

Managing Work-Family Conflict among Entrepreneurs: An Empirical Study

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Abstract

Modern day entrepreneurs who operate in today's highly volatile socioeconomic circumstances are undeniably encumbered with a host of role stressors that affect their businesses and personal lives, namely role overload, role ambiguity and role conflict. Coupled with work schedule flexibility, these role stressors have a bearing on work-family conflict and are the focus of this study. Employing self-administered questionnaires via purposive sampling, data were collected from Malaysian entrepreneurs, married with at least one child. Results derived utilising the Partial Least Square (PLS) approach suggest that role conflict and role overload positively affect work-family conflict. However, role ambiguity and work schedule flexibility indicate insignificant effect on work-family conflict. Given a multitude of challenges faced by entrepreneurs in this context, an understanding of the findings can bring to light some insights on how work-family balance can be achieved to boost the development of Malaysian entrepreneurs.

Keywords: role stressors, work schedule flexibility, work-family conflict, entrepreneurs, Malaysia

1. Introduction

The integration between work and family affairs has become a collective of incompatible source (Symoens & Bracke, 2015) affecting individuals who work long hours such as entrepreneurs (Hornaday & Aboud, 1987). Torrance (2013) found that entrepreneurs involved in micro enterprises spent 63 per cent longer hours at work than the average paid employee in the United Kingdom. The Malaysian Labour Survey Report (2011) recorded a similar situation among Malaysian entrepreneurs who weekly clocked 50.2 hours on average.

In comparison with those employed, entrepreneurs face a more daunting task when striving to balance work and family. The Connecticut Business and Industry Association (2014) reported that 26 per cent of family business owners in the United States experienced strong tension in reconciling both their competing businesses and family demands, notably when balancing interpersonal, financial and operational obligations. Entrepreneurs face an assortment of people within their establishments or externally, namely their staff, business counterparts, associates and customers (Lee & Choo, 2001), and hence, don many hats in their multiple roles juggling conflicting demands (Teoh & Foo, 1997) when executing decisions and practicing sound judgement (Boyd & Gumpert, 1983). This justifies the notion that entrepreneurs tend to face chronic job stress wrought by work-family conflicts which steadily rise in tandem with modern-day lifestyles.

In a recent online survey by the world's largest provider of workplace solutions, Regus, 48 per cent of workers comprising business owners across 95 countries admitted to rising stress levels (Sobri, 2015). In spite of this trend, extant literature pertaining to work-family conflict indicate more focus on those employed (see Jamadin et al., 2015; Kelly, Moen, & Tranby, 2011; Qu & Zhao, 2012), rather than on entrepreneurs (Kuschel, 2014; Shelton, Danes, & Eisenman, 2008), particularly entrepreneurs' role stress (Ahmad & Xavier, 2010; Khairuddin, 2015; Wincent & Örtqvist, 2009). There is an obvious need to investigate such conflicts among entrepreneurs to enable the establishment of accurate work-family balance strategies based on actual findings. In view of the fact that entrepreneurship is an important initiative in Malaysia, the findings will support the nation's economic development in keeping with the objective of becoming a developed nation before the next decade. Therefore,

this study has critical implications from both theoretical and practical standpoints.

The next section in this paper delves into previous research relevant to the topic at hand and constructs the propositions for testing. Subsequently, it examines the methodology employed, leading to the results and extrapolation of the findings. It concludes by addressing several implications pertinent to the entrepreneurial community in Malaysia and provides suggestions on improving future research related to work-family conflicts.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Work-Family Conflict

Researchers have ratified that work-family conflict is complex and multidirectional, i.e., work interference to family and family interference to work (Aminah Ahmad, 2008). Although the two concepts are interrelated, most researchers tend to focus on the former. Many researchers (Ayree et al., 1999; Gutek, Searle, & Klepa, 1991; Hochschild, 1997; Howard, Donofrio, & Boles, 2004; Karatepe & Kilic, 2007; Netemeyer, Boles, & McMurrian, 1996) have concluded that individuals encounter greater levels of work-to-family conflict than family-to-work conflict. Compounding this are Frone, Russell and Cooper's (1997) findings that people reported three times as many incidents in the work domain (e.g., work hours) than in the family domain (e.g., spousal support). Higher conflict rates occur at work mainly since work boundaries are less permeable than family boundaries, more so among entrepreneurs who face much more distress, given their longer hours at work.

