

Work-Life Balance and Job Satisfaction among Working Adults in Malaysia: The Role of Gender and Race as Moderators

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Abstract—This study examines the relationship between work-life balance and job satisfaction among working adults in Malaysia with gender and race as moderators. 120 respondents completed the questionnaire. Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 22 was used. Reliability, one-way analysis of covariance (ANCOVA), t-test and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) were tested in this study. Based on the results, the relationship between work-life balance and job satisfaction is significant. However, contrary to many beliefs, gender and race do not moderate the relationship between work-life balance and job satisfaction. Nevertheless, this study highlights the importance of implementing work-life balance policies and practices in organisations for higher job satisfaction.

Index Terms—Gender, job satisfaction, Malaysia, race, work-life balance.

I. INTRODUCTION

In the recent years, many employers had seen the evolution of work demand and supply where more technologies were brought into the business and subsequently resulted in changing of talents' knowledge and skills. Malaysia, too is experiencing similar change on work trend. This has led to the increase of work-life balance demand in the workplace. According to a report by The Malaysian Insider, there are more than 60% of Malaysian workforce felt that they are unable to spend time for their families, thanks to the long working hours [1], which could have resulted in dissatisfaction thus leaving the workforce just to spend time with their families for those who can afford. Dual-income families coping with the high cost of living, especially in the cities is another factor of the increasing work-life balance demands in workplace [2], [3].

As far as Malaysian workforce participation is concerned, statistics from the Ministry of Human Resource of Malaysia shows that the distribution between female employees as compared to male is higher, with 61.5% of total registrants in July 2014. This shows that more female participation in the Malaysian labour market which inclusive of both public and private employees.

Based on a study conducted by Towers Watson's 2012 Global Study Workforce Study discovered that although monetary rewards play the main motivation for employees to

perform well in their job, it is also a strategy to retain the best talent in the organisation. Employees do feel engaged if the organisation is able to provide with a long term reward, where the flexibility on the working arrangement was highlighted as one of the pull factors.

An in-depth study on work-life balance in Malaysia is still lacking and the published reports only highlighted on specific areas such as focusing on female employees, public service employees and academician's perspectives on work-life balance [4], [5]. A research conducted by Sanjeevkumar [6] proposing that the Malaysian public servants are motivated to stay on due to the fact that in the Government sector provides reasonable work tasks and satisfying work arrangement which enable them to balance between work and personal lives.

Previous researchers in Malaysia had only covered the perspective of employees in the public sectors. The study on work-life balance can be expanded to other areas apart from public organisations. In fact, the study should also cover the whole industries and combining the public and private sectors within Malaysia as it would be able to represent the perspective of Malaysian employees as a whole.

Based on the published works, there is not much empirical study in relation to the work-life balance and job satisfaction in Malaysia. On top of that, the results and findings do not represent Malaysian employees as a whole in terms of benefiting work-life balance with job satisfaction since the research works are targeting on specific groups within the working adults. Hence, there is a need to analyse the Malaysian employees' perspective per se, instead of focusing on certain work groups.

Work-life balance has been the current topic of interest for almost every working adult including the employers. It also allows researchers to explore and discover on any possibilities which could impact on the topic. Based on a research by ACCA and TalentCorp [7], it revealed that one of the reasons women leave the workforce is the lack of work-life balance. Most of the study focuses on women due to the increase of the gender in the workforce and it somehow contributes to the changes in working preference.

In the case of this research, it is to examine whether specific gender (male or female) is demanding on the work-life balance policies or practices to be adapted in the organisation. It is also due to the previous researches which only focus on the female to be associated with the work-life balance. The question should not limit to female but also to expand to the males as they too contributing into the workforce and sharing the similar experience of working style preferences. Thus, the study should not be limiting or focusing only a specific gender

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but to explore both in order to have wider scope of research.

Therefore, this study is conducted to create a new perception or development especially for employers for the benefit of the future hiring and employment preferences. The researcher hopes that this study would build a foundation on both Malaysian employers and employees' perspective as well as for future industry practices on the sustainability of the program to be implemented.

A. Research Objectives

In this study, the objectives are to:

- a) Determine the relationship of work-life balance and job satisfaction among Malaysian working adults
- b) Determine the importance of gender and race differences between the work-life balance and job satisfaction among Malaysian working adults

B. Research Questions

This study aims to investigate on the relationship of work-life balance and job satisfaction; and be able to answer on the questions below:

- a) What is the impact of work-life balance and job satisfaction?
- b) How do gender and race differences affect the relationship between work-life balance and job satisfaction?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction is described by Mirzaii, Riazi, Vares and Alamgard [8] as one of the crucial ingredients for job accomplishment which related to higher productivity and also intrinsic motivation of an employee. It also reflects on how a person's reaction and what to expect from the job in order to achieve high job satisfaction [9]. On top of that, the job content such as remuneration, career advancement, job perks, colleagues, and managers' support plays as an insight for an employee towards job satisfaction. Many researches have done on such so to prove that those correlate with the job satisfaction in various industries [10]-[17].

