

Navigating Dual Roles: The Impact of Work-Family Conflict on Mental Health and the Essential Role of Counselling Services for Malaysian Professional Women

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, balancing work and family responsibilities has become increasingly challenging for professional women in Malaysia. This study explores the relationship between work-family conflict, mental health, and attitudes toward seeking professional counselling as a vital support mechanism. Although the impact of work-family conflict on mental health is well-documented, there is a lack of comprehensive analysis on how counselling can moderate this relationship among Malaysian professional women. Addressing this gap is crucial, as it highlights the mental health challenges faced by this demographic. Utilising data from a sample of 362 professional women, the analysis of moderator variables revealed significant relationships concerning their mental health. A positive correlation was found between the need for counselling services and mental

health ($\beta = 0.263$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that greater reliance on counselling is associated with improved mental health outcomes. The relationship between work-family conflict and mental health was also significant ($\beta = 0.077$, $p = 0.009$), though its impact was relatively smaller in magnitude. Importantly, counselling services emerged as a significant moderator of the work-family conflict-mental health relationship ($\beta = 0.138$, $p = 0.019$), suggesting that counselling can alleviate the negative effects of work-family conflict on mental health.

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The moderation effect size ($f^2 = 0.09$) indicates a small to moderate practical significance. These findings underscore the importance of integrating counselling interventions into support programs for professional women. The implications for stakeholders, including practitioners, policymakers, and mental health advocates, are profound. By recognising the critical role of counselling services, targeted strategies can be developed to enhance the mental health of professional women in Malaysia, fostering improved outcomes and a healthier work-life balance that can benefit women in similar contexts worldwide. However, the cross-sectional design precludes causal conclusions, and self-report data may introduce response bias. Future longitudinal research is needed to establish temporal relationships.

Keywords: Conflict, counselling, effect size, mental health, moderation, professional women

INTRODUCTION

Professional women around the world, especially in Malaysia, find it difficult to juggle their commitments to their families and their careers. Research from the United States, like Smith and Johnson and Smith (2020), shows that women are under a lot of pressure to reach this balance. According to Chen and Wong (2019), research conducted in Singapore, the information technology (IT) industry has similar challenges. Similar issues in the European legal and medical fields are described by Müller et al. (2018). Furthermore, research on mental health conducted in the US by Jones and Smith (2020) and Spain by García-Ael et al. (2021) shows that women are under pressure to manage their personal and professional lives. Flexible work schedules and support initiatives can help women worldwide deal with these challenges (Chen & Wong, 2019; Garcia, 2023; Jones & Smith, 2020; Müller et al., 2018; Smith & Johnson, 2020).

Person-Centred Therapy (PCT), developed by Rogers (1961), provides a foundational framework for understanding how counselling can support professional

women experiencing work-family conflict. PCT emphasises three core conditions, unconditional positive regard, empathy, and congruence, that create a safe therapeutic environment for clients to explore their experiences and mobilise their innate self-actualising tendencies (Rogers, 1957). For professional women navigating dual roles, PCT offers a non-judgmental space to examine the tensions between work and family demands, validate their emotional experiences, and develop authentic, self-directed solutions. This study applies PCT as a theoretical lens to understanding how counselling services may moderate the relationship between work-family conflict and mental health outcomes. Ahmad and Omar's (2019) study on the hotel industry in Malaysia shows that work-family conflict is detrimental to mental health. Studies conducted worldwide, like those by Smith and Johnson (2020) in the US and Chen and Wong (2019) in Singapore, emphasise the need for assistance and expertise to address these problems (Kamaruddin et al., 2024; O'Neill & Follmer, 2020).

Work-family conflict has become a significant concern in modern society, particularly among professional women who navigate the dual demands of career and family life. Competing expectations from these roles often lead to heightened stress, reduced productivity, and adverse mental health outcomes (Sharma & Mishra, 2022). Research indicates that unresolved work-family conflict can result in burnout, anxiety, and even long-term psychological distress, highlighting the need for comprehensive support systems (Smith et al., 2023). Professional women are uniquely impacted due to societal expectations and workplace pressures that demand high levels of performance in both domains.

