of culture and religion in managing their work-life responsibilities.

From the findings, the women academics have a clear collective stance as they value doing things for others rather than for themselves (Gender role, Work role and Belief system). The academics have demanding tasks in both domains (Work related tasks and Family/ Personal related tasks): their professional tasks demand much of their time and energy and the same goes for the demands at home (Spillover and Work-life Challenge). While the academics emphasized their difficulties in fulfilling the work demands, they never expressed their difficulties in managing their domestic responsibilities. They willingly perform the job for the sake of their family despite being exhausted during their long working hours (Gender role, Work role and Belief system). This reflects how the traditional perception of gender roles in Malay culture strongly influences their daily work-life experience of these women academics.

## 6.3 Discussion of Findings

### 6.3.1 How do Malaysian women academics experience work-life interface?

Teaching as a career has been perceived by most people as an easy job which “offers a shorter working day, accommodates family responsibilities and childcare, and requires little more in skills than a desire to work with children” which, so it is argued, all make it easier for teachers to balance their work role and their family role (Richardson & Watt, 2016: 277). However, juggling work and family roles as a teacher is also challenging (Claesson & Brice, 1989). In addition, some researchers highlighted the way teaching has been internationally recognized as one of the most stressful occupations (Hakanen, Bakker, & Schaufeli, 2006; Prieto et al., 2008).

A VITAE project (Variations in Teachers’ Work, Lives and Effectiveness) commissioned by Department for Education and Skills (DfES) in England identified six professional life phases among teachers (Day et al., 2006). According to the VITAE report (Day et al., 2006), for participants either in the third and fourth phase which are between 8-15 years and 16-23 years of teaching experience, this is the period of work-life tensions in which teachers have to manage not only heavy workloads but also additional demands outside their academic duties. They tend to organize their lives around two primary domains: work and family. Some will also occupy other roles that involve personal development responsibilities. The participants in the Vitae study come home from their paid work to a ‘second shift’ (Hochschild, 1989). They expect and are expected to organize and carry out family work or domestic responsibilities. Work-family responsibilities are made of different components such as childrearing, care giving, house chores, teaching and administrative tasks. The findings from the study of English teachers resonate with the findings of this study of Malay women academics.

Findings from the two-week diary writing show that the academics experienced overload of tasks in both roles. However, work-related tasks seem higher than personal/ family related tasks. Most of the participants mentioned a number of problems at work which included heavy workload and intensification of work to accomplish demanding

administrative tasks. For the participants, the responsibilities and expectations of the work place often competed with those of the home. Demands from their academic jobs never ended and meeting their family responsibilities was also challenging to them. In addition to having a high level of performance in their professional role, they also have to balance the burden of child care and domestic affairs. It could be difficult combining these domestic and academic roles, the dual commitment to paid and family work. Some of the participants derive satisfaction from both spheres of life, while some do not. There are also some who tried to overtake their professional tasks while at the same time attending to their family's needs. However, with the aim of balancing their family and work responsibilities, they try their best to excel in both roles.

The findings are consistent with the findings of several previous studies which point to the lack of boundaries between the domains of work, family and personal (Aryee et al., 1999; Fletcher & Bailyn, 2005). The permeability of the boundary between these roles has adverse effects on the participants' life. It can create tension when one role dominates and requires total commitment from the participants. For example, some of the participants revealed that they had been focusing their life, time and energy more on work than on their family or personal needs. In most of the interviews conducted, participants experienced more work to family tension than otherwise. Many participants expressed their difficulty in trying to get more time to spend with family. For instance, Maria described how she had struggled to find time to assist her children for their examinations and also for her own personal career development.

Coping with family roles and work roles is a challenge and could result in an inter-role conflict known as work-family conflict (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). Work-family conflict has been found to be expressed differently in collectivistic cultures and individualistic cultures (Kossek & Ozeki, 1998; Greenhaus & Parasuraman, 1989; Spector et al., 2004). These differences between the two types of culture include how work and family roles are divided, the meaning of work, the nature of the organization and relationships with superiors. Although some of the participants reported that they tried to separate the work domain and their personal or family life, most of the time they took home their work with them. However, the reason for this may not relate only to the idea that the participants are from a collectivist culture. According to Trompenaars and Hampton-

Turner (1998), collective cultures tend to integrate both work and family domains. Further, as a result of the nature of the teaching profession itself, with the intensification of workload and long working hours which stretch to the evenings and weekends, then the boundary between work and family is less clearly delineated (Caproni, 1997; Doherty & Manfredi, 2006; Edwards & Rothbard, 2000; Houston et al., 2006; Jones, 2003). Furthermore, the growing demands by organisations means that employees are increasingly under pressure and have no choice but to take work home.

Completing the academic tasks at home while, at the same time fulfilling their domestic responsibilities, also led to stress and exhaustion for these women academics. In their daily routine, most of the participants described how they ended their day feeling tired and restless. Although they were exhausted after completing their long working hours and work demands, they continued with their domestic tasks. According to role theory, women, regardless of the culture, are likely to experience strain when trying to meet their traditionally assigned role as a home caretaker and their role as an employee (Carlson et al., 1995).

Teachers in a 1996 study by Acker clearly thought that the combination of being a teacher and a mother was not at all straightforward. The western teachers recounted that they were forced into 'triple-shifts' of work consisting of teaching, housework, and childcare. The unequal division between men and women in performing the household tasks creates more difficulties for women to find a balance between work and family than men (Bird, 2006). Although the academic workload in the higher education institution is very much like the burden of teachers in schools, the participants in this research have different experiences. In this current research, the participants expressed their difficulties in completing their academic and the administrative tasks. They also described their daily experience of managing their family and domestic responsibilities. Although the data demonstrates that they have to juggle the demands arising from the family domain as well as from the workplace, none of the participants expressed their view that managing their family life and domestic roles was a burden for them. In their accounts of their work-life interface experience, quite often the participants indicated that these are responsibilities of them being a mother and a wife while some viewed the demands of

family responsibilities as a test from God. Living in their collectivist society, their lack of criticism of their family responsibilities may be due to cultural inhibitions which are still strong among the participants such as the belief that a woman's primary role is in the home or that women must take second place to men at the workplace.

However, based on the responses provided by the participants, it could also be argued that they might be protected from the unfavourable effects of negative role experiences by their cultural and religious beliefs. As described by Luke (2001), the role and behaviour of Malaysian women are framed by cultural expectations that consider women's roles as being that of wife, mother, and homemaker alongside the women's behaviour is seen as "subdued", "quiet", and "withdrawn". In the Malay culture, it is unacceptable to discuss family problems with other people, particularly those who are not part of the family. Indeed, it is not part of the normative behaviour to share negative things with others or such things to become public knowledge. Thus, it could be assumed that the participants might feel inappropriate to disclose their true feelings about the burden of managing their daily work-life responsibilities.

On the other hand, being Muslims, these women academics may think that they need to possess particular qualities to be a good and righteous wife and mother. As discussed in the literature review chapter, besides protecting their honour, Muslim women are encouraged to treat their family kindly and be a dutiful wife: they will gain the blessings of God when they act according to the Islamic teaching and please their husband and children. Moreover, in Islam, the ultimate concern in life is to live well in the present and, most importantly, in the hereafter. Each believer is expected to strive to live by following what God values as mentioned in the Holy Qur'an because the results of this struggle will be measured in the hereafter. Thus, performing multiple roles may not be considered as a burden for the women academics because they see this as gaining the blessings from God will lead towards a righteous life.

This lack of criticism of the demands of home life is consistent with Noor's 1995 study on roles and well-being among Malay and Chinese women in Malaysia. In her study, both groups reported that their lives were satisfactory and that they enjoyed working. Many attributed their life either to the generosity of God or to the fact that they had been

patient in facing the trials and tribulations of life. Similarly, participants in this study of Malay women academics also believed in the wisdom behind those trials and accepted that whatever happened to them came from God. This acts as a motivation for them to have the strength to address these and be optimistic about their future. These findings support a suggestion made by Anderson (as cited in Aryee, Srinivas, & Tan, 2005: 133) that “optimistic individuals experience more positive emotions, repair mood more effectively and are more adept at regulating emotions and stress”. Therefore, when work demands are seen from a positive viewpoint, it can result in satisfaction and excitement among the participants, especially when they were able to complete their responsibilities. This can lead to the employees’ perception that work demands are not a burden to them.

Women who are mothers will, broadly, have similar home tasks, even though they come from many different cultures. Women continue to be associated as the primary caregiver to their children regardless of whether they are career women or housewives. In Britain (McCulloch & Dex, 2001) as in East and Southeast Asia (Ochiai, 2008), many women decide to stop working full-time or limit their career goals when they have children. Although the participants in this current research spent less time at home due to the overload of their academic and administrative tasks, the majority still consider family to be more important than work, indicating the centrality of family life to them. The participants said that managing home and children was an important responsibility that needed to be performed. This is consistent with the findings of a few studies conducted on professional Malay women in Malaysia (Abdullah, 1987; Abdullah et al., 2008; Omar, 2003). Most Malay career women are still responsible for managing the two important domains in their life which are work and family. At the same time, they still maintain their tradition as a Malay woman (Abdullah, 1987; Abdullah et al., 2008; Omar, 2003). Significantly, although they have to perform multiple responsibilities, none of the participants in this research described their intention to resign. In addition, some of them have increased or sustained their work commitment due to their passion for teaching. This clearly signifies that juggling multiple roles for a Malay woman does not seem a burden but, due to the strong influence of religion and culture, fulfilling both work and family duties are considered as responsibilities or an act of worship.



However, many participants admit that, although they accepted the work responsibilities and managed to meet the workload well, they could not avoid facing difficulties in balancing their career with family responsibilities in certain circumstances. Time constraint seems to be one of the crucial factors that need to be dealt with when these women face a home-related or work-related emergency, for example, when they had deadlines for their work tasks, attending conferences or when their family members had health or personal problems.

Nevertheless, many of the participants who claim that in certain circumstances they find difficulties in balancing career and family responsibilities do not consider the tasks they have to shoulder as a burden. With such time constraints, it would be impossible for them to complete both. The findings from Noor's 1995 study between Malay and Chinese ethnics in Malaysia show that both groups chose family than work when they were asked to make a choice between those two. However, this is not just about segregated gender roles but wider cultural understandings. Work has different meaning between the Eastern and Western societies. In individualistic Western societies, individuals are expected to give priority to their own goals above others because the relationships among individuals are loose (Hofstede & Bond, 1988). In contrast, in a collectivistic society, people usually work to support their families and not for their own self-accomplishment. This involves all members of the family including the extended family members. An example of how academic work is viewed differently between Western societies and non-Western societies is described below.

Simone Schweber, a mother, and an assistant professor of education and Jewish studies at the University of Wisconsin in the USA, explains the experience that made her conclude that the concept of a mother achieving work-family balance is only an illusion. She further explains that she would rather accept being viewed as a bad academic for being a good mother, than as a bad mother for being a good academic (Schweber, 2005). The women academics in this current research are trying their best to become excellent in both roles. Some participants claimed that, in order not to interfere their family life, they will try to complete their tasks at their workplace. This is evident in their explanations of how they brought home their work with them and to try to complete this

while, at the same time manage their children. Being able to complete both tasks without neglecting one of them makes these women feel less guilty and more comfortable. Furthermore, in Islamic teaching, work is given special importance to the extent that it is considered as an act of worship in itself. Work and effort are described as a struggle (*jihad*) in the way of God (Ahmad & Owoyemi, 2012).

