

## Organizational Factors and Work-Life Balance among Policewomen in Sarawak: Emotion Based Coping Strategy as Mediator

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To Link this Article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARBS/v10-i1/6832> DOI:10.6007/IJARBS/v10-i1/6832

**Published Date:** 20 January 2020

### Abstract

Policing is an extremely demanding profession and woman have no choice for working hours which may lead to work-life imbalance. Thus using the suitable coping strategy is paramount to ensure work life balance. The purpose of this study is to examine the effect of emotion based coping strategy as mediator between the selected organizational factors (flexible working hour, organization support and self-management) on work life balance. A total of 110 policewomen in Kuching, Sarawak responded to the survey questionnaire. The finding shows that emotion based coping strategy mediate only the relationship between self- management and work life balance. Thus, in order to assist policewomen to experience WLB, the organization should encourage policewoman to learn to have some 'me time' besides providing support such as counselling and mentoring.

**Keywords:** Flexible Working Hour, Organization Support, Self-Management, Emotion Based Coping Strategy, Work Life Balance

### Introduction

In the era of modernization, participation of women in workforce is not a common issue. Women become important and had given opportunity to involve in employment sector. Furthermore, the formulation of National Women Policy reflects the government's determination to optimize the potential of women in national development (Selvaratnam & Yeng, 2011). The integration of women in the workforce in Malaysia is a new phenomenon in the process of modernization and capitalism (Selvaratnam & Yeng, 2011). Women have become crucial resource in organization and at the same time they need to integrate work and non-work roles effectively. Thus, the involvement of working women in the organization have become increasingly demanding. Based on the report by Department of Statistics Malaysia (2017), there are increment by 0.2% for female labour force which is 54.3% in 2016 and 54.1% in 2015. The increment shows that women also plays a vital role in work force.

According to Polis Diraja Malaysia (PDRM) website, Women's Police Unit was established in the time of emergency. Many local women have been recruited as Special Police. The government at that time was actively launched an operation to prevent the supply of food to the communist terrorists. Because most of the people who worked as rubber tappers in the country are women, the recruitment of women for tasks such checks are necessary. Special Police also perform tasks in lock-ups and a police escort to women and children were detained. In August 1955, the Women's Police Force was officially established. A police officer Englishwoman, Miss B.D.B. Wentworth was seconded to the Police Force to assist in the efforts to train police pioneering women in this country. Since then, Women's Police Force continues to thrive play an important role in maintaining the country's security and welfare.

WLB has emerged as an increasingly more invasive challenge for women. Working parents often encounter in trying to take care of their children and families in order to balance employment duties (Families and Work Institute [FWI], 2004b; FWI; Galinsky & Johnson, 1998). The concept of WLB is a recognizing of good functioning at work and at home with at the very least perceived role conflict (Guest, 2002).

To balance work and life is a big challenge for women especially who are working in police department. Working in the police department normally will require one-person ready for work at any time of the day and sometimes need to work during shift time. In addition to that, shift work can be define as employment in which two or more groups of employees work at different times of 24 hour time span (Finn, 1981). This situation can lead to improper hours of work and can lead to imbalance between work and family. Time apportionment of a working woman was related to the type of responsibilities at home and at work place (Subha & Dhivya, 2014) . Generally, there are many factors influence individual to achieve work life balance such as, flexible work arrangement (Jain & Swami 2014), organization support (Francis & Lingard 2004), co-worker support (Kangure, 2013) organizational culture, self-management and time management (Tiwari, 2015). These factors will influence an individual ability to manage their work and life and at the same time to get the satisfaction for both.

In the aspect of gender role, women normally experienced work family conflict compared to men in dealing with house chores and work (Gurney, 2010). Gurney (2010) also mentioned that women were more likely to raise the issue of control over working hours. Women's greater possibility of discussing working hours may have been linked, in part, to caring responsibilities; women with caring responsibilities needed higher levels of temporal flexibility (flexible working hours) due to their roles as primary carers within the family domain. There were many gender differences in findings about the family domain. Women tended to have the majority responsibility for caring and domestic work. There were both similarities and differences in how women and men in the sample spoke about their parenting roles (Gurney, 2010). Both sexes described practical aspects of caring, such as collecting children from school and providing financially for them. However, women spoke about wider identity issues regarding parenthood, indicating the borders around this domain differ for mothers and fathers (Gurney, 2010).