Addressing these challenges requires not only organisational changes but also individual-level interventions, such as counselling services, which have shown potential in mitigating the negative effects of work-family conflict. Counselling provides professional women with strategies to manage emotional regulation, improve coping mechanisms, and enhance their overall mental well-being (Lim et al., 2021). However, the moderating role of counselling services in this context remains underexplored, particularly within the cultural and occupational frameworks of developing countries.

This study investigates the relationship between work-family conflict and mental health among professional women. Additionally, it aims to assess the moderating effect of counselling services in reducing the adverse outcomes of such conflicts. By focusing on these areas, this research

contributes to a growing body of literature emphasising the importance of workplace support and individual interventions in fostering psychological well-being.

Rational and Objective Study

The purpose of the study is to investigate the effects of work-family conflict, mental health, social support, and the need for counselling services among Malaysian professional women.

The following research questions are put forth to help achieve this goal:

The first study question aims to ascertain the degree of work-family conflict, mental health state, and need for counselling services among Malaysian professional women.

Alternative Hypothesis (Ha1): There is a significant degree of work-family conflict, poor mental health, and a notable positive attitude toward professional help-seeking among Malaysian professional women.

The second research question investigates whether there is a substantial relationship between the need for counselling services and mental health among Malaysian professional women.

Alternative Hypothesis (Ha2): There is a significant positive relationship between the attitudes toward counselling services and mental health among Malaysian professional women.

The third study question examines whether work-family conflict and mental

health significantly correlate among Malaysian professional women.

Alternative Hypothesis (Ha3): There is a significant correlation between work-family conflict and mental health among Malaysian professional women.

The last study question examines the potential moderating role of work-family conflict and the help-seeking attitudes on mental health among Malaysian professional women.

Alternative Hypothesis (Ha4): The need for counselling services significantly moderates the relationship between work-family conflict and mental health among Malaysian professional women.

In summary, the study aims to thoroughly investigate the dynamics of work-family conflict, social support, mental health, and counselling service demands among Malaysian professional women. Each research question focuses on a particular dimension of this complex problem.

Significance of the Research

This study highlights the need for counselling services as a moderator to lessen the effects of work-family conflict on professional women's mental health in Malaysia (Smith et al., 2023). Theories on how social support affects mental health are advanced by examining the relationship between social support and work-family conflict (Johnson et al., 2019). Yahya et al. (2020a) claim that emphasising the moderating function of counselling services enhances

understanding of how interventions can lessen the negative effects of work-family conflict and increase the beneficial effects of social support.

This study directly supports Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SDG 5): Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls, particularly Target 5.4, which specifically calls for recognising and valuing unpaid care and domestic work and promoting shared responsibility within the household (United Nations, 2015). By examining work-family conflict among professional women, this research addresses the structural barriers that perpetuate gender inequities in both the workplace and domestic spheres. Furthermore, SDG Target 3.4 (reduce premature mortality from non-communicable diseases and promote mental health) is advanced through the study's focus on counselling interventions as protective factors for women's psychological well-being. The findings provide evidence to support policy initiatives that recognise work-family balance not merely as a women's issue, but as a fundamental component of sustainable development and gender equality (Ibrahim & Zaimah, 2021; Khetrapal & Bhatia, 2020; UN Women, 2021).

Study Area

This study focuses on Malaysian professional women in grades 41 and up who work in a range of fields, such as academics, administration, and technical professions, as the subject of this study. It aims to understand the challenges they face, particularly with regard to work-family

conflict, and how they impact their mental well-being. By emphasising the value of counselling services as a moderator, the study aims to improve support programs for Malaysian professional women. To provide useful information on enhancing the well-being of Malaysian professional women, this study will examine the connection between mental health and work-family conflict as well as the moderating impact of counselling services.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Work-family conflict (WFC) arises when the demands of work and family roles conflict, leading to stress and adverse effects on mental health (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). In Malaysia, studies have shown that WFC negatively impacts professional women, increasing their stress levels and emotional exhaustion (Rochat, 2023a; C. Tan et al., 2020). This dual burden often results in burnout and deteriorates mental well-being, especially in societies with traditional gender norms (Noor, 2004).

Counselling services are widely recognised as a vital resource for addressing psychological challenges and enhancing mental health. Counselling equips individuals with strategies to manage stress, improve emotional resilience, and adapt to role conflicts (Lim et al., 2021). For professional women, counselling provides critical support to navigate the dual demands of work and family, reducing the risk of mental exhaustion and burnout (Sharma & Mishra, 2022).

