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Work-Life Balance and Job Satisfaction among Malaysian Healthcare Employees

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Abstract

Increasing participation of women and dual career couples into the employment world, together with the establishment of non-standard work arrangements have affected the employees' ability to juggle between work and life and therefore influencing the satisfaction in performing their job especially among those who are working in 24-hour operating companies such in a healthcare industry. Hence, this study among 681 employees of a Malaysian healthcare organization has found that there was a positive and significant effect of satisfaction with work-life balance towards job satisfaction and male workers were significantly more satisfied with their jobs as compared to the female counterpart.

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Keywords: Work-Life Balance; Job Satisfaction; Healthcare; Gender

1. Introduction

The balance between employees' work and life has been the subject of debate among academics, practitioners and policy makers due to the growing concern of sustainable development of social and human capital. Due to rapid technological advancement, organizational change and transformation as well as development of alternative work arrangements, employment world nowadays allows existence of diverse non-standard manpower such as part-timers, seasonal, casual, moonlighters and others with the increasing number of working mothers, students, dual-career couples, single parents, and older workers (Malik, Wan, Dar, Akbar, & Naseem, 2014). Furthermore, significant changes in the demographics in modern societies have blurred the boundary and the interactions between work and other life's interests as more employees are bringing their work to home and more work are available at all times and places e.g. flextime and telecommuting (Dash, Anand, & Gangadharan, 2012). Therefore,

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work-life balance a vital tool in today's employment relationships especially in working environment of twenty-four-hour operating companies such as healthcare employees who have to work at night and rotating shifts. A study exploring their ability to balance work and non-work lives have to be practically and theoretically undertaken and how these balances would affect their overall job satisfaction should be ascertained. Hence, this study is aimed to discover the level of work-life balance and job satisfaction and their relationships among employees of healthcare organizations in Malaysia. According to Haar, Russo, Suñe, and Ollier-Malaterre (2014), Malaysia is one of the settings where work-life balance is in the growing interest of the literature. Healthcare subject is selected as the respondents of this study because of the importance of this industry in today's world whereas it is also among the key indicators of Malaysian government economic transformation program. Additionally, this study examines the differences among various groups of employees with regards to their gender, ethnicity, marital status, and work status in experiencing the balance between their work and life domains as well in overall job satisfaction. This study, therefore, provides references to work-life balance researchers and all employers in determining satisfaction of all employees that could be different according to their demographic characteristics and workplace environment.

2. Literature review

Work-life balance

The phrase 'work-life balance' consists of two conjoining requisites; 'work-life' and 'balance'. The first term of 'work-life' encompasses a broad assortment of diverse constructs that include the nexus between paid work and other non-work activities which can be referred to as 'life' (Chang, McDonald, & Burton, 2010). This 'work-life' is a broader concept that extends the past studies of 'work-family' with the inclusion of all other life's interests or activities other than families such as leisure, study, hobbies, recreation, travel, social, community and hobbies. Hence, it reflects the desires of employees with and without families, spouses, children, parents, or other home's needs (Chang et al., 2010). The second term of 'balance' is defined as harmony or equilibrium between two domains, e.g. work and non-work (Darakshan & Islam, 2014). This 'balance' was also commonly referred to as the opposite continuum of 'conflict', although there were scarce studies to prove this contention (Valcour, 2007). Taken together, work-life balance is defined as the state of equilibrium where a person is able to simultaneously and effectively maintain a sustainable balance between the demands of both work and non-work lives. Kossek et al. (2014) added that work-life balance is a perception-centred approach since each person is unique thus the feeling of how well an employee's work and out of work roles are balanced shall depend on upon his or her life values, priorities, and goals. On the contrary, the imbalance between work and life is happening when a demand for either work or personal roles makes employees incline to either side hence resulting the other part less productive.

Job satisfaction

The term job satisfaction refers to a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting the appraisal or reflection of one's various aspects of job or job experiences (Locke, 1976; Stone, 2005). Job satisfaction is also defined as a way of completeness and accomplishment stemming from work hence it is very important since satisfied employees will be contented and motivated to perform comfortably, effectively and efficiently towards organization's goals (Malik et al., 2014; Darakhshan & Islam, 2014). Mukhtar (2012) had identified that there were three factors influencing an employee's job satisfaction i.e. individual factors (personality, education, marital status, age), social factors (co-workers, teamwork, supervision) and organizational factors (company size, formal structure, management, politics, and procedures, technologies).

