

**INTER-ROLE CONFLICTS AND WOMEN SALES  
WORKERS' WELL-BEING: THE MODERATING  
ROLE OF CONTROL, INVOLVEMENT AND  
RECOVERY**

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by

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENT</b> .....	<b>ii</b>
<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS</b> .....	<b>iii</b>
<b>LIST OF TABLES</b> .....	<b>x</b>
<b>LIST OF FIGURES</b> .....	<b>xiii</b>
<b>LIST OF APPENDICES</b> .....	<b>xxvi</b>
<b>ABSTRAK</b> .....	<b>xvii</b>
<b>ABSTRACT</b> .....	<b>xix</b>
<b>CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION</b> .....	<b>1</b>
1.1 Background of this Research .....	1
1.2 Problem Statement .....	10
1.3 Research Questions .....	17
1.4 Research Objectives .....	18
1.5 Significance of the Study .....	19
1.5.1 Theoretical Significance .....	20
1.5.2 Practical Contribution .....	23
1.6 Scope of the Study .....	26
1.7 Definition of Key Terms .....	26
1.7.1 Life Well-being.....	26
1.7.2 Workplace Well-being.....	26
1.7.3 Psychological Well-being.....	27
1.7.4 Physical Health .....	27
1.7.5 Work-Family Conflict.....	27
1.7.6 Family-Work Conflict.....	27
1.7.7 Job Demand-Control.....	27
1.7.8 Family Demand.....	28

1.7.9	Role Involvement (Job Involvement and Family Involvement).....	28
1.7.10	Recovery Experience .....	28
	1.7.10(a) Psychological Detachment .....	28
	1.7.10(b) Relaxation.....	28
	1.7.10(c) Mastery Experience .....	28
	1.7.10(d) Control.....	29
1.8	Organization of Thesis .....	29
<b>CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW .....</b>		<b>30</b>
2.1	Introduction .....	30
2.2	Well-being.....	30
	2.2.1 Life Well-being (LWB) .....	33
	2.2.2 Workplace Well-being (WWB).....	34
	2.2.3 Psychological Well-being (PWB).....	34
	2.2.4 Physical Health (PH).....	35
2.3	Underpinning Theories .....	36
	2.3.1 The Conservation of Resources (CoR) Theory.....	36
	2.3.2 Role Theory .....	39
2.4	Other Related Theories .....	40
	2.4.1 Spill-over Theory .....	40
	2.4.2 Crossover Theory.....	41
	2.4.3 Theory of Separate Spheres, Ecological Systems Theory and Boundary Theory .....	41
	2.4.4 Gender Role Theory.....	42
2.5	Inter-Role Conflict .....	43
	2.5.1 Work-Family Conflict (WFC).....	45
	2.5.2 Family-Work Conflict (FWC).....	51

2.6	Job Demand-Control (JDC) .....	53
2.7	Family Demand (FD) .....	57
2.8	Role Involvement .....	59
2.8.1	Job Involvement (JI) .....	60
2.8.2	Family Involvement (FI).....	63
2.9	Recovery Experience .....	67
2.9.1	Psychological Detachment from Work (PDW).....	70
2.9.2	Relaxation (RLX).....	73
2.9.3	Mastery Experience (MEX).....	74
2.9.4	Control (CON).....	75
2.10	Research Framework.....	76
2.11	Hypotheses Development.....	77
2.11.1	Direct Relationship Between Inter-Role Conflict and Well-being.	78
2.11.2	The Moderating Role of Job Demand-Control .....	86
2.11.3	The Moderating Role of Family Demand.....	89
2.11.4	The Moderating Role of Job Involvement.....	92
2.11.5	The Moderating Role of Family Involvement .....	97
2.11.6	Recovery Experience as Moderators .....	101
2.11.6(a)	The Moderating Role of Psychological Detachment.....	104
2.11.6(b)	The Moderating Role of Relaxation.....	106
2.11.6(c)	The Moderating Role of Mastery Experience. ....	108
2.11.6(d)	The Moderating Role of Control.....	110

2.12	Gaps in the Literature.....	113
2.13	Chapter Summary.....	116
<b>CHAPTER 3    METHODOLOGY.....</b>		<b>117</b>
3.1	Introduction.....	117
3.2	Research Design.....	117
3.3	Population and Sample.....	118
3.4	Sampling Frame.....	119
3.5	Sampling Technique.....	120
3.6	Data Collection Procedure.....	123
3.7	Questionnaire Design and Research Instruments.....	127
3.7.1	Well-being.....	128
3.7.1(a)	Life Well-being.....	128
3.7.1(b)	Workplace Well-being.....	128
3.7.1(c)	Psychological Well-being.....	129
3.7.1(d)	Physical Health.....	129
3.7.2	Work-Family Conflict and Family-Work Conflict.....	130
3.7.3	Job Demand-Control (JDC).....	131
3.7.4	Family Demand (FD).....	132
3.7.5	Job Involvement (JI).....	132
3.7.6	Family Involvement (FI).....	133
3.7.7	Recovery Experience.....	133
3.7.8	Personal Information.....	135

3.8	Pilot Test .....	135
3.9	Statistical Data Analysis Technique.....	140
3.10	Chapter Summary.....	143
<b>CHAPTER 4 DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS.....</b>		<b>144</b>
4.1	Introduction .....	144
4.2	Summary of the Collected Data .....	144
4.3	Respondents' Profile .....	145
4.4	Factor Analysis.....	148
4.4.1	Factor Analysis on Dependent Variables (Well-being).....	149
4.4.2	Factor Analysis on Independent Variables (Inter-Role Conflict, Job Demand-Control, Family Demand, Job and Family Involvement, Recovery Experience).....	151
4.5	Reliability.....	155
4.6	Restatement of Hypotheses .....	157
4.7	Revision of the Research Framework .....	161
4.8	Preliminary Analysis.....	162
4.8.1	Correlation .....	165
4.9	Response Bias .....	169
4.10	Main Analysis .....	171
4.10.1	Results for Direct Relationships .....	172
4.10.1(a)	Work-Family Conflict to Well-being .....	173
4.10.1(b)	Family-Work Conflict to Well-being.....	174
4.10.2	Results for Moderation Analyses.....	176
4.10.2(a)	Work-Family Conflict to Well-being with Job Control as a Moderator.....	176
4.10.2(b)	Family-Work Conflict to Well-being with Job Control as a Moderator.....	178
4.10.2(c)	Work-Family Conflict to Well-being with Job Involvement as a Moderator.....	181



