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Achieving Balance in Work-Family Conflict through the Influences of Family Supportive HRM:
A Conceptual Framework for the Organizations of Bangladesh

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Abstract

The inclusion of a female in the workforce has brought the issue of work-family conflict (WFC) within the research paradigm. Most studies on WFC have been conducted on Western countries. Recently researchers of Asian developing countries are also showing their interest in studying WFC, its predictors and outcomes. However, In Bangladesh, study on WFC is very limited. The present paper reviews extant literatures on WFC to give a broader view on WFC through accumulating the scattered research findings so that employers and employees of Bangladesh can have a better idea of addressing WFC with possible strategies. The paper contributes to the existing literatures by proposing a new dimension of research area: managing WFC through family supportive Human Resource Management (HRM) among organizations in Bangladesh. A proposed Family Supportive HRM (FSHRM) Model is presented and related hypotheses are formed to support WFC policy making for the organizations of Bangladesh. Future empirical study on this area is thereby sought from the local researchers to incorporate local characteristics in addressing WFC. Thus, WFC from the developing country perspective is added.

Key Words Work-Family Conflict, family supportive HRM, Developing country, Bangladesh

Paper Type: Conceptual Paper

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1. Introduction

The number of dual income families in Bangladesh is heightened because between 1999 to 2006 women's involvement in the workforce has increased more than twice than that of males in different sectors in Bangladesh (Ali, 2010). This growing trend simultaneously increases a concern for female employees to achieve work-life balance as female assume more family responsibilities in Bangladesh. In the context of Bangladesh culture, female family role is more emphasized than female work role. However, with a transition in female participation in the workplace, a gradual shift in recognizing female work role is also agreed. Though Bangladesh culture is accepting such changes in the workforce demography, still female cannot ignore their more emphasized family role. Hence, it is the high time for the organizations of Bangladesh to study and develop strategies to manage employees having both work role and family role. In the contemporary competitive business world, Bangladeshi organizations cannot be left alone without considering family supportive people management strategy to attract, retain and motivate limited skilled workforce that may act as a source of competitive advantage.

Increased participation of women in the job has contributed more to study the interaction between work and family (Ahmad, 2008). The interface between work and family is consistently viewed as work family conflict (WFC) because these two domains share a common life in individual that makes one involvement difficult because of the demand for the other one. Work and family conflict reflects individual incapability to make a balance between the demands of the work role and the demands of the family role. WFC means a inter role conflict arising from work and family interrelated roles (Aslam, Shumaila, Azhar & Sadaqat, 2011). Aslam et al. (2011) find that WFC have implications for both employee and organization because work family conflict spill over creates disturbance in both domains (work and family) that ultimately affect the performance of the employee and the organization.

Families in which both husband and wife work, are more likely to create even more important conflicts between work and family (Livingston & Judge, 2008). As females are engaged with enlarged job responsibility, male are sharing more family duties in addition to their as usual bread earning responsibilities. Both women taking job responsibility and men being involved in home chores and child care feel the immense pressure to balance their extensive family and job commitment. Research on WFC have provided ample evidences that work-family

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conflict is an important and invasive experience, with adverse consequences, such as stress and mental health problem (Hammed, 2008), job dissatisfaction (Noor, 2004); withdrawal behaviour at work (Hammer, Bauer & Grandey, 2003) and work and family life dissatisfaction (Ford, Heinen & Langkamer, 2007).

WFC challenges require employers to develop family responsive policies and practices as well as family support to cope up with dual roles of both male and female workers (Poelmans, 2001). Grant-Vallone and Enshar (2001) find that the significant demographic and attitudinal changes of employees with the increased pressure from the international organizations (e.g. ILO) force the organizations to address work and family issues as a fundamental business concern. It has become so critical that researchers are studying organizational strategies considering organizational supports, family policies and innovative human resource management (HRM) policies to balance both male and female employees' work family conflict. Special focus is given on HRM issues as HRM is responsible for employee decisions in the organization. Flexible parental leave legislation, child care, older care, flexitime are the new issues in HR policies to support dual career families to manage their work life with family responsibilities. Companies are increasingly adopting family-supportive programs to engage and retain employees (Richman et al., 2008) and to build a committed workforce (Halpern, 2005).