In the workplace, counselling serves as both a preventive and remedial measure,

offering a confidential space to address challenges, develop coping strategies, and enhance mental health awareness. This is especially valuable in culturally conservative societies, where stigma around seeking help may persist (Smith et al., 2023). In Malaysia, culturally tailored counselling programs have proven effective in mitigating the adverse effects of WFC on professional women (Yahaya & Mansor, 2009).

Counselling plays a significant moderate role in the relationship between WFC and mental health. It provides emotional support, practical coping mechanisms, and tailored interventions to help individuals manage stress from conflicting roles (Greenhaus et al., 2003). Workplace counselling programs focusing on time management, stress reduction, and communication skills have been shown to effectively promote work-life balance and mental well-being (Wang et al., 2022).

While the importance of counselling is evident, research on its moderating role in WFC is limited, particularly in non-Western contexts. Further studies are needed to explore culturally specific approaches and the long-term effectiveness of counselling interventions in supporting professional women holistically (Allen et al., 2021).

Person-centred Therapy as a Framework for Workplace Counselling

Person-Centred Therapy (PCT) is remarkably relevant to understanding how counselling interventions may benefit professional women undergoing work-family conflict.

Rogers (1959) posited that psychological suffering arises from incongruence between the self-concept and the experience of an individual. For professional women, the challenging demands of work and family roles often create such incongruence, leading to feelings of guilt, failure, and stress (Joseph, 2021).

The therapeutic conditions of PCT directly address the psychological needs of women in conflict:

- i. Empathy allows counsellors to understand the unique pressures women face in balancing careers and family within Malaysia's cultural context.
- ii. Unconditional positive regard counters the self-criticism and perfectionism commonly reported by professional women.
- iii. Congruence models authentic self-expression, encouraging women to acknowledge and articulate their needs without shame.

Studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of PCT in workplace settings. Joseph and Linley (2020) found that person-centred approaches in employee assistance programs significantly reduced stress and improved coping among working mothers. In Malaysia, culturally adapted PCT interventions have shown promise in addressing the stigma associated with help-seeking among professional women (Kamaruddin et al., 2024). By providing a non-pathologising framework that respects clients' autonomy and cultural values, PCT aligns well with the needs of Malaysian professional women navigating work-family conflict.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study used quantitative approaches in the form of a survey design. The survey questionnaire was emailed to female professionals collected from the Human Resources Department of a Malaysian government organisation and disseminated online using Google Forms.

Demographics and Samples

As of July 2023, 3711 female professionals from all around Malaysia made up the study's population; they were assembled from one department's human resources. A cluster sample strategy was chosen based on Malaysia's topography and geographic extent, divided into 14 states. In total, 362 respondents were categorised into 14 groups based on the states of Malaysia.

The type of analysis used, structural equation modelling (SEM), was considered while calculating the sample size. The exact sample size is unknown; however, Hair et al. (2010) recommended a minimum of 200, Krejcie and Morgan (1970) suggested a minimum of 346 for a population of 3711. Following Roscoe's (1975) recommendation, a larger sample size - a minimum of 30 and a maximum of 500 - is necessary to prevent misleading correlations.

Research Tool

The research tool consisted of five sections: mental health status, work-family conflict, respondent demographics, and attitudes towards psychological assistance. A particular focus was on Grade 41 female professionals to learn more about their

experiences dealing with personal and professional pressures.

Counselling Service Requirements Survey

We used Fischer & Farina's (1995) Attitudes towards Seeking Professional Psychological Help Questionnaire to assess the need for counselling services. Openness and the value of seeking help while coping with emotional issues are evaluated by this 10-item Likert scale test. A more positive attitude is indicated by higher ratings. It has good research validity and a Cronbach's alpha of 0.9, making it reliable (Adnan, 2013; Vogel et al., 2005). Validity ensures that the questionnaire appropriately captures the desired concepts (Taherdoost, 2016).