4.10.2(d)	Family-Work Conflict to Well-being with Job Involvement as a Moderator.....	182
4.10.2(e)	Work-Family Conflict to Well-being with Family Involvement as a Moderator.....	185
4.10.2(f)	Family-Work Conflict to Well-being with Family Involvement as a Moderator.....	186
4.10.2(g)	Work-Family Conflict to Well-being with Relaxation as a Moderator.....	189
4.10.2(h)	Family-Work Conflict to Well-being with Relaxation as a Moderator.....	193
4.10.2(i)	Work-Family Conflict to Well-being with Mastery Experience as a Moderator.....	194
4.10.2(j)	Family-Work Conflict to Well-being with Mastery Experience as a Moderator.....	195
4.11	Summary of Results for Hypotheses.....	197
4.12	Chapter Summary.....	201
<b>CHAPTER 5</b>	<b>DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION.....</b>	<b>204</b>
5.1	Introduction.....	204
5.2	Recapitulation of the Study.....	204
5.3	Discussion of the Results.....	206
5.3.1	Direct Relationships Between Work-Family Conflict and Well-being.....	207
5.3.2	Direct Relationships between Family-Work Conflict and Well-being.....	214
5.3.3	The Moderating Role of Job Control in the Relationship Between Work-Family Conflict and Well-being.....	222
5.3.4	The Moderating Role of Job Control in the Relationship Between Family-Work Conflict and Well-being.....	226
5.3.5	The Moderating Role of Job Involvement in the Relationship Between Work-Family Conflict and Well-being.....	229
5.3.6	The Moderating Role of Job Involvement in the Relationship Between Family-Work Conflict and Well-being.....	233

5.3.7	The Moderating Role of Family Involvement between Work-Family Conflict and Well-being.....	237
5.3.8	The Moderating Effect of Family Involvement between Family-Work Conflict and Well-being.....	240
5.3.9	The Moderating Role of Relaxation in the Relationship Between Work-Family Conflict and Well-being.....	243
5.3.10	The Moderating Role of Relaxation in the Relationship Between Family-Work Conflict and Well-being.....	248
5.3.11	The Moderating Role of Mastery Experience in the Relationship Between Work-Family Conflict and Well-being.....	252
5.3.12	The Moderating Role of Mastery Experience in the Relationship Between Family-Work Conflict and Well-being.....	254
5.4	Implications of the Study .....	256
5.4.1	Theoretical Implications .....	256
5.4.2	Practical Implications.....	258
5.5	Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research .....	261
5.6	Conclusion.....	265
	<b>REFERENCES.....</b>	<b>268</b>
	<b>APPENDICES</b>	

## LIST OF TABLES

	<b>Page</b>
Table 3.1	Number of Stores ..... 120
Table 3.2	Sources and Description of Items ..... 134
Table 3.3	Pilot Test Modifications of Items from the Respondents' Comments and Feedback ..... 137
Table 4.1	Summary of the Collected Data ..... 145
Table 4.1.1	Summary of the Collected Data by Region ..... 145
Table 4.2	Respondents' Profile ..... 147
Table 4.3	Component Structure and Component Loadings for Dependent Variables ..... 150
Table 4.4	Component Structure and Component Loadings for Independent Variables ..... 154
Table 4.5	Restatement of Hypothesis ..... 158
Table 4.6	Mean, Standard Deviation, Cronbach's Alpha Coefficients, and Inter-Correlations among Study Variables ..... 168
Table 4.7	Independent Chi-Square Test for Methods of Questionnaire Distribution Against Ethnic, Marital Status, Dependents, Type of Dependents, Number of Children, Children Age, and Presence of Helper at Home ..... 169
Table 4.8	Independent Sample T-Test for Methods of Questionnaire Distribution Against Age and Working Hours per Week ..... 170
Table 4.9	Various Regression Models Estimating Coefficients for the Direct Relationship Between Work-Family Conflict (WFC) and Well- being ..... 173

Table 4.10	Various Regression Models Estimating Coefficients for the Direct Relationship Between Family-Work Conflict (FWC) and Well-being.....	175
Table 4.11	Testing Moderation Effect of Job Control (JC) in the Relationship Between Work-Family Conflict (WFC) and Well-being Using Bootstrap.....	177
Table 4.12	Testing Moderation Effect of Job Control (JC) in the Relationship Between Family-Work Conflict (FWC) and Well-being Using Bootstrap.....	179
Table 4.13	Testing Moderation Effect of Job Involvement (JI) in the Relationship Between Work-Family Conflict (WFC) and Well-being Using Bootstrap.....	182
Table 4.14	Testing Moderation Effect of Job Involvement (JI) in the Relationship Between Family-Work Conflict (FWC) and Well-being Using Bootstrap.....	183
Table 4.15	Testing Moderation Effect of Family Involvement (FI) in the Relationship Between Work-Family Conflict (WFC) and Well-being Using Bootstrap.....	186
Table 4.16	Testing Moderation Effect of Family Involvement (FI) in the Relationship Between Family-Work Conflict (FWC) and Well-being Using Bootstrap.....	187
Table 4.17	Testing Moderation Effect of Relaxation (RLX) in the Relationship Between Work-Family Conflict (WFC) and Well-being Using Bootstrap.....	190
Table 4.18	Testing Moderation Effect of Relaxation (RLX) in the Relationship Between Family-Work Conflict (FWC) and Well-being Using Bootstrap.....	193

Table 4.19	Testing Moderation Effect of Mastery Experience (MEX) in the Relationship Between Work-Family Conflict (WFC) and Well-being Using Bootstrap.....	195
Table 4.20	Testing Moderation Effect of Mastery Experience (MEX) in the Relationship Between Family-Work Conflict (FWC) and Well-being Using Bootstrap.....	196
Table 4.21	Summary of Results for Hypotheses.....	197

## LIST OF FIGURES

	<b>Page</b>
Figure 2.1	The Job-Demand-Control Model..... 55
Figure 2.2	Research Framework of This Study..... 76
Figure 4.1	Revised Research Framework..... 162
Figure 4.2	Breakdown of the Research Framework for Work-Family Conflict to Employee Well-being with Job Control as a Moderator ..... 177
Figure 4.3	Breakdown of the Research Framework for Family-Work Conflict to Employee Well-being with Job Control as a Moderator ..... 178
Figure 4.4	Illustration for the Presence of Moderation Effect (Job Control) on the Relationship Between Family-Work Conflict and Life Well-being..... 180
Figure 4.5	Illustration for the Presence of Moderation Effect (Job Control) on the Relationship Between Family-Work Conflict and Psychological Well-being..... 180
Figure 4.6	Breakdown of the Research Framework for Work-Family Conflict to Employee Well-being with Job Involvement as a Moderator 181
Figure 4.7	Breakdown of the Research Framework for Family-Work Conflict to Employee Well-being with Job Involvement as a Moderator 183
Figure 4.8	Illustration for the Presence of Moderation Effect (Job Involvement) on the Relationship Between Family-Work Conflict and Life Well-being..... 184
Figure 4.9	Breakdown of the Research Framework for Work-Family Conflict to Employee Well-being with Family Involvement as a Moderator.....185

Figure 4.10	Breakdown of the Research Framework for Family-Work Conflict to Employee Well-being with Family Involvement as a Moderator.....	187
Figure 4.11	Illustration for the Presence of Moderation Effect (Family Involvement) on the Relationship Between Family-Work Conflict and Life Well-being. ....	188
Figure 4.12	Illustration for the Presence of Moderation Effect (Family Involvement) on the Relationship Between Family-Work Conflict and Physical Health.....	189
Figure 4.13	Breakdown of the Research Framework for Work-Family Conflict to Employee Well-being with Relaxation as a Moderator.....	190
Figure 4.14	Illustration for the Presence of Moderation Effect (Relaxation) on the Relationship Between Work-Family Conflict and Psychological Well-being.....	191
Figure 4.15	Illustration for the Presence of Moderation Effect (Relaxation) on the Relationship Between Work-Family Conflict and Workplace Well-being.....	192
Figure 4.16	Breakdown of the Research Framework for Family-Work Conflict to Employee Well-being with Relaxation as a Moderator.....	193
Figure 4.17	Breakdown of the Research Framework for Work-Family Conflict to Employee Well-being with Mastery Experience as a Moderator.....	194
Figure 4.18	Breakdown of the Research Framework for Family-Work Conflict to Employee Well-being With Mastery Experience as a Moderator.....	196