Work-family conflict refers to "a type of inter-role conflict in which involvement in work roles interfere with involvement in family roles" (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985, p. 77). In essence, it is the degree to which one domain's activity, like work, interferes with another domain's activity, such as family (Carlson, Grzywacz, & Kacmar, 2010). Consequently, demands from both work and family are rendered so mutually exclusive that one role may suffer some degree of neglect due to focus being given to the other (Duxbury & Higgins, 2008).

While the majority of Malaysian entrepreneurs (97.3 per cent) are embroiled in small and medium enterprises (SMEs) (Hafsah, 2015), and often work long hours, this situation is not unique to the owners of SMEs only (Burke 2011). Work and family affairs, however, might get intertwined to a greater extent in SMEs than in large organisations (Jennings & McDougald, 2007; Lee & Choo, 2001). Reiterating this is a qualitative study undertaken by Annink and Den Dulk (2012), who found that being the one who brings home the bacon causes increased pressure for entrepreneurs that have to balance both work and family. This can widely impact these entrepreneurs' decisions on whether to continue with their businesses.

2.2 Role Ambiguity, Role Conflict and Role Overload

The very nature of running one's own business, subjects entrepreneurs to certain levels of stress, largely because their roles necessitate the use of available resources in creating new ventures for the purpose of generating profits in highly competitive markets (Shane & Venkataraman, 2000). Once a venture is in full swing, entrepreneurs are responsible to perform well both in financial and non-financial aspects (Gartner, 1985), thereby causing them to experience higher stress levels compared with other job occupations (Robertson, 2004). This is backed by evidence indicating that close to 70 per cent of entrepreneurs concur that operating their own businesses generates more stress, as opposed to being employed, due to the pressure of commitments and obligations (Hussain, 2013).

Role-related stress, which is, role conflict, role ambiguity and role overload are the three major dimensions that entrepreneurs will face in their working lifestyle. Whether on their own or accumulatively, these dimensions can steer entrepreneurs away from wanting to continue in their businesses (Mellahi & Wilkinson, 2004; Shepherd & Douglas, 2000). This is evident from the Global Entrepreneur Monitor's (GEM) Global Report 2014 which showed a reduction in the number of Malaysian adults who started their own businesses (Timm, 2015).

Role conflict has been conceptualised as the discrepant role expectation of members or external persons toward the role set of an individual (Kahn et al., 1964). Role conflict occurs when expected behaviours or tasks are at odds with one another (Kahn & Byosiene, 1992). Conceptually, role conflict happens among entrepreneurs when expectations from stakeholders become difficult to execute within that role.

The second dimension, role ambiguity, represents the uncertainties arising when individuals have no clear direction about what is expected of them and how to perform (Rizzo, House, & Lirtzman, 1970). Role ambiguity stems from a lack of information or the capability to perform to satisfaction, a job that one has been assigned to (Wincent & Örtqvist, 2009). Inadvertently, proponents of organisational role stress argue that ambiguity can be excluded when people carry out their roles effectively (Sawyer, 1992).

A new entrepreneur is faced with limited resources such as capital, training, equipment and facilities in the

process of accomplishing the multiple tasks required, from operations to marketing the products and services of his or her company. Other possible sources of stress could be difficulties in securing business loans, and the extent to which entrepreneurs are adequately informed and valued by their business partners. Taken together, poor resources and communication could be potential stressors for entrepreneurs (Buttner, 1992; Khairuddin, 2015) in fulfilling their obligations, leading to role ambiguity.

