

Measuring Self-Esteem, Work/Family Enrichment and Life Satisfaction: An Empirical Validation.

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Abstract. This study validates the hypothesized interrelationships among constructs of self-esteem, work/family enrichment and life satisfaction. Using data collected from 680 female nurses employed in public hospitals in Malaysia, this study also examines the likely mediation effect of work/family enrichment on self-esteem-satisfaction relationship. To tests these relationships, the study employs full structural modeling testing using SEM with AMOS 17 data-fitting program. The results indicate that self-esteem is directly influence and has significant effect on life satisfaction. The result provides empirical support for a positive relationship between self-esteem and work/family enrichment.

Keywords: self-esteem, satisfaction and work/family enrichment.

1. Introduction

In recent years, the importance of managing the boundary between work and family roles has come to the fore of an organizational research. This is because work and family are essential components in the lives of most people [1,2]. More importantly, work and family roles can produce significant impact on life satisfaction [3]. Most of researchers agree that when a person has difficulty in striking this balance, there may potentially be several detrimental outcomes. Conversely, if a person successfully manages his or her multiple roles, these roles may enrich his or her life. Critical concerns have been raised by management practitioners and academics regarding this issue [4]. The last three decades have witnessed changes in the lives of men and women in three ways: 1) both men and women juggling work and family roles simultaneously; 2) the existence of dual-income families, single parents and a growing number of women in the workforce; 3) the attitudes and values of men and women towards other aspects of life such as religion, leisure and the general quality of life [5]. As a result, organizations face the challenge of executing practices that allow their employees to perform at work as well as function meaningfully in their home. Organizations and academia must give serious attention to the relationships between work and family roles and how these two domains affect other elements such as the individual life satisfaction. Critically, for many organizations, helping employees to balance work and family maybe be useful strategies for attracting and retaining capable employees. Helping employees to achieve a certain level of work-life balance could go far in increasing employee work satisfaction and hence the value of services delivered to customers.

Therefore, the overall objective of this study was to validate the hypothesized interrelationships among the constructs of self-esteem, work/family enrichment and life satisfaction among nurses of public hospitals in Malaysia. In addition, the study also examined the likely mediation effect of work/family enrichment on self-esteem -satisfaction relationship.

1.1 Theoretical Underpinning of the Study

Based on work/family enrichment theory [6] that promotes the positive effects of juggling work and family roles [7-9], this study will examine three constructs that have a causal link to one another. They are self-esteem, work/family enrichment and satisfaction.

a) **Self-Esteem**

According to Rosenberg, “self-esteem is the totality of the individual’s thoughts and feelings with reference to himself as an object” [10, p.38]. Simply, this statement reflects an individual overall evaluation regarding his/her competencies. In research concerning work and family matters, the inclusion of self-esteem is important. Previous research has indicated that self-esteem is a crucial personal resource that is central to individuals’ sense of well-being [11]. Korman [12] also believed that a person with self-esteem would be strongly motivated to high levels of well-being. It is universally accepted that people attempt to achieve self-esteem because high self-esteem produce significant effect by buffering the person against stress, negative emotions, enhancing personal adjustment [13]. Maslow [14] described a person with high self-esteem as psychologically happy and healthy. A person with high self-esteem is capable of dealing with anxiety, enhance coping, and promote physical health [15-17]. On the other hand, if a person has low self-esteem, he or she will have psychological frigidity [14], in that he or she may be experiencing depression, anxiety and maladjustment [15-18]. In line with this, several researchers reported that people with low self-esteem experience negative emotion more commonly in contrast to those with high self-esteem [18-20, 17, 21]. As Grandey and Cropanzano [22] reported in their study, self-esteem has a direct relationship to all work and life satisfactions. However, they found no relationship between self-esteem with family satisfactions. In terms of role conflict, previous research on nurses suggested that role conflict is more likely when the nurses have low self-esteem [23]. Critically, according to these researchers, that existence of role conflict normally results in lower performance outcome. From the above explanation, it is possible that those who have high self-esteem are capable of overcoming conflicts arising from combining work and family. Moreover, the higher the self-esteem is, the more the person is likely to see himself/herself as being successful in managing work-life balance [12].