## LIST OF APPENDICES

- Appendix A Questionnaire
- Appendix B Profile of the Respondents
- Appendix C Missing Value Analysis (MVA)
- Appendix D.1 Factor Analysis for Dependent Variables
- Appendix D.2 Factor Analysis for Independent Variables
- Appendix E Descriptive Statistics, Cronbach's Alpha Coefficients and Correlation Matrix
- Appendix F.1 Independent Chi-Square Tests
- Appendix F.2 Independent Sample T-Tests
- Appendix G.1 Moderation Test for Work-Family Conflict on All Well-being Components With Job Control as Moderator
- Appendix G.2 Moderation Test for Work-Family Conflict on All Well-being Components With Job Involvement as Moderator
- Appendix G.3 Moderation Test for Work-Family Conflict on All Well-being Components with Family Involvement as Moderator
- Appendix G.4 Moderation Test for Work-Family Conflict on All Well-being Components With Relaxation as Moderator
- Appendix G.5 Moderation Test for Work-Family Conflict on All Well-being Components With Mastery Experience as Moderator
- Appendix G.6 Moderation Test for Family-Work Conflict on All Well-being Components With Job Control as Moderator
- Appendix G.7 Moderation Test for Family-Work Conflict on All Well-being Components With Job Involvement as Moderator
- Appendix G.8 Moderation Test for Family-Work Conflict on All Well-being Components With Family Involvement as Moderator
- Appendix G.9 Moderation Test for Family-Work Conflict on All Well-being Components With Relaxation as Moderator
- Appendix G.10 Moderation Test for Family-Work Conflict on All Well-being Components With Mastery Experience as Moderator



**KONFLIK ANTARA PERANAN DAN KESEJAHTERAAN PEKERJA  
JUALAN WANITA: PERANAN MODERATOR KAWALAN, PENGLIBATAN  
DAN PEMULIHAN**

**ABSTRAK**

Kesejahteraan pekerja berperanan sebagai salah satu komponen terpenting dalam menentukan produktiviti tenaga kerja dan prestasi organisasi. Walaupun terdapat banyak sebab yang boleh memberi kesan terhadap kesejahteraan pekerja, salah satu sebab yang mungkin dipandang enteng dikalangan golongan berpendapatan rendah ialah isu-isu tentang konflik yang wujud dari domain kerja dan keluarga. Tujuan kajian ini adalah untuk membuat ujian empirikal sama ada konflik antara peranan (konflik kerja-keluarga dan konflik keluarga-kerja) memberi kesan kepada kesejahteraan pekerja jualan wanita. Tambahan pula, untuk menguji bagaimana peranan kawalan, penglibatan dan pemulihan mampu menjadi moderator pada hubungan di antara konflik antara peranan dan kesejahteraan pekerja. Data dikumpulkan melalui soal selidik yang dikendalikan sendiri daripada 400 pekerja jualan wanita pasar raya besar dan pasar raya di seluruh Malaysia. Kesemua hipotesis diuji menggunakan PROCESS Macro SPSS 24 dibangunkan dan dikemaskini oleh Hayes (2018). Hasil kajian menunjukkan konflik kerja-keluarga mempunyai hubungkait yang signifikan terhadap kesemua komponen kesejahteraan pekerja. Walaubagaimanapun, konflik keluarga-kerja adalah signifikan hanya terhadap kesejahteraan hidup dan kesihatan fizikal, sementara separa signifikan terhadap kesejahteraan psikologi. Uji kaji ke atas moderator menunjukkan keputusan signifikan bagi kawalan kerja dalam hubungan di antara konflik keluarga-kerja dan kesejahteraan hidup serta kesejahteraan psikologi. Tambahan pula, penglibatan kerja

dan keluarga menunjukkan keputusan moderator yang signifikan dalam hubungan di antara konflik keluarga-kerja dan kesejahteraan hidup. Penglibatan keluarga juga menunjukkan signifikan moderator dalam hubungan di antara konflik keluarga-kerja dan kesihatan fizikal. Santai sebagai pemboleh ubah pengalaman pemulihan menunjukkan moderator yang signifikan dalam hubungan di antara konflik kerja-keluarga dan kesejahteraan tempat kerja serta kesejahteraan psikologi. Akhir sekali, keterbatasan dalam kajian ini dan implikasi dari keputusan-keputusan kajian di atas bagi praktikaliti pengurusan jualan dibincangkan.

**INTER-ROLE CONFLICTS AND WOMEN SALES WORKERS' WELL-  
BEING: THE MODERATING ROLE OF CONTROL, INVOLVEMENT AND  
RECOVERY**

**ABSTRACT**

Employee well-being serves as a crucial component in determining workforce productivity and organizational performance. While there are many reasons that can affect employee well-being, one of the reasons they may have been under looked among low income earners are issues of conflict arising from work and family domains. The purpose of this research is to examine empirically whether inter-role conflicts (work-family conflict and family-work conflict) affect women sales workers' well-being. Furthermore, to examine how the role of control, involvement and recovery can moderate the relationship between inter-role conflicts and employee well-being. Data gathered using self-administered questionnaires of 400 women sales workers from hypermarket and department stores across Malaysia. All hypotheses were tested using PROCESS Macro SPSS 24 developed and updated by Hayes (2018). The findings showed that work-family conflict is significantly related to all employee well-being components. However, family-work conflict is significant only towards life well-being and physical health, while partially significant towards psychological well-being. Tests on moderators showed significant moderation for job control in the relationship between family-work conflict and life well-being as well as psychological well-being. Additionally, job and family involvement moderated significantly in the relationship between family-work conflict and life well-being. Family involvement also moderated significantly in the relationship between family-work conflict and physical health.

Relaxation as a recovery experience variable showed significant moderation in the relationship between work-family conflict and workplace well-being as well as psychological well-being. Finally, limitations of the study and implications of these findings for sales management practice are discussed.

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of this Research

Over the past decades, the increased participation of women in the workforce worldwide has raised concern regarding health and well-being from the combination of work and family life. Women, who are often being associated with gender stereotyping and gender role expectations strive to maintain their well-being (International Labour Organization, 2018). The differences in nature between men and women in terms of physical, mental, and emotion affect well-being differently. Moreover, as different perceptions on gender established based on religious and cultural inclination, the perceived role expectations between both sexes produced different well-being outcomes. Time autonomy for instance, is not always equal for men and women due to the different gender role expectations in a household (Saigaran and Karupiah, 2020). Globally, women spend at least twice as much time as men on unpaid care work, including domestic or household tasks as well as care for people at home and in the community (UNICEF Malaysia, 2020). Although this adds value for the household members but often it reduces women's own personal well-being.