The third dimension, role overload, takes place when time and resources are insufficient to meet the necessary demands pertaining to the commitments and obligations of individuals in their roles as entrepreneurs (Latack, 1981). In other words, role overload signifies excessive or overlapping demands which, when compounded, may lead to decay in the quality of work and life of a person (House et al., 1979). When time and energy become restricted commodities for entrepreneurs, they may be severely challenged when responding to the demands and expectations required of their roles, consequently bringing about devastating consequences (Abdel-Halim, 1981).

Although entrepreneurs operate their own businesses, they undergo long work hours, face possible work-family conflict, and are likely to react to stressful conditions. Therefore, stress reactions and insufficiencies are inherent parts of the entrepreneurial role (Wincent & Örtqvist, 2006). Entrepreneurs should respond proactively by avoiding ambiguities in potential role conflicts, and addressing role overload when factors from either side of the divide threaten to disrupt operations on the other side.

Extant literature indicated a consistent positive relationship between role-related stress factors (role conflicts, role overload and role ambiguity) and work-family conflict (see Frone et al., 1997; Fu & Schaffer, 2001; Fuß et al., 2008; Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Parasuraman, Purohit, & Godshalk, 1996; Ryan, Ma & Ku, 2009; Williams & Alliger, 1994). Of these factors, role ambiguity and role conflict were seen not only to be the precursors of work-family conflict, but also associated with higher levels of such conflicts (Aryee, 1992; Chin et al., 2012; Grandey & Cropanzano, 1999; Michel et al., 2010). Not to be sidestepped, role overload was also shown to have a significant relationship with work-family conflict (see Aminah Ahmad & Maznah Baba, 2003; Fu & Shaffer, 2001).

Depending on these premises, the following hypotheses were constructed:

H1: Role ambiguity is positively related to work-family conflict.

H2: Role conflict is positively related to work-family conflict.

H3: Role overload is positively related to work-family conflict.

2.3 Work Schedule Flexibility

According to Hammer, Allen, and Grigsby (1997), work schedule inflexibility is based on a person's own evaluation of a work schedule that is assumed to be fixed, providing no allocation for commitments outside of work, such as family. This provides justification for many female entrepreneurs to opt for a business ownership (Ferguson, 1998) since work-family conflict can be reduced to some extent (Lee, Sohn, & Ju, 2011).

Inflexible work schedules have become a workplace constraint for entrepreneurs and can result in difficulty in aligning work hours with family time. Frequent business travels, for example, tend to erode into family time, rendering it a challenge to avoid or minimise work-family conflict (Parasuraman et al., 1996).

Inflexible work schedules can create role conflicts when entrepreneurs strive to balance work and family as shown in several studies offering corroborating evidence (see Aryee, 1992; Byron, 2005; Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Lee & Choo, 2001; Michel et al., 2010; Yildirim & Aycan, 2008). Unfortunately, the empirical foundation for these studies have been inconsistent, with some postulating that schedule flexibility caused less work-family conflict when individuals frequently accessed their control of their schedules (Byron, 2005; Kossek & Michel, 2011; Thomas & Ganster, 1995). Other research, however, found work-family conflict to be independent of schedule flexibility (Kossek, Lautsch, & Eaton, 2006). To confirm the findings, the following hypothesis was put forth:

H4: Work schedule flexibility is negatively related to work-family conflict.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Data Collection

The sample of this study comprised married entrepreneurs, with at least one child. This criterion was established to ensure that the entrepreneurs sampled had both family and work responsibilities. Employing the purposive sampling method, survey questionnaires were distributed to 218 entrepreneurs who managed and operated businesses in the Klang Valley, Penang, Johor Baharu and Malacca. The locations were pinpointed primarily

because of the large numbers of entrepreneurs whose ran their business operations there.

Table 1 shows the demographic characteristics of the respondents. The majority of them comprised Chinese women aged 30–49. About 88 percent possessed tertiary education qualifications; 48 per cent operated their businesses with 5-30 employees; and 45.4 per cent had 6-10 years of experience in business. Of these, over 35 per cent spent between 46 and 55 hours at work on a weekly basis, which is more than the time spent with their families.