Nevertheless, there are various of strategy women can implement in situation of balancing their work and life. One of the strategies is coping strategy. Coping is a process of individual ongoing efforts towards thoughts and actions in order to manage specific demands. Emotional-based coping attempts to change what or how it is appraised (Lazarus,1993) and the strategies are such as obtaining emotional support, denial of truth or emotional venting (Parr, 2012). Past study revealed that coping strategies employed by Nigerian women in the

banking sector successfully achieve work-family balance (Stella & Chima, 2015). Thus, emotion-based coping able to reduce and manage emotional distress especially associated with work-family life (Carver, Scheier & Weintraub, 1989; Subha & Dhivya, 2014).

Flexible working policy helps to balance work life, to reduce stress among employees, reduce the number of turnover and increase employee's commitment towards organization. However, for women working in police department, this will become a challenge for them because the nature of job and task specification of department itself. In addition, the organizations function as police department led many tasks to be carried out irrespective of the time, including outside of office hours (Omar, Mohd, & Ariffin, 2015). There is limited research available in the scope of policewomen, thus this study will be carried out to examine the relationship between flexible working hour and WLB among policewomen.

In addition, lack of organizational support may cause employees who have trouble balancing work and personal life perform less effective and productively. Work life balance is difficult to achieve due to the organization keep increasing the complexity of employee task, the expedite of work outcome and the increasing demand for employee work hours (Nii-dei & Kwabena, 2013). Thus, it will lead to employee stay up late work and also not enough rest at the same time which will affect the health of employees and increased stress level and absenteeism rate.

Self-management is the recognition that effectively using the spaces in an individual's live is vital, and that available resources; time and life are limited (Nii-dei and Kwabena, 2013). Thus, individual need to manage themselves and achieve the quality of life and have time with family and friends, time for travel, time to do hobbies and sports and time to do voluntary work. For instance, Nii-dei and Kwabena (2013), reported, Ghana Police have health care facilities to cater for policewomen health needs and for their families. By providing this facility, it is easier for the policewomen to manage their time for themselves and at the same time can spend time with their family. Not much research in had examined the association between self- management and WLB. In simple words, it is relevant and necessary to conduct this study due to the reason that there were limited literature particularly in Asian context among the policewomen on the topic of coping-strategy to achieve work life balance. In addition, lacking of the past research finding on the topic of coping strategy as a mediator variable indeed to be necessary. In accordance to Pearlin & Schooler Carmi (2009), coping strategy with the aim of avoiding, preventing or controlling emotional stress and is to protects the people from being psychologically harmed by problematic social experience, thus coping strategy is a behaviour that importantly mediates the impact that societies have on their members.

Therefore, to bridge this research gap, the following hypotheses are proposed: **(H1)** Emotion based coping strategy will mediate the relationship between flexible working hour and WLB. **(H2)** Emotion based coping strategy will mediate the relationship between organization support and WLB. **(H3)** Emotion based coping strategy will mediate the relationship between self-management and WLB.

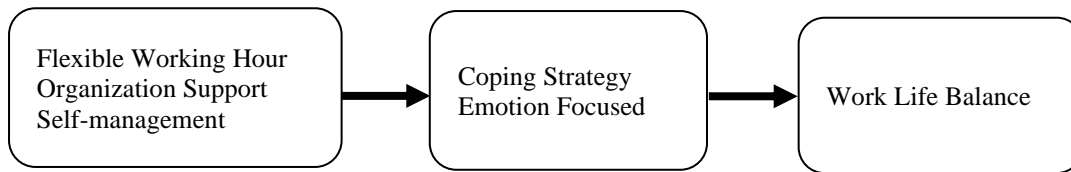


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework (Source: Francis &amp; Lingard, 2004)

## Methods

A quantitative approach through survey questionnaire was carried out in Ibu Pejabat Kontinjen Sarawak in Kuching among the policewomen and total of 110 responded to the questionnaire from the total number of 150. The minimum sample is met based on sample size determined by using table generated through Krejcie and Morgan (1970) approach. No major issue on normality and outliers as well as the reliability and validity which met the benchmark value of 0.40 of item factor loadings, Kaiser Meyer-Olkin and Bartlett's test of Sphericity value and Cronbach alpha (Hair et al., 1998).