The trend is similar in Malaysia. Working women in this country often experience role conflict as a worker and homemaker created by the cultural and societal norms (Khan and Rokis, 2020). The perception of the traditional role of women as primary caregiver has never changed and the role is observed in almost every ethnicity among Malaysians (Abdullah et al., 2013). Working women are expected to be

excellent in completing work at home and at the workplace (Mustapa, Noor and Mutalib, 2018). The demand to prioritise work, family, health and household seen to lead more conflicts (Sabron et al., 2017). Thus, finding work-family balance becomes more challenging for women than men with the combination of having a job besides a family (Ahmad and Omar, 2008). Gradually, stress due to conflict, expectations and sustaining work-family balance can lead to Malaysian women's deprived well-being.

In Malaysia, women make up almost half of the Malaysian population. However, the labour force participation rate for women was still relatively low at 54.7% in 2017 compared to 80.1% of men (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2018a). This placed Malaysia at rank 14 out of 18 countries listed in the Global Gender Gap Report 2017 for East Asia and Pacific region (World Economic Forum, 2017; Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2018b). Due to the deeply embedded socio-cultural perceptions of women in the Malaysian communities, the weight of domestic and family care is disproportionately shouldered by women. In 2017, 58% of women compared to only 3.2% of men outside the workforce gave 'housework/family responsibilities' as the reason they were not seeking work (Khazanah Research Institute, 2018). This reflects the load Malaysian women carries when it comes to household and childbearing duties.

However, despite the setback of women coming into the workforce, by industry, women out-performed men in the services sector. The services sector remained as the primary source of employment for women with 72% from the total employment are female service workers (Institute of Labour Market Information and Analysis, 2017; Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2017). Within services sector, the largest proportion of women are in the wholesale and retail trade sub-sector (18.3%), followed by education and accommodation and food service activities (Institute of Labour Market Information and Analysis, 2017; Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2017). Equally, in

terms of occupational sector, service and sales workers alone accounted almost 30% of women from the total employment in the country (Institute of Labour Market Information and Analysis, 2017; Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2017).

The majority of employed women being in this sector signifies important numbers to the country's economic contribution. Services sector has the largest share of GDP with 57% recorded in 2019 (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2020). The growth of this sector was mainly led by wholesale and retail trade sub-sector with 7.7% growth for the overall year in 2018 (The Edge Markets, 2019; Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2020). This translates to a total revenue of RM494.9bil contributing about 16% of the national GDP (The Star, 2020; Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2020). This indicates that the economy rely heavily on the services sector particularly on wholesale and retail trade contribution, which consists the bulk of women who are already in the workforce. However, these women are often under-reported, overlooked and the least of profession being given attention to. To date, documented studies on working women are mostly done in the public sectors i.e. public hospitals, schools, and universities (Sabron et al., 2017; Achour et al., 2017; Isa et al., 2018) or occupations among high-skilled professionals i.e. managers (Fei et al., 2017) and banking sector (Ahmad and Omar, 2008). There are only few studies done specifically on women in the semi-skilled occupations such as clerical (Ahmad and Omar, 2008) and manufacturing workers (Ibrahim and Ohtsuka, 2013). There are even fewer studies done on women specifically in the service and sales workers. Thus, with the significant numbers of women engaged in this sector reflects the need to give attention to this working group.

According to Malaysian Standard Classification of Occupations (MASCO) 2013, sales workers are those who “sell and demonstrate goods in wholesale or retail

shops, at stalls and markets, door-to-door, via telephone or customer contact centres. They may record and accept payment for goods and services purchased, and may operate small retail outlets” (p.288). Sales workers are divided into four minor groups namely; street and market salesperson, shop salesperson, cashiers and ticket clerks, and other sales workers (MASCO, 2013). They are commonly found in wholesale and retail establishments as stated in the Malaysia Standard Industrial Classification (MSIC) 2008. Sales workers are employed either as part-time (minimum six hours a day) or full-time (minimum eight hours a day) with a monthly wage ceiling of RM1,100 or standard minimum wage of RM5.29 per hour (New Straits Times, 2019).

Sales workers are classified in the bottom 40 per cent (B40) household income group earners in Malaysia (Eleventh Malaysia Plan, 2015). ‘B40’ refers to households whose income sits in the bottom 40th percentile of the national income range with a mean monthly household income of RM 2,537 (Eleventh Malaysia Plan, 2015). Raising the income of B40 households is a priority set out in Malaysia’s current development plan (2016 – 2020) called the Eleventh Malaysia Plan. The B40 group is set as a priority as they are exposed to several disadvantages compared to the other two income group earners i.e. middle 40 per cent (M40) and top 20 per cent (T20). Among the disadvantages are low social security coverage, minimal healthcare opportunities, fewer benefits, and lack of education and support from organisations. Furthermore, according to The National Health and Morbidity Survey (2015), there is a higher prevalence of mental health problems among adults from low-income families. The B40 group is at a higher risk of having poor mental health caused by lower mental health literacy and negative attitudes toward seeking help compared to those with a higher socioeconomic status (Ibrahim et. al., 2019). Specifically for women, who often received high expectation from surroundings and ought to give excellent performance at work and



home, they have to find their own “me time” by engaging in different kind of non-work-related activities to increase their self-esteem and refresh their well-being. However, this is not a privilege for all women (Jha, 2019). Especially for B40 women, who live on limited earnings, extra activities means extra money. All these make them vulnerable and have a higher tendency to be exposed to work and family issues.

In Malaysia, there is virtually no barrier for women to enter any industry or occupations. However, the differences between the number of men and women in the country’s statistics of industry and occupations might reflect the choices that Malaysian women choose to follow. Choice of occupation can be affected by an individual’s level or field of study, interest, family interference, past experiences, or gender-stereotyping on a certain type of occupation or industry. Factors that affect women’s choices of the above sectorial involvement have been identified as including the family’s socio-economic status. Poorer families rely on women’s contribution to family although they are viewed as secondary contributors and the demands of women’s unpaid household duties mean that they can be called upon to extend their labour likewise in the informal sector as unpaid workers (Bhatt, 2008).

Women sales workers like any other working women in Malaysia, is generally bound by the gender role perception and expectation due to the heavily embedded cultural and societal norms. Moreover, being in the vulnerable B40 income group earners reflects that even women sales workers are exposed to experiencing work-family conflict. Common issues faced by sales workers such as long working hours and low wages (The Star, 2020) are among the factors that can lead to work-family conflict. Previous local studies have shown that long-working hours have significant relationship with work-family conflict (Noor, 2006; Ahmad & Omar, 2008; Syed Ismail et. al., 2016;

Achour et. al., 2017; Khan & Rokis, 2020). This might also be among the reasons of high turnover rates among sales workers (e.g. Salleh, Nair & Harun, 2012; Nair, Salleh & Nair, 2014; Kamarulzaman et. al., 2015). This is possible because a study by Aziz (2011) have showed that conflict between work and family, regardless of direction, was found to be related to high turnover intention and lower commitment to organisation and work.