Another interesting finding describes how culture has an impact on how work and family are perceived by different societies. Triandis (1989) argued that values are shaped by culture. For example, it is the norm that women from collectivistic cultures take up the role of home caretaker while men take up the role of provider. Women are expected to stay at home and manage all the home-related tasks, while men are expected to work and provide for the family in monetary terms (Patel et al., 2006). Although women in collectivistic cultures in increasing numbers are now taking up a new role as an employee, they are still expected to be the primary caregivers and to take care of the household. In order to be seen as someone with a positive standing, these women need to adhere to this role. This current research, however, found that, in performing their roles as an academic and as a mother and a wife, the participants still try to give the best in both roles due to their belief in Muslim work ethics and their traditional Malay custom. Although all participants demonstrated a deep sense of motherhood and said that their families are their priorities, they also highlighted the importance of career in their life. Thus, these findings disagree with the argument made by Triandis (1989) that women in collectivistic culture consider their roles in the home and family domain as more salient. Further than this, as more women enter the workplace in collectivist societies, they have to balance what is perceived as their primary role with their work role. This illustrates that work-family conflict is culture-specific and not global, and the variables influencing the experience of work-family conflict may have different types of impact depending on the culture and its respective context.

The impact of being an educator and the work of teaching can add to the idea that work is a secondary concern for women. Biklen (1995) and Thomas and Brien (1984) found working that with school children was considered to be quite draining and that an individual can lack energy to be both a good mother and a good teacher. Thus, when work interferes with the fulfilment of roles in the home domain, this may cause stress for

the individual, and this stress may consequently affect the fulfilment of the work role (Hill et al., 2004). This may explain the reason why most participants in this current research end their daily work-life feeling stressed. Yet, although the participants end their day feeling exhausted and strained, most see meeting both sets of demands as an accomplishment which provides them with satisfaction. This may also reflect their strong belief in their culture and religion. Performing the 'traditional role' as a mother and a wife is a responsibility and, as an individual, the participants believe that a person should not complain. They would be considered insincere if they blamed their tiredness on the domestic tasks they had performed. Moreover, this view is grounded in their beliefs: when domestic tasks are done with sincerity and in accordance with the teachings of Islam, this is a form of worship.

In addition to academic work tasks, some participants explained that they were also responsible for the administrative tasks. For them, an administrative task is more demanding than the academic task. Combining the administrative duties and academic tasks required extra time and energy, which caused further difficulties for them balancing these also with their family responsibilities. According to Abdullah et al. (2008), the main challenge faced by women in Malaysia is the lack of fit between the support obtained at the workplace and family demands. For example, when employees were asked to work during weekends, this used their time that should have been spent with their family. This finding is consistent with a study by Becker and Moen (1999) in which demands of long working hours have an impact on their respondents' family time and personal lives. However, a finding from this current research on Malay women academics pointed to the significance of leadership style and culture for these women's experience of their work-life balance.

In this current research, some of the participants expressed dissatisfaction when they had to stay at the workplace for extra working hours. For instance, Layla described how previously she was not bothered if she had to work overtime or stayed late at the office but her attitude changed when new management took over. She then became very particular about the time she spent at her workplace. This behaviour is illustrative of their dissatisfaction with the expectations evident in a leadership culture based on a more autocratic approach and contrasted with a more flexible and responsive leadership style.

Thus, it is a significant finding of this research to propose that long working hours do not actually affect the participants' personal lives and family time. Instead, the key factor is the leadership style and culture of the organization which shapes experiences and attitudes to work.

Studies on work-family have found that the role of a spouse is significant in providing support as it helps in avoiding conflicts between work and family roles. Studies revealed that dual-career couples emphasize the importance of social and emotional support in the family institution. For example, it was discovered that spouse support enhances the quality of family and marital well-being (Adams, King, & King, 1996; Aryee et al., 2005; Baker, 2001; Bures, Henderson, Mayfield, & Worley, 1995; Ruderman, Ohlott, Panzer, & King, 2002). In a study of dual-earner couples, Greenberger and O'Neil (1993) found that while men's well-being was chiefly associated with social support from their wives, women's well-being was linked to social support from husbands, neighbours, supervisors, and co-workers. However, the support varied in degree and kind, and over time. For individuals in a collectivist culture, social support is provided as a form of duties or obligations (Triandis, 1995) rather than on a voluntary basis. Therefore, it is likely that more individuals in collectivist culture will receive social support as all will benefit. Indeed it is assumed that those who can afford to provide support will do so (e.g. Fu & Shaffer, 2001; Li & Leung, 2001; Shaffer et al., 2005).

Likewise, the majority of the participants reported that family and spouse support is crucial in managing their work-life responsibilities. Most participants recognised that they found it easier to manage both roles effectively owing to the support of the husband and family because this support was a great source of motivation to the academics, even if this was only emotional support. Interestingly, none of the participants pointed out whether they faced any difficulty getting their husband to share domestic responsibilities. This differs with some studies which show that employed wives are distressed when husbands do not participate at home (Mederer, 1993; Perry-Jenkins & Folk, 1994). For the current research participants, having at least emotional support was enough. It could be assumed that this was due to the influence of the patriarchal culture of their society where men are not supposed to share the domestic responsibilities. This difference in socialisation practices in Malaysian society, however, has led to the construction of

gender imbalance and uneven division of work. The Malay family, as well as the society, has developed expectations about how men and women should behave in the society (Eagly & Karau, 2002).

In this research on Malay women academics, most participants stated that obtaining permission and receiving emotional support from their husbands were the most important sources of support they needed in order for them to undertake their tasks or responsibilities and progress in their careers. This reflects their identity which has an influence in their professional life: as Malay Muslim wives, although also career women, the participants emphasize the concept of obedience to their husbands. The concept of obedience to the husband can be understood in the context of Islam and Malay culture when participants discussed the importance of getting permission from their husbands in performing their duties. Indeed, the concept of obedience within the limits of fairness and justice has been emphasized in the Holy Qur'an (Al-Quran, 4: 34). In Islam, a wife must obey her husband because she is considered under her husband's authority but this is an important aspect of faith where it is believed that when a wife obeys her husband, she will gain the blessings from God and will be rewarded in the hereafter life. That having their husband's blessing and permission is more than enough, without them receiving instrumental support, was clearly visible in the interviews with the participants. For them, this support gave them the strength to manage and ease the burden of work responsibilities.

Several studies conducted in non-Western countries, including Malaysia, found that dual-career couples were capable to perform their household tasks efficiently by having a systematic division of tasks schedule (Abdullah, 1987; Da, 2004; Gilbert, 1994; Hochschild, 1997; Sultana & Noor, 2011). For instance, a daily, weekly or monthly type of schedules was designed as their guidelines. These have given opportunity to both husbands and wives to become involved in the paid labour force (Abdullah, 1987; Da, 2004; Gilbert, 1994; Hochschild, 1997; Sultana & Noor, 2011). However, such coping strategies were not applied by the participants in this current research, except for Zahra who shared domestic chores with her husband and their grown-up children. Other participants described how they managed the domestic responsibilities and their family on their own which begin from early morning and continued after they come back from the college. Although some

studies highlighting the sharing of house work between couples can be applied to Malaysia, it is important to note that Malaysia comprises various ethnic groups and this research concentrates only on the Malay ethnic group and sharing of housework was not the norm. In looking at this issue of family and domestic work not being the responsibility of most of these women, it was not that they wanted to necessarily reduce their responsibilities within either role. This issue was largely that there was not enough time to address these questions.

Besides spouse and family, the participants also reported that colleagues and religion play a crucial role in managing their daily work-life responsibilities. Support from colleagues has helped the participants fulfil the responsibilities that have been entrusted to them as academics. The support received not only helps them in reducing their work load but can even contribute to a cooperative spirit among colleagues and possibly improve the performance of their departments. The role of colleagues is discussed in detail in the next research question. The other source of support for these women was their religious faith. Religion gives meaning and purpose to life by structuring one's experiences, beliefs, values, and well-being (Argyle & Beit-Hallahmi, 1997). When facing difficulties such as being pressured with the needs of a new work culture, some of the participants believed that these are trials from God sent to them. Consistent with the study conducted by Noor (2008, 1999) among Malaysian women, the findings of this current research show that, besides providing the participants with solace through prayer and contemplation, having strong faith in religion supports them in dealing with adverse life circumstances. Thus, being religious and practicing religion as a way of life helped them especially in managing their work-life responsibilities.

As part of the theory of work-family conflict, there is the idea of spillover, either negative or positive. The participants revealed that their involvement in the academic world influenced how they managed their family and *vice versa*. For instance, Maria described how her work was badly affected when she had difficulty managing her new born baby. For Salma being a multi-tasking person at home when she had to handle her six young children helped her in better organizing her tasks at her work place. It appears that having to manage demanding work and family roles does not necessarily lead to a

negative spillover, but can also have a positive impact on the academics and their families.

Findings from this research also bring to light the formation of the identity of the participants. Identity development is a major psychosocial task and one that appears during many phases of life. Although Erikson's theory of identity was largely fixed by the end of the adolescence, he did suggest that identity continues to evolve throughout adulthood. Identity construction is never fixed but one of ongoing construction (Sokol, 2009). The in-depth analytic method of IPA in analyzing the data shows how gender role, work role and belief system contribute to dynamic identity formation of the Malay Muslim women academics.

The Malay Muslim women academics' identities are hardly free choices for them. The sense of this derived from the culture and contexts in which they live and of which they are part. Being a Malay Muslim woman, the interplay between Malay culture and Islamic teaching acts as the main resources and parameters for the participants' identity construction. In Article 160 (2) in the Malaysian Federal Constitution, a Malay identity was defined based on three main symbols: religion, culture, and language. Mutalib (2008) explains how '*adat*' or the Malay traditional customs, one of the defining elements of Malay identity, control the individual's values, norms, and behaviours. Gender is an important dimension of the identities of these participants. According to Harun (2009), women in the Malay society occupy a 'subordinate' and 'subservient role position'. In addition, a few nicknames are given to Malay women such as '*orang dapur*' (literally means a person who manages the kitchen) and '*orang rumah*' (literally means a person who manages the house). Indirectly, this shows the expected role position that a Malay woman has to perform in a marriage and in the society (Harun, 2009).

In this research, the participants' perception of what it means to be a woman reflects the terms that represent the role of Malay women. For example, Aisha described that, "*We are women and it is our task in managing our children. It is already our responsibility whether you have the time or not to do it. So, as a mother you have to accept. Whether you like it or not, you must accept.*" Farah also believed that the major proportion of tasks to be accomplished at home should be borne by women when she said, "*70% to 80% of*

*tasks are done by a wife at home compared to the husband.*" Their perception about the role of women being responsible with doing house tasks and managing the family was very explicitly reflecting their adherence to the norms of their role as Malay women.