Though like other research studies, most studies on WFC is largely based on Anglo-Saxon data, research attempts to look at WFC in other cultures are also emerging. Examples include China (Ling & Poweli, 2001), Japan (Fujimoto, Kotani & Suzuki, 2008), Finland (Kinnunen & Mauno, 1998), Hong Kong (Lo, Stone & Ng, 2003), Malaysia (Noor, 2002, 2004); Iran (Namayandeh, Yaacob & Juhari, 2010); India (Namasivayam & Zhao, 2007) and Pakistan (Nadeem & Abbas, 2009). In this line it is very much surprising not to have that much research support on the WFC in Bangladesh. Study on WFC in Bangladesh is almost ignored. A single study on WFC can be mentioned in Bangladesh (Alam, Sattar & Chaudhury, 2011). Newaz, Ali and Akhter (2007) find the importance of work and family life balance for bank employees and Hossan, Sarker & Afroze (2012) study a growing demand for work and family life balance of the workers of RMG industry. The present study will contribute to the existing WFC literatures by considering Bangladesh perspective in addressing WFC concern. Moreover, this study also aims to extend HRM literatures through addressing organization HRM policies supporting to reduce employee WFC.

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2. Bangladesh as Study Context

Poelmans (2001) points out, some societal characteristics that can be expected to influence the nature of WFC, first, the importance or centrality of the family as an institution and; second, an increase in female labour participation that is changing the traditional single- to dual-earner families. Such changes create two simultaneous, opposite types of social pressure causing a dilemma for women in particular: a pressure to work and a pressure to take care of one's family. As Bangladesh is also experiencing the same phenomenon, the present study focuses on studying WFC to conceptualize WFC and its predictors and outcomes so that organizations in Bangladesh can develop policy initiatives for family supportive HRM (FSHRM) to reduce WFC of their employees. The proposed FSHRM model of the current paper is a theoretical base in this regard.

Local research on WFC in Bangladesh is completely lacking. Research on this topic is especially relevant in Bangladesh because there are several circumstances that, when combined, intensify work-family conflict. First, more female are joining into the labour force (Hossain & Tisdell, 2005). For this, the transition from traditional to dual-earner families has been quite radical in Bangladesh. Second, working hours are typically longer making combining work and family more difficult for dual income families (Alam et al., 2011). Third, the family continues to be an important institution in Bangladesh culture which generates a particular pressure to create and look after a family (Crozier & Davies, 2006). Fourth, companies in Bangladesh have not adopted family-friendly policies (Hossan et al., 2012; Alam et al, 2011). The increased number of dual income families with no organizational support for balancing work and family role is creating simultaneous pressures on the researchers and managers to explore WFC issues in Bangladesh. Considering the prevalent workforce demography and employee expectations, organizations of Bangladesh must need to admit the pressing problem of WFC as well as devise solutions to this dilemma.

Alam et al (2011) investigate the work-family conflict (WFC) of women managers in Dhaka, Bangladesh. The study collected data from forty samples of four strata (Doctors, Teachers, Bankers and Managers) each. The study revealed that longer working hours affect work family balance directly and children are the worst victims of this WFC. This study was based on only Dhaka metropolis. Therefore, the researchers recommended exploring this new

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research area with bigger sample size and wider study area. Newaz et al (2007) identify WFC is one of the main reasons of turnover problem in banking sector. Along with other policy recommendations the author suggested to introduce policies to reduce WFC that will ultimately reduce employee turnover in banking sector. Hossan et al., (2012) have a strong urge for the RMG industry management to design and implement policies to make a balance for work and life of its employees that will minimize the current labour unrest in the RMG industry. These research examples provide the evidence of the importance of examining WFC issue in the context of Bangladesh. The present paper focuses on review of available WFC literatures so that a sound theoretical base can be developed for policy making on WFC of the Bangladeshi organizations. Based on the review, a proposed HRM model is suggested and related hypotheses are formed to be considered by the Bangladeshi organizations in dealing with WFC issues.

3. Literature Review

3.1 WFC(work family conflict)

Though work and family were studied as sub disciplines in sociology, Pleck (1977) examined how an individual functioning in either area affects the involvement in other sphere. Male work role and family role and female work role and family role are intricate in the work-family role system. Hence, work and family are two fundamental but interrelated systems for dual-career live in which problems in any one system have consequential influence on the other one as well. Namayandeh et al. (2010) refer this scenario portraying conflict, namely, work interference with family (WIF). Therefore, WFC is defined as a state of affairs where the work and family domains interfere with one another to such a degree that the one is influencing negatively the other (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). In dual career family, WFC is often assumed to affect women more than men (Livingston & Judge, 2008). Similarly, many men, like women, are also experiencing increased levels of stress and conflict as they run for work and family responsibilities (Bakker, Demerouti & Dollard, 2008).