Table 1. Demographic profiles of respondents

Variables		Frequency		Variables		Frequency		
		N	%			N	%	
Sex	Male	96	44.0	Business Ownership	Founder	66	30.3	
	Female	122	56.0		Purchased	4	1.8	
					Join/Inherited family business	141	64.7	
					Others	7	3.2	
Total		218	100.0	Total		218	100.0	
Age	Less than 20	0	0.0	Business Sector	Trading	43	19.7	
	20-29	20	9.2		Services	102	46.8	
	30-39	76	34.9		Construction/mining	37	17.0	
	40-49	89	40.8		Manufacturing	13	6.0	
	50-59	29	13.3		Others	23	10.6	
	60 or more	4	1.8					
	Total	218	100.0		Total	218	100.0	
Ethnicity	Malay	34	15.6	Business Size	Not exceeding 5	54	24.8	
	Chinese	146	67.0		5 or less than 30	105	48.2	
	Indian	35	16.1		30 to not exceeding 75	41	18.8	
	Others	3	1.4		75 to not exceeding 200	18	8.3	
	Total	218	100.0		Total	218	100.0	
Education Level	Less than primary education	3	1.4	Years in Business	5 or less	56	25.7	
	Primary education	6	2.8		6-10	99	45.4	
	Secondary education	17	7.8		11-15	40	18.3	
	GCE/STPM/Pre-university	16	7.3		16-20	16	7.3	
	Diploma	45	20.6		21-25	6	2.8	
	Advance diploma	11	5.0		25 or more	1	0.5	
	University	90	41.3		Total	218	100.0	
	Postgraduate education	11	5.0		Work Hours per week	20 hours or less	1	0.5
	Others	19	8.7			21-35 hours	61	28.0
						36-45 hours	70	32.1
			46-55 hours	77		35.3		
			56 hours or more	9		4.1		
Total		218	100.0	Total		218	100.0	
Number of Children	1	91	41.7	Family Hours per week	20 hours or less	33	15.1	
	2	58	26.6		21-35 hours	82	37.6	
	3	53	24.3		36-45 hours	18	8.3	
	4	15	6.9		46-55 hours	46	21.1	
	5 and above	1	0.5		56 hours or more	39	17.9	
	Total	218	100.0		Total	218	100.0	

3.2 Variables and Measures

To measure work-family conflict, a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*) was selected, using the 10 items developed by Netemeyer et al. (1996). Several other work-family conflict related studies employed this instrument, which has covered a wide spectrum of professions including entrepreneurs (see Leaptrott, 2009; Oscharoff, 2011). In this scenario, the Cronbach's alpha reported was 0.77.

To ascertain the role stressors, the researcher utilised the instrument developed by Rizzo et al. (1970) to measure role conflict ($\alpha = 0.86$) and role ambiguity ($\alpha = 0.89$). The other dimension of role overload ($\alpha = 0.97$) was assessed using questions developed by Mathew and Panchanatham (2011). Similarly, all of the items measuring role stressors were scored on a 5-point Likert scale.

Work schedule flexibility was measured by adopting the works of Greenhaus et al. (1989) ($\alpha = 0.68$) and Hill et al. (2010) ($\alpha = 0.72$), with the items also utilising a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (*being very inflexible*) and 5 (*being very flexible*).

3.3 Assessing Face Validity and Reliability

For content validity, a pilot test was conducted on 60 entrepreneurs chosen randomly, after which, minor adjustments were made to the questionnaire before being disseminated. For reliability, the variables in this study exceeded the indicated minimum value of 0.70 suggested by Nunnally (1978), and hence, met the criterion (see Table 2 for details).

