FEATURED SCHOLAR

Each month the Work and Family Researchers Network spotlights the contributions of a scholar who is making significant advances in understanding work-family concerns. We are delighted to present the following interview with Xi Wen (Carys) Chan.

Xi Wen (Carys) Chan, Ph.D.

Senior Lecturer

Employment Relations and Human Resources, Griffith Business School

Griffith University

Australia

Experts Panel Link:

https://wfrn.org/expert/xi-wen-carys-chan/

WFRN – ***How did you first get introduced to work-family issues and become a researcher in this field?***

Carys – My interest in work-family research was sparked during my undergraduate internships in various large multi-national financial services firms in Singapore. Witnessing firsthand the complexities of balancing work and personal life, I became captivated by the challenges faced by my colleagues, friends, and families in navigating work-life integration. This fascination ignited a desire to understand these dynamics and contribute to solutions, ultimately leading me to pursue a research career in this field.

My undergraduate honors research explored the role of work-life balance self-efficacy in mitigating the negative impact of work-family conflict on job satisfaction in Australia. This early work laid the foundation for my Ph.D. studies, where I delved deeper into the work-family interface by examining the effects of supervisors' negative emotions on subordinates' work engagement and family undermining in Singapore.

WFRN - ***How did you first get involved with the WFRN? What do you value most about the organization?***

Carys – I was first introduced to the WFRN during my doctoral studies when I noticed that many established work-family scholars were part of this organization. I then started subscribing to the WFRN mailing list, and was subsequently invited to join WFRN's social media committee and international committee. I was immediately struck by the organization's welcoming atmosphere, its commitment to interdisciplinary collaboration, the high caliber of research, and the inclusivity of WFRN leadership and committee members. The WFRN has played a crucial role in my professional development, providing opportunities to connect with leading scholars, exchange ideas, and stay abreast of cutting-edge research in the work-family field. For example, through WFRN I met other like-minded work-family scholars and we are now organizing a WFRN-sponsored special issue "Flexibility I-deals for Whom? A Critical Exploration of the Complexities of Boundary Management and Unequal Access to Flexibility Negotiation" in the *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*. I value the WFRN's focus on fostering a supportive community for researchers at all career stages.

WFRN – ***Tell us about your current research, what are you studying?***

Carys – My current research streams examine the interplay between work and life, with a particular focus on the following areas:

© 2010 - 2024 Work & Family Researchers Network | All Rights Reserved

- The work-life interface: I investigate how work and non-work roles interact and influence each other, examining topics such as work-life conflict, work-life enrichment, and work-life balance.
- Self-concept/efficacy: I explore how individuals' self-perceptions and beliefs about their abilities impact their experiences in work and non-work domains.
- Work-related stress and burnout: I study the causes and consequences of work-related stress and burnout, and how these issues can spill over into life.
- Return-to-work: I investigate the challenges and facilitators of successful return-to-work transitions after parental leave, career breaks, or injury/illness.
- Leader-subordinate interactions: I examine how supervisors' behaviors and communication styles can affect employees' well-being and work-life experiences.

WFRN – ***What are your big findings? Did you make any unexpected discoveries?***

Carys – My research findings can inform the development of evidence-based social policies that promote work-family wellbeing. For example, my work on the work-life interface highlights the importance of flexible work arrangements and supportive workplace cultures in enabling employees to manage their work and non-work responsibilities effectively. These findings can guide policymakers in designing policies that encourage employers to adopt family-friendly practices. Further, my research on the return-to-work of cancer survivors highlights the critical need for comprehensive support programs and tailored interventions that facilitate their successful reintegration into the workforce. This includes addressing not only physical health concerns, but also the psychological and social aspects of returning to work after a cancer diagnosis. Additionally, my studies on work-related stress and burnout emphasize the importance of creating healthy work environments that prioritize employee wellbeing. Policymakers can leverage these findings to develop regulations or incentives that encourage organizations to implement stress-reduction initiatives and promote a positive workplace culture.