Gender, culture and religion formed key elements in the identities of these women but these facets intersect with their experiences and their sense of themselves through their work. According to Kohn and Schooler (1978), one's identity is in large part defined by one's work because the nature of work can affect one's cognitive capacity and intellectual ability. The VITAE report (Day et al., 2006) shows that teacher identity comprises the interactions between professional, situated and personal dimensions. As academics, the professional dimension was evident: the participants show their passion in teaching. Although some of them began their teaching career by chance, their commitment to teaching developed as they progressed in their career. This could be seen when Iman said, *"I now love teaching"*. Despite her dissatisfaction with the new leadership style, Iman has a strong confidence with her career, looking to progress for the benefit of the college. Similarly, Salma did not begin her teaching career with passion but when thinking about the future she is now confident that she will become a leader and responsible in managing the college. Their commitment in their career reflects how work role contributes to the development of their identity.

The participants' belief system in their culture and religion also plays major role in their identity formation but this is not always a straightforward alignment. For example, Farah describes that, *"All religions seek for the collaboration between both husband and wife"* which shows that managing family tasks is a shared responsibility. Yet, she agreed that the major proportion of house tasks should be performed by women. This shows how culture dominates the participant's actual task despite their strong belief in their religion. While there is no specific prescription of women taking sole responsibility for family and domestic duties in Islamic belief, however the norms of Malay culture seem to dominate when it comes to the division of work roles between genders.

Being Muslims, work is viewed from Islamic perspectives. Work and effort are described as a struggle (*jihad*) in the way of God (Ahmad & Owoyemi, 2012). In Islamic teaching, being a teacher is one of the noble works while, in the Muslim work ethic, performing a noble work is an act of worship. As a Malay Muslim academic, the participants show their



strong dedication and commitment to their work. For example, when Laila states that *“work is the ‘amanah’ [an Arabic term which means the moral responsibility of fulfilling one’s obligations due to Allah] from Allah that we have to perform despite the obstacles and difficulties that we face”*, Laila believes that work is a duty that needs to be completed. In addition, Maria’s father highlighted the work ethic when he reminded her that God will not bless what was earned from work if the work was not performed seriously. The belief system of these women in how work should be performed has put work as a central priority in their life and, at the same time, they must behave as a good wife and loving mother. Therefore, for these participants the domestic tasks were not seen as a burden to them: it was a responsibility to be fulfilled and at the same time they also needed to meet the demands of their career as an academic (Hashim & Omar, 2004; Omar & Hamzah, 2003).

Thus, the key to understanding the identities of these women is through their perceptions of their work role, gender role and belief system and these are shaped by both in the Malay culture and Islamic religion. Their work-life decisions and priorities in and across all domains of work and life are constrained and enhanced by the interplay between culture and religion. It can be seen that, in negotiating their identities, the Malay culture and Islamic teaching remain central as does performing both roles, equally important to the participants. Implicitly though, family and domestic work were largely their responsibilities which only they could address. Understanding the construction of the identities of these participants helps to illuminate the position of these Malay women academics in Malaysia and the way religious and cultural identities influence the management of their daily work-life responsibilities.

### **6.3.2 What are the environmental factors that assist and/ or hinder the academics’ work-life responsibilities?**

According to the VITAE report (Day et al., 2006), a supportive school culture was a key factor in sustaining motivation and a sense of effectiveness among teachers. The quality of leadership, both at school and departmental level; and relationships with co-workers are key influencing factors on teachers’ motivation, commitment, and quality retention.

The participants in this current study indicated the extent to which they received various types of support as well as the importance of each type of support. They also indicated factors that hinder them in achieving their work-life responsibilities. Many of these factors reflect the findings of the Vitae study.

Cinamon (2006), Hill et al. (2004) and Subramaniam and Selvaratnam (2010) discovered that work arrangements, such as flexible working hours and part-time jobs, have helped women to balance the responsibilities of work and family. In addition, alternative work arrangements were also found to reduce the work- family conflict faced by working women (Cinamon, 2006; Hill et al., 2004; Subramaniam & Selvaratnam, 2010). In this study, the participants emphasize that flexible working hours benefited them in managing their daily work-life responsibilities. Indeed, flexible working hours is one of the main reasons why some participants chose to be academics. For example, Iman describes how she resigned from her previous company to become an academic because she believes that flexi-time could provide her with a balance of work and life. Aisha also chose to resign from her previous workplace just to become an academic. Although her previous job gave better pay, Aisha strongly believed that teaching as a career could give her better time quality with her children. Other participants also reported how flexible working hours can help them manage their daily lives. For example, in their struggle to balance family and career responsibilities, flexi-time helps these participants to cope with the time constraints which put pressure on them. Hence, balancing career and family is more organized with flexi-time. This work arrangement policy supported the participants in reducing their work life conflicts and helped them in sustaining or increasing their work commitment. Besides flexible work arrangements, leadership style and culture emerged as one of the main factors that have impact on how the participants managed their daily work roles and responsibilities.

In this research, leadership was an important but unexpected theme. Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness Research Program (GLOBE), as well as a large number of other empirical studies (House & Aditya, 1997), have shown what is expected of a leader and what leaders may and may not do. However, the status and influence of a leader vary due to the influence of cultural forces in the area in which the leader

functions. House and Aditya (1997) discovered that Malaysians expect their leaders to be humble, modest and dignified. What came from this current research was the impact of two different leadership styles and the resulting organisational culture. Both transformational and autocratic leadership styles were identified as styles which can have positive and negative impact on the participants' work-life arrangements.

In their professional lives as an academic, leadership styles can have a significant influence on their professional and organizational commitment. These academics are experiencing a great change in their work culture. A few participants described how being long under the management which understands and satisfies their needs has made it difficult for them to accept changes in their professional work life. This may be due to the fact, that having an understanding leader and flexible working hours, managing their work-life responsibilities did not create any difficulties for them. Day et al. (2006) in the Vitae project illustrated the impact of leadership style and organizational culture on teachers' experiences and identity – the factors associated with the 'situatedness of their work'. The same is evident in this research on Malay women academics. The participants contrasted their experiences of a transformational leadership style with a more directive one. Based on an understanding of the importance of teachers or academics to fulfil the goals of educating, Leithwood (1992) reported that transformational leaders pursue three goals: helping staff collaborate, encouraging teachers' improvement, and helping staff solve problems effectively. In this research on Malay women academics it was reported that a transformational style had a positive influence on them; this leadership style created a supportive climate in the institution (Northouse, 2016).

Many organisations have come to realize that it is important to create a culture that promotes and facilitates work-life effectiveness and satisfaction (Bryan, 2015). As discussed above, Schein (1985) claimed that organisational culture and leadership are two sides of the same coin and, thus, leaders play an important role in influencing the organisational culture. Leaders are then instrumental in shaping the work-life culture in the organisation because leaders create and change cultures. For example, Rosenholtz (1989) linked teachers' commitment to supportive principal behaviour such as feedback, encouragement, acknowledgement, use of participative decision making and

collaborative decision making. In addition, Hammer et al. (in Bryan, 2015) identified four categories of supportive supervisor behaviour considered to be family-supportive by the employees: emotional support, instrumental support, role modelling and creative work-family management. Meanwhile, House (1981) theorized that, among emotional, appraisal, instrumental and informational supports, emotional support is the most important dimension of supportive behaviour.

The findings indicate that leadership style has a significant impact on a more directive leadership culture. The participants reported that their views were not taken into account and they did not participate in the decision-making. Being in a Malay culture and with Islamic practice, it is seen as inappropriate for employees to be an outspoken or disagree. However, according to Hayers (2000), workers experiencing autocratic supervision felt under considerable pressure which is intensified by family responsibilities being an important priority for the participants. The participants, reporting on their experiences of the two contrasting leadership styles, illustrate the importance of this in work-life balance. Hence, this research supports the importance of a facilitative and transformational leadership approach where there is an understanding not only of the organisational needs but the demands that employees have to balance.

In this research, the academics are experiencing the change of leadership style from a favourable to an unfavourable behaviour. The impact is not only on the academics' organizational commitment but also on how they manage their work-life responsibilities. In terms of organizational commitment, leadership style has great influence on the participants. For instance, under a directive leadership style, Layla and Zahra feel their commitment towards the organization has declined. However, the situation does not affect their commitment to teaching itself. As described by Billingsley and Cross (1992), leadership style was not a significant predictor of teachers' professional commitment. Teachers may leave an organization but they may not leave the profession. Instead, they may find a more supportive work environment. Aisha, Salma and Maria, for example, were looking forward to their future career despite their dissatisfaction with the leadership style.

This research demonstrates that most participants seek to stay in the teaching profession because of their high professional commitment: some participants described how they enjoyed and loved teaching as their profession. Religion could also be one of the reasons that strengthened their professional commitment with the Islamic view that teaching is a noble profession. In addition to these personal reasons, how an individual views the place of work context can also be influential. Previous scholars have identified that individuals who have a strong work ethic and view work as a central life interest tend to be highly committed (Card, 1977; Kidron, 1978; Mowday, Porter, & Steers, 1982; Parasuraman & Nachman, 1987).

Besides fostering or hindering organizational commitment, leadership style can affect an individual's personal well-being. Ultimately this leads to the way they manage their work-life responsibilities. A study conducted on the effects of principal support on special and general educators' stress, job satisfaction, school commitment, health, and intent to stay in teaching, indicates that teachers who experience higher levels of principal support are more likely to experience greater job satisfaction and school commitment and less likely to experience personal health problems than those receiving lower levels of support (House, 1981). In this research on Malay women academics, the fast-paced daily routines of the directive work culture, where there was no flexible working, affected their ability to successfully sustain their personal well-being. Finding time to complete their multiple responsibilities is a major challenge. For example, some participants revealed that they frequently went to bed late at night after completing all tasks. This led to episodes of sleep deprivation, exhaustion, stress and burnout. Yet, they only reported that they were exhausted and did not see the home tasks that they had to complete as contributing to this. Participants also described how the quality of their family relationships suffered because of the directive autocratic leadership style. This situation compounded the limited time that participants have because of multiple work-life responsibilities. Because of this also, some participants reported not having enough time for their own personal development. For example, Maria and Salma were struggling to find time to complete their assignments for their part-time study which will benefit their future career progression.

The experience of the participants in this research reflects how they are struggling to reconcile their own values with the constraints of a directive organizational work culture. This demonstrates how the organization policies and practices impact on, and shape, the participants' experience as well as their values and practices. Data from the analysis of the interviews suggest that, from the perspective of the women academic, leaders should have good people skills, show care and concern for others, recognize the contribution of all members, be a good communicator and listener, and work to distribute the academics workload. In addition, some participants commented that leaders should be approachable and trusting. As described by Burke (2002), when work does not permit women to take care of their family, they feel unhappy, disappointed and frustrated. They draw tight boundaries between work and family and they do not like one crossing the other. The findings reflect how an autocratic leadership style has an impact on the work culture of an organization which eventually impacts on the academics' work-life management responsibilities.

Participants in this research also described the importance of colleagues or co-workers in managing their work-life especially in their professional sphere. Results of a study on social support, negative affectivity and work-personal life balance among academics at one public university in Malaysia, revealed that social support from co-workers was the most important predictor for personal work-life balance (Md. Shahid et al., 2016). Likewise, the findings of this research on Malay women academics show that social support from colleagues is important in reducing the participants' stress at the workplace and outside of work. For example, although the participants reported that they had an increasing range of responsibilities and greater workload, the support received from their colleagues helped them to maintain their work-life balance effectively.