Koning [18] explains that flexible work schedule would result in achieving job satisfaction. The study among nurses' self-scheduling had improve on the level of their morale, having full control over their working and personal time, reduce staff turnover and absenteeism and the flexibility to arrange their work shift among each other, which all of these resulted on the job satisfaction.

Zeqiri and Aziri [19] extended their research on four different measures of job satisfaction for employees in Republic of Macedonia, which were remuneration, relationship with manager, relationship with peers, and the possibility of career growth. The respondents basically met with these satisfaction measurements toward the job except for the career growth which resulted the dissatisfaction in their position.

According to Ilies, Wilson and Wagner [20], the job satisfaction measures the attitudinal evaluation of an employee's job experience for a certain working day which

involves the mood in terms of emotion and feelings. The study shown that the mood plays the major role in determining the daily job satisfaction and the effect of it could result in affecting the mood both at home and work as the individual who controls the emotion and feeling.

Ciric [21] has studied on job satisfaction relating to women's work condition (organisational culture) to measure both stress and satisfaction in a family-friendly environment. As a result, the organisational culture which contains values and behaviours has significant effect on the job satisfaction and work stress for the employee.

The studies of job satisfaction are without a doubt is seen as an important topic to discuss further since it is affecting an employee's life [21]. Organisations are also encouraged to pay attention on the topic not only it involve the employees but also act as one of the strategic approach in aligning with the goals and vision of the company.

From the recent studies discussed, job satisfaction mostly relates back to the work-life balance topics which cover the organizational policies in terms of flexible working hours as well as the benefits. Thus, it is relevant to further explore in this area for the benefit of the research.

B. Work-Life Balance

Work-life balance term is defined as the time an employee spend on both at work as well as socialises with family, friends and attending to other personal interests [22]. Individuals are now exposed to the idea of work-life balance in order to achieve the total satisfaction in life, apart from being happy or performing well at work. The work-life balance or family-friendly work policies are found to be as one of the basic needs for every working adult especially in this era. A case study by Mazerolle and Goodman [23] on athletic trainers' view on work-life balance policies is found to be encouraging in terms of shared goals between professionalism as well as the personal.

Another policy which an organisation is able to introduce is changing from full-time to part-time employment. A research conducted on the part-time work arrangement had shown that employees are volunteering to opt to this type of employment and also accepting lower compensation [24]. The result also noted that the outcome is generally positive in terms of productivity and company image, recruitment and retention program, as well as able to respond and adapt quickly in the current need in the labour market.

The introduction of flexible working time in Germany has found that it has allowed them a great opportunity to have and enjoy their private lives. Zulch, Stock and Schmidt [25] have discovered on different types of employees with flexible working-time preferences according to individual need. The majority of respondents were female, thus they are able to cluster it into few groups such as part-time employee with elderly care, part-time employee who is still in school, and working mother with children. All in all, the introduction of this program is to encourage employees to decide on their work time arrangement in order to fit into their current need.

It is highlighted in Brough and O'Driscoll [26] article on the work-life balance intervention in the organisation whereby compressed work week or flexible work hours has been implemented since in the early 1980s as it allows the

individuals to spend more time for family and leisure as well as to make certain on their family needs and value is taken care of. Apart from the flexible working time, the leisure time program is also introduced by Tabarsa, Tehrani, Lofffi, Ahadian, Baniasadi and Tabarsa [27] where an employee could spend a period of time other than his or her usual job scope for non-work related activities.

The other non-work related is the child and eldercare responsibility, where the demand especially in terms of time, could affect the work-life balance especially for those who are with young children and elderly parents [28]. The research concluded that the importance on having childcare support (i.e. time) especially is needed for parents with young children in order to ensure they provide with the necessary attention and care.

From the perspective of the organisation, the work-life balance benefits (the consequences of work-life balance implementation) are reduce absenteeism and turnover, improve productivity and image, and ensuring retention and loyalty whereas in the eye of employees, the work-life balance benefits are inclusive of improving health, autonomy and stress reduction [29]. The result of the relationship is negative which shows that the perspective of an organisation and employees is a challenging to impose every single need for both sides. The organisation needs to work hand in hand with its employees in order to fulfill the basic requirements from both as well as to ensure that the implementation would satisfy both parties.