Table 2. Reliability for pilot test

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha, α
Role Ambiguity	0.923
Role Conflict	0.826
Role Overload	0.865
Work Schedule Flexibility	0.975
Work-Family Conflict	0.889

To ensure convergent and discriminant validity of the measurement model, several items were examined, namely factor loadings, average variance extracted (AVE) and composite reliability (CR) (Gholami et al., 2013). According to Hair et al. (2014), factor loadings lower than 0.40 should be deleted. After the removal of four items from Role Conflict (i.e., rc1, rc2, rc3, rc4) and one item from Work-family Conflict (i.e., wfc7), the results indicated that all of the other items were above the cut-off values where loadings of all of the constructs exceeded 0.70 (Hair et al., 2014), AVE was larger than 0.50 (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988; Fornell & Larcker, 1981) and CR was higher than the recommended value of 0.70 (Hair et al. 2014), indicating that the measures had sufficient convergence validity (Gefen, Straub, & Boudreau, 2000), as seen in Table 3.

Table 3. Measurement model

Construct	Item	Loadings	AVE	CR
Role Ambiguity	ra1	0.773	0.755	0.948
	ra2	0.768		
	ra3	0.869		
	ra4	0.948		
	ra5	0.939		
	ra6	0.899		
Role Conflict	rc5	0.884	0.752	0.901
	rc6	0.827		
	rc7	0.890		
Role Overload	rol1	0.705	0.604	0.924
	rol2	0.790		
	rol3	0.765		
	rol4	0.839		
	rol5	0.808		
	rol6	0.795		

	rol7	0.794		
	rol8	0.713		
Work Schedule Flexibility	wsf1	0.940	0.831	0.967
	wsf2	0.937		
	wsf3	0.888		
	wsf4	0.884		
	wfc5	0.905		
Work-Family Conflict	wsf6	0.913		
	wfc1	0.818	0.618	0.936
	wfc2	0.820		
	wfc3	0.853		
	wfc4	0.763		
	wfc5	0.777		
	wfc6	0.742		
	wfc8	0.799		
	wfc9	0.745		
	wfc10	0.749		

The discriminant validity of the measures was gauged via Fornell and Larcker's (1981) criterion which compares the correlations between the constructs and the square root of the AVE for that construct. This highlights the extent to which items are differentiated among the constructs or measure distinct concepts. Table 4 illustrates that this criterion was met with all the values on the diagonals exceeding the values of the corresponding row and columns.

Table 4. Discriminant validity

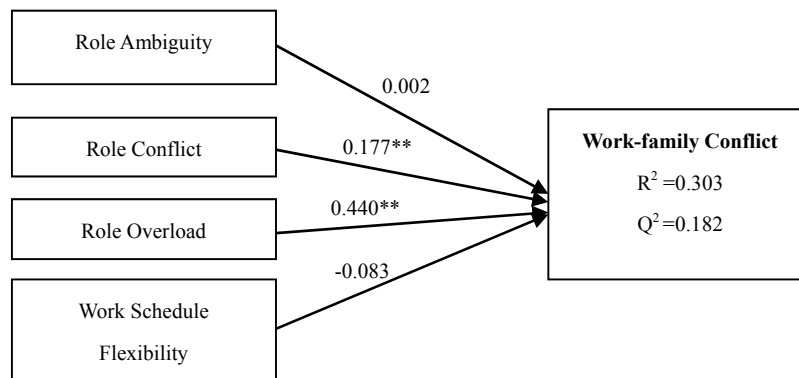
	Role Ambiguity	Role Conflict	Role Overload	Work Schedule Flexibility	Work-family Conflict
Role Ambiguity	0.869				
Role Conflict	0.002	0.867			
Role Overload	0.269	0.414	0.777		
Work Schedule Flexibility	0.449	-0.152	-0.032	0.911	
Work-family Conflict	0.084	0.371	0.517	-0.123	0.786

Note. Values in the diagonal (in bold) represent the square root of the AVE while the off-diagonals represent the correlations.

3.4 Predictive Capability of the Structural Model

The coefficient of determination (R^2) value for work-family conflict is greater than the 0.26 value suggested by Cohen (1988), indicating a substantial model. Work-family conflict explains 30.3 per cent of the variance in role ambiguity, role conflict, role overload and work schedule flexibility. As such, the model has predictive accuracy.