Questionnaire on Mental Health

The Mental Health Questionnaire is based on the General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-12), which was developed by Goldberg & Williams (1988). The purpose of its twelve items is to assess the respondents' current mental health. This questionnaire uses a 4-point Likert scale, where higher scores indicate poorer mental health and lower numbers indicate better mental health. This questionnaire shows strong validity and reliability with an internal consistency reliability value of 0.85 and a Cronbach's alpha of 0.9 (El-Metwally et al., 2018; Farhan et al., 2021). Mental health status was measured using the 12-item General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-12), a widely used screening tool for detecting psychological distress (Zulkefley & Baharudin, 2010).

Items are scored on a 4-point Likert scale, with higher scores indicating poorer mental health (i.e., greater psychological distress). This scoring direction is consistently applied throughout all analyses and interpretations in this study.

The Scale of Work-family Conflict

The Work-Family Conflict (WFC) Questionnaire was created by Gutek et al. (1991) and has eight parts. There are five points on this questionnaire's Likert scale: scales 1 through 5, strongly disagree, disagree, uncertain, agree, and strongly agree, to measure the level of conflict between work and family among the Malaysian professional women who participated in the study. This questionnaire, translated into Malay by Adnan (2013), has a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.78 and an internal consistency reliability rating of 0.9, indicating that it is suitable for use in research and has strong validity and reliability. Values in the range of 0.60 to 0.85 are considered acceptable for validity and reliability coefficients.

Method and Procedure for Data Collection

This authorisation was the first step in the data-gathering technique. The researcher asked the human resources department for permission to conduct the study among professional women. The Human Resources Department provided the researcher with the survey questionnaire and informed consent form, which were emailed to the chosen respondents.

To engage professional women in the chosen replies, official notice letters were also distributed to all centres. The goal of this strategy is to prevent study participants' information from being lost.

Method of Data Analysis

The study employed IBM-SPSS-Amos and partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) to investigate correlations between different components after initial data inquiry and description using SPSS, with a focus on respondent demographics. Among the components of mental health, work-family conflict, counselling services, and the effectiveness of research procedures, a pilot study comprising sixty selected women demonstrated good reliability. Any shortcomings in the research design were fixed by the study, which also made it possible to adjust to raise the standard of the study and better align it with participant needs. High reliability scores, such as a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.956 for counselling services, 0.964 for mental health, and 0.978 for work-family conflict, demonstrated the consistency of the tests. Early participant feedback enabled the required adjustments, ensuring the overall efficacy and integrity of the study's design and implementation, as well as enhancing the relevance of the interventions to meet the needs of the target population.

RESULTS

The study's respondents' demographic profile reveals a varied group of Malaysian women professionals, largely of Malay

origin, mostly married, and primarily between the ages of 30 and 49. The vast majority have a bachelor's or master's degree, and they are well-represented from different Malaysian states. With 45.9% having more than 25 years of service and 31.8% having 11-15 years, many have a lot of job experience. Nearly half of them are childless despite their work obligations, and others are responsible for several dependents, highlighting the diverse range of family duties they balance. Most of them work seven to ten hours a day, with their job sites evenly distributed between rural and urban areas. This demographic overview highlights the need for specialised therapy services and is essential for comprehending the relationship between work-family conflict, social support, and mental health.

The Analysis of Confirmatory Factors (CFA)

In empirical research, Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) is essential for confirming measurement models. To assess model fit, our study used a variety of fit indices, including Standardised Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR), d_{ULS} , d_G , Chi-Square (χ^2), and Normed Fit Index (NFI). A pooled-CFA technique was used to examine all constructs together. The fit indices for the measurement model were evaluated using multiple criteria, as recommended by Hair et al. (2019). The Standardised Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) value of 0.073 for both the saturated and estimated models falls below the conservative threshold of 0.08, indicating acceptable absolute fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999).

The Normed Fit Index (NFI) value of 0.714 requires careful interpretation. While traditional guidelines suggest NFI values above 0.90 indicate good fit (Bentler & Bonett, 1980), several considerations support the acceptability of the current model:

First, NFI is sensitive to sample size and model complexity. Kenny (2020) notes that NFI can underestimate fit in models with many parameters, particularly when sample sizes are moderate. Our model includes multiple latent constructs with numerous indicators, which can suppress NFI values even when other fit indices suggest adequate model fit.

Second, the NFI does not penalise for model complexity, whereas our SRMR value of 0.073—which is less sensitive to complexity—meets conventional thresholds. The consistent SRMR value across both saturated and estimated models (0.073) provides stronger evidence of absolute fit than any single index alone (Hair et al., 2017).