C. Work-Life Balance and Job Satisfaction

Studies on the relationship between work-life balance and job satisfaction have been conducted in recent years due to the increase of the demand for work-life balance by the employees. Scholars are keen to focus on this research to evaluate the success of the program in an organisation as well as measure the level of the total satisfaction of an individual. Study conducted by Ko, Hur and Smith-Walter [30] revealed that receiving support from supervisor and dependent care program provided by an organisation and also the flexibility of scheduling seemed to have a positive and high relationship with the job satisfaction.

Hosboyar [31] examined the flexible work arrangement and its relationship with job satisfaction which resulted by allowing an employee to enjoy the satisfaction in their job while performing it at their own time and place, as well as benefiting an organisation in terms of retention. Ramadevi and Nagini [32] have shown a positive evidence of existence of the relationship between work-life balance and job satisfaction. The employer provided with the useful policies which enable its employees to juggle and balance their work and private lives which subsequently enhancing the job satisfaction.

D. Gender and Race

Although there are no direct research done on gender and race as moderators between work-life balance and job satisfaction, plenty of studies have been conducted on gender and race separately. A study by Gupta and Hyde [33] had shown that gender does not play a major role in impacting an employee's job satisfaction. Contrary to the result, Khan,

Ramzan and Butt [34] found that males in the banking industry are more satisfied with their job and able to work genuinely, systematically with fruitful performance at the workplace. An investigation on women's perceived on job satisfaction, it is concluded that organizations with family-friendly policies would affect the job satisfaction and attaining the fulfillment of work-life balance [21].

The research on race correlate with work-life balance and job satisfaction was done as early as 1980s, which focuses on Whites and Blacks. A study by Bartel [35] has an obvious explanatory of blacks with less job satisfaction due to discrimination at work besides receiving lower salary than whites. While Konar [36] studied on Moch [37] findings on racial differences in job satisfaction which resulted the same as Bartel [35], also inclusive Mexican American in the research. The most recent study by Yap, Cukier, Holmes and Hannan [38] had yet again proved that blacks are the least satisfied in their careers as to compare with whites, South Asians and Chinese in Canada. The job satisfaction is associated with human capital factors, workplace environment and demographic which concludes that the measurement varies across the race.

E. Hypotheses

From the discussed published studies, three hypotheses are developed as below:

H1: There is a relationship between work-life balance and job satisfaction

H2: Gender moderates the relationship between work-life balance and job satisfaction

H3: Race moderates the relationship between work-life balance and job satisfaction

F. Theoretical Framework

The following framework summarises the chosen topic from the Malaysian perspective in order to determine the relationship which might provide an impact for future hiring and to retain employee in the competitive labour market.

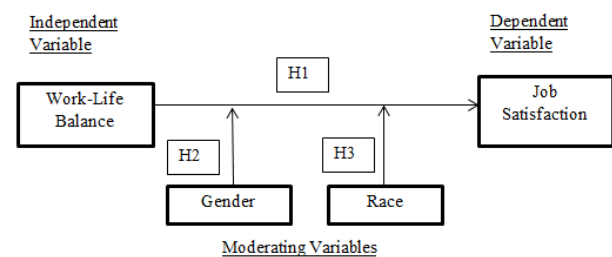


Fig. 1. Theoretical framework.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research design is a descriptive study which all the variables and characteristics are easily explained. Data collection used in this study is the primary data where feedback is gathered directly from the target sampling group. The data collection method is done via distribution of hardcopy questionnaires and online platform using Google Forms. Data is compiled slightly more than one month and it is done in a non-contrived setting. The questionnaires are distributed to 300 working adults across Malaysia and 120 questionnaires were returned to the researcher.

The questionnaires has been tested, used and cited in

previous research works which does not require undergoing a pre-test. Thus, the question on testability is supported. It was developed from Wong and Ko [39] for work-life balance and Weiss, England and Lofquist [40] for job satisfaction with 20 questions each. 7-point Likert Scale was used in work-life balance in which 1 indicates “Strongly Disagree” while 7 indicates “Strongly Agree”. Sample of questions used are “I have enough time for my family” and “My supervisor is very understanding when I talk about personal or family issues that affect my work”. A 5-point Likert Scale used in job satisfaction where 1 indicates “Very Satisfied” and 5 indicates “Very Dissatisfied”. Sample of questions used are “In my present job, I am satisfied with my schedule” and “In my present job, I feel I have job security.”