The Q^2 value from the blindfolding analysis for work-family conflict is 0.182 (see Figure 1). The result indicates that the model has predictive relevance since the value being greater than 0 (Fornell & Cha, 1994; Hair et al., 2014). Hence, it can be concluded that the predictive capability of the model is accepted.



Notes. **p<0.01,*p<0.05.

Figure 1. Structural model

4. Data Analysis

The first part of the analysis involved usage of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23.0 for the descriptive statistics. Subsequently, to evaluate the model, the Partial Least Squares (PLS) analysis using SmartPLS 2.0 was undertaken. Complying with Anderson and Gerbing’s (1988) two-stage analytical procedures, the bootstrapping model (5000 re-samples) (Hair et al., 2014) was used to ensure validity and reliability of the measurement model, as well as test the relationships between the constructs in the structural model. To ascertain the model’s predictive capability, a blindfolding analysis was performed to obtain the predictive relevance (Q^2).

4.1 Data Analysis and Results

The hypothesised relationships between the constructs were tested via the bootstrapping method (5000 re-samples) using Smart PLS 2.0 to determine the significance of the path co-efficient, standard beta, standard error and *t*-value. Table 5 depicts that role conflict ($\beta = 0.177, p < 0.01$) and role overload ($\beta = 0.440, p < 0.01$) have positive relationships with work-family conflict, while role ambiguity ($\beta = 0.002$, non-significant) and work schedule flexibility ($\beta = -0.083$, non-significant) are insignificantly related to work-family conflict, indicating that only two hypotheses - H2 and H3 - are supported from the four proposed in this study. However, H1 and H4 are not supported.

Table 5. Summary of hypothesis testing

Hypothesis	Relationship	Std. Beta	Std.		Supported
			Error	t-value	
H1	Role Ambiguity -> Work-Family Conflict	0.002	0.088	0.027	NO
H2	Role Conflict -> Work-Family Conflict	0.177	0.070	2.536**	YES
H3	Role Overload -> Work-Family Conflict	0.440	0.077	5.728**	YES
H4	Work schedule flexibility -> Work-Family Conflict	-0.083	0.068	1.209	NO

Note. **p< 0.01, *p< 0.05.

5. Discussion and Implications

Among the many challenges facing entrepreneurs, striking a fine balance between work and family tops the list. As iterated by Gholipour et al. (2010), job stress usually arises when one is unable to handle conflicts between work and family, leading to job and personal dissatisfaction. Although dual-income families have long become a norm in Malaysian society, work-family conflict is yet a newly recognised area of conflict that has gained attention only within the last two to three years, more so after an increasing awareness of the resulting strain upon families needing to subsist on two incomes.

The results of this study shed light on how role-related stressors (role conflict, role overload and role ambiguity) and work schedule flexibility affect the relationship between entrepreneurs and work-family conflict. This is possibly one of the few studies which have approached this topic from the perspective of role-related stressors and work schedule flexibility in the entrepreneurship context using a validated instrument, hence, contributing to the advancement of knowledge in this area.

The findings affirm the notion that for entrepreneurs, work gains higher precedence over family (Connecticut Business and Industry Association, 2014; Hornaday & Aboud, 1987; Torrance, 2013), with Malaysia being no exception. It supports the Malaysian Labour Survey Report (2011) which highlights that more than 35% of entrepreneurs spent 46-55 hours on average at work in a week. The outcome of the online survey by Regus indicating the rising stress levels of business owners, therefore, is not unexpected (Sobri, 2015), further compounding the positive relationship between work-family conflict and stress reactions (Wincent & Örtqvist, 2006).

In terms of the role-related stress dimensions examined in this study, there is evidently a significant relationship between work-family conflict and both role conflict and role overload (Abdel-Halim, 1981; Aminah Ahmad & Maznah Baba, 2003; Fu & Shaffer, 2001; House et al., 1979; Khairuddin, 2015; Khan & Byosiere, 1985; Kahn et al., 1964; Latack, 1981). Specifically, it confirms that entrepreneurs tend to have higher levels of stress associated with their workload than with role ambiguity (Harris et al., 1999). This is especially true for entrepreneurs who have young children, inadvertently causing role overload due to obligations arising from both sides of work and family. The multiple roles entrepreneurs play at any one time have contributed to work-family conflict.