Additionally, workplace deviant behaviour such as employee theft among sales workers has also been studied (e.g. Moorthy et. al., 2015). This costs shortfall in businesses of retail chain organisations and contributes significantly to retail shrinkage in Malaysia (23.3% is from employee theft) (The Centre for Retail Research, 2011). Although reasons behind employee theft behaviours in Malaysian retail industries is still under-researched, among of the reasons are because of low wages, job stress, job dissatisfaction, and opportunity to engage in such behaviour (Moorthy et. al., 2015). In 2016, The Star reported a theft issue in one of the department stores in Malaysia involving children's clothes and shoes. The arrested employee confronted that she was not satisfied with the company due to no pay rise despite that she has been working there long enough. Although this is only one example among the many theft behaviour issues among employees, it reflects the importance of this issue in which reflects upon their satisfaction with life and job. Issue of low wages not only it causes loss to organisations, it also causes other negative outcomes, such as to an individual's personal life. In a study by Khan and Rokis (2020), they found that obligations to manage households and financial constraints were significantly related to work-family conflict. Given that Malaysian women are already subject to heavier gender-role expectations and coming from the B40 group, low wages might be a driving factor leading to work-family conflict. Apart from low wages, studies have shown that other factors such as

workload, job stress and job dissatisfaction as a result of feelings of unfair or abusive supervision have associations with work-family or family-work conflict in which all are related to deviant workplace behaviour (Ahmad & Omar, 2013; Radzali, Ahmad & Omar, 2013; Ahmad & Omar, 2014; Moorthy et. al., 2015). Therefore, in view of these issues, women sales workers might also have their own struggle in managing between work and family life as they also face a lot of challenges in their working environment. Giving attention to all these aspects is vital to service and sales workers occupational sector.

Furthermore, workplace bullying is a serious concern especially for women sales workers who has always been a target for mistreatment (Talib & Hassan, 2014; Mokhtar, Adnan & Rohaizad, 2018; The Star, 2020). Any repeated mistreatment of an individual over an extended time in situations which he or she has difficulties to defend against is considered workplace bullying (Kwan, Tuckey & Dollard, 2020; Rosander et. al., 2020). In a study on customer service workers and frontline service workers in Malaysia (with more than 50% of respondents were women including sales workers), workplace bullying was found to have a significant relationship with the three types of psychological symptoms i.e. depression, anxiety and stress and two types of psychosomatic symptoms i.e. sleep disturbances and headache (Mokhtar, Adnan & Rohaizad, 2018). Recent studies also showed that not only it affects employee's health, it also causes interference into the family life (Liang, 2020; Buonomo et. al., 2020). Having to comprehend the work and home role responsibilities with minimum pay wages, stressors from workplace bullying might further burden women sales workers causing unwanted consequences in their work and family life. An increasing number of studies underlined the role of bullying episodes on employees' family life, opening a debate on the effects of counterproductive behaviours beyond the organisations (e.g.

Hauge et. al., 2010; Fiorilli et. al.,2019). Workplace bullying created high levels of stress that was felt inside the workplace and at home, creating work-family conflict and led to lower job satisfaction as well as family dissatisfaction (Hamid & Amin, 2014). Previous studies have also shown that the negative effects of workplace bullying on employees' health, well-being and quality of life goes through higher levels of work-family conflicts (Yoo & Lee, 2018). In turn, deprived well-being due to high work-family conflict lead to negative job, organisational and individual outcomes, such low productivity and performance (Ahmad, 2008; Tay & Dar, 2011; Jamadin et. al., 2015), emotional exhaustion (Hwa & Amin, 2016; Chung et. al, 2017; Han et. al., 2018), life dissatisfaction (Achour et. al., 2017), and increased in turnover intentions or actual turnover rates (Salleh, Nair & Harun, 2012; Nair, Salleh & Nair, 2014; Kamarulzaman et. al., 2015). Work-family conflict seems to represent effectively as one of the processes by which bullying could affect life outside the workplace (Isabel et. al.,2011; Raja et.al., 2018; Liang, 2020). Therefore, these hidden actualities beyond financial and material aspects are what is more concerned and need to be given attention to.

There is mounting proof that work-family and family-work conflict are identified with work productivity and performance that is associated with well-being (Jones, 2006; Ahmad, 2008; Ibrahim, Shatri & Zin, 2020; Chughtai, 2021; Radita et. al., 2021) as well as money related expenses (Chin, 2018; Butali, Mamuli, and Wesang'ula, 2014). This is because conflict between work and family roles causes negative outcomes to employee well-being (Noor & Mahudin, 2016; Achour et. al., 2017). Work-family or family-work conflict has been found to bring about negative effects such as; stress, emotional exhaustion, absenteeism and job dissatisfaction (Ahmad, 2008; Ibrahim, Ohtsuka & Halik, 2009; Azlina, 2010; Syed Ismail et. al., 2016). All of which translates to costs incurred to the organisation and consequently, to

the national economy. Mental health issues for instance, are on the rise with 50.2% of employees having at least one dimension of work-related stress (AIA Vitality Survey, 2019). Cases of depression, anxiety and mental disorder have been on the rise in Malaysia with work stress was among the leading causes (New Straits Times, 2016). Stress due to work or in the workplace can be manifested as absenteeism or presenteeism (New Straits Times, 2016). Organisations lose a total of 73.1 days per employee due to absence and presenteeism, costing each employer RM2.27 million per year (AIA Vitality Survey, 2019). Moreover, direct and indirect health costs and loss of productivity while at work can further result in a reduced national economic output (AIA Vitality Survey, 2019). Consequently, amplified stressors from work are brought into the family domain causing conflict, hence more negative outcomes and vice versa. This cycle if left unattended can cause serious problems to the nation. The number of those suffering from mental health problems has already tripled over the past 20 years such that estimated projection loss for Malaysia would be \$10.6bn (RM43.6bn) for 2010, rising to \$24.3bn (RM99.9bn) by 2030 (Malaysian Health System Research Report, 2016). Therefore, in the effort of reducing work stress, care and domestic roles, even if unpaid and officially unrecognised in national accounts, are also indispensable in ensuring the optimal functioning of labour force participation. Thus, employee well-being is vital, as it causes economic loss on each level; individual, family, employer, health system and ultimately, at the national level.

Therefore, by understanding the issues related to women in the service and sales sector in Malaysia, the study aimed to determine whether these women workers, like any other working women, face work-family or family-work conflict in which may affect their well-being. This study also aim to understand further on variables of control, demand, involvement and recovery that might have influence in weakening the conflict

to well-being relationship. In addition, this study would also add to the existing research on well-being of working women, work-family studies, and service and sales occupational sector particularly in South East Asia and Malaysia.

## **1.2 Problem Statement**

Well-being is vital in ensuring economic growth and country stability. A society with great well-being is defined as having a good quality of life, while a bad quality of life is portrayed as 'illbeing'. Both well-being and illbeing may incur costs towards a nation, but the cost of having people with well-being is beneficial and gives prosperity to the country. Illbeing on the other hand is detrimental, it is a loss in any organisation, including families and individuals. Therefore, the topic of well-being is crucial and need to be given serious attention in research.

In a workplace setting, the well-being of employees determines the organisation's performance. Healthy and happy employees lead to a productive workforce, which in turn enhances the organisation's performance (Tov and Chan, 2012). Moreover, employees' satisfaction with their job and life may significantly affect their commitment and dedication to their organisation (Aziz, 2011; Ibrahim and Ohtsuka, 2013). In the retailing sector specifically, retailers need to remain competitive and sustainable in the market by delivering quality products and services (Tay and Dar, 2011). The need to engage with human capital especially those in the frontline services is pivotal to ensure top customer service quality (Lau et. al., 2017; Al-Suraihi et. al., 2020). The way forward is to improve the productivity and quality of employees' performance by way of ensuring good employee well-being (Tay & Dar, 2011; LeBonte, 2003). As services are intangible, and are produced and consumed at the same time, retail employees must be healthy and stay driven to commit themselves in meeting

customer satisfaction. The well-being of retail employees should therefore be carefully managed and evaluated to ensure that they perform well.