b) **Work/Family Enrichment**

Theory of work/family enrichment provides a clear picture of positive outcomes of combining work and family roles. While there may be other possible explanation for work/family enrichment, this study focuses on the impact of self-esteem from psychological and physical resources. According to Greenhaus & Powel [6], self-esteem generated from one role (work) can improve the quality of life in the other role (family) or vice versa. Several studies in the past have examined the positive side of managing work and family roles; thus, they suggest that personality traits such as self-esteem, self-efficacy and self-confidence may enhance performance in another role because they can stimulate motivation, goal-setting, effort and persistence [24-26].

c) **Life Satisfaction**

Life satisfaction outcomes are divided into three parts; job satisfaction, family satisfaction and well-being satisfaction. Based on work/family enrichment theory, if a person’s work role is enhancing his family role, it seems logical to hypothesize that this may be related to an increase in satisfaction in one’s family role. Similarly, if a person’s family role is enhancing his work role, an increase in work satisfaction could be possible. Hennessey [27] provided support to this claim, indicating that work/family enrichment has a positive relationship with both work and family satisfaction. Specifically, the author reported that women with higher levels of work/family enrichment are more likely to experience higher levels of work and family satisfaction. Grzywacz [28] proposed that work and family enrichment may help to strengthen social relationships, thereby providing a buffer against negative events and leading to improved health outcomes. Several researchers have also suggested that increased levels of work and family positive spillover may be related to both greater job satisfaction and greater family satisfaction [29-31]. However, no empirical evidence exists with regards to the relationship between work/family enrichment and well-being satisfaction.

2. Methodology

Overall a total of 710 questionnaires were distributed to married female nurses in public health care service in Malaysia. Although, the response rate was 100%, 21 questionnaires were later discarded because of missing data. Therefore, the effective response rate was approximately 97%. The sample size was deemed

adequate for the application of structural equation modeling (SEM) to address the research objectives. The majority of the respondents were Malay, diploma holders and above 40 years old. The majority has worked as nurses between 4 and 10 years.

This study adapted the measures used in previous studies. Self-esteem was assessed using Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSE) [10], an instrument designed to provide a measure of global self-esteem. The work-to-family Enrichment (WFE) and family-to-work enrichment (FEW) were assessed using two scales of work/family enrichment measure by Carlson et al. [32]. Then, the measure of family satisfaction was adapted using a modified 5-item version of Brayfield and Rothe’s [33] Job Satisfaction Scale. In this modified version, the word “work” has been replaced with the term “family life”. Next, items for job satisfaction were assessed using the 3-item General Job Satisfaction subscale, which is part of the Job Diagnostic Survey (JDS) developed by Hackman & Oldham [34]. For the variable of well-being satisfaction, it was adapted from the Overall Life Satisfaction scale developed by Quinn and Staines [35]. All items were measured using a six-point Likert-type scale (ranging from 1= strongly disagree to 6= strongly agree). Later, the questionnaire was rigorously pilot tested on 100 respondents before the main data collection was performed. This pilot study was very important in ensuring more reliable data were collected during the major survey with establishment of content validity. The respondents were invited to comment on the questionnaires and thus, their constructive comments provided a basis for refinement to the construct measures.

Using AMOS’s (version 17) maximum likelihood estimation, the study tested the adequacy of the hypothesized models using structural equation modeling (SEM) approach.