Work-life balance and job satisfaction

The latest research by Mas-Machuca, Mirabent, and Alegre (2016) among 374 employees of a Spanish pharmaceutical organization found that work-life balance is positively related with organizational pride and job satisfaction. Another study conducted by Mukhtar (2012) on work-life balance and job satisfaction among 143 tenure-track faculty members of Iowa State University, United States reveals the significant relationship between work-life balance and job satisfaction (correlation was significant at $r=.60$). Darakshan and Islam's (2014) study among 120 female faculty members of two central universities in Delhi, India (60 from each university) using non-probability purposive sampling technique revealed a high level of job satisfaction existed among female faculties and the existence of significantly low negative effect of occupational stress and work-life imbalance on the degree of job satisfaction. In Pakistan, Malik et al.'s (2014) study among 329 employees of 19 universities (i.e. public and private business schools) affirmed that relationship of work-life balance and job satisfaction is statistically significant and there is a partial mediation effect of work life balance on the relationship between job satisfaction and job benefit. Additionally, using structural equation modelling analysis, a multi-cultural study by Haar et al. (2014) among 1416 employees from seven distinct populations (i.e. Malaysian, Chinese, New Zealand Maori, New Zealand European, Spanish, French, and Italian) had ascertained the significant positive relationship of work life balance towards job and life satisfaction. Based on overall review of the existing literatures, it was known that the variables of work-life balance shall positively related to job satisfaction but the extent to which different personal characteristics of employees such as gender, marital status and work status is related to both variable is not yet confirmed. Hence, this study is aimed to fill that gap.

3. Research Methods

For this research study, the researchers utilised quantitative cross-sectional method using standardized questionnaires for conducting a causal study in order to identify the relationship between work-life balance and job satisfaction. The unit of analysis or type of respondents for this study was the individual employees of various ranks in several Malaysian healthcare organizations (i.e. hospitals) who had volunteered for this study. For the purpose of this study, the researcher chose non-probability sampling designs of convenience sampling. The total of sampling size was 681 employees from few private hospitals in Malaysia and all collected data was analysed using SPSS software. The research was conducted in several selected locations in Klang Valley, Malaysia. Measurements of work-life balance were adapted from Omar's (2013) Satisfaction With Work-Life Balance scales of seven items and five-point Likert scales, while job satisfaction's measures were adapted from Morganson, Major, Oborn, Verive, and Heelan (2010) of three items and five-point Likert scales ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Limitation of this study is the subjectivity of respondents' self-rated about their work-life balance and job satisfaction that could be further investigated using longitudinal study.

4. Findings and Discussion

Based on Table 1, from the 681 respondents in this survey, they were mainly comprised of female employees which were 562 respondents (83.9%) and 108 males (44.8%). Other than that, the ethnicity of the respondents was mostly Malay which was comprised of 363 respondents (54.2%). The respondents' age group was divided into five group, which were majorly between age of 20 to 29 years old with frequency of 226 (35.7%) followed by age between 30 to 39 years old with the frequency of 138 (21.8%). Meanwhile people with age of more than 50 years old, they were the minority with the frequency was only 71 that indicated 11.2%. Based on the analysis, there were not many differences between married respondents (i.e. 342 workers or 51.3%) and single respondents (i.e. 317 workers or 47.5). The majority of the respondents were permanent workers with 554 in frequency (83.2%), followed by 95 contract workers (14.3%).

Table 1. Respondents' demographic profiles

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	108	16.1
Female	562	83.9
Ethnicity		
Malay	363	54.2
Chinese	68	10.0
Indian	200	29.4
Others	39	5.7
Age		
Less than 20	105	16.6
20 – 29	226	35.7
30 – 39	138	21.8
40 – 49	95	14.7
50 or more	71	11.2
Marital Status		
Single	317	47.5
Married	342	51.3
Others	8	1.2
Highest Education		
Primary school	12	1.8
Secondary school	252	38.0
Diploma or Certificate	328	49.4
Bachelor degree	57	8.6
Postgraduate degree (e.g. Masters or Ph.D.)	7	1.1
Professional qualification or others	8	1.2
Work Status		
Permanent full time	554	83.2
Part time	5	.8
Contract	95	14.3
Temporary	12	1.8
Monthly Gross Income		
RM1000 or less	104	16.1
RM1001 – RM2000	312	48.4
RM2001 – RM3000	150	23.3
RM3001 – RM4000	43	6.7
RM4001 – RM5000	20	3.1
RM5001 or more	15	2.3