Table 1

*Summary of research instrument*

No	Instrument	Total items	Sources/Contents
1	Flexible Working Hour	11	Ahmad, Mohamed Idris & Hashim (2013)
2	Organization Support	16	Francis & Lingard (2004)
3	Self-Management	6	Swarnalatha (2013)
4	Coping Strategy	14	Carver et al (1989); Guppy et al (2004)
5	Work life balance	8	Manfredi & Holiday (2004)

## Results and Discussion

A total of 110 valid questionnaires were collected for this research. From the 110 cases gathered, the outcomes got demonstrates that greater number of the respondents are from the age group of 30-39 (39.1%) trailed by age group of 40-49 (36.4%), age group of 50-59 (14.5%), and age group of 24-29 (10%). Along these research, majority part the respondents are in the age group of 30-39 years of age. While for marital status, larger part of respondents is married (80.9%) trailed by single (11.8%), divorced (7.3%) and none for widowed. Most of the respondents are Malays (50.9%) trailed by Iban (25.5%), Bidayuh (12.7%), others (7.3%), and Chinese (3.6%). Majority of respondents is Islam (55.5%) followed by Christian (41.8%) and Buddhist (2.7%). In terms of academic, the majority of the respondents with MCE/SPM capability (61%), Diploma/STPM (18.1%), Bachelors (12.7%), others (7.3%), only 0.9% are Master degree holder. For data with regard to availability of helper, most part of respondents has no helper (84.5%) and only 15.5% has helper.

Table 2

*Direct, Indirect, and Total Effect*

Variable	Direct	Indirect	Total	Lower Limit	Upper Limit
Flexible working hour	.2061	.0599	.2660	-.0521	.2170
Organization Support	.3075	.0838	.3914	-.0251	.2456
Self-Management	.90	.307	.3397	.0233	.1743
TOTAL	.7726	.2244	.71		

As shown in Table 2, the quantity of lower limit and upper limit of flexible working hour was -.0521 and .2170, association support was -.0251 and .2456 while self-administration was .0233 and .1743 which was analysed through Preacher and Hayes (2004) approach by utilizing SPSS macros version 22; PROCESS Model 4 in simple mediation model (Mackinnon et al., 2007).

The first assumption was not supported, whereby emotion based coping strategy does not mediate the relationship between flexible working hours and WLB. Past study had proposed that the flexible hour does not helping in achieving work life balance depending on the nature of the job (Lathi, 2017). For example, during the exam weeks, teachers have a huge amount of papers to review and they need to work until midnight if they want to return the exams within a reasonable time (Lathi, 2017; Rabi, Ghazali, Rohaizad, & Zulkefli, 2018; Rabi, Ghazali, Rohaizad, & Zulkefli, 2018). Since this study involved policewomen whereby they are practising different times of 24-hour time span. (Finn, 1981), thus the H1 is rejected. The second assumption was also not supported, whereby the emotion based coping strategy does not mediate the relationship between organization support and WLB. The finding was similar to Wu, Rusyidi, Claiborne and Mccarthy (2013) found, that is, there is no significant relationship between organization support and WLB based on emotion based coping strategy. In addition, Au and Ahmed (2016) stated the organizations support do not lead to WLB since the employees discovered their top management is one of the reasons of stress and had negatively impact of WLB. Therefore, the H2 is rejected.

The third assumption was supported, whereby the emotion based coping strategy mediated the relationship between self-management and WLB. Self-management is one of the crucial components to achieve the WLB (Nii-dei & Kwabena, 2013; Sadoughi & Hesampour, 2017). Having some 'me time' for hobby, exercise, meditation for instance help employees to have a clearer mind to manage work and life. Self-management predicts WLB only if the emotion based coping strategy was utilized. Majority of the respondents in this study are married, thus having spouse may act as the 'shoulders to cry on'. Hence, the H3 was supported.

### Conclusion and Implications

The study demonstrated the mediating role emotion based coping strategy in the relationship between self-management and work life balance among policewomen. Thus it is very important for individual policewoman to take care of herself in balancing her work, family, leisure and hobby so that work life balance can be achieved. Organization could help by providing self-management training courses such as stress management, time management, Zumba or other recreational activities. As emotion based coping is important, organization could offer counselling service as well as mentoring system to help employee solve their problems so that WLB can be achieved.



## Acknowledgement

The research is funded by Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (Unimas) MyRa Special Grant 2016 F04/SpSTG/1393/16/3

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