Researchers (Netemeyer, Boles & McMurrian, 1996; Lu, Gilmour, Kao & Huang, 2006; Spector et al., 2004) have studied the interaction between work and life based on a conflict perspective stemming from the role theory of Kahn et al. (1964) on organizational stress. These researchers identified inter role conflict as a significant source of work stress. Based on the

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concept of Kahn et al. (1964), researchers see work-family conflict as a form of inter-role conflict in which the demands of one role hinder to meet the demands in the other role. This conflict exists when: (a) time devoted to the requirements of one role makes it difficult to fulfill requirements of another; (b) strain from participation in one role makes it difficult to fulfill requirements of another; and (c) specific behaviors required by one role make it difficult to fulfill the requirements of another" (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985, p. 76).

Furthermore, Netemeyer et al. (1996) suggested two more distinct forms of work-family conflict: work-to-family and family-to-work conflict (Byron, 2005; Mesmer-Magnus & Viswesvaran, 2005). Work-to-family conflict is "inter role conflict in which the general demands of time devoted to, and strain created by the job, interfere with performing family-related responsibilities" (Netemeyer et al., 1996, p. 401). Family-to-work conflict refers to the reverse. Thus, Ahmad (2008) has conceptualized WFC broadly as a construct with dual direction (work-to-family and family-to-work), multiple forms (time-based, strain-based, and behaviour-based) and specific to multiple life roles (e.g., spouse, parental, elder care, home care, and leisure). The present study focuses on WFC with direction from work to family having multiple effects on both work and family roles of dual earners of a family (family where both husband and wife have dual roles). The situation can be best depicted as dual men with dual role in a single family. As the present aim is to help organizations develop FSHRM policies to minimize WFC effect on both roles of both male and female employees, one direction of conflict from work to family is considered.

Currently, WFC is also explained using the conservation of resources theory (Premeaux, Adkins & Mossholder, 2007; Kossek, Pichler, Bodner & Hammer, 2011). This theory assumes that people struggle to protect and build resources, such as objects (e.g. money, house), conditions (e.g. quality of one's roles, external support), energies (e.g. time and level of energy), and personal characteristics (e.g., beliefs such as a positive outlook). Psychological stress occurs when these resources are lost or threatened. Work-family conflict is defined as the corollary to the threat of losing resources in the process of running after both work and family roles (Grandey & Cropanzano, 1999). For example, job demands can threaten one's resources (time, energy and effort) to be employed in family demand (Lapierre & Allen, 2006). Therefore, this theory provides a framework in understanding how coping methods (i.e., problem-focused coping) and

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support (i.e., support at work and help from family members at home) rearrange work-family conflict (Lapierre & Allen, 2006).

Another theory used in explaining WFC is "expansionist hypothesis/theory" (Tsai, 2008; Barnett & Hyde, 2001) which stated that multiple role occupancy has beneficial effects such that "adding" the worker role is beneficial to women, and "adding" family roles is beneficial for men. The expansionist approach assumes that energy and resources are not limited and fixed but rather they are expandable. Involvement in various roles is a strategy to expand one's energy supply. Various terms have been used to refer to the process by which one role strengthens or enriches the quality of the other role, such as work-family enrichment, work-family enhancement, work-family facilitation, and positive spill over (Tsai, 2008). This expansionist perspective views work-family interaction positively which predicts a positive correlation between work and family roles. Researchers have found that if employees can make a balance between their roles and activities they will have lower strain and depression and high sense of self-esteem (Marks & MacDermid, 1996).