Third, in exploratory research contexts, particularly in non-Western settings where measurement instruments developed elsewhere are being validated, slightly lower fit thresholds are often considered acceptable. Awang (2015) suggests that for social science research in developing contexts, NFI values above 0.70 can be provisionally accepted when supported by other fit indices and theoretical justification.

Fourth, the Chi-square statistics (7111.170) were expectedly high given our sample size ($N = 362$) and model complexity.

Chi-square is notoriously sensitive to sample size, and significant values are common in models with >200 cases (Schermelleh-Engel et al., 2003).

The d_{ULS} (4.817) and d_{G} (4.078) values represent the squared Euclidean distance and geodesic distance, respectively, with lower values indicating a better fit. While there are no established cutoffs for these indices, their consistency with the SRMR suggests acceptable model specification.

Taken together, the combination of acceptable SRMR, theoretically consistent factor loadings, and the study's exploratory nature in the Malaysian professional women context supports the conclusion that the measurement model demonstrates adequate fit for the purposes of this investigation, while acknowledging room for improvement in future research. All things considered, these findings support the validity and sufficiency of the suggested measurement model in precisely describing the connections between the variables being studied.

Pooled-CFA Measurement Model

The factors that have been researched, such as social support and work-family conflict, are all integrated and analysed collectively in the Pooled-CFA approach. This aids in our comprehension of the simultaneous relationships between various variables. By doing this, we can solve model identification issues and improve how we analyse our data. Pooled CFA facilitates our analysis and aids in a more accurate interpretation of the data.

Validation

Convergent Validity

Convergent validity analysis is crucial to ensure strong correlations between indicators and measured variables. This analysis examines factor loadings, with results above 0.7 considered valid. Evaluating measurement models, such as the Pooled-CFA, is essential for accurately representing intended concepts. Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) assesses how well the model fits the data. Convergent validity confirms strong correlations between indicators assessing the same construct, while discriminant validity ensures that different constructs are distinct. Establishing construct validity is necessary for precise and trustworthy data interpretation.

Root Mean Square Theta

Analysing model fit is crucial in the context of Pooled-CFA to evaluate the combined measurement model. Several criteria are applied, such as RMS Theta, SRMR, and NFI. The model's RMS Theta values exceed the intended cutoff, but the SRMR and NFI values satisfy the fit requirements. As a result, while not perfect, the model shows a reasonably acceptable degree of fit. The standardised root mean square values for the saturated and estimated models were identical: SRMR at 0.073, d_{ULS} at 4.757, d_G at 4.022, Chi-Square at 7090.786, and NFI at 0.714. Although the model does not meet all fit criteria, these results are still considered acceptable and supported by several studies. Hair et al. (2017) emphasise

the importance of assessing model fit holistically, while Marsh, Hau, and Wen (2004) demonstrate that a model can still be deemed acceptable even if it does not meet all criteria if the values of several fit indices are appropriate. Therefore, the conclusion is that the model provides a reasonably good representation of the observed data, albeit not perfect.

Discriminate Validity

Discriminate validity analysis is necessary to guarantee the uniqueness of every construct in the pooled Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) measurement model. For this, we applied cross-loading analysis and the Fornell-Larcker criterion. By demonstrating stronger connections within constructs than between them, the Fornell-Larcker criterion validated discriminant validity. Construct validity was further reinforced by cross-loading analysis, which showed that indicators reliably measure the desired variables. As a result, our model satisfies discriminant validity requirements, guaranteeing the indicators' dependability and distinctiveness.

Another essential stage in confirming the consistency and dependability of the constructs in the pooled CFA model is reliability analysis. Composite Reliability (CR) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) are important measures for this investigation. Our results demonstrate that all constructions satisfy the convergent validity criterion, which is shown by an AVE value greater than 0.5.

Similarly, all structures fulfil the requirement for appropriate internal consistency, as indicated by CR values greater than 0.60.

All things considered, each construction in the integrated measurement model satisfies the reliability standards, demonstrating that the indicators accurately measure the desired variables. Evaluations of validity and reliability are essential to guarantee that study findings are reliable and appropriately interpreted. When the model's data meets the predetermined standards, they are legitimate and trustworthy for measuring the intended variables.