The nature of working in the retail sector has its own stressors. Nonstandard work schedules such as irregular and extended shifts, long periods of standing due to long work hours, high-demand workloads, workplace mistreatment and reduced staffing are a few reasons for health and well-being issues related to retail job stress (NIOSH, 2019). These issues may affect retail workers in several ways. Non-standard work shifts for instance, can lead to less time for family or personal life (Hwa & Amin, 2016). Long work hours without enough breaks may lead to increased errors and injuries in the workplace (New Straits Times, 2016). High-demand workloads from customer service jobs can lead to emotional and physical stress (Tay & Dar, 2011). Workplace mistreatment may lead to emotional exhaustion and mental health problems (Chung et. al., 2017). The study on well-being of retail employees are still scarce in this country despite its significance in contribution to the national economy. Nevertheless, in order to remain competitive in the service industry, retailers need to focus in improving the productivity and quality of their employees.

Employee turnover issue has been a major concern in Malaysia's retail sector (Khoo et. al., 2017; Teng et. al., 2019). High employee turnover is severe as it effects productivity and organisation's cost (Chin, 2018; Butali, Mamuli, and Wesang'ula, 2014). The process of recruiting, selecting, and training of new employees are necessary when employees leave their organisations. Besides, high employee turnover rate tarnishes the organisation's image, decreases chances of improvement, slows down implementation of new plans, and degenerates productivity (Ghosh et al., 2013; Nair, Salleh & Nair, 2014). It is also predicted that organisations that fail to reduce their

employee turnover rate is expected lose their competitiveness in the long run (Ismail and Lim, 2007). While there is limited knowledge on possible reasons behind the high employee turnover rates in the Malaysian retail sector, one of the most being discussed is job dissatisfaction (Makhbul, Rahid & Hasun, 2011; Teck-Heng & Waheed, 2011; Nair, Salleh & Harun, 2012; Kamarulzaman et. al, 2015). Studies have shown that the feelings of dissatisfaction as signs of poor employee well-being are associated to employee retention (Page and Vella-Brodrick, 2009, Medina, 2012) and turnover (Wright and Bonnett, 2007). According to Dawal *et al.* (2009), employees generally work harder and perform better when they are satisfied and happy with their job. However, if the job satisfaction is low, it will deter the employee's work commitment and increase the intention to withdraw oneself either from the job or organisation (Cohen & Golan, 2007; Nair, Salleh & Nair, 2014).

Job dissatisfaction among retail employees are associated with numerous reasons i.e. nonstandard work hours, long working hours, low wages, workplace mistreatment and high-demand workloads especially for those in the customer service line (NIOSH, 2019). However, recent studies on retail job dissatisfaction in other countries goes beyond job related issues and that issues of family life has come into subjects of discussions (Darrat, Amyx & Bennett, 2010; Chelariu & Stump, 2011; Carballo-Penela, Varela & Bande, 2019). Non-work life has been found to significantly affect workers at work and this includes retail workers (Darrat, Amyx & Bennett, 2010; Chelariu & Stump, 2011; Carballo-Penela, Varela & Bande, 2019). Studies on work and family conflict among workers in the retail sector in Malaysia is still scarce, although studies on other services sectors have been explored i.e. public service (Aazmi et. al, 2016; Sabron et. al., 2017), education (Idris, 2011; Abdullah, 2016; Isa et. al., 2018), services sector in general (Zainal et. al, 2020). The consequences of work and



family conflict towards workers affects not only job satisfaction, but also life and well-being in general. Therefore the limited knowledge on work-family issue on Malaysian retail workers warrants attention to study especially on well-being consequences.

Poor employee well-being as a result of certain psychological conditions may also cause unfavourable outcomes to the organisation. Psychological conditions that are triggered because of strained working conditions such long working hours or excess in workload can lead to workplace stress (MacDonald, 2003). Retail workers, especially sales workers who usually interact with customers face-to-face, are the main actors in the delivery of service quality (Yavas, Babakus & Karatepe, 2008). However, they are often underpaid, typically work long hours, irregular schedules and carry heavy workloads (Singh, 2000; Yavas, Babakus & Karatepe, 2008). All these can trigger unnecessary psychological disorders such as burnout (Low et. al., 2001; Matthews et. al.,2018), depression (Chung et. al, 2017), and other chronic psychological disorders (New Straits Times, 2016; Ibrahim and Ohtsuka, 2013). As a result, these lead to increase in absenteeism, exhibits low levels of motivation at work, encourages intention to leave the organisation, and eventually leaving the organisation (Gimeno, Benavides, Amick, Benach and Martinez, 2004; Page and Vella-Brodrick, 2009; Medina, 2012).

Across occupations, job control; that is the extent of autonomy a worker has in the job, has shown to contribute to numerous beneficial employee outcomes, including a heightened sense of ownership over the work performed (Den Hartog & Belschak 2012), an increase in proactive behaviours such as problem solving (Parker & Collins 2010), enhanced levels of self-efficacy (Bandura 1997), and improved job satisfaction (Cavanaugh et al. 2000). At the personal level, job control has been found to reduce work-to-family conflict even with high job demand (Gronlund, 2007). However, job

control in examining between work-family role conflict and well-being among retail sales workers is limited. Gambles (2006, p. 1463) points out that while the service sector has attracted increasing attention for Human Resources Management studies, “the retail sector has been neglected”. Against this backdrop, this study seek to examine the moderating role of job control between work-family conflict and sales workers well-being especially among women workers. This could contribute to the retail context in Malaysia and Southeast Asia at large.

While a number of studies of work-related outcomes can be found in the retail setting, studies on the well-being of women sales workers are rare. Women in the retail sector, like any other majority of women in this country are expected to comply with the deeply embedded gender-role duties at home. This includes demands of housework and caring duties. Demands have always been a negative predictor to well-being (Artazcoz et al, 2004a). Demands are interpreted as burdensome and draining to one’s energy (de Jonge et al, 2000; Macdonald, 2003). However, under certain conditions, pressures or stress can push someone to act in getting a task done (Trambayak, Kumar & Jha, 2012). For this reason, this study tests family demand as a moderator between conflict to well-being relationship. Retail sales workers issue on non-standard and irregular working hours that imposes the incapability of meeting demands of job and family leading to work-family conflict, could be moderated by having some degree of pressures (family demands) in order to fulfil the role duties. This may then contribute to workers’ well-being.

Sales worker’s issues, such as high-demand workload, low wages and reduced staffing cost a fortune on sales workers’ well-being. Furthermore, impact on women sales workers may be different such that women are expected to manage household

duties when at home. Stressors from work may be brought to home causing more strain. Given these issues, it would be useful to investigate the impact of role involvement within a sample isolated to just sales workers particularly in the retail sector. Role involvement, that is how much a person identifies with her role (whether at work or at home), is related to high level well-being (Riipinen, 1997). The degree to which each person's role involvement is related to numerous personal and situational characteristics that is caused by how well the role fulfills the individual's needs (Riipinen, 1997). For instance, sales workers increasingly need to be "involved" in their work as customer relationship, teamwork, productivity, and organizational performance are all vital to maintain and expand business, despite experiencing conflicts. Role involvement, may also be thought about the importance of a role (in job or family) to the individual's self-worth (Marshall, Lassk & Moncrief, 2004). Thus, even if with experiencing conflict between roles, the degree of involvement may aid in maintaining sales workers' well-being.