3.2 Consequences of WFC

Most individuals are engaged in organized work taking a large percentage of their time and having important implications for individuals' psychological well-being from their affective experience and behaviors at work and their off-work setting (Ilies, Schwind, Wagner, Johnson, DeRue & Ilgen, 2007). In dual career family, individuals work and family experiences have significant influences on their various outcomes and consequently, individuals search for work-family balance. Work-family experiences, especially work-family conflict, contribute to poor physical health (Greenhaus, Allen, & Spector, 2006). In terms of emotions, the two most commonly measured signs of psychological distress stemming from work-family conflict are anxiety and depressed mood (Grimshaw, 1999, p. 219 as cited in Tsai, 2008). Work-family conflict has been shown to be related to negative work outcomes such as job dissatisfaction, job burnout, and turnover (Greenhaus, Parasuraman & Collins 2001, Howard, Donofrio & Boles 2004), as well as to outcomes related to psychological distress, and work and family dissatisfaction (Major, Klein & Ehrhart, 2002; Ford et al., 2007). Individuals who experience work-family conflict have been found to incur increased health risks, inadequate performance in family roles (e.g., marital partner and parent), reduced family and life satisfaction, and poor

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marital adjustment and mental health (Boles, Wood & Johnson, 2003; Chandola et al. 2004); employee well-being (Moreno-Jimenez et al, 2009); negative social interaction with family (Ilies et al 2007). Baskerville Watkins et al. (2012) find that when employee faces WFC, family member can influence his or her withdrawal decision and job search behaviour. Considering the magnitude of the effects of WFC on employees, contemporary organizations as well as researchers are exploring the antecedents and supportive strategies to reduce these effects.

3.3 Antecedents of WFC

Razak et al. (2010) study three predictor variables (spouse support, parental demand and job involvement) derived from the work domain to examine their effects on WFC. Namayandeh et al. (2010) find low support received from husband, family members/relatives and supervisor might increase perceived conflict between work and family. Major et al (2002) find work overload and organizational expectations for time spent at work increases work time that is positively related with WFC. In a recent review study, Rimi and Rubel (2013) suggest to emphasis on role stressors (role conflict, role ambiguity and role overload) as workplace factors responsible for WFC. Yildirim & Aycan (2008) find work overload and irregular work schedules are the significant predictors of work-to-family conflict. Job that require coordination from others, use of technology to do work at home and job insecurity is also held responsible for WFC (Batt & Valcour, 2003); Marital, parental, and spouse's employment status prove to be consistently important predictors of work-family conflict (Winslow, 2005). Job demand (more time and emotion for job) is also an important predictor of WFC (Bakker et al 2008).

From a meta-analytic review of studies from Asian and Western cultures, Byron (2005) has found that work-to-family conflict and family-to-work conflict have shared antecedents (e.g. job stress and family stress) as well as unique antecedents (e.g. work variables on work-to-family conflict and family variables on family-to-work conflict. WFC is associated with work variables, including number of work hours, work role quality, and workplace support of familial obligations (Tsai, 2008). Time-related conditions such as schedule inflexibility, shift work requirements, and night duties are consistently related to WFC (Fujimoto et al., 2008). Ahmad (2008) develops a comprehensive model on predictors of work-family conflict which suggests that the predictors could be job-related (job type, work time commitment, job involvement, role overload, job flexibility), family-related (number of children, life-cycle stage, family

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involvement, child care arrangements) and individual-related (life role values, gender role orientation, locus of control, perfectionism).

Zhang and Liu (2011) review antecedents of WFC from the aspects of individual, work and family. Antecedents include the effects of individual factors like demographic and personality variables, the influences of work variables like work stress, family friendly programs and impacts of family variables like family demands and spousal interactions. Workplace characteristics can also contribute to higher levels of WFC. Researchers have found that the number of hours worked per week, the amount and frequency of overtime required, an inflexible work schedule, unsupportive supervisor, and an in hospitable organizational culture for balancing work and family all increase the likelihood of WFC (Anderson, Coffey & Byerly, 2002; Berg, Kalleberg & Appelbaum, 2003; Nikandrou, Panayotopoulou & Apospori, 2008; Pedersen, Minnotte, Kiger & Mannon, 2009).

3.4 Family Supportive Strategies for WFC

Ample evidences are found to relate family supportive strategies with minimizing WFC. In order to reduce dissatisfaction and stress resulted from work-family conflict among employees, many supportive factors can be identified from the previous researches. Work place helps employees to coordinate between work family roles by:

1. Organizational or work culture: supportive and friendly culture facilitates to balance both work and family life of their employees (Mesmer-Magnus & Viswesvaran, 2006; Pedersen et al., 2009).
2. Supervisor support: Positive behavior from supervisor can reduce work pressure on family and family pressure on work (Karatepe & Uludag, 2008; Karatepe & Kilic, 2007; Mesmer-Magnus & Viswesvaran, 2006; Yildirim & Aycan 2008) and;
3. Family friendly benefits: formal benefits provided to employees will help them to coordinate between work-family responsibilities to lower work-family role strain (Barcenas-Frausto; Bourhis & Mekkaoui, 2010; Brough, Michael & Kalliath, 2005).

