Exploring Work-Family Balance Perception in Creative Industry

Azelin Aziz and Mohd Khairie Ahmad

Abstract - Previous research suggests that employees in the creative industry are likely to hold several jobs, working irregular time, employment are short-term, with little career security and uncertain job prospects, and nevertheless the workforce appears to be growing. As Creative Industry has been projected to be one of the Malaysia economic sources, it is critical to understand the working-life quality on this highly increasing industry. This study explores how Malaysian creative industries' related workers view a balanced work-family life. Series of in-depth interviews were conducted on 12 creative industry workers. Data were transcribed and analyse using thematic analysis methods. The results suggest that work-family balance was viewed from several perspectives – role participation, role conflict, and role achievement.

Index Terms - Work-family, creative industry workers, balance.

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1 INTRODUCTION

Creative industries have gradually becoming more important source of post-industrial knowledge based economy. These industries were expected to achieve an annual growth rate of 13% in the domestic segment and targeting an annual growth rate of 20% for content exports according to Malaysia Economic Transformation Programme. As a result, Malaysia Creative Industry Policy has argued for the drastic extension. However, the expansion is suspected has ignored the creative employment conditions, risk generating labour markets marked by irregular, insecure and unprotected work. Thus, this scenario has laid some significance questions on quality of work-family balance in these rising industries. Studies on work-family interface have received tremendous interest from scholars as more employees are now juggling between work and family roles. This is due to increase women participation in labour force, dual career couple as well as single parents [1], [2], [3]. As a result, a question has emerged about whether employees are able to balance their roles at home and at work appropriately.

2 RESEARCH BACKGROUND

A balanced work-family life (termed as work-family balance (WFB)) is expected to mean different thing to different people. This is because, the structure of the work and family are believed to influence how work and family life are experienced [4],[5]. For instance, different occupation could have different work hours, job descriptions and schedules. Similarly, the presence of

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extended family or a domestic helper in a household might ease an employee with his/her household demand.

Western conception of WFB as widely seen in the literature is believed non-universal [6]. Thus, to understand how non-western people like Malaysian perceive WFB, a study employing Malaysian sample is necessary.

Within the Malaysia work-family literature, the majority of the study focuses on examining the determinant and the outcome of the various work-family experiences [7], [8]. Not much work is done on exploring the conceptualization of work-family related construct with the exception to [1] study. In their study which looked into the WFB concept, women teachers of the government schools were sampled. In this occupation, employees work in fixed schedule and have shorter work hours at worksite as opposed to other occupation. Contrary to this, the present study aims to extend the Aziz & Chang's study - that is examining the WFB definition - by looking from the perspective of employees working irregular hours. For this purpose, individuals working in creative industry such as broadcasting station, news media, production house and advertising are sampled.

In creative industry, works done are project-based and deadline-driven. As a result, working longer than the average 8 hour-day office job, on weekends or at night is unavoidable. This has made the line between work and family domains are increasingly blurred. With such a demanding work schedule, managing the multiple roles of the work and family is challenging. The work performance in creative industry is very much influenced by employees' creativity and innovation. Studies have shown that perceived imbalance between work and family roles hinder performance. In relation to this, it is necessary to investigate the issues of work-family balance in employees working irregular hours, first, by placing emphasis on determining what a balanced work-family life mean to them. Accordingly, the following research question is to be

answered by this study:

What does work-family balance mean to employees in creative industry?

3   CONCEPTUALIZING WORK-FAMILY BALANCE

An overview of the literature shows that there was no widely accepted definition of the work-family balance construct. Most frequently, researchers viewed WFB as a lack of conflict or interference between work and family roles. It has been argued, however, that the mere conflict is inadequate to represent WFB as it does not capture the positive aspects of work-family interface that are likely to contribute to a balanced work-family arrangement [9].

Alternatively, scholars began to propose other definitions for the WFB construct – among others, focusing on the equality perspective. For example [10] stated balance is achieved when input and outcome in each domain are equal. In another perspective, there were also scholars who conceptualized balance using psychological constructs. For instance, [11] defined WFB as 'satisfaction and good functioning at work and at home with a minimum of role conflict' (p. 349).

In view of this, the researcher believed conceptualize balance using the psychological construct is more realistic because it is subjective in nature – equal distribution of resources between domains, for example, may not necessary. For instance, although a greater number of children will generally increase one's demand in the family role, the presence of older children may offer a significant source of help - as such, a little resources are sufficient. In relation to this, the researcher believe whether or not balance is achieved, it is up to an individual's judgment as to whether his/her expectations about work and family roles are met or not. Thus, by interviewing employees about the meaning of a balance work-family life to them, this objective can be achieved.