Productivity in retail businesses is indispensable (Saurabh, 2014). Retail sales are usually projected to grow. In order to meet the projected growth, retail companies need committed healthy workers to increase productivity or pursue growth opportunities. Even if shrinkage is expected, productivity is still demanded. Shortage of or unproductive workers may affect operations and the profitability of retail businesses. Unproductive workers are signs of poor well-being. Well-being can be dampened due to work roles especially at sales workers level that requires extensive physical efforts that are exposed to long, irregular hours, including evenings and weekends (The Star, 2016). Sales workers who are also usually required to stand for long periods with not enough breaks may lead to poor physical health in the long-run (NIOSH, 2019). Furthermore, for women workers, who are then required to manage their households after work hours, might further stimulate strains in which causes

poorer health. Workers with poor health not only lose proficiency in performing work at their workplace but also the capability to carry their roles at home. This is because work influences the family by what individuals do at home and how individuals feel at home. Work may also influence how individuals perform tasks at home. Likewise, family also influence the work domain.

Prior studies have shown physical health status as one of the indicators to employee well-being (Medina-Garrido, Biedma-Ferrer and Ramos-Rodriguez, 2017; Shoss and Shoss, 2011; Richman, Kubzansky, Maselko, Kawachi, Choo and Bauer, 2005; van Horn, Taris, Wilmar and Schreurs 2004; Taris, Schreurs and van Lersel-Silfhout, 2001; Wright and Cropanzano, 2000). The frequency of somatic complaint released by employees could be a hint that workers are feeling stress at work (Goldman & Lewis, 2005) or at home (Carballo-Penela, Varela & Bande, 2019). There were associations of physical health to employee performance (Wright and Cropanzano, 2000) as well as job and life satisfaction (Richman *et al.*, 2005). Intention to quit could also spark from physiology aspect like somatic complaint (Siong *et al.*, 2006). In a long run, workers would frequently take medical leave, absent from work, unproductive at work, and eventually quit (Makhbul, Rahid & Hasun, 2011).

For these reasons, recovery; as a process of psycho-physiological unwinding after effort expenditure at work (Guerts & Sonnentag, 2006) plays an important role in maintaining retail worker's well-being. A growing body of empirical research has found that positive experiences on non-working days, after work or during break-times at work, such as taking time to relax may increase well-being (Moreno-Jiminez *et. al.*, 2009; Sonnentag, Binnewies & Mojza, 2008). Work-family interface is also important and need to be included in the study of recovery processes. Recovery in work-family

processes requires attention on the quality of recovery apart from recovery opportunities and activities. The quality of activities and the affective experience during times devoted to recovery is essential to the well-being of retail workers (Zijlstra & Sonnentag, 2006).

Thus, against the issues above, the purpose of this study is twofold. First, it develops and tests a model of women retail sales workers' inter-role conflicts (i.e. work-family conflict and family-work conflict) and the impact on their well-being; life well-being, workplace well-being, psychological well-being and physical health. Second, it examines the potential moderating role of job-demand-control, family demand, role involvement and recovery experience on the conflict to well-being relationships.

### **1.3 Research Questions**

Based on the issues and concerns relating to women retail sales workers in the country, this research therefore attempts to answer the following questions:

1. Is there any significant direct relationship between work-family or family-work conflict and women retail sales workers' well-being (life well-being, workplace well-being, psychological well-being, physical health) in Malaysia?
2. How does job-demand-control influence the relationship between work-family or family-work conflict and women retail sales workers' well-being (life well-being, workplace well-being, psychological well-being, physical health) in Malaysia?
3. How does family demand influence the relationship between work-family or family-work conflict and women retail sales workers' well-being (life well-being, workplace well-being, psychological well-being, physical health) in Malaysia?

4. How can the role of involvement (in job and family) influence the relationship between work-family or family-work conflict and women retail sales workers' well-being (life well-being, workplace well-being, psychological well-being, physical health) in Malaysia?
5. How does by undergoing recovery experience (i.e. psychological detachment, relaxation, mastery experience and control) can influence the relationship between work-family or family-work conflict and women retail sales workers' well-being (life well-being, workplace well-being, psychological well-being, physical health) in Malaysia?

#### **1.4 Research Objectives**

This research intends to understand deeper on women sales workers' well-being by examining the inter-role conflict (work-family conflict and family-work conflict) as predictors and testing job-demand-control, family demand, role involvement (job involvement and family involvement), and recovery experience (psychological detachment from work, relaxation, mastery experience, control) variables as moderators. Thus, this research aims to meet the following objectives:

1. To study the direct relationship between work-family or family-work conflict on women retail sales workers well-being (life well-being, workplace well-being, psychological well-being, physical health) in Malaysia.
2. To examine the influence of job-demand-control on the relationship between work-family or family-work conflict and women retail sales workers' well-being (life well-being, workplace well-being, psychological well-being, physical health) in Malaysia.

3. To examine the influence of family demand on the relationship between work-family or family-work conflict and women retail sales workers' well-being (life well-being, workplace well-being, psychological well-being, physical health) in Malaysia.
4. To examine the influence of role involvement (in job and family) on the relationship between work-family or family-work conflict and women retail sales workers' well-being (life well-being, workplace well-being, psychological well-being, physical health) in Malaysia.
5. To examine the influence of recovery experience (psychological detachment, relaxation, mastery experience and control) on the relationship between work-family or family-work conflict and women retail sales workers' well-being (life well-being, workplace well-being, psychological well-being, physical health) in Malaysia.

### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

Findings from this study hope to contribute to society's benefit, considering that well-being plays a vital role in quality of life today. The increasing number of women joining the workforce justifies the need for more gender-inclusive approaches to meet appropriate needs of the community. Thus, practitioners and academicians may benefit from this study in getting more insights on gender and well-being related matters. Organisations can be guided on what should be addressed and emphasized by the management team particularly for Human Resources Managers to improve sales workers' well-being hence performance in the retail sector. For the researcher, the investigation will uncover critical areas in the field of organisational behaviour that may

further benefit other researchers to explore. Thus, the significance of this study covers both in theoretical perspectives and practical contributions in several ways as below.

### **1.5.1 Theoretical Significance**

First, despite the recognition that inter-role conflicts can have detrimental effects on well-being, the bulk of prior studies examine the separate influences of work-family conflict (Parasuraman & Simmers, 2001; Noor, 2002; Ibrahim, Ohtsuka & Halik, 2009; Ibrahim & Ohtsuka, 2013; Neto et. al., 2016) and to a lesser extent the impact of family-work conflict (Boz, Martinez-Corts & Munduate, 2016) on well-being. Few studies (Brough & Kelling, 2002; Narayanan & Savarimuthu, 2015) consider the effects of both work-family conflict and family-work conflict simultaneously on well-being.