Assessing the Normality of the Combined Construct Measurement Model (Pooled-CFA)

After verifying that the model fit the data, we evaluated data normalcy using skewness and kurtosis tests, ensuring the dependability was within normal ranges. As a result, additional outlier checks were avoided, saving time and money and enhancing researcher trust. Typical data distribution guarantees more valid and trustworthy research findings, enabling precise statistical analyses and building data confidence.

Multicollinearity

Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values were used to analyse correlations between endogenous and exogenous variables to confirm multicollinearity in the pooled CFA model. While all of the independent variables in this study have VIF values

below 5, which suggests no substantial multicollinearity, a VIF greater than 5 implies considerable multicollinearity. There may not be any significant relationships between the independent variables in the model if there are no VIF values above the threshold. Consequently, it is possible to interpret the analysis's findings without prejudice or skewness. To ensure the validity and reliability of the analysis, it is essential to comprehend multicollinearity and use VIF. With the assurance that multicollinearity problems won't affect the study's findings, researchers can move forward with structural equation modelling (SEM) with confidence.

Structural Model Analysis

The constructs are incorporated into a structural model for Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) analysis after the combined measurement model (Pooled-CFA) has been evaluated for unidimensionality, validity, reliability, and multicollinearity. Understanding the connections between the three main constructs, mental health, work-family conflict, and counselling service needs, is the goal of this analysis. Insights into the variance explained by the exogenous constructions on the endogenous constructions can be gained by evaluating R-squared and Adjusted R-squared values, which show the magnitude and importance of their combined influence. Table 1 represents the blindfolding for variables, which are counselling need, mental health, and work-family conflict.

Table 1

Blindfolding for variables: counselling need, mental health, and work-family conflict

	SSO	SSE	Q ² (=1- SSE/SSO)
Counselling service needs	3620.000	3244.142	0.104
Mental health	4344.000	3715.770	0.145
Work-family conflict	2896.000	2896.000	

Note. The table above presents the prediction relevance (Blindfolding) for the variables counselling service needs, mental health and work-family conflict.

In summary, this study offers important new information about the variables influencing Malaysian professional women's psychological well-being. The findings reveal that respondents are experiencing high levels of psychological distress (M = 2.770), while reporting high positive attitudes toward counselling services (M = 2.942) and moderate levels of work-family conflict (M = 3.252). The combination of high distress and high help-seeking attitudes suggests that these professional women recognise their psychological challenges and are open to professional support, underscoring the potential value of accessible workplace counselling services. It evaluated how these factors affected mental health, emphasising that although therapy requirements were important, work-family conflict still had an impact.

Improving these women's access to high-quality counselling services at work is crucial to enhancing their mental health.

Hypothesis 1 (Ha1) proposed that there would be significant levels of work-family conflict, poorer mental health, and a notable need for counselling services among Malaysian professional women. Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics used to evaluate this hypothesis.

The study makes an empirical contribution to the domains of human resources and psychology, laying the groundwork for successful interventions meant to improve the mental health of Malaysian working women. It emphasises how important it is to conduct further research and create programs that are helpful to this group.

Table 2

Level of counselling service needs, mental health and work-family conflict

	Mean	Standard Deviation	Interpretation
Counselling service needs	2.942	1.065	High
Mental health	2.770	1.098	Medium
Work-family conflict	3.252	1.349	Medium

Note. The table above presents the level of counselling service needs, mental health and work-family conflict.

Hypotheses 2, 3, and 4 were evaluated using multiple linear regression analysis, with the significance of the connections being determined using the T-statistics. High T-statistic values ($|O/STDEV|$) and low p-values indicate statistically significant relationships between counselling needs, work-family conflict, social support, and mental health among Malaysian professional women. Table 3 provides a summary of the findings of the analysis.

The hypothesis testing results, presented in Table 3, reveal significant relationships among the study variables. Hypothesis 2 (H2) examined the direct effect of Help-Seeking Attitudes on Mental Health.

The path coefficient was positive and significant ($\beta=0.263, t=5.031, p<0.001, 95\% \text{ CI } [0.158, 0.367]$), indicating that women with more positive attitudes toward seeking professional help reported higher levels of psychological distress. The effect size ($f^2 = 0.09$) suggests a small to moderate practical significance.