The report from the VITAE study (Day et al., 2006) also reveals that the relationships with colleagues is one of the major factors that influenced teachers to sustain their commitment and motivation to remain in or leave a school. The majority of the participants in this research were still motivated and committed to remain in their teaching career because they felt secure and happy when they had good colleagues around. Although undesirable work place conditions have been highlighted as one of the

reasons for employee attrition (Billingsley & Cross, 1992; Darling-Hammond, 1984), the support that workers received from their colleagues has positive influence towards their future career notwithstanding their dissatisfaction with the leadership style remains.

### **6.3.3 Is there any influence of the academics' personal or cultural involvement in managing their work-life responsibilities?**

Asian culture is collective and familial and the women play a major role in managing the household and family (Hofstede & Bond, 1988). According to Noor (2006), in managing work and life responsibilities, women's lives in Malaysia are complex. For them to achieve success in life depends not only on those who are in their work and family domains but the extended family and the wider societal norms and expectations are also influential. This could be explained from the frame of reference of Hofstede (2011: 11) that, in a collectivist culture, "people are integrated into strong, cohesive in-groups, often extended families (with uncles, aunts and grandparents) that continue protecting them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty, and oppose other ingroups" (Hofstede, 2011: 11).

This research on Malay women academics indicates that most of the participants view performing domestic chores as women's responsibility. They still adhere to the gender ideology on the division of labour which exists in the wider Malaysian society. Their experience, however, does not support Hochschild and Machung's 1989 study which stated that career women often consider performing domestic tasks as a burden to them. Instead, some of the participants in this research are happy when performing tasks for their family members because it indicates that they manage to fulfil their responsibilities as a mother and a wife and even as a daughter or a sister. This could also be explained by the participants in this research not considering that doing the domestic tasks and managing the family was a burden but instead a worthwhile duty that needs to be fulfilled (Hashim & Omar, 2004; Omar & Hamzah, 2003). This would allow these women academics to perform the primary household tasks and at the same time maintain the traditional perception of themselves as women within their culture (Abdullah, 1987; Abdullah et al., 2008; Bakar, 2012; Hashim & Omar, 2004; Omar & Hamzah, 2003).

Findings from Noor's 2006 study on Malay women reveal that their life style has remained unchanged, despite the opportunity they have for their advancement in education and employment. Malay women prioritize their family more than their self-fulfilment. The findings indicate that the participants in this current research on Malay women academics are caught in a dilemma between the modern challenges of life and culture or traditions. Even as academics, they are still expected to be responsible for the family and to maintain the traditional perception of a woman. Although this problem affects all women, it is especially significant to women in Asia due to the strong cultural views on the different and separate role that men and women should accomplish either in the family or society. The situation is exacerbated by lack of support in organisations to support work-life balance practices.

This current research shows that culture and religion have great influence in shaping these Malay women academics' behaviours in managing their work-life responsibilities. For example, managing a number of young children for the participants is not a burden, although it is not an easy task. Indeed, Islam does not limit the number of children and parents are expected to bear as many children as possible unless there are issues that would risk harm to the mother or the children. Islam regards children as a gift in the world for parents as guided by the Holy Qur'an, "Wealth and sons are allurements of the life of this world" (Al-Quran, 19:46). Thus, the role of Islamic teachings, spiritual beliefs, and Malay custom were reflected in how they experienced their daily work-life interface and were seen to have a powerful influence on their positive perceptions in managing their work-life responsibilities.

The findings of this research on Malay women academics acknowledge that, in the division of housework tasks, gender segregation still exists because the participants were still bound by the religious and cultural rules. Moreover, within Malay patriarchal society, it is still not acceptable for a wife to be dominant over the husband (Bakar & Hashim, 1984; Bakar, 2012; Kling, 1995; Noor, 1999a, 1999b). Therefore, in any sharing of household responsibilities, it would be considered inappropriate for a husband to perform the tasks.



Much of the Malay custom is 'metaphorically expressed in proverbial sayings' which transfer imagery of natural phenomena into cultural wisdom and idealism. The messages may indicate sentiments for the "village or nation, kinship, parental guidance, romantic love or passion" (Karim, 1992: 64). Karim (1992: 67) agreed that "to be a 'Malay' is to have *adat*". *Adat* is the Malay term which refers to the Malay customs and encompasses the total system of values, norms, and morales which govern Malay life or which contribute to the essence of Malay culture. It also refers to the code of morality which encompasses Malay social relations particularly that pertain to the family, kinship and village community. Many Malays still strongly uphold the traditional Malay proverb that describes the "importance of domesticity for a woman" (Ibrahim & Hassan, 2009 : 38). One of the prominent Malay proverbs which emphasizes the responsibility of women in managing the home, specifically in performing the tasks in the kitchen, presents the continuity of *adat* principles in Malay society. This behaviour is clearly shown by the participants. Although the participants did not mention the proverb verbally, the way they managed their daily life and the way they described this in the diaries and the interviews reflects the strong influence of these understandings of Malay culture in their life. Regardless of their employment status as an academic, the participants were responsible for managing the domestic tasks. This clearly supports the findings conducted by Abdullah et al. (2008) on Malay women's perception on their roles which indicates that, despite their status as employed women, they are expected to be responsible for the family and to maintain the traditional perception of a woman.

In short, Malaysia is now moving towards becoming a developed country and the participation of women in education and employment is increasing. However, it would appear from this research that the role of women in the public and private domain remains largely unchanged. In negotiating between their professional and personal roles, their identity is as a working Muslim woman living in a patriarchal system that has long existed in Malay culture. This research shows that religious beliefs and culture have a strong influence on the lives of the participants in balancing the duties and responsibilities of their work and family. However, as an academic, the leadership style and organizational culture at the workplace also have an impact on them in achieving work-life satisfaction.

## 6.4 Chapter Summary

A border does not exist between work and home domains for this group of Malay Muslim women academics as long as both tasks could be completed and fulfilled. The academics do not regard completing their domestic tasks as a burden but see these rather as part of their roles as a wife and a mother. In negotiating the demands of work and home responsibilities, the women academics' role in both domains is complicated because of the expectations framed by their culture and religion. As members of a collectivist culture, specifically in the Malay culture, family is always first and, as women, managing home and family are their primary tasks. Having largely sole responsibility for the family and domestic tasks is not an issue for these women academics even though having shared responsibility for this sphere may assist them better.

These women academics also consider work important because it is emphasized in Islamic beliefs that work is a trust given to them and should be performed accordingly. However, as the research evolved, it was not simply the tension between home and work demands that became salient but the leadership culture of the workplace was also very important. Accomplishing their academic tasks is not a pressure for them when the leadership style and culture appreciates their position and affords flexibility for them to manage their responsibilities in both roles. The leadership style has an impact on the organisational culture which in turn has an impact on the women academics' experiences in managing work and home responsibilities.

# **CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSION**

## **7.1 Introduction**

The previous chapter, which discusses how Malay women academics experienced their work-life management, shows how negotiating between professional and personal roles has an impact on the women careers, their personal and family lives, and their well-being. This chapter presents a critical overview of the research, setting the findings against the key theoretical construct of 'work-life interface'. Potential limitations are also highlighted. Also considered is how the findings can translate into recommendations for practice and future research in this field. The chapter ends with an autobiographical reflection by the researcher which reflects the personal journey experienced by her in undertaking the research.

## **7.2 Critical Review of the Research**

This research aimed to gain insights into how Malaysian women academics make sense of their daily work-life integration. Its focus was on opening up an area of investigation that had previously been explored in western cultures and organisations. This section provides a brief discussion on how the theoretical focus has moved from a simple idea of work-life balance to an understanding of work-life interface and the ways this is understood in the largely western literature.

A number of key themes have emerged from the findings. It was agreed that work-life interface is complex and multi-faceted. There are competing demands between work demands and family and domestic responsibilities whereas in western literature there is a clearer boundary between work and personal life, which is not so evident in this research. Therefore, the important issue in work-life interface cannot simply be seen as avoiding

spillover. For these women academics, the boundary between work and personal life is not clearly delineated. These interact with each other and their gender is of importance in this regard.

A critical issue for these women academics is not to see either work or family demands as burdensome. The key is the meaning that these women give to their role and responsibilities in both the work context and the family. For these women, it is not about having fewer responsibilities in either domain but about ensuring they perform well in both spheres. The idea of a work-life interface in this context is shaped by the intersection of gender, cultural expectations, and religious belief.

The identity of each of the research participants as a Malay Muslim woman is an important aspect of their understanding of their work-life interface and how they look to manage it. Family and work are important sources of satisfaction. The participants see their family responsibilities as appropriate for them as Malay Muslim women. Perhaps the main frustration for these women in managing their work-life balance was an inflexible leadership style and culture that removed previous practices which allowed the women to respond to both work and family demands.

Hence, in this research, leadership style and organizational culture can have a significant impact on how the women try to meet both sets of demands. These findings point to the need to examine work-life balance and the interface between working lives and personal lives within particular cultural and religious contexts where the cultural understandings of the meaning of work and family will shape women's experiences of work-life interface and the way they go about managing this.

### 7.3 Limitations of the Research

This investigation into the work-life interface of Malay Muslim academic women was essentially exploratory research, using IPA in order to research this issue in depth in a specific context. Therefore, this does limit the generalizability of the findings. This research is limited to one of the higher education institutions in the West Coast of Malaysia in which all the academic staff were Malay Muslim. While the institution where the research was conducted is typical in size and mission of those types of higher education institutions, there are inevitably differences in staffing profile and the organizational structures between these. Therefore, the profile of academics, the perceptions of these staff and organizational culture of this particular institution may vary from other such institutions. Academics at other institutions may have different challenges particularly with regard to organizational and leadership culture in relation to work-life experience.

Although the research findings cannot simply be generalized to the wider population, given the small sample size of seven women academics working in one institution, this is not necessarily a limitation. The purpose of this research was not to obtain knowledge that can be generalized but rather to gain an in-depth understanding about women academics' work-life experiences in certain contexts. With IPA, a smaller sample size will allow a deeper and more detailed analysis (Smith et al., 2009). IPA provides a voice for this group of women academics whose work-life experiences have not been explored extensively in the published organizational literature. The participants' accounts have been privileged in this research and meaningful insights gained by focusing on individual experiences and understandings in accordance with the idiographic approach of IPA (Smith et al., 2009). Although objectivity and generalizability are not attainable, this detailed and systematic idiographic analyses can make a significant contribution. Connecting the current findings of this research to the extant literature sheds light on the existing work-life research specifically among collectivist culture. It also adds to and broadens the understanding of the investigated phenomena of academics' work-life

interface and the importance of leadership style in women academics managing their work-life balance within wider societal expectations of their role as women.