Cronbach’s Alpha was used to measure the reliability of the consistency and stability of variables Coakes and Ong [41]. The higher the correlation of the items, the higher Cronbach’s Alpha’s will be; and the maximum score is 1. Malholtra [42] explained that Cronbach’s Alpha of 0.6 indicates a poor correlation between items. Ideally for any scale, the Cronbach’s Alpha value should be above 0.7. The Cronbach’s Alpha value for work-life balance is 0.894, while the value for job satisfaction is 0.922, in which both are with twenty items for testing. Therefore, both variables indicate high consistency in each scale respectively.

IV. RESEARCH RESULTS AND FINDINGS

A. Demographic Profile

The majority of respondents are consists of female, which is 70% out of 120 participants. 50 respondents are represented from the 21 to 30 years old age group and it is made up of 41.7%. Most of the respondents are from Malay ethnicity and married. They hold First or Professional Degree and working in Financial Institution field as full-time employees.

B. Regression Analysis

Regression analysis is used when independent variable is correlated with dependent variable as it represents the best assumption of the dependent variable and other independent variables [41]. The result will enable to support or reject the proposed hypotheses made. Since this study also measures on the two moderating factors (i.e. gender and race), they have been adjusted to be the central for the data in order to fit in this test. They are adjusted by multiplying with the independent variable (i.e. work-life balance) and then produced as “moderator gender” and “moderator race” separately.

TABLE I: REGRESSION ANALYSIS ON JOB SATISFACTION AND WORK-LIFE BALANCE WITH GENDER AS MODERATOR

Model Summary ^b					
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.685 ^a	.470	.456	.38204	1.921

a. Predictors: (Constant), moderator gender, TotalWLB, gender

b. Dependent Variable: TotalJS

The result in Table I shows that 45.6% of the job satisfaction can be explained by the independent variable with the centralised gender as moderator.

TABLE II: REGRESSION ANALYSIS ON JOB SATISFACTION AND WORK-LIFE BALANCE WITH RACE AS MODERATOR

Model Summary ^b					
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.678 ^a	.460	.446	.38543	1.906

a. Predictors: (Constant), moderatorrace, race, TotalWLB

b. Dependent Variable: TotalJS

The adjusted R-squared shown above is 0.466, which means that 44.6% of job satisfaction can be explained by work-life balance and the centralisation of race. For both results, they showed that the linear regression for this study have the data which fits the model well.

C. Hypotheses Analysis

One-way ANCOVA test provides the means of reducing systematic bias and within-groups error in the analysis. It is to determine whether the independent variable is having an effect, the influence of covariance on the dependent variable is controlled during the analysis [41].

TABLE III: ONE-WAY ANCOVA; TESTS OF BETWEEN-SUBJECTS EFFECTS

Source	Type III		Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
	Sum of Squares	df				
Corrected Model	24.470 ^a	48	.510	4.852	.000	.766
Intercept	21.344	1	21.344	203.154	.000	.741
gender	.002	1	.002	.017	.898	.000
ethnic	.024	1	.024	.231	.632	.003
TotalWLB	23.950	46	.521	4.956	.000	.763
Error	7.460	71	.105			
Total	765.767	120				
Corrected Total	31.929	119				

The test above has resulted that the output indicates both gender and race have no impact on the dependent variable as the significant value is greater than 0.05. However, there is a significant relationship exists between work-life balance and job satisfaction, where $F=227.954$, $p<0.05$. Thus, hypothesis one is supported. The relationship is without a doubt had proven its existence in many published studies [9, 43]. Employees tend to be happy at work when they are able to juggle their personal and work matters equally. When the satisfaction is gained, the employees are able to perform their tasks more efficiently and will be committed at work. When they are performing, it will impact directly to the organisation’s effectiveness and subsequently they could be rewarded accordingly. By providing the facilities of work-life balance also will boost the employee’s job satisfaction [44]. To further support on gender and race as the moderators for the relationship between work-life balance and job satisfaction, t-test is used to test on hypothesis two, while one-way ANOVA is tested for hypothesis three.

TABLE IV: T-TEST ANALYSIS; INDEPENDENT SAMPLES TEST FOR WORK-LIFE BALANCE

Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					
F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	
Equal variances assumed	.046	.831	.918	118	.360	.12282	.13375
Equal variances not assumed		.932	68.610	.355	.12282	.13176	

Based on Levene's test in Table IV, the probability is greater than 0.05, assuming that the variances are equal. The two-tail significant for both genders are also greater than 0.05, therefore it is not significant. Thus, the hypothesis two is rejected. The result shows that gender does not give an impact to the relationship of work-life balance and job satisfaction. It suggests that among Malaysian working adults, regardless of gender, find the relationship is co-exist. This is also in line with a study conducted by Doble and Supriya [45] that both male and female workers felt on the importance of work-life balance which subsequently effect their job satisfaction. Studies by Walker, Wang and Redmond [46] and Warriar [47] had also suggested on the non-existence of gender bias in work-life balance and job satisfaction.