Haddock, Zimmerman and Ziemba (2006) identify supportive practices including flexible work scheduling, non-traditional work hours, professional/job autonomy, working from home, supportive supervisors, supportive colleagues and supervisees, and the ability to set firm

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boundaries around work. Pedersen et al (2009) study family-friendly benefits related to childcare; such as, flexible time use, family leave, ability to care for sick children on demand, on-site childcare for young and school-aged children, and women's permission to breastfeed at work. Lapierre et al (2008) find employees working in an environment viewed as more family-supportive experience lower levels of WFC. Reduced WFC then translates into greater job and family satisfaction, followed by greater overall life satisfaction. Shockley and Allen (2007) reveal that friendly work arrangements relate more highly to WFC than to FWC and that temporal flexibility (flextime) has a stronger relationship with WFC than does spatial flexibility (flexplace). Grandey, Cordeiro, and Michael (2007) point out that those working long hours in the family-supportive work environment have lower WFC than those working long hours in an unsupportive environment. Kreiner (2006) and Li and Cong-Wei (2010) analyse person-organization fit to reduce WFC.

Kreiner (2006), Edwards and Rothbard (2000) present psychological tactics such as segmentation (the suppression of behavior, thoughts, and feelings from one domain while participating in another), compensation (intensive involvement in one domain to counteract negative outcomes in the other), accommodation (limited psychological involvement in one domain to accommodate the demands of the other), and boundary management (methods of developing and navigating borders between work and family domains) as methods of coping with WFC. Batt and Valcour (2003) study the effect of HRM policies on WFC. The study shows that the most effective organizational responses to WFC and to employee attachment with the organization are those that combine work-family policies with other human resource practices, including work redesign and commitment-enhancing incentives.

WFC is caused by factors from both the work and home situations (Aslam et al., 2011). Warner & Hausdorf (2009) further says that the most significant determinant of work-family conflict is found in the work domain. Therefore, it is critical for employers to become aware of practices that can be implemented in order to reduce employees' work family conflicts. Researchers have tested the impact of work and family benefits which comprise of flexible schedules, childcare assistance, parental leave, childcare information and older care on employee attraction, job satisfaction, organizational commitment and retention in the organization (Anderson et al., 2002; Anafarta, 2011; Bourhis & Mekkaoui. 2010).

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4. Proposed Model for Bangladesh

This paper provides a general understanding on WFC with its predictors and outcomes. From this review, organization and employees may have a better awareness of the sources of conflict with probable solution strategies. Organizations can introduce FSHRM policy to reduce WFC by introducing person-organization fit in selection process; can conduct counseling and advice program to increase employee knowledge on their personal strategies to reduce WFC; can introduce flexible job design, flexible work hour to help employees accommodate both job and family responsibilities, implementing family supportive facilities (child care, older care, parental leave, family medical coverage and physical facilities). Based on the role theory, organization should acknowledge WFC of their employees and must be proactive in taking supportive measures. On the other hand, organization's FS policies may recognize the expansionist theory by supporting all employees in performing their extended work and family responsibilities for their benefits. Therefore, blending role theory and expansionist theory, organization must devise supportive strategies to tackle WFC challenges. In this respect, organization should remember these facilities that be accepted as employee perceived facilities for their positive outcomes through minimizing their WFC. Employee perceptions should be measured in introducing family supportive HRM policies. Because employee perceptions on HRM influences their acceptance of HRM as positive and employee oriented to generate intended outcomes of HRM (Nishii, Lepak & Schneider, 2008). Research review shows that organizations employ employee friendly policies to attract and satisfy them for their increased commitment and retention in the organization. In line with these arguments, the following FSHRM model is proposed to be empirically tested in the Bangladesh context.
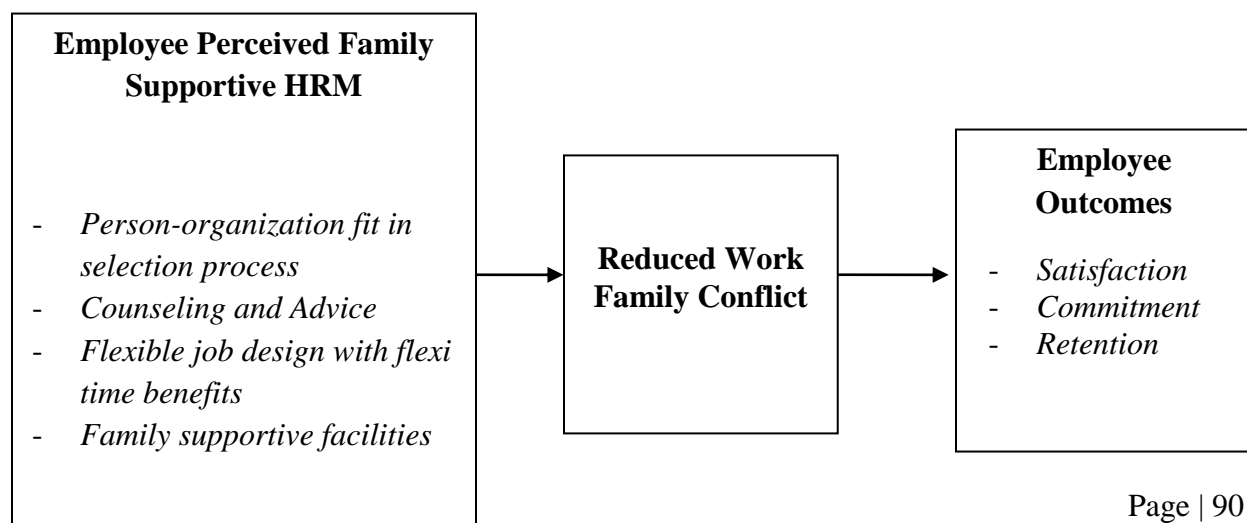
Employee Perceived Family Supportive HRM