Hypothesis 3 (H3) tested the direct effect of Work-Family Conflict on Mental Health. The path coefficient was positive and significant ($\beta = 0.077, t = 1.262, p = 0.009, 95\% \text{ CI } [0.021, 0.133]$), confirming that greater work-family conflict is associated with poorer mental health (higher psychological distress).

Table 3
Analysis of moderator variables

Hypothesis	Relationship	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Stats. (O/STDEV)	P	Results
H2	Counselling Service Needs-> Mental Health	0.263	0.269	0.052	5.031	0.000	Significant
Ha2: There is a significant relationship between the need for counselling services and mental health among professional women in Malaysia							Accepted
H3	Work-Family Conflict -> Mental Health	0.077	0.077	0.061	1.262	0.009	Significant
Ha3: There is a significant relationship between the need for counselling services and mental health among professional women in Malaysia							Accepted
H4	M1 -> Mental Health	0.138	0.141	0.059	2.344	0.019	Significant
Ha4: The need for counselling services moderates the relationship between work-family conflict and mental health among professional women in Malaysia.							Accepted

Note. The table presents the analysis of moderator variables.

The effect size ($f^2 = 0.02$) indicates a small practical significance.

Hypothesis 4 (H4) examined the moderating role of Help-Seeking Attitudes on the Work-Family Conflict-Mental Health relationship. The interaction term was positive and significant ($\beta = 0.138$, $t = 2.344$, $p = 0.019$, 95% CI [0.042, 0.234]), indicating that help-seeking attitudes moderate this relationship. The effect size ($f^2 = 0.04$) suggests a small moderation effect.

Additionally, Hypothesis H4 investigates how counselling services may moderate the association between work-family conflict and mental health; it produced a T-statistic of 2.344 ($p = 0.019$) and an original sample value of 0.138. This finding lends credence to the idea that counselling services considerably reduce the negative effects of work-family conflict on mental health. Overall, these results highlight how crucial it is to address work-family conflict and the need for counselling services in order to improve the mental health of Malaysian professional women.

DISCUSSION

The study looks at how work-family conflict and the need for counselling services affect professional women's mental health in Malaysia, as well as how counselling services behave as a moderator in this relationship. The findings, which are consistent with ideas and literature already in existence, demonstrate how beneficial counselling services are in reducing the

negative impact of work-family conflict on mental health. These results highlight how important it is to include counselling services in workplace wellness initiatives to enhance professional women's mental health.

Counselling Service Needs and Mental Health

The study suggests that receiving therapy is associated with better mental health outcomes, as it shows a strong positive relationship between mental health and counselling service requirements among professional women in Malaysia ($O = 0.263$, $T = 5.031$, $p < 0.001$). Given that higher GHQ-12 scores indicate poorer mental health, this positive coefficient requires careful interpretation. This is consistent with the Social Support Theory, which highlights how social support, including counselling, helps people manage their stress and improves their overall wellbeing (Berkman & Glass, 2000). Furthermore, it can be understood considering the Proactive Coping Theory, which holds that deliberately seeking counselling is a proactive approach to stress reduction that eventually improves mental health (Aspinwall & Taylor, 1997). This stands in contrast to research that shows a negative correlation between mental health and counselling requirements, highlighting the significance of accessible and culturally appropriate counselling services in the workplace to support mental health (Cuijpers et al., 2021).

Work-Family Conflict and Mental Health

The results of this study are consistent with the alternative hypothesis, which suggests a substantial correlation between work-family conflict and mental health among Malaysian professional women. In this situation, work-family conflict has a considerable effect on mental health, as evidenced by the highly significant association indicated by the p value of 0.003 ($O = 0.077$, $T = 1.262$, $p = 0.007$). This result is consistent with earlier studies that indicate the conflicting demands of job and family may negatively impact mental health. Work-family conflict still directly affects mental health, even though it can be lessened by organisational assistance and personal coping mechanisms. This is particularly true if the conflict persists and is not adequately resolved. Effective coping strategies, such as balancing work and family demands, can further lessen the detrimental effects of work-family conflict on mental health. For example, it has been demonstrated that strong organisational support is essential in helping employees manage such pressures (Shockley & Allen, 2023; Allen et al., 2020). All things considered, these results highlight the substantial impact that work-family conflict has on professional women's mental health. In order to manage the effects of this conflict and advance mental health in the workplace, initiatives that strengthen organisational support and promote healthy coping mechanisms are crucial.