Apart from that, business owners embarking on new ventures tend to be somewhat inexperienced or lacking in business information to make rational or informed decisions due to time constraints during the initial start-up, causing them to juggle both work and family (Leaptrott, 2009). Given the rapidly changing role of people nowadays, entrepreneurs could capitalise on this and adopt role-sharing strategies to reduce their role conflict as a parent, spouse and employer. Effective distribution of responsibilities among family members, the spouse in particular, is needed to execute various tasks at home to decrease the incompatibility between work and family conflicts.

The other two factors examined in this study, role ambiguity and work schedule flexibility, were found to be insignificant to work-family conflict. The insignificance of role ambiguity is consistent with the findings of Carlson, Kacmar and William (2000), and Tharmalingam and Bhatti (2014). According to Harris et al. (1999), role ambiguity is not as prevalent among entrepreneurs in comparison with those employed as professionals, skilled or unskilled workers, attributed mainly to the fact that entrepreneurs run their own operations, make their own decisions and function in a self-established and unambiguous role (Chell, 2008). Since most entrepreneurs work independently without taking orders from superiors, they are able to organise their work and home schedules and establish boundaries between the two. Hence, they have the luxury of flexible schedules, with any arising work-family conflict being dependent mainly on their occupational and organisational contexts.

The findings of this study, therefore, point to the importance of reducing work-family conflict among entrepreneurs by focusing on reducing role conflict and role overload. With regards to this, entrepreneurs could seek professional advice to gain business information from the onset of their business operations to reduce work-family role conflict which affects their business decision-making behaviour. Furthermore, policymakers could implement a work-family management strategy (e.g., invest in day-care centres or provide childcare subsidies for needy entrepreneurs) to assist entrepreneurs in propelling their ventures into high growth. Since Malaysian entrepreneurs do not have sufficient childcare centres to cater for their needs (Teoh & Chong, 2014), the Malaysian government can initiate childcare and homecare facilities which actually aim to ease the burden of entrepreneurs and provide better work-family balance.

Having addressed the need for better support and facilities, entrepreneurs should also learn how to delegate their tasks among their workers. They need to develop trust towards the capability of their workers and empower individuals with more control over work-related activities. This could ease some burdens and eventually allow entrepreneurs to enlarge their territories and increase leverage to expand their businesses beyond their own individual capacities. The relevant ministries and government agencies could render further support by organising enterprise-based education and professional development courses for all entrepreneurs (Teoh & Chong, 2014).

Spousal support is another pertinent aspect worth addressing in the quest to reduce work-family conflict. This is because entrepreneurs tend to have higher work overload than their spouses (Danes, Matzek & Werbel, 2010), and those that lack support from their spouses can unwittingly invite work-family conflict (Sandberg, 2013; Wayne et al, 2013).

6. Conclusion

The findings of this study provide great value to an SME-dominated economy such as Malaysia's, in order to strengthen entrepreneurship development. To gain a more complete picture of work-family conflict among

entrepreneurs, qualitative research incorporating conversation and observation analysis can be useful to infer the actual behaviour of entrepreneurs on their subjective perception towards managing work and family demands. Instead of testing the existing theory, the development of a new theory is needed to explore and identify other factors that influence entrepreneurs' role stress in further detail.

To increase the study's validity, data could also be obtained from multiple sources to provide a better sense of experience and outcome of work-family conflict not just for target respondents, but also other relevant individuals (e.g., spouses and children are interviewed to obtain their perceptions) in the work and family system. Specific behaviours like trust, care and autonomy given toward employees also could be measured. Future research also could examine the moderating and mediating effects within the study, like the influences of demographic variables on role stress and work-family conflict among entrepreneurs. This framework could be tested to address the heterogeneity of male and female entrepreneurs who are single parents and/or co-entrepreneurial couples by using a range of methods and data sources to accurately capture the reality of entrepreneurs' experiences.

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