One particular possible limitation relates to this research being conducted in a culture where there has been little systematic investigation of women's experiences of their work-life interface. While the field is dominated by western studies, this research was conducted in a Malayan context and the participants could choose what language to use in the interviews and diaries. Therefore, data had to be translated. There is a danger that in the translation process some of the nuanced meanings of the women's construction of their experiences might be lost. However, a rigorous approach using guidance related to IPA was adopted. All interviews were conducted in Malay or a mixture of Malay/ English because English is not the participants' first language and thus this would allow the participants to express themselves easily and freely. The transcripts were not translated into English for the analysis. As discussed in Chapter Three, texts are part of culture and language and their transfer into other cultures and languages will change the text themselves (Gutt, 1989). The analysis was carried out using the Malay or mixed Malay-English transcripts in order to avoid any potential distortion of meaning due to the translation process. Thus, the raw data which is in the form of Malay or mixed Malay-English transcripts has been used to enable the researcher to stay as close as possible to the rich accounts of the participants.

## **7.4 Implications for Practice**

With the increasing number of women in the workforce in Malaysia, particularly in the teaching professions, there is a need to understand how women academics experience their daily work-life interface. As with other women, academics have to perform multiple roles. One of the agenda items in the Tenth Malaysia Plan (2011-2015) is to produce more skilled women and they are encouraged to participate in education and training opportunities provided to them. This strategy in the Plan is designed to contribute to helping Malaysia to become a high-income country. Nevertheless, the participants' management of their daily work-life is still guided by the patriarchal system that is deeply

rooted in the Malay culture. This is reflected in their religious faith and their culture which guided their choices and practices in almost every aspect of their lives. Even with the considerable pressures of competing demands, the participants in this study of Malay women academics have expressed a positive attitude towards their future career and intend to remain in their profession albeit they are pressurized by the need to perform multiple roles in their lives. Nevertheless, action should be taken to ensure that the academics could have a healthy work-life balance.

The findings in this research of Malay women academics indicate that there are some factors which influence the way the women academics manage their daily work-life responsibilities. A significant finding shows that leadership style was a critical influence in the way the participants manage their work-life responsibilities. It can be concluded that, for the participants in this context, the length of working hours does not matter so much as the leadership style. This is evident from the participants' reports of their positive response to a more facilitative leadership style as they were willing to stay longer at their workplace when they were assigned some tasks to be completed. In contrast, a directive and autocratic style limited their ability to manage their work-life interface and could result in negative attitudes. The crucial part that needs to be considered is the impact of an autocratic and inflexible leadership style on the participants' work-life management which then influences their organizational commitment.

Spiker and Brown (2000) put forward claims that the nature of employees' relationships with their leaders determines how long the employees remain with the organization and how productive they are within the organization. Thus, academic leadership plays a key role in shaping a work-life culture of a higher education institution particularly in creating a supportive and friendly culture towards employees and students (Bryan, 2015). Organisational leadership should be sensitive to the way women academics manage their daily lives whether they prefer both work and family domains to be segregated or integrated. In particular, the leadership should demonstrate an appreciation of the difficulty some women academics will have when they were asked to attend an unplanned meeting after official working hours due to their commitment with their family life such as picking up their young children from school. Accordingly, there should be a

clear communication between leadership and staff particularly for women academics in their work and life management. This awareness has the potential to reduce the pressure that women academics face in managing work and family responsibilities. Indirectly, potentially it can improve the work-life quality of the academics.

Across different sectors, employee perceptions of work–life balance have been shown to be associated with a number of key workplace outcomes such as job satisfaction and employee commitment to the organisation. The findings of this research reveal how the participants' commitment towards the organization was affected because of the difficulties in balancing work-life management – particularly when these were intensified by a style of leadership that did not allow flexibility. According to Bryan (2015: 18), “flexible work environments and supportive department chairs, deans and provosts have been identified as key factors in improving the quality of faculty work, family balance, and overall life and job satisfaction”. Rosenholtz (1989) recommended that leaders engage in a variety of support behaviours such as giving positive feedback and acknowledging any efforts made by the academics, encouraging them for their career development, and applying participative decision making and collaborative problem-solving in their leadership style. According to Grossman (2000), emotions also appear to play a significant role in terms of one's enthusiasm for their work. A leadership style that understands emotions appears to motivate subordinates to work more effectively and efficiently. Hence, leaders should assess their style to see if they are providing the support that these women academics identified as important. Ramayah et al. (2010) found that leaders in universities are generally not aware of how influential they can be, nor do they explicitly consider their leadership style in achieving better performances.

In the context of this research, leadership in higher education institutions is an important issue. Malaysia aspires to be a significant international hub for higher education by the year 2020 (MOHE, 2011). In the opening speech of the Malaysian Education Blueprint (2013-2025)(Ministry of Education, 2012), the Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia emphasized the significant role of leadership as one of the main institutional pillars of governance, teaching and learning, research, innovation and commercialization. Therefore, there is a need to ensure that the leadership style adopted facilitates this



process and builds staff commitment. Work–life balance has been identified as a key workplace issue for staff in higher education institutions (Harman, 1989; Houston et al., 2006; Meyer, 1998; Paewai et al., 2007). In order to attract and retain motivated and productive academics, particularly in Malaysia, the work-life balance of the academics should be a key concern for leaders of higher education institutions because work-life balance impacts not only on job satisfaction but on broader motivational and attitudinal aspects of work, and on actual staff performance. Areas of concern for academic leadership include monitoring the academics' workloads, implementing fair and transparent workload management systems, setting clear and realistic targets and valuing the output achieved rather than just time spent at work. In addition, the leader's style should foster a workplace culture that is supportive and provides adequate reward and recognition so that all academics, including the women, feel valued for the contribution they make.

At the institution level, senior management and the leadership style adopted should recognize the importance of maintaining a healthy balance between work and other aspects of life. They should review the implementation of policies which impact on the academics' professional and personal lives. Action research and surveys could be used to investigate the consequences of the policy implementation on academics' work-life balance. Managing one's professional and personal life should no longer be treated as a personal issue but a social and work issue that matters to every individual. In other words, policies and guidelines pertaining to the academics' working hours and workloads should be revised or developed by making sure that work-family related issues are also taken into consideration. For example, workloads given to academics including non-academic tasks, such as becoming the advisor of the college society, should be fairly shared among them to ensure that every academic could have some balance between their work and family demands.

The results of this research indicate that gender still plays a major role in determining the division of labour at home in Malaysia where women still maintain more responsibilities in the management of the household than men. Findings show that, though the economic position for women has improved, women's social and familial position remains

unchanged. Indeed, most participants in this study of Malay women academics consider that performing domestic tasks is part of women's responsibilities. Here we see the intersection of religion and culture in shaping gender roles and therefore in shaping the work-life interface of these women academics. The current trend for more women to enter the workplace raises questions about the traditional gender segregated familial and domestic roles. In this research, the care of children was a particular concern for these women academics. However, we need to be also aware of other caring demands, which in a gender segregated culture will largely become the responsibility of women. The Malaysian Research Institute on Ageing reported that Malaysia is set to become an 'Aged Nation' in 2035 when the population aged 60 years and above may exceed 15% of the total population of the country (Malaysian Research Institute on Ageing, 2016). This means that caring for dependent adults or elders is on the rise and creates further challenges for those who are concerned about work-life balance of working women.

Although it may be difficult to change perceptions of traditional gender roles, various steps could be implemented to inform the society. Women's Affairs Division and Ministry of Women and Family Development are some examples of the government agencies in Malaysia that can launch campaigns of awareness through mass media and also by addressing especially the youngsters through current social networking sites or social media tools such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Tumblr. To avoid any conflict or contradiction between the practice of Islam and Malay culture, religious scholars could also play a role in delivering talks describing the actual claims regarding the duties and responsibilities of each individual in the family and also in the society. Finally, parents could educate their children about the importance of shared responsibilities in managing household chores and this needs to be nurtured and trained from childhood.

## **7.5 Recommendations for Future Research**

Throughout the entire research process, additional questions arose or areas of knowledge opened up which form opportunities for further research. Understanding how certain factors, such as the age of participants and their marital status, would affect the results of

this research is essential. Future research opportunities could look at how younger Malay Muslim academics at the beginning of their teaching career experience their work-life interface. It would be interesting to find out whether young academics are influenced by culture and religion in the same way as this sample of largely mid-career women academics, particularly how these affect them in managing their work-life responsibilities. Research on the generation gap suggests that Generation X and Generation Y have different ways of thinking and perceptions towards life. For example, although Generation X employees are said to strive for work-life balance at their workplace, Generation Y employees expect to have more flexibility in work-life balance (Meier, Austin, & Crocker, 2010).

Since Malaysia is a multi-cultural country, further investigations into different Malaysian ethnic groups may add to the pool of knowledge. For example, a study could be conducted in an environment with a combination of different ethnic and religious views among women academics. Factors such as religion and culture should be taken into consideration because the findings of this current research reveal that Malay culture and the practice of Islam do influence the way the participants experience their work-life interface. Finding out whether other ethnic cultures or religions have impact on work-life management of different ethnic groups of Malaysian women academics would add to understandings of work-life interface. Future research could also open the door to further studies in this field to add valuable insights on work-life interface among academics in the South-East Asian region. A comparison could be made, for example, between Malaysian Malay Muslims and Singapore Malay Muslims. Although Singapore is the neighbouring country of Malaysia, there are still differences such as those of religious orientation (Zuber, 2010). Due to the differences in how culture and Islam are perceived between the two groups, it would be interesting to look at how those factors influence and impact on the way each group manages their work-life responsibilities and particularly their work commitment. It is also recommended for future researchers to recruit respondents of Malay ethnicity without linking them with religion in order to find out whether the finding of such a study would be similar to the current findings.

In terms of social support, future research could also focus on the actual rather than perceived support provided by the participants. In addition, studies should explore the support roles provided to the women academics by her spouse from the spouse's perspective. In a patriarchal society where the men hold primary power in a family, it would be interesting to find out or understand how the men perceive work-life responsibilities in a family should be managed. Research that focuses on the couple as a unit is also a logical next step. Differences in families with and without children and with and without eldercare responsibilities need to be investigated. Research that addresses how the dynamics of support differs for married couples, single parents or unmarried people also would be interesting and may uncover unique issues.

Leadership styles should also be given priority in future research. An unexpected outcome of this research highlights the influence of leadership style on these women academics in managing their work-life responsibilities. The findings point to the possibility that academics' organizational commitment may be affected and will impact the quality of work when they experience difficulties in their work-life management due to their dissatisfaction with the leadership style. It was beyond the scope of this research to take forward a further exploration of this leadership issue but it has highlighted the opportunity for a more extensive and in-depth study to examine leaders' perceptions towards the work-life balance issue among academics in the current context. Moreover, this finding suggests that, as long as a leader understands the professional and the personal needs of academics, work-life conflict will be less of an issue among them.

In order to deepen the understanding of the leadership paradigm especially in the Southeast Asia region, studies could also be conducted on the effects of the different leadership styles on academics' work/ home management. Further research should focus on the differential effects of the actions of specific leaders on the academics' lives at work and at home. Both the leader and academics in the same organization could also be recruited as participants in one study in order to see the perceptions of both parties on the issue in managing professional and personal life. This could help to see if there are factors that are mutually shared by both groups which could contribute to better work-life management.