- *Person-organization fit in selection process*
- *Counseling and Advice*
- *Flexible job design with flexi time benefits*
- *Family supportive facilities*

→ **Reduced Work Family Conflict** →

Employee Outcomes

- *Satisfaction*
- *Commitment*
- *Retention*

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Figure 1. FSHRM Model to Address WFC for employee satisfaction, commitment and retention.

Proposition 1: Employee perceived FSHRM can reduce WFC and increase employee outcomes.

Proposition 2: Employee acceptance of available FSHRM as WFC reducing can enhance employee satisfaction, commitment and retention in the organization.

This model contributes to the existing HRM literatures as research investigating the purported effects of FSHRM on WFC is still scarce and inconclusive (Giardini & Kabst, 2008).

5.Conclusion

The increased female work role and male family role have created one man; dual role; double problem for each of dual earners in a single family. In Bangladesh, today employees are also facing the same scenario. As traditionally Bangladeshi people are family oriented and it continues, it generates a pressure to create and take care of family with extended responsibilities in work. Again Bangladeshi organizations are not that much family friendly to help employees balance family and work responsibilities. So both family duties and job duties are creating dilemmas among Bangladeshi employees. As highlighted by Alam et al (2011), situation of WFC has grown severe in recent times in Bangladesh; to conduct such a study in Bangladesh is a need of time. More studies on WFC focus developed Western countries that are different from developing countries due to different cultural beliefs and practices. Therefore, non-Western settings demand more research on the issues of WFC. Bangladesh as a non-western study location can fill this expectation. Studies relating to WFC are relatively new in Bangladesh and there is very few mentionable studies focusing on WFC to date. The contributions of this study will be a foundation step to guide Bangladeshi organizations in their WFC policy making to improve the outcomes of the employees through extending organizational family supports to them. The proposed model can be tested in the organizations and countries irrespective of differences across the globe.

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6. Recommendations

The present study proposes a HRM model that is considered to be family supportive from employee perspective. This model can reduce employee WFC if employees perceive it positive to balance their work and family roles. Thus, a theoretical relationship between HRM and WFC is delineated based on existing literatures. Therefore, the present author expects empirical investigation of this model to test its applicability in the context of Bangladesh. Future study may incorporate both employee views and management concern for addressing WFC issues. Local researchers should come forward to suggest more on how to minimize WFC in the organizations based on local needs. Managers must acquire more knowledge on managing both male and female employees not only in their job life but also in their home life. More study on this unexplored area can minimize this knowledge gap. Therefore, the present author feels a stronger need for more and more theoretical and empirical research in this area within and beyond Bangladesh.

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