Second, for well-being studies, this research initially refers to Zheng et. al.'s (2015a) employee well-being model. However, each construct is measured individually in this study. An addition 'physical health' dimension is included in this study to create inclusiveness in the construct of well-being as retail sales workers faces a lot of physical strains apart from psychological strains. Zheng *et al.*'s (2015a) employee well-being model is bounded to only employee's well-being dimension i.e. perceptions and feelings on work (workplace well-being), life satisfaction (life well-being) and their psychological experiences (psychological well-being). However, other researchers such as Danna and Griffin (1999), de Jonge, Bosma, Peter and Siegrist (2000), Catano et al. (2010), and Shoss and Shoss (2011) have shown that physical health is considerably an important element in determining the well-being of employees. Moreover, the differences in physiology between men and women results to different well-being outcomes especially in terms of physical health (Vlassoff, 2007). Thus, physical health needed to be part of the study on women retail sales workers' well-being.



Third, studies in work-family dynamics have long been examining the unfavourable relationship of an inter-role conflict such as work-family or family-work conflict with employee well-being (Medina-Garrido et al., 2017; Noor and Mahudin, 2016; Duygulu, Ciraklar, Guripek and Bagiran, 2013; Hammig, Gutzwiller and Bauer, 2009; Netemeyer, Pullig and Maxham, 2005). However, the need to study on the ‘how’ to unravel this phenomenon is far more necessary. For this reason, this study examines several potential moderators that are hypothesized to weaken the relationship between conflict and well-being. Specifically, the influence of demand and control, involvement and recovery are tested and hope to contribute in expanding work-family and well-being studies.

Henceforth, despite the evidence that well-being may be predicted by job-demand-control (de Jonge et. al., 2000; Lindfors et. al., 2007; Ibrahim & Ohtsuka, 2013), and job-demand-control predicted work-family conflict (Gronlund, 2007; Hilton et. al., 2009; Zheng et. al., 2015b), empirical research on the moderating role of job-demand-control as a buffer role between work-family to well-being is very sparse (Ding et al, 2018; Nigatu & Wang, 2018). Moreover, job-demand-control as a moderator on the relationships between conflicts in the work-family interface and well-being on sales workers is far limited. Typically, job-demand-control is viewed from the strain hypothesis in service-based jobs (Hwa & Amin, 2016; Chung et al, 2017; Han et al, 2018). That is, the extend of high (psychological) demands and low in control. However, in dealing with conflict between work and family, there is a considerable evidence that control beliefs can lessen the experienced stressfulness of exposure to threatening occasions (Thamos & Ganster, 1991). Thus, in the light of buffer hypothesis in the job-demand-control model, this study tested the influence of job-demand-control on conflict to well-being relationship specifically in the context of retail workers.

Subsequently, a large body of research demonstrates the moderating role of job or family involvement in various effects of organisational outcomes, well-being and quality of work or life, citing “buffering effects” such that any negative relationship is weaker for individuals who possess higher levels of involvement (Riipinen, 1997; Chughtai, 2008; Huang et al., 2016; Zhou, Chen & Liu, 2019; Abdallah et al, 2017). However, gaps remain in the work–family literature on role involvement’s potency as a moderator towards well-being outcomes. Although few studies explore the role involvement in family on work-family interface (Michel & Clark, 2009; Paustian-Underdhal et al, 2016), the role involvement in job on work and family is still scarce. Moreover, role involvement as a buffer that aims to promote well-being is called to research further (Greenhaus & Powell, 2003; McNall et al, 2010; Zhang, Xu & Fu, 2018). Accordingly, in retail services setting, role involvement may buffer the negative outcomes on well-being with identification of self-worth and saliency especially on issues of workplace mistreatment and low wages.

Lastly, recovery experience as a moderator is expect to contribute in promoting well-being of retail workers who are commonly exposed to long working hours and long standing periods. Previous studies on recovery experience tested in all directions, such as on direct relationships of predictors to recovery (Cropley & Purvis, 2003; Taris et al, 2006), recovery to outcome variables (Fritz et al, 2010), and many as moderators (Geurts & Sonnentag, 2006; Moreno-Jimenez et al, 2009; Kato & Yamazaki, 2009; Nohe, Michel & Sonntag, 2014). However, in services industry, many literatures focuses on service recovery (Boshoff, 2007; Allen, 2000) while little studied on recovering from work concentrating on worker’s well-being (Eschleman, Mathieu & Cooper, 2017; Conlin, Hu & Barber, 2020). Additionally even fewer study on recovery and work-family interface (Amstad & Semmer, 2009), hence more research is needed.

Thus, this study is expect to gain a deeper insight into the effect of recovery experience as a moderator on work-family and well-being relationship. Particularly, to empirically test on samples of women retail sales workers in Malaysia.

### **1.5.2 Practical Contribution**

Besides filling academic gaps and serving as a frame of reference for future research, the findings of the study may also prove useful to organisations in the retail sector. An understanding of male-female role differences in the relationship between inter-role conflicts, control, involvement, recovery & well-being is crucial for organisations in determining if an undifferentiated or dual (i.e. gender-specific) approach is warranted in managing sales workers (Moncrief et al., 2000). The differences in gender roles and needs between men and women may require different approaches or support by the organisation in order to retain and gain employee loyalty. Thus, this research provides insights as a guide to organisations in taking necessary actions depending on their own issues and environment respectively.

Additionally, managers and supervisors of retail sectors can also benefit from this study by way of understanding the work-related issues that can ease the conflict to well-being relationship. For example, managers or supervisors could discuss to understand work-family issues among workers and offer support whether through specific skills trainings such as time management, wellness programmes, or educate on selection of mental health issues. At the same time, the workers themselves can benefit by knowing the significance of their role in the industry and economy at large. Workers need to be aware of their own state of well-being that might be the biggest influence of their performance either in job or family role. With empirical data and the factual

understanding, this study may be materials to educate the workers on their issues that contributes to work-family problems, hence their well-being.

Subsequently, this research hope to also benefit consumers. Retail salespeople are important, yet often overlooked category, because they have an important role in creating and maintaining a relationship with the consumer, with whom they are in direct contact (Chelariu & Stump, 2011). It is necessary so that consumers too can have better understanding and empathy towards sales workers. This research expands on the organisational behaviour field's limited perspective on inter-role conflict and well-being construct among retail sales workers. Sales workers are generally the first line of organisational contact to consumers and thus are representatives of the firm, especially those in the customer service. This position carries an immense potential for organisational liability because customers tend to attribute the sales worker's personal behaviours to the organisation or business as a whole (Scott and Jehn 2003). Sales workers who showed lacking in performance and seem unproductive may indirectly reflect how organisational care of their workers.

In addition, previous studies on retail are mostly limited to certain states or regions in Malaysia, for example, East Coast (Nair, Salleh & Nair, 2012); Selangor (Teck-Hong & Waheed, 2011); Negeri Sembilan (Kamarulzaman et. al., 2015); Sarawak (Ayupp & Kong, 2010). The data collected from this research comprises samples of retail sales workers from all regions across Malaysia. This is to ensure that a broad variety of culture and working environment is covered within this research in which could increase generalizability. However, despite this generalizability, research such as on specific areas are necessary as every area differs in terms of issues, culture and working environment. Nevertheless, addressing retail sales workers issues in