Finally, the findings of this current research may contribute to the extension of a study conducted in 2007 entitled 'The Changing Academic Profession' (CAP) among 1,226 Malaysian academics from various disciplines. In the CAP study, only the aspects from the respondents' professional sphere were considered and looked into. The survey found that, despite a heavy teaching load, lack of service and research resources and having less influence in aspects related to the administration and management of the institution, the academics were still satisfied with their profession. However, the findings of this current research on Malay women academics suggest that in understanding the academics and their perceptions towards factors that matter in their life, both their professional and personal life experiences matter. Thus, future study could extend the CAP study by taking into consideration both professional and personal factors of academics in order to find out if there is any difference with the previous findings from the CAP study.

## **7.6 Autobiographical Reflection**

According to Shaw (2010), if researchers make themselves examine closely their expectations of the research to be conducted, they may appreciate better the nature of the research, the relationship of the research to them personally and professionally and also the relationship between the researchers and their participants of the study. Indeed, researchers who are proactively exploring themselves as a researcher, before the start of the research, will find it easier to communicate with their participants, specifically in the dialogue sessions. This can also make the process of understanding becomes easier when reviewing the evidence from the participants. This process is known as reflexivity (Shaw, 2010).

One way to engage in the reflective process is by keeping a research diary throughout the research journey. This diary was written in the first person, and this section is also written from that point of view. Therefore, in this section I disclose from my research diary my background, issues and thoughts that have emerged throughout this research process and how these elements contribute to make better sense of the subject area. Gadamer (2004) proposed that the interpretative phenomenological approach is much more than a

description and interpretation of the participants' experiences as the researcher becomes immersed in the process and data. Thus, as part of the reflexive process, a researcher needs to demonstrate to the reader what is 'going on' during the research.

My experiences as a wife, mother, and a former academic have motivated me to delve deeper into these women academics' work-life issues. Work-life interface of women academics was a topic with personal significance. My own experiences in balancing work, family and an academic career prompted me to examine the work-life literature more closely. As I assessed the relevant literature on work-life areas, it became evident that the problems and causes of work-life issues among non-Western academics were largely understudied. Thus, motivated by my experiences as a woman academic who also had a family, I endeavoured to learn more about the work-life experience of women academics.

My journey in undertaking this research study has been an invaluable experience. I learned that research process is not a smooth flow of tasks. Things do not fit neatly together as planned as the process is sometimes messy. Conducting research can be at certain times frustrating and at others rewarding. Nevertheless, this research has provided some key ideas which have helped me examine my own professional values, and generate guidelines for possible changes to my own future practice.

The use of an IPA methodology, relatively new in work-life research, offers a unique perspective in exploring women academics' work-life experiences. The methodology has facilitated and provided detailed idiographic insight into my participants' experiences in managing their work-life responsibilities. The approach allowed me to enter into the participants' experiences by giving them a voice to reveal their feelings and thoughts and helps me better to understand the situation. Moreover, it is an essential part of qualitative research to give participants the opportunity to reveal their emotions (Cassell & Symon, 1994). As far as I am aware, this is the first IPA research to explore the work-life experiences of women academics. From a reflexive viewpoint, being a novice researcher utilizing IPA, I found the guidance of Smith et al. (2009) very helpful. Although the difficulty in interpreting and organizing the seven sets of participants' themes into

superordinate themes cannot be underestimated, I believe it is worth the challenge. During the data analysis, I chose to analyse and organize the data manually rather than using the computer software because it gave me the opportunity to immerse myself in the words, phrases, and stories of the participants. This gave me a better understanding and I avoided losing the meaning. IPA allowed me to look at this issue from the point of view of the participants.

My Ph.D. journey was very fruitful and highly rewarding. The opportunity of conducting the telephone interviews by listening to my participants who kindly shared their experiences in managing their daily multiple responsibilities is a journey of constant development and learning. It leads me to understand the value of accepting and respecting the diversity of others' meanings and perceptions. In addition, it has helped me to deviate from my own established mental models (Senge, 2006) and become a more effective person in my relationships with people by comprehending different viewpoints.

Conducting this research has also given me more insight into the experiences of the 'work' and 'personal' lives of Malay Muslim women academics. Through my research, I have attempted to answer how the Malay Muslim women academics make sense of their work-life experience. However, being an insider researcher, I have also reflected on whether my role has influenced my participants in sharing their true experiences. I am aware that, if the interviews were conducted by someone from a different background, this could have resulted in a different type of answers. The issue of leadership, which has been emphasized many times during the interviews by most of the participants, is a sensitive issue and would not be easily shared by participants. I believe that, when my participants refer to my past experience teaching at the college together with them, it gives them the confidence that I understand their situation. This made it easier for them to discuss the topic and share their experiences. The use of phrases such as, "you yourself know Amy", "well... as you already know", reflects how comfortable the participants felt and believed that I understand their situation very well. It is very possible that a researcher from a different background would not have been privileged with such insider knowledge and so the participants would not have come out with those terms.

As a researcher, I truly appreciate the willingness of participants to share their experiences and put their trust in me. However, it could also be argued that I may be biased towards my participants because I have some experience working at the same college and this may have influenced the interpretation and type of stories that were elicited. Therefore, during the interview process, I was mindful that I needed to keep my distance as a researcher and that there was a need for a closer examination of each story. Due to the geographical distance when conducting this research, it was also a benefit for me administering the interviews through the telephone because I could have a big cue card placed in front of me which reminded me of my role and position as a researcher.

Being in a similar role as the participants, previously, made me reflect on my past experiences as an academic. As described by Smith et al. (2009: 1), “‘experience’ is a complex concept... (it) usually occurs when something important has happened in our lives”. The participants’ description of their experience with different leadership styles highlights both their satisfaction and their difficulties in managing their work-life responsibilities. Leadership seems to play an important role in their life. The leadership style and ensuing actions, whether favoured and admired or criticized by the academics, will create either memorable or unpleasant experience. The experiences shared by the participants made me compare my previous and current work-life management. I agree that leadership has great impact in both my past and current career.

Being an academic, I have never had a border between my work and my family life and, almost all the time, I have allowed work to intrude on my personal or family life. Thus, this leadership theme makes me realize that I too had the experience of different leadership styles in my academic life. Having a leader who understands your work-life needs contributes to achieving work-life satisfaction. I am not using the term work-life balance here in a narrow sense of these been equal sets of demands because I managed to have a satisfactory life although academic work dominated my life but with an understanding leader. In contrast, my current work allows me to segregate between work and family domains. This might be due to the current work responsibilities which help me avoid the cognitive intrusion of my work in my life. For example, in my past career, almost every night before I went to bed, I would be thinking about my work for the following



day. However, in terms of leadership, my work-life management is not currently affected by the types of leadership that I experience but this can have an impact on work satisfaction.

I hope that the insights gained and recommendations made in this research will provide the means particularly for the leaders at higher institutions to understand the work-life roles in which academics, particularly women academics, are engaged. The provision of high-quality education by institution depends upon healthy and motivated staff who have an acceptable balance between work and home lives. Therefore, in order to retain effective academics, the leadership needs to provide them with a positive and supportive psychosocial work environment. A problem for many Malay women currently in academia, including myself, is the lack of power we feel within the institution where an autocratic and directive form of leadership inhibits employees, especially women, to be outspoken or to dare to give their opinions. Although the findings of this research cannot be generalised, the experiences of these women academics can benefit women from different cultures and with different understanding. Finally, I hope this research has provided an opportunity for Malay women academics to express themselves and have their views and experiences taken into account in institutions by giving attention to their voices which can further be investigated.

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## Appendix 1: Consent Form



### Consent Form

**Title of Project:**        *Understanding Work-Life Interface of Malaysian Academics:  
An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis*

**Name of Researcher:** Amelia Binti Ismail

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the Plain Language Statement for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.
  
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.
  
3. I understand that my participation will involve the following:
  - completion of diary entries for two weeks; and
  - participation in a follow-up telephone interview which will be audio-recorded and will last between 45 and 60 minutes.

The study is expected to begin in the middle of September 2014 and conclude in the middle of April of 2015.

4. I understand that the researcher will take all reasonable measures to protect the confidentiality of my records and I can choose how much information I want to give.

5. I understand that return of an agreed transcript to the researcher, gives permission for direct quotes from the transcript to be used in the study.
6. I understand that I can opt to withhold my permission for the direct quotes to be used in the study.
7. I agree / do not agree (delete as applicable) to take part in the above study.

_____	_____	_____
Name of Participant	Date	Signature

Amelia Binti Ismail

11/10/2014

_____	_____	_____
Researcher	Date	Signature

## Appendix 2: Plain Language Statement



### Plain Language Statement

#### 1. Study title and Researcher Details

The research working title is *Understanding Work-Life Interface of Malaysian Academics: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis*. The research is being conducted by Amelia Binti Ismail, a PhD student in the School of Education, in the University of Glasgow, United Kingdom under the supervision of Dr. Beth Dickson and Professor Christine Forde. This is a student research project which is a requirement of the Doctorate of Philosophy at the University of Glasgow. Ms Amelia can be contacted at [a.ismail.1@research.gla.ac.uk](mailto:a.ismail.1@research.gla.ac.uk)

#### 2. Invitation paragraph

You are being invited by email to take part in a research study. Before you decide it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Feel free to ask questions if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

Thank you for reading this.

#### 3. What is the purpose of the study?

Academics are considered to have more freedom than other workers to arrange their working lives with personal priorities. However, it has been argued that academics do not have this level of flexibility. The purpose of this study is to understand in more depth how Malaysian academics experience work-life interaction. Specifically the study intends to highlight the major factors in the working environment of the academics that may affect their work-life balance and whether there is an influence of personal or cultural involvement. The outcomes of this study may help to inform future practice.

#### 4. Why have I been chosen?

You have been approached to participate in the study because you have the experience as an academic and are likely to have work and family commitments. In total, 10 academics have been invited to be involved in this study.

#### 5. Do I have to take part?

Participation in this study is voluntary. Should you wish to withdraw at any stage, you are free to do so without prejudice. You can choose how much information you disclose. The return of an agreed transcript indicates that you give permission for direct quotations to be used.

## **6. What will happen to me if I take part?**

Should you agree to participate, there will be two stages to be completed. First, you will be asked to keep a diary either written in English or Malay, for two weeks which will record your daily experience as you fulfil a range of roles at home and at work. After two weeks, the diary will be returned to the researcher. Next, the researcher will conduct a follow-up telephone interview which will last no longer than 1 hour in order to get a more detailed picture of the data recorded from the diaries. The researcher will request that interviews be recorded in order to facilitate data gathering and subsequent data analysis. When the recording has been transcribed, you will be provided with a copy of the transcript to verify that the information is correct and/or request deletions. However, you retain the right to decline the researcher's request to record the interview or to quote directly from the agreed transcript. This study is expected to begin in the middle of September 2014 and conclude by April 2015.

## **7. Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?**

If you consent to take part in this study, all data collected about you will be strictly confidential and your participation will be anonymous. There are a small number of people involved in this study and the sensitive issues being researched about how participants feel about their working lives, might lead to some readers being able to identify the speakers. In order to ensure that this is most unlikely to happen, every effort will be made to protect your anonymity e.g. your employer has given permission for the study to take place but does not know who is participating. In addition, during the interview you can decide what you want to say. When you receive the transcript you can ask for parts of it to be deleted. The published research will use pseudonyms to refer to speakers.