The result also indicates the highest education level of the respondents in where 328 (49.4%) of the respondents were having diploma or certificate, followed by the secondary school with 252 (38%) of the respondents. Then, 57 (8.6%) of respondents were having a bachelor degree. There were 12 (1.8%) of the respondents who were only having primary school education, meanwhile, 8 (1.2%) respondents were having the professional qualification and the least group of respondent were having postgraduate degree i.e. 7 people (1.1%). Next part in the demographic background is monthly gross income. The highest portion of the respondents found in this survey were earning between RM10001 to RM2000 with 312 in frequency or 48.4%. Then, followed by the respondents who were earning between RM20001 to RM3000 with frequency of 150 or 23.3%, continued by 104 (16.1%) of respondents who were earning equal or less than RM1000, 43 (6.7%) of respondents who were earning between RM30001 to RM4000, 20 (3.1%) of respondents who were earning between RM40001 to RM5000, and lastly only 15 of the respondents (2.3%) who were earning RM50001 or more. Based on Table 2, the Cronbach's alpha for work-life balance was the highest ($\alpha = .93$) which it was measured by 7 items and was considered as very high. The Cronbach's alpha for job satisfaction that was measured by 3 items was .82 where it was considered as good in reliability. Table 2 also shows that the level of job satisfaction among respondents could be considered as high since its mean was 3.38 out of 5.00. However, the level of their work-life balance could be considered as moderate since its mean was only 2.68 out of 5.00.

Table 2: Descriptive and reliability analysis

Variables	Reliability (Cronbach's Alpha)	Mean	Standard Deviation
Work-life balance	.93	2.63	.196
Job satisfaction	.82	3.38	.175

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was conducted to validate the uni-dimensional operationalization of both measures of work-life balance and job satisfaction adapted from prominent scholars into the current local context of Malaysian setting. The Principal Components extraction method was used along with the varimax rotation method for the factor analysis and all eigenvalues greater than one was considered in this case. Barlett's measure tests the null hypothesis that the original correlation matrix is an identity matrix. Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Measure of Sampling Adequacy measure varies between 0 and 1, and values closer to 1 are better. A value of .6 is a suggested minimum. In the analysis, the Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant with p- values less than .05 and the KMO statistic was above .91. Therefore, the factor analysis was feasible and a number of sampling was adequate. The eigenvalues for the two principal components of work-life balance and job satisfaction were 5.83 and 1.47 respectively. The two factors account for a total variance of 73%. The results of the factor analysis for work-life balance and job satisfaction are tabulated as per Table 3 that shows each item had a loading greater than .50 on the intended factor. In summary, all 10 items for both measures were retained for subsequent analyses.

Table 3. Exploratory factor analysis

Variables	Factor Loading
Work-life balance	
I am successful in balancing my work and non-work life	.80
I am satisfied with the balance between my job and non-work life	.85
I am satisfied with the way I divide my time between work and non-work life	.86
I am satisfied with the way I divide my attention between work and non-work life	.86
I am satisfied with how well my work life and my non-work life fit together	.83
I am satisfied with my ability to balance the needs of my job with those of my non-work life	.81
I am satisfied with the opportunity I have to perform my job well and yet be able to perform non-work related duties adequately	.74
Job satisfaction	
Overall, I am satisfied with my job	.84
I recommend my organization to others as a good place to work	.84
I am satisfied with my current work schedule	.82

Table 4. Regression analysis

Independent variables:	Dependent variable: Job Satisfaction	
	Unstandardised Coefficient	Standardised Coefficient
(constant)	2.358	
Work-life Balance	.522**	.496
F value	214.794**	
R ²	0.246	
Adjusted R ²	0.245	

Correlation and regression analysis were also conducted to ascertain the relationship between both variables of work-life balance and job satisfaction. Based on results of correlation analysis, it was found that work-life balance was positively and significantly associated with the moderate level of correlation ($r=.50$, $p=.000$). Based on regression analysis result as per Table 4, the R² was .246, and the adjusted R² was .245. Therefore, all independent variables in this study had explained 25 percent of the variance in employee job satisfaction. Work-life balance was positively and significantly affecting the dependent variable of employee job satisfaction with the result of the unstandardized regression coefficient of $r = .522$, $p < .01$. The results of this regression analysis clearly proof that a unit increment in an employee's work-life balance shall affect a unit increment in his or her job satisfaction.

Therefore, this study is in line with prior studies who found the similar significant positive relationship between work-life balance and job satisfaction (e.g. Mas-Machuca et al., 2016; Mukhtar, 2012; Darakshan& Islam, 2014; Malik et al., 2014; Haar et al., 2014).

Table 5.Independent sample t-tests and one-way ANOVA

Demographic variables(M)		With work-life balance	Job satisfaction
Gender	Male	5.27	5.24
	Female	5.11	4.99
	t-value	1.34	2.07**
Ethnicity	Malay	5.15	5.01
	Chinese	5.13	4.91
	Indian	5.18	5.12
	Others	4.85	4.94
	F-value	.954	.718
Group comparison (Scheffe)		-	-
Marital Status	Single	4.96	4.93
	Married	5.29	5.11
	Others	5.57	5.04
	F-value	7.75**	1.96
Group comparison (Scheffe)		single < married	-
Work Status	Permanent full time	5.19	5.06
	Part time	5.74	5.60
	Contract	4.80	4.75
	Temporary	5.20	5.39
	F-value	3.69*	2.65*
Group comparison (Scheffe)		contract < permanent	-

Note. Demographic variables were represented by mean scores (M) which higher scores represent greater agreement with the attributes. Dashes represent data that were not applicable.* $p < .05$.** $p < .01$.