4   THE INFLUENCE OF WORK STRUCTURE

The differences in work structure such as the amount of work hours, scheduling of the work time as well as the job description are believed to have caused variations in the work-family balance experience across people of different occupations. This is because different work structures place a somewhat different amount of demand on individuals [11].

Thus far, within the Malaysia literature, past work-family studies have mostly sampled employees working in a traditional daytime schedule (e.g. [12], [13], [14]). Furthermore, these studies also mainly investigated the relationship between various work-family predictors to the experience of work-family conflict - with the exception to [1] study who explored work-family balance concept. In their study, the participants were women teachers who work fixed hours and schedule. The study found support for the widely-held assumption in the society that women join teaching profession mostly due to family-related reasons, in particular, to look after the family affairs even though they are working. Consistent with this, it is not surprising that these participants' view of a balanced work-family life surrounds the issues of fulfilling work and family responsibilities. In other words, balance is achieved when they are able to fulfill the work and household duties appropriately.

The present study investigates participants working in a more demanding work condition-specifically those working irregular hours and schedule such as those in creative industry. This industry has received considerable attention from the government because of its potential to contribute to national GDP (Government to continue, 2014) – in particular, the creative multimedia category. In this industry, work performance is very much dependant on individuals' creativity and innovation to produce an outstanding work. Works done are primarily project-based and deadline-driven. As a result, working longer than the average 8 hour-day office job, in the evening or on weekends is unavoidable. This has made the line between work and family domains are increasingly blurred as opposed to occupations with fixed hours and schedule. Studies have shown that working irregular hours and schedule is more likely to experience stress or conflict between the two roles [12], [15]. Having to work long hours, an evening work and on the weekend would mean employees are physically not available for family affairs planned at specific times. Thus, it is the aim of this study to examine these people of no-traditional work schedule view a balanced work-family life..

5   METHODS

This study requires an essential manner to explore work-family balance phenomena such as thoughts and perceptions. According to [16] and [17] the understanding of deeper perspectives can be captured through face-to-face interaction. Therefore, this study employed face-to-face in-depth interviews technique. Using the purposive sampling technique, a series of in-depth interviews were conducted with twelve practitioners from different backgrounds, roles, and segments of creative industry. They were asked open ended questions to enables them to better express their thoughts and perceptions of balance between work and family. The interviews were recorded, transcribed and analysed using qualitative analysis software, Nvivo. Thematic analysis was engaged to examine the data and nodes were established to explain what does work-family balance mean to employees in creative industry.

6   FINDINGS

6.1 Informants Background

Generally, the informants of this study mainly are working in news related industry as six of them claimed to work as journalist. Three of them work in broadcasting organisation, two were from production house and only one working in an advertising firm. The informant also consisted of nine Malays, two Chinese and one Indian. In

addition, majority of them were female. Of these twelve informants, six are married, one of them is single father and another five are not-married. Basically, for married informants they have an average of two to three children together with at least one parent still alive. Majority of the informant are also either staying alone or with their immediate family members. Details background information of each informant can be reviewed in Table 1.

TABLE 1. INFORMANTS BACKGROUND

	Ethnic	Gender	Job Type	Status	Dependents	Home Category	Parents Status
Inf.1	Malay	Female	Journalist	Single	None	IF	OFA
Inf.2	Malay	Female	Broadcasting	Married	1 kid	NF	BPA
Inf.3	Malay	Female	Journalist	Married	2-3 kids	Alone	OMA
Inf.4	Malay	Male	Journalist	Single	None	Alone	OMA
Inf.5	Malay	Male	Journalist	Married	≥ 4 kids	Alone	OMA
Inf.6	Chinese	Female	Advertising	Married	2-3 kids	Alone	OFA
Inf.7	Malay	Male	Production	Married	2-3 kids	Alone	BPA
Inf.8	Chinese	Female	Journalist	Single	None	IF	BPA
Inf.9	Malay	Male	Journalist	Sing. Parent	2-3 kids	NF	OFA
Inf.10	Malay	Female	Broadcasting	Married	2-3 kids	NF	BPA
Inf.11	Malay	Male	Production	Single	None	Alone	OMA
Inf.12	Indian	Female	Broadcasting	Single	None	Alone	BPA

OFA=Only father alive   OMA=Only mother alive   BPA=Both parents alive
IF=Immediate Family   NF=Nuclear Family.

6.2   Work-Family Balance Perspective

Based on the interview transcripts, it was noted that mostly all informants' responses on the work-family balance were uncomplicated. Generally, the analysis found three major themes that emerged in conceptualising about work family balance among the creative industry workers: role participation, role conflict and role achievement. Figure 1 illustrates the major themes and subthemes that support the idea of work-family balance of the informants.