## **8. What will happen to the results of the research study?**

The research will be reported in an empirical report which is a component of a Doctor of Philosophy thesis. The researcher will also aim to publish the study findings in an appropriate peer-reviewed journal. Participants in this study will not be identified in any report and/or publication. All personal data will be destroyed including the diaries and audio-tapes.

## **9. Who has reviewed the study?**

This study has been reviewed by the College of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee, University of Glasgow.

## **10. Contact for Further Information**

Please contact the researcher via email at [a.ismail.1@research.gla.ac.uk](mailto:a.ismail.1@research.gla.ac.uk) if you require further information concerning this study.

If you have any concerns about the conduct of the study which you do not wish to discuss with the researcher, please contact the College of Social Sciences Ethics Officer, Dr Muir Houston, email: [Muir.Houston@glasgow.ac.uk](mailto:Muir.Houston@glasgow.ac.uk)

## Appendix 3: Diary Study Template



### DAILY DIARY STUDY

**Title of Project:**        **Understanding Work-Life Interface of Malaysian Academics:  
An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis**

Thank you for taking part in this diary study. This study forms part of a body of work being undertaken by Amelia Binti Ismail for a PhD in Education.

This study aims to explore how Malaysian academics experience their work-life interface. Specifically, it intends to highlight the major factors in the working environment that contribute to the issues and whether there is an influence of personal or cultural involvement. The diary is designed to allow you to indicate your work and home activities and experience on a daily basis, over the course of two weeks.

Your experiences are valuable as this is the way in which future research can move forward and make a difference.

All information collected during the course of this diary study will remain strictly confidential. If you have any queries at any time while completing the diary please feel free to contact me at **a.ismail.1@research.gla.ac.uk**. I will also contact you during this time to see how it is going.

This research is being supervised by Dr Beth Dickson (**Beth.Dickson@glasgow.ac.uk**) and Professor Christine Forde (**Christine.Forde@glasgow.ac.uk**) at School of Education, University of Glasgow.

Many thanks for your help with this research.

Amelia Ismail, PhD Researcher, School of Education, University of Glasgow

**Diary Completion Guidelines:**

- This study is about how you experience your work-life interface as an academic. Therefore, please feel comfortable to write about your activities. You can decide how much you want to disclose.
- You may write or key in using the computer file in English or Malay or even mixed. Do not worry about the spelling or grammar. However, if you are writing, I would be grateful if you can write clearly.
- Please complete the diary each day over a period of two weeks. The diary should be completed in late evening if possible.
- Please complete the first part on your general information and please fill in the day and date in the space provided on each new diary page.
- Once you have completed all the diary entries, please use the envelope provided to return the materials if you are writing or email to **a.ismail.1@research.gla.ac.uk** if you are using the computer file.

***Thank you again for your participation in this study, it is greatly appreciated.***

**Participant General Information**

**Name**

**Age**

**Marital Status**

**Number of Children**

**Length of Service in ██████ Centre**

**Job Position**

(e.g. Lecturer, Head of Department)

**Committee/Society Involved**

(e.g. Disciplinary Unit, Uniform Unit Advisor, etc.)

**Week 1**

**Day 1**

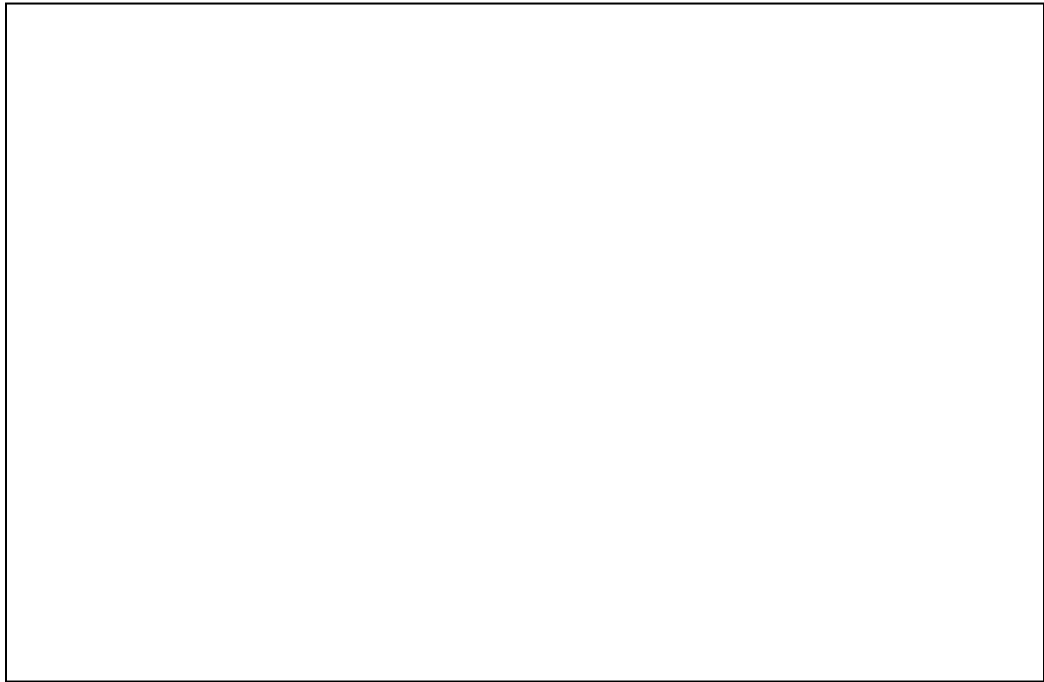
**Day / Date:**

1. Thinking back on today, please describe the significant things that you did.

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for the user to write their response to the prompt above.



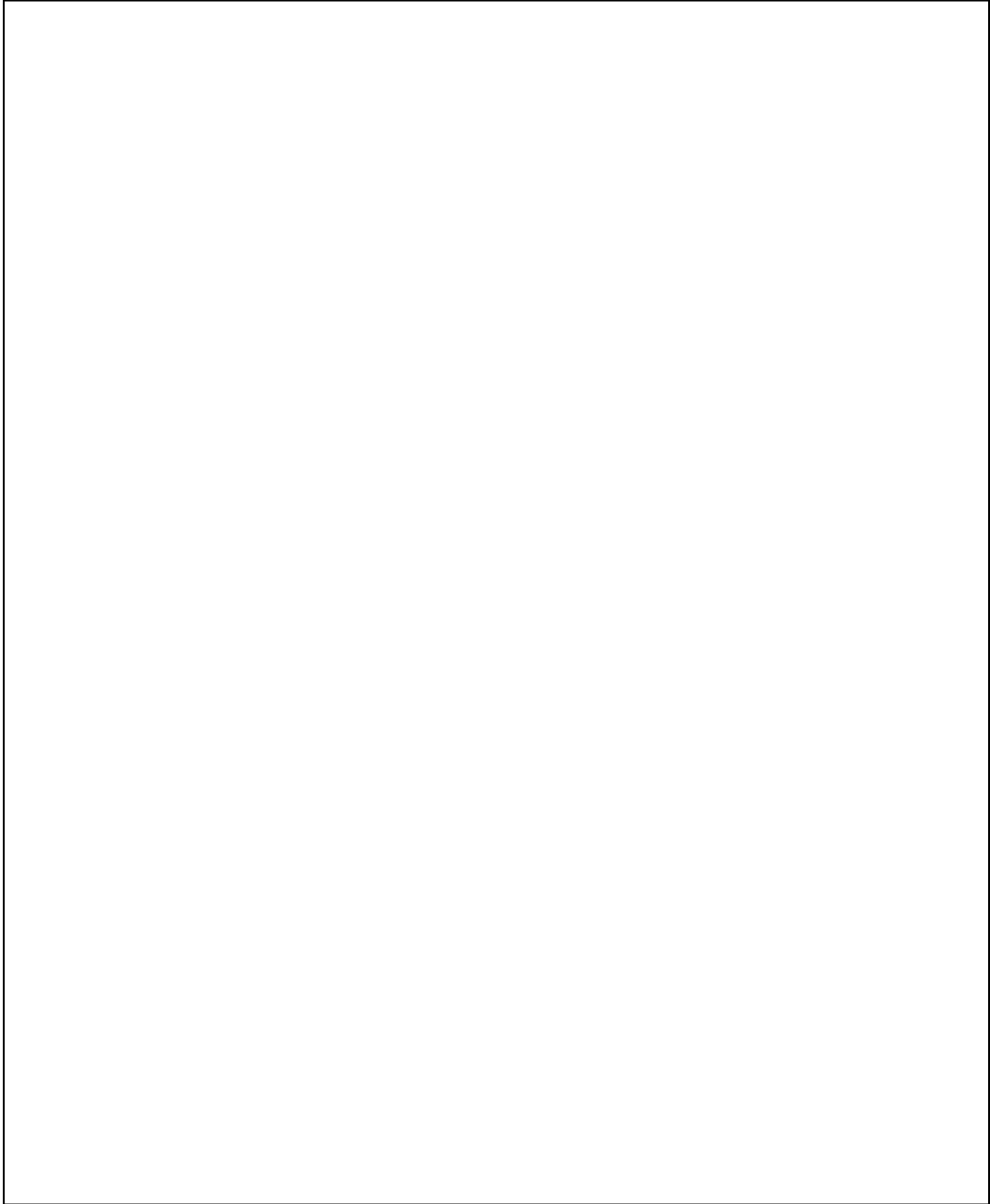
2. Were work demands and tasks evident after your working hours and were family and personal commitments evident during the working hours? Please describe.

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for the respondent to describe work demands and tasks evident after working hours and family/personal commitments during working hours.

3. How do you feel about it?

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for the respondent to describe how they feel about the situation.

Please use this space to add any other comments that you feel might be relevant.

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for the user to provide additional comments. The box is currently blank.

## Appendix 4: Telephone Interview Protocol



### TELEPHONE INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Working Title: Understanding Work-Life Interface of Malaysian Women Academics: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

*RQ1: How do Malaysian academics describe their work-life experiences?*

*RQ2: What are the work environmental factors that assist and/or hinder them in achieving work-life balance responsibilities?*

*RQ3: Does personal or cultural involvement influence the academics in achieving satisfactory work-life balance?*

Pseudonym: \_\_\_\_\_

### INITIAL INTRODUCTION

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this follow-up telephone interview which will last between 45 and 60 minutes. I anticipate the information you provide will contribute to a better understanding of how Malaysian academics experience their work-life interface. This interview will be recorded, but your identity will be kept entirely confidential. At any time you wish to stop, please let me know.

Issues discussed will be mostly referred to the diary entries that you have completed. This is to have better understanding how you experience your work-life interface, the work environmental factors and the influence of your culture or personal involvement in achieving a satisfactory work-life balance. You can choose how much information you want to disclose and you would be responsible with that.

## CENTRAL QUESTIONS

1. Let's begin with your professional life. How did you become part of MARA lecturer and in a typical day, what would I see you doing?
  - Can you define what work and non-work means to you?
  - In your diary entries, most of your significant things deal with the situation at the office. So how do you balance your responsibilities with being a parent and a spouse?
  - In managing both work and non-work responsibilities, what are the challenges you face as an academic and a parent/spouse?
  - Does your work have positive/negative impact on your personal/ family life or vice versa? How does it have an impact (positive/negative) and can you provide an example
  
2. Let's talk about your work environment.
  - Can you share some experiences the time when people (colleague/leadership/students) or policies at your work place helped you meet your personal needs (family / personal commitment).
  - (How did you feel?)
  