WFRN – ***How can your research guide the formulation of social policy?***

Carys – My research findings can inform the development of evidence-based social policies that promote work-family wellbeing. For example, my work on the work-life interface highlights the importance of flexible work arrangements and supportive workplace cultures in enabling employees to manage their work and non-work responsibilities effectively. These findings can guide policymakers in designing policies that encourage employers to adopt family-friendly practices. Further, my research on the return-to-work of cancer survivors

© 2010 - 2024 Work & Family Researchers Network | All Rights Reserved

highlights the critical need for comprehensive support programs and tailored interventions that facilitate successful reintegration into the workforce. This includes addressing not only physical health concerns, but also the psychological and social aspects of returning to work after a cancer diagnosis. Additionally, my studies on work-related stress and burnout emphasize the importance of creating healthy work environments that prioritize employee wellbeing. Policymakers can leverage these findings to develop regulations or incentives that encourage organizations to implement stress-reduction initiatives and promote a positive workplace culture.

WFRN – ***Does your research inform workplace practice? How? Can you tell me about how your research might help individuals or families develop effective personal strategies?***

Carys – By understanding the intricate connections between work and life, individuals can proactively manage potential conflicts and harness opportunities for mutual enrichment. Building self-efficacy, or a strong belief in one's abilities, emerges as a key factor in enhancing coping skills and resilience when facing the inevitable stresses and adversities of work and family life. Recognizing the signs of work-related stress and burnout empowers individuals to take proactive steps towards self-care and seek support, safeguarding their wellbeing. For those returning to work after a career break or a significant life event, my research offers a roadmap for successful reintegration. By understanding the common challenges and facilitators, individuals can better manage expectations, communicate effectively, and advocate for their needs during this transition. Furthermore, my work emphasizes the importance of fostering positive relationships at work. By actively cultivating connections with supervisors and colleagues, individuals can create a supportive work environment that promotes not only productivity but also overall wellbeing and work-life balance. In essence, my research provides individuals and families with a toolkit of evidence-based strategies to navigate the complexities of modern life, empowering them to craft fulfilling and sustainable lives where both work and family flourish.

WFRN – How do you integrate work-family topics in your teaching and/or training? Do you have an assignment or approach that is especially effective?

Carys – I integrate work-family topics into my teaching by incorporating relevant and recent work-family research findings, case studies, and real-world examples into my lectures, workshops, and discussions. I also encourage students to reflect on their own experiences and perspectives on work-life issues. One particularly effective assignment involves having both my undergraduate and postgraduate students conduct a work-life audit of their current

© 2010 - 2024 Work & Family Researchers Network | All Rights Reserved

or past workplaces, where they analyze the organization's policies and practices related to work-family support and make recommendations for improvement. This assignment allows my students to apply theoretical concepts to real-world settings and develop practical skills for managing work-life challenges.

WFRN - What advice would you give to graduate students or those early in their professional careers?

Carys - Embarking on your journey in the work-family research field can be both exciting and daunting. As I transition from early- to mid-career, I'd like to share some advice based on my own experiences:

- Choose research topics that genuinely interest you and align with your values. This will fuel your motivation and sustain you through inevitable challenges.
- Connect with other researchers in the work-family field and seek mentorship from experienced scholars. The WFRN is a fantastic resource for building these connections.
- Work with researchers from different disciplines to gain new perspectives and insights. The work-family field is inherently interdisciplinary, and collaboration can lead to groundbreaking discoveries.
- Research can be challenging, with setbacks and unexpected obstacles. Don't give up on your goals; perseverance and resilience are key.
- Continue to learn and grow throughout your career. The work-family field is constantly evolving. A curious mind will help you stay at the forefront.

Remember, you are embarking on a meaningful journey that has the potential to make real differences in the lives of individuals, families, and communities. Embrace the challenges, celebrate the successes, and never lose sight of your passion for creating a better world.

ABOUT THE WFRN

The Work and Family Researchers Network's mission is to facilitate virtual and face-to-face interaction among academic work and family researchers from a broad range of fields as well as engage the next generation of work and family scholars. The WFRN welcomes the participation of policy makers and workplace practitioners as it seeks to promote knowledge and understanding of work and family issues among the community of global stakeholders.

To learn more about the WFRN, please visit our website WFRN.ORG. To become a member, please click on this link https://wfrn.org/become-a-member/.

© 2010 - 2024 Work & Family Researchers Network | All Rights Reserved