Role participation coded participants' responses mentioning balance as a situation in which they are able to perform their duties at work and at home appropriately. This theme explains about informants being able to spend time and give a commitment as desired on their work and family tasks. Balance in the context of role participation also explains about time management between and ability to focus on both domains. The samples of the responses are:

"...situations in which a person can focus on tasks at home and in the office job in any situation" (Inf. 12)
"...balance in terms of time management and commitment to the work and family" (Inf. 2)
"...able to carry out and fulfill tasks appropriately and at the same time to spend sufficient time with their families without interruption" (Inf. 4)
"Ability to ensure proper focus is given to the office tasks and duties to the family." (Inf. 9).

The 'role conflict' theme refers to responses mentioning about the interference between the two domains, which is

work aspects that get carried into the family domain and vice versa. Analysis found none conflict task and none conflict environment as the two subtheme that explicates 'role conflict' conception of work-family balance. The samples of the responses that were coded under this category are:

"It's [balance] about able to create a non-conflict environment between your career and your family" (Inf. 6)
"No major problems occurred between work and family situation" (Inf. 10)
"...is a concept to indicate a situation where there is no conflict happening" (Inf. 8)
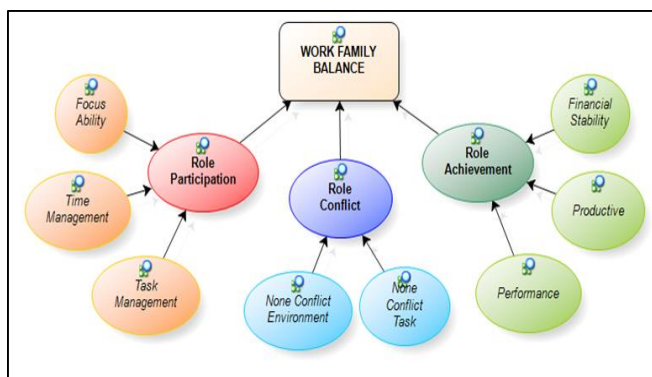

Fig. 1. Themes of Work Family Balance Conception Among Creative Industry Workers.

The third major theme supporting work-family balance is 'role achievement'. It refers to the responses that reflect balance as a situation in which individuals are satisfied with their achievement in work as well as the family condition. Financial stability, performance and productive are the three subthemes that explain about role achievement. Informants responses for this category are:

"Have a productive work quality in tandem with the developing a happy and successful family ..." (Inf. 3)
"...managing family and at the same time be able to succeed on the job" (Inf. 1)
"...when task related to work and family can be well accomplished. That is you achieve success in your career and have happy family" (Inf. 11)
"Achievements in terms of income earned through employment to finance the needs of the family." (Inf.5)
"It means when performance of task related to work and family can be well accomplished." (Inf. 7)

In general, all the responses were categorized into three categories which were termed as: role participation, role conflict, and role achievement (see Table 2).

TABLE 2. Participants' Conceptualisations of WFB

Participant	Role Participation	Role Conflict	Role Achievement
1	√		√
2	√		√
3	√		
4	√		
5			√
6	√	√	
7			√
8		√	√
9	√		
10	√	√	
11			√
12	√		

7 CONCLUSION

The results of this study yielded that the majority of the participants view work-family balance as having chance to perform role duties, spending time and give commitment to both domains. In the present study, this perspective of viewing WFB is termed as the role-participation perspective. In specific, the majority of women participants mentioned about this aspect. This finding is in line with the argument in the literature that the traditional gender role is still prevalent in the non-western society like Malaysia [18]. Women are still expected to assume the primary role in the household even though working in a demanding irregular schedule.

Only a small number of participants view WFB from the role-conflict perspective. This is supporting the suggestion made by previous scholars that non-western people are less likely to view work and family as interfering each other [19]. Instead, work is seen as a mean to contribute to a better living.

The present study also found that several respondents perceived WFB in terms of role-achievement perspective. This refers to the extent in which participants are happy with their achievement in work and also satisfied with the condition in the family– that is having a happy and successful family as well as able to provide the family needs. From the finding, it was found that the majority who responded regarding the achievement aspect are male participants. This is not surprising given that in this society, male is considered the breadwinner [20], thus doing well in work is important to them so as to provide for the family. As such, work achievement is more of the concern to the male participant than the female participant.

In conclusion, the findings of this study revealed that, first, women regardless of occupation, mostly view WFB from the role-participation or fulfilling role duties perspective. Secondly, women in a demanding job may join the profession out of their passion and ambition, thus, result in them to also view WFB from the role-achievement perspective-that is being successful in career while not neglecting the family. Lastly, the finding also implies that male and female somewhat vary in how a balanced work-family life is viewed.

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