3. As a Muslim and a Malay woman, do you think your culture or your personal involvement influence you in managing your work and non-work responsibilities?
  - What does a balanced work-life mean to you?
  - Do you care about having a good balance between work and family or do you think either one should be a priority?
  - How are you sure whether you are achieving a balanced life or not?
  - How do you manage your work and non-work responsibilities? Can you give some examples.
  - To what extend do your spouse and/or other support share in family responsibilities? Can you please share your experience.
  - To what extend does this contribute (positive) or affect (negative) your daily professional lives? Can you please provide an example and explain.
  - How do you imagine your work-life situation will be as you look towards the future?
  - Is there anything else on these issues that you would like to add?

## CLOSING

Thank you for the time spent sharing the information. You can ask me to take out any parts of the interview, if you think that is necessary. I will then send you a transcript. You can ask for any of it to be deleted. When you return the transcript you are happy with, you are giving me permission to use direct quotes from it.

## Appendix 5: Translated version of original script

### Original transcript (Malay version):

I: Dari segi bantuan atau pun peranan rakan-rakan atau pun pihak pengurusan semasa [ ] ada masalah tersebut, bagaimana peranan tersebut mempengaruhi cara pemikiran dan tindak tanduk professional [ ] di tempat kerja?

### English version:

I: How do you think the role of the management or your colleagues affect the way of your thinking and your professional behaviours at your workplace?

### Original transcript (Malay version):

R: Pada [ ] sebagai seorang policy maker atau pentadbir, dia perlu menyesuaikan policy yang dia nak implement dengan keadaan staf dia. Mungkin ada polisi-polisi yang ditentukan memang arr by book lah. Mengikut seperti di dalam buku. Tapi ada masa-masa polisi tersebut boleh err boleh difleksibelkan, boleh diubah suai mengikut kesesuaian arr apa ni.. masalah kesesuaian staf pada masa tersebut. Sebab kalau sebagai manusia, kita kadang memang kita sukakan ketegasan dan juga err apa ni err undang-undang. Kena ada peraturan semua-semua tu tapi bila peraturan tu sampai mengongkong.. mengongkong pihak staf, peraturan yang pentadbir nak jalankan tu mengganggu staf, jadi dia akan jadi satu yang err tidak memotivasikan pekerja even pekerja mungkin akan lebih stress. Dan dia menggalakkan arr staf untuk menipu. Menipu maksudnya arr macam contohnya (...) dia pun dah berkorban (...). Tapi ada staf yang berbeza-beza. Dia punya situasi dia (...). Jadi benda tu tak...tak puas hati. Dan sampai boleh menyebabkan staf ni jadi kreatif tu kata nak menipu tu (...). Haa jadi tak.. suasana tu jadi tak sihat. Daripada dia seorang pekerja lah yang jujur membentuk dia untuk menipu. Jadi, tu lah, polisi tu tidak digunakan dengan sesuai.

Kita perlu bertolak ansur di beberapa keadaan sebab staf tu pun dah arr ada beberapa staf yang betul-betul dah bertungkus-lumus (...) jadi why not arr bagilah macam reward walau pun reward tu bukan dalam bentuk duit kea pa kan (...). Jadi benda-benda macam tu, polisi-polisi yang macam itulah yang menyebabkan staf-staf bawahan ni jadi... dia rasa demotivate sebab tindakan tu agak drastic. Kalau dulu, mungkin pihak kitorang sendiri arr selama ni dah terlalu rehat. Rehat in a way in the sense that macam... macam apa... manjakan. Bukanlah manja tapi dah terlalu fleksibel sangat dengan pentadbiran yang lama, jadi bila pentadbiran baru yang secara drastic macam ni, dia jadi semua terkejut. Jadi... ibarat macam orang dah lama tak bersukan tetiba suruh lari 100 meter sprint tu. Jadi dia terkejut. Jadi dia lagi serik. Serik untuk bekerjalah sebab dia dah... dia dah terluka hati dia sebab dengan apa arr kesungguhan dia buat itu buat ini, end up dia dapat macam tu. Jadi benda tu mungkin kena dekat beberapa orang tapi bila.. ye lah nature manusia bila dia tak puas hati, nak tak nak ermmm dan memberi kesan yang mendalam kepada dia.

**English version :**

R: I feel that as a policy maker or a leader, (the college director) needs to adjust the policy that (the college director) wants to implement at the workplace. Policies are written in the book. However, sometimes (the college director) should be flexible to adapt the policies with the need of the staff. As human beings, we sometimes want to be firm or stick with the regulations. It is true that we need rules and regulations. Unfortunately, it could also demotivate the staff or pressure them if the policies that are being implemented are controlling their life. Even it could encourage them to tell lies. For example, a staff felt that she had sacrificed or contributed a lot to the college. Suddenly, when she had an unavoidable personal situation and the leader could not help her to solve the problem due to the written policies, this forced her to tell lies. This has created an unhealthy work environment. From an honest person, she became a liar. So, that's the result when policies were not used appropriately.

At certain times, you must be considerate. There are some staff who have worked very hard and why not reward them. It is not necessary to reward them with money. Those kinds of things such as the policies could demotivate the staff because the action was too drastic. Previously, we might have been working too long in a comfort environment. Comfort in a sense that we were being cared for. We have been working too long in a flexible environment under the previous leadership style and it gives us a great shock when there is a drastic change under the new leader. It is as if you are asking a person to do a 100m sprint after he/she has not been running for quite some time. So, it is a shock for her. She fears to continue working. She feels hurt with how she was treated after she has given her full commitment to the college. This might happen to some people only but it leaves a profound impact on her life.

## Appendix 6: Master table of themes from Farah's transcript

Participant 3 (Farah)		
Emergent themes	Page/Line	Keywords
<i>Negative work culture</i>		
Lack of cooperation from other staff	2; 68-69	
Disturbed by the new generation of academics' attitude	12; 426-427	
New generation of academics have negative work behaviour	13;436-437	
Less respect by new generation of academics	13; 447-453	
A drastic change of leadership style results in negative work environment	19; 649-653	
One way communication between management and academics affects academic work performance	19; 661-662	
Power and rank create gap between leader and academics	19; 663-666	
Drastic change in policy implementation results in dissatisfaction among academics	19; 681 -684	
Autocratic leadership in current management	20; 685-689	
Competition among leaders in policy implementation affects academics	20; 689-692	
Dissatisfaction with one way communication in assigning tasks	20; 689-699	
Leader pressured by top management results in assigning more tasks to academics	20;712-715	
Leader neglects academics' point of view	21; 720-724	
A new leader is an intruder in a work culture	21; 746-747	
No give and take by management	8;318-321	
Difficulty in getting support from college leader when having personal problem	8; 270-273	
College leader should consider staff needs when implementing policy	8; 282-288	
Academic's family matters were not taken into consideration by management	9; 306-312	
Authoritative leadership style creates unhealthy work culture	8; 316-318	

Academic's contribution is not being appreciated	8; 319-321
Satisfaction with previous management (leader)	10; 329-331
Rewards from management results in academic work satisfaction	10; 352-355
Rewards from management is not for appreciation but only a norm in giving reward	11; 362-368
Unclear delegation of work tasks by management	11; 378-380
No guidance and assistance in work task given by leader	11; 378-382
No choice in work delegation (authoritative leader)	11; 383-385
Impact of competing for KPI among leaders on academic work performance	11; 388-397
Leaders competing for organisational success neglects college manpower	11; 391-392
Management competes for quantities and neglect qualities	11; 394-395
Family support contributes to academic work commitment (no family to work interference)	12; 420-423
Unfair work delegation between young and old teachers	14; 469-470
Leaders have different view in their leadership styles	7; 220-223
Unfair policy implementation at top management level	7; 228-232
Academic work involved lots of non-academic tasks	5; 160-163

<i>Negative impact under new leadership</i>	
Extra workload affects her in managing home	3; 98-102
Extra workload results in work-life interference	2; 46-47
Pressure from management in completing tasks	2; 68
Pressured by work affects family	2; 70-74
Avoiding work-life interference is a challenge	3; 75-77
Work overload affects academic personal well-being (stress)	4; 113-116
Work overload affects in managing family task responsibilities (emotionally affected)	4; 115-116
Work-life interferences are common in her academic's life under new leadership	4; 126-130
New working hours give negative impact in work-life management	5; 172-180



Difficulty in managing work-life responsibilities under new leadership	6; 207-212
New leadership restricts academic freedom	6; 216-217
Authoritative leadership style leads to loss of motivation and stress among academics	9; 291-294
Inconsiderate leader leads to negative behaviour among academics	9; 294-295
Authoritative leader demotivates academic	10; 326-328
Resistance to change	10; 332-335
Emotionally hurt with current leader's decision	10; 335-340
Leadership behaviour results in negative behaviour among academics	10; 339-343
Ambitious leaders affect academic work planning	12; 397-402
Incomplete tasks lead to frustration among academics	12; 399 -402
Work overload decreased academic work commitment	12; 402-409
Leader's roles have huge impact on academic work commitment	12; 427-432
Change of leader and colleagues affects academic work commitment and performance	19; 649-651
Ineffective leadership style influence academic personal well-being (stress)	19; 652-653
Struggling to increase work commitment under current leadership	19; 653-655
Leader's role leaves deep impact on academic's motivation (low)	21; 734-736
<i>Man is the breadwinner, woman is the homemaker</i>	
Managing home and family tasks are both duties for a woman	1; 18-26
Managing family has less challenge than work	3; 80-81
Woman is responsible for children's upbringing	3; 102-108
Woman is a homemaker	3; 102-112
Women are responsible for the well-being of the family	15; 514-517
Women are multi-tasking than men	15; 515-516
Women manage home better than men	15; 524-526
Men at work as breadwinners, women at home as homemakers	15; 527-535
Women are perfectionist in managing home	15; 535-539
Perfectionism restricts men from getting involved in managing home	16; 541-544

Conflict between practice of Islam and Malay culture in managing work-life responsibilities	16; 551-555
Wife is subjected to husband's permission in performing work tasks	17; 609-610
The significance of husband's role in academic professional life (Muslim belief)	18; 631-634

<i>Challenges in work-life</i>	
Difficulty in managing multiple roles at early career	1; 34-38
Bringing up small children influence work-life management	1; 35-37
Managing work-life in early career involves lots of sacrifices to the family	2; 38-42
Time management is a challenge at early career	2; 38-41
Completing tasks that requires new skills and knowledge is a challenge	2; 61-64
Life is fully occupied with work and home tasks	4; 140-181
<i>Priority of work in non-western culture</i>	
Doing office work at home is a routine not an interference	6; 185-187
Religion belief that work is a responsibility that needs to be performed	14; 482-484
<i>Coping</i>	
Reduced workload promotes better work-life management	2; 47-51
Grown-up children support work-life management	3; 81-82
Spouse support contributes to positive work-life management	3; 83
Applying soft skills from work to home	3; 92-97
Support and trust received from understanding spouse	4; 120-124
Family support leads to work satisfaction	4; 130-137
Prioritizing work tasks according to its urgency as coping strategy	5; 151-152
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Perseverance as a coping when dealing with work overload	5; 155-157

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