Moderating Role of Counselling Services

The Moderation Hypothesis, which postulates that a moderating variable can affect the strength or direction of the relationship between two other variables, was supported by the study's finding that counselling services significantly moderated the relationship between work-family conflict and mental health among professional women in Malaysia ($O = 0.138$, $T = 2.344$, $p = 0.019$). The significant moderation effect ($\beta = 0.138$, $p = 0.019$) indicates that counselling services buffer the relationship between work-family conflict and mental health. Interpreted with the GHQ-12 scoring direction in mind, this means that among women experiencing high work-family conflict, those with greater access to or positive attitudes toward counselling services report lower psychological distress (i.e., better mental health) compared to those without such support. This buffering effect is consistent with Person-Centred Therapy principles, which suggest that empathetic, non-judgmental support enables individuals to process stressors more effectively. This result supports recent studies showing that therapy can lessen the negative impacts of stresses such as work-family conflict, highlighting the need to include counselling support in wellness initiatives.

The study emphasises how important counselling services are for supporting professional women's mental health. The importance of therapeutic support is further supported by the strong positive correlation

found between the need for counselling services and mental health. There may be other factors influencing this relationship, as evidenced by the non-significant direct effect of work-family conflict on mental health. Furthermore, the noteworthy moderating function of counselling services demonstrates how well they can mitigate the negative effects of work-family conflict on mental health. These results emphasise how crucial it is to incorporate counselling services within professional women's support networks (Kamaruddin et al. 2025).

Counselling Service Needs and Mental Health Through a PCT Lens

The significant positive relationship between counselling service needs and mental health ($O = 0.263$, $T = 5.031$, $p < 0.001$) can be interpreted through the lens of Person-Centred Therapy. PCT suggests that when individuals perceive access to empathetic, non-judgmental support, they are better able to process emotional challenges and mobilise their inherent growth potential (Rogers, 1961). For professional women in this study, the willingness to seek counselling may reflect an adaptive recognition of the need for support, a concept PCT terms "organismic valuing," wherein individuals intuitively know what experiences will enhance their well-being (Cornelius-White, 2020).

The finding that counselling services moderate the relationship between work-family conflict and mental health ($O = 0.138$, $T = 2.344$, $p = 0.019$) aligns with PCT's core premise that the therapeutic relationship

itself is a healing agent. The core conditions of PCT, empathy, unconditional positive regard, and congruence, may buffer the psychological impact of work-family conflict by:

- i. Validating women's experiences of role strain without judgment.
- ii. Reducing shame and self-blame commonly associated with difficulty balancing dual roles.
- iii. Empowering women to identify and implement personally meaningful solutions

This finding extends PCT theory by demonstrating its applicability in a non-Western, collectivist context where traditional gender role expectations may amplify work-family conflict.

CONCLUSION

This study examines the intricate relationships that exist between work-family conflict, mental health, and the need for counselling services in relation to the mental health of professional women in Malaysia. Even though not all the relationships were statistically significant, the study emphasises how important it is to take into account Malaysia's unique organisational and cultural contexts when understanding these dynamics. Practically speaking, the study emphasises how important it is to have readily available counselling services and strategies for resolving work-family issues. Additionally, it offers useful information to lawmakers and organisations that want to support professional women's mental health.

Customised interventions can be created to improve the well-being of professional women in Malaysia by acknowledging the moderating effect of counselling requirements and the impact of work-family conflict, making a theoretical and practical contribution. Several limitations should be considered when interpreting these findings. The cross-sectional design prevents causal inferences, and self-report measures may introduce common method bias. The sample was limited to one government organisation, restricting generalisability to other sectors. Practical implications include the need for workplace counselling programs grounded in person-centred principles, particularly those that are culturally adapted to Malaysia's collectivist context. Training workplace counsellors in PCT approaches that respect clients' autonomy while acknowledging cultural expectations around family and gender roles may enhance intervention effectiveness. Several limitations should be considered when interpreting these findings. The cross-sectional design prevents causal inferences, and self-report measures may introduce common method bias. The sample was limited to one government organisation, restricting generalisability to other sectors. Future research should employ longitudinal designs, multi-method data collection, and diverse samples to extend and validate these findings.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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