3. Result

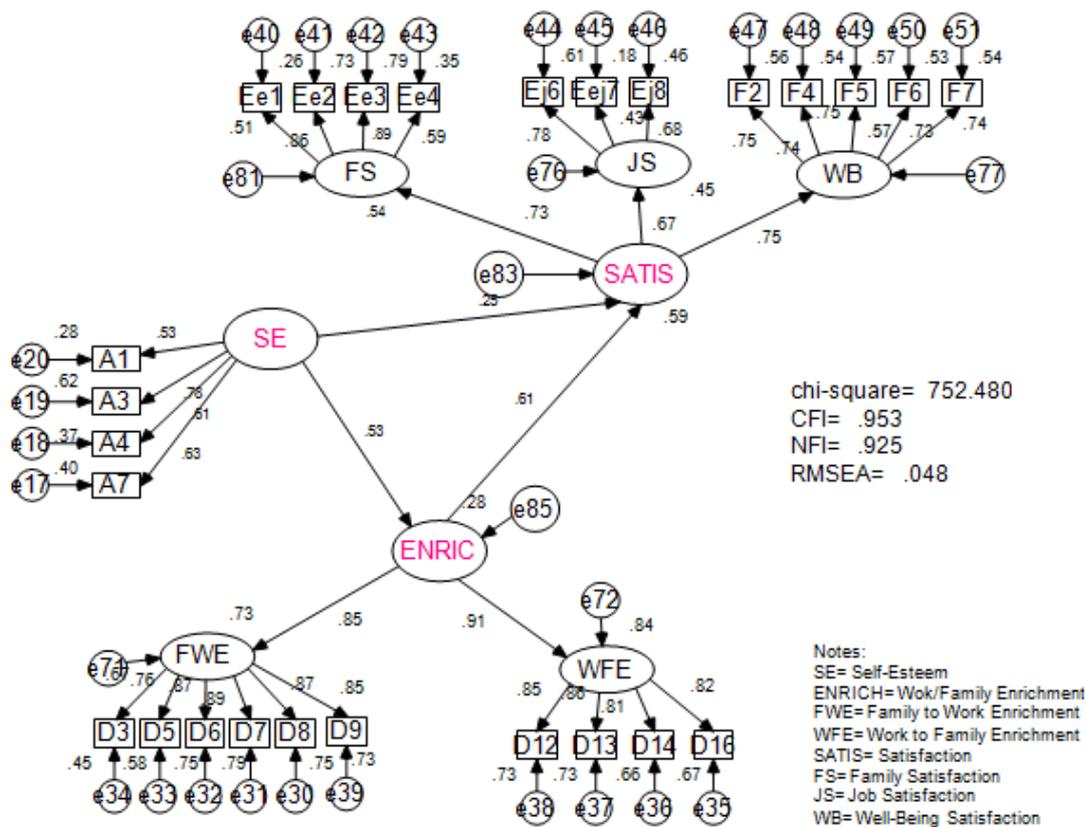


Fig. 1: Result of structural model

The results of the full fledged SEM (Figure 1), which used AMOS data-fitting program, supported the hypothesized relationships among constructs (SE=Self-Esteem, ENRICH=Enrichment, SATIS= Satisfaction). Specifically, the maximum likelihood estimation of the model yielded the several noteworthy results, which collectively supports the adequacy of the model. The chi-square test of overall model fit resulted with a

statistically significant discrepancy between the model and the data ($\chi^2 = 752.480$, $p = .000$; CMIN/df = 2.577). However, the other overall fit statistics (RMSEA = .048; NFI = 0.925 and CFI = 0.953) satisfied their respective thresholds deemed important in a good fitting model. The analysis also produced statistically significant path coefficients, implying the following causal links: i) self-esteem positively related to life satisfaction of employee, ii) self-esteem support positively related to work/family enrichment, iii) Work/family enrichment partially mediated the relationship between self-esteem and life satisfaction, iv) self-esteem, however, exerted substantial direct effect on life satisfaction of employee. In addition the model was free from offending estimates and the directions of the estimates were theoretically justifiable. Finally, the parameter estimates were statistically significant at .05 level, and were of practical importance, since each standardized structural coefficient was larger than 0.2.

4. Discussions and Conclusions

The findings of the present study have expanded the existing body of knowledge on work/family enrichment in several ways. First, the data indicated that self-esteem is directly influence and has significant effect on life satisfaction. The result is similar to Grandey and Cropanzano [22]. However, this present study supports family satisfaction outcomes.

Second, the result provides empirical support for a positive relationship between self-esteem and work/family enrichment. As Greenhouse and Powell [6] suggested, resources derived from either work or family role help in promoting work/family enrichment. No evidence exists in the past to support this finding. Third, the present study provides indications that an individual with higher levels of work/family enrichment is more likely to experience higher level of satisfaction towards wellbeing, job and family. This finding is consistent with the findings of previous studies [18] and assumptions [20,21] which suggest that increased levels of work and family enrichment may be related to greater satisfaction particularly on job and family matters.

Nevertheless, this study has several limitations and requires further examination and additional research. First, this study has focused on married nurses with experience in public health care service. Further research is needed to compare married nurses from public and private healthcare organizations for more rigorous result. Second, since this study only considered married nurses, it is unclear whether the analytical results can be generalized to unmarried nurses, male nurses and other profit-oriented sectors. Finally, since the sample of this study was collected in Malaysia, generalization to other countries might be limited due to cultural differences in managing work-family issues related to self-esteem, work/family enrichment and satisfaction.

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