TABLE V: TESTS OF HOMOGENEITY OF VARIANCES FOR ONE-WAY ANOVA FOR JOB SATISFACTION

Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
.947	3	116	.420

TABLE VI: ANOVA

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	.694	3	.231	.859	.465
Within Groups	31.236	116	.269		
Total	31.929	119			

By using one-way ANOVA in terms of racial differences, Levene's test for homogeneity of variances is not significant as $p > 0.05$, and it is confident that the population variances for each group are approximately equal. In determining whether it has a significant F-ratio by referring to Table VI. The significant value is again greater than 0.05. This can be concluded by rejecting hypothesis three. A study conducted by Campbell [48] resulted that regardless of racial differences, they shared the similar perspective towards the relationship in the United States. The same could be applied in Malaysian context based on the result produced in this study. Furthermore, there is no exploratory research on this topic with regards to the racial differences that could confirm whether or not race plays an important role with the

relationship among Malaysian employees.

The outcome in this study has shown a mixture of proven results on previous researches. A positive relationship exists on the first hypothesis, while the rest suggested differently. This is due to the fact that the respondents are now preferred to work in an environment where both of their work and personal affairs could be met without having to scarify any of them, regardless of gender and racial differences. It shows that Malaysian employees are now shifting from the traditional working style to a more balanced work and personal lifestyle.

V. LIMITATIONS, FUTURE RESEARCH AND CONCLUSION

A. Limitations

Most of the respondents were based in Klang Valley which has the highest workforce in Malaysia. Though Klang Valley is the administrative, financial and services centre of Malaysia, where businesses, local and foreign, big and small, are located, the result may vary for those who work in other regions. There are other factors which can be considered as addition for other independent variables to determine the relationship for this study. It could result in terms of extensive view on job satisfaction among employees especially in Malaysia.

B. Future Research

From the limitation described earlier, future research recommendation could cover to an extended number of sampling. A larger number of sampling would be able to provide better representation of the target sampling as well as increasing the precision of the expected results.

Next, it is recommended to focus on a specific location where the working adults' population are at large such as in Klang Valley. Within the specific area, the result could represent on the particular state or location as a whole. It also help to ensure that the representation made would reflect on the working adults in the particular area.

Another recommendation for future research is to investigate in other aspect of work-life balance, such as imbalance work-life or work-life conflict, to determine the relationship with job satisfaction. This may produce a more meaningful result and enhance the current studies in terms of the Malaysian working adults' perspective.

The fourth recommendation is to focus on other demographic profiles such as male employees or Generation-Y (Gen-Y). This is due to the fact that there are lesser study on male employees which impact on the work-life balance and job satisfaction. While many studies are focusing on women, we should not forget on the male employees as they are also contributing into the market and it would be best to study on them in order to understand on the employee engagement. Reason to choose Gen-Y is due to the instant increase in the workforce. In order to retain the Gen-Y employees, a thorough study relating to them could help employers to understand them better in Malaysian perspective.

Future researchers could also consider focusing on one industry to provide an in-depth study. Different industry would have different nature of business and scope of work. By

doing this, more examples and proof can be achieved in relating to the topic to ensure that the result would be able to further expand to other areas especially in Malaysia.

C. Conclusion

Based on the findings of this research, it has proven on the relationship between work-life balance and job satisfaction among working adults in Malaysia is exist. In this research, there are two moderating factors included to measure its impact on the relationship. However, a significant correlation was found only through work-life balance and job satisfaction while the other two variables resulted in otherwise.

Previous studies had proven the impact of gender and racial differences between work-life balance and job satisfaction but it does not suggest the same in this study. The factor could be the previous studies were conducted outside Malaysia, more studies on female employees, and different races which do not represent Malaysia were also being measured.

Work-life balance programs or policies should be implemented into industry practice to ensure on the engagement of the employees and to tap the best talent in the market. It is also in line with current trend of working preference where most of the employees are moving into a more balanced between life and working style.

Initiative by the Government i.e. supporting flexi working hours, childcare in-house facility [49] could also assist employers to further equip the work-life balance into practices and policies within the organisation. It provides a platform for employers to implement the program where selected organisations would be sharing their strategy as guidance, and for employees or job seekers on the availability of the work-life balance in any organisation.

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