An additional analysis of group comparison using independent sample t-test and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) were performed to identify any significant differences among groups of gender, ethnicity, marital status and work status with regards to both studied variables of work-life balance and job satisfaction. Based on Table 5, there were no significant differences among both males and females respondents with regards to their balance between work and life but in terms of their job satisfaction, male employees were found to have significantly higher job satisfaction as compared to females. On the other hand all four groups of ethnicity i.e. Malay, Chinese, Indian and others were indifferent in terms of both their work-life balance and job satisfaction. The results of this study are consistent with the previous studies of Mukhtar (2012) and Hill, Yang, Hawkins, and Ferris (2004) who found no significant differences among different groups of gender and race/nationality in India and IBM Company with regards to their work-life balance. As similar to this study, Mukhtar's (2012) study among 143 tenure-track faculty members in the United States found that female faculty members have lower job satisfaction as compared to their male counterparts.

Although different groups of marital status i.e. single, married and others were indifferent with regards to their job satisfaction, but employees who were married were significantly feeling more balanced in juggling their work and non-work demands as compared to the singles. Among the four groups of work status i.e. permanent full time, part time, contract and temporary workers, there were significant differences between some of them were permanent full-time employees were better in balancing their work and life demands as compared to contract workers. However, there were no significant differences with regards to the level of job satisfaction among all employees of different work status. This results were inconclusive with Morganson et al.'s (2010) study that using web-based survey among 578 employees of a large, US-based, not-for-profit engineering and technology research organization and working at

one of four locations (main office, client location, satellite office, and home) found that part-time workers perceived greater work-life balance support than full-time workers and at the same time part-time workers reported greater job satisfaction than full-time workers. The results of this study had also contributed to the idea and theory that the differences among the workers' work-life balance and job satisfaction were due their different personal characteristics such as gender, marital status and work status.

5. Recommendations and Conclusion

As a recommendation from the result of this study, work-life balance is definitely a significant factor affecting employees' job satisfaction. At present, although the level of job satisfaction among Malaysian healthcare employees is considered high (as accordance to mean analysis), but the level of work-life balance is considered moderate only (not high). Hence, management should be very careful in developing such policies to promote the work-life balance of employees by making sure their plans or initiatives are available and accessible with no biases and are well communicated and well accepted by employees. The flexible staffing and scheduling are demanded extensively in today's ever-changing world of business, and this study has proven the impact of how it is managed towards employees' work-life balance and work attitudes which may further influence their behaviour and well-being. Other than that, management may involve their employees in the establishment of work-life balance guidelines and procedures that are more employee-focused. These actions are part of managements' corporate social responsibility and should be considered as competitive advantage strategies. The non-standard work status and schedule should be advocated as a win-win means to support employees work and non-work needs as well as for organisational efficient cost and flexibility requirements especially in service industries that need to fulfil variations in customer demands. Hence, management should encourage the effective application of work-life initiatives that do not exploit their employees but capitalise on its beneficial effects to become the employer-of-choice. This is also important in attracting new talents as well as retaining existing ones. Future research should be undertaken to further extend the knowledge of this study into different setting, culture or environment such as in manufacturing industry or in other countries other than Malaysia.

Taken together, this study has enhanced the under-developed studies of work-life balance literature by providing evidence of a positive and significant relationship between employees' congruent preferences for work-life balance policies and their satisfaction with work-life balance, and in turn, positively affecting their work-related attitudes. For recommendation of future research, other researchers can conduct the same research study in other industries to validate work-life balance factors that associated with job satisfaction thus enabling the results of this study to be generalized in the specific industry. Future research may investigate the conditions under which moderator variables such as organisational climate, task interdependence, procedural justice, company size and marital status may influence these relationships. In addition, future researchers may establish the causality of the relationships among the variables by using longitudinal or experimental, or qualitative research designs. As a conclusion, this study found that there were positive and significant relationships between work-life balance and job satisfaction. Other than that, it was found that male workers were significantly more satisfied with their jobs as compared to the female counterpart. On the other hand, employees who were married and permanently employed were found to have a better work-life balance as compared to the singles and contract workers. Additionally, this study also found that there were no significant differences among groups of gender and ethnicity with regard to satisfaction with work-life balance. To summarize, the higher an employee's work-life balance, the higher his or her job satisfaction will be in an organization.

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