

WORK LIFE BALANCE AND QUALITY OF LIFE AMONG FEMALE WORKERS IN MALAYSIA

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ABSTRACT

Looking at Malaysia labor force participation rate, the participation of women has been increased from time to time. Since the number of female university students has also increased, these students later will occupy the job vacancy in the labor market. Nevertheless, it leads to the greatest struggle for the female workers, which is to balance their roles between workplace and home. They are obliged to fulfil the expectation of their superiors at the workplace, while being responsible to their family after working hours. Thus, this paper aims to study the implications of work life balance of female worker on their quality of life. Three components of work life balance were assessed; time balance, involvement balance and satisfaction balance. A total of 100 self-administered questionnaires were distributed to female lecturers in Jengka, Pahang by using convenience sampling. The data was analyzed by using SPSS for descriptive statistics and multiple regression. The result reveals that the work life balance of individuals affect their quality of life. The relationship between self-management and quality of life is stronger for employees who have control of their life. Furthermore, female workers with high quality of life are more effective in managing their daily activities.

Key words: Work life balance, Quality of life, Female worker, Satisfaction

INTRODUCTION

The involvement of women in working sector has become a debatable issue prior to the concern on their work-life balance. Even though most of them work outside home, they are still the primary caregivers for their family. Despite the emphasis placed on work-life balance, nearly half (47%) of all the women agreed that having a child wouldn't stand in the way of building a career (Lydia, 2015).

Yet, balancing work and family remains to be an important issue that pertains to all working individuals especially to working women. Today, these women are struggling with finding family-friendly workplaces that can reconcile work and family matters (Chalawadi, 2014). Business communities and society as a whole should be open to creating more flexible working environments, promoting work-life balance and diversity (Fang, 2015).

Work-life balance is defined in a different way by researchers from different perspectives. According to Fapohunda (2014), work life balance is about finding the right balance between one's work and one's life and the comfortable feeling with both work and non-work commitments. In order to do proper prioritizing between work and lifestyle, it depends on how other activities are effectively managed (cited in Razak, Yusof, Azidin, Latif, & Ismail, 2014). To produce time balance, an individual should be able to distribute time equally with their work and family (Hazel, Felix & Reuben, 2015). Thus, the balance time in work and family roles may reduce possible conflict, hence will lead to a better quality of life. Consistent with Jeffrey, Karen and Jason (2003), a balanced engagement in work and family roles is associated with individual well-being. Regardless of gender differences, there is a need for all working individuals to accommodate the balanced work and personal lifestyle.

For Malaysia scenario, in the labor market itself, women have participated actively as a player. Women do not only participate in certain sector, but almost in all sector, for example, in agriculture, manufacturing, teaching and other professions. In addition, the participation has eventually increased by year. For example, Malaysian women labor participation rate is 43.46% for 2010 and increase to 50.9% in 2018.

Being a woman, although known as career women, the task as a mother and wife need to be fulfilled. Therefore, they are not only need to focus on their jobs, but also on the family wellbeing. The multiple-roles that women are compelled to play these days lead to a major energy leak both at a psychological and physical level which adversely affects their well-being and leads to role conflict (Hetanshi, 2014). Besides, the origins of research on work life balance can be traced back to studies of woman having multiple roles; worker, wife and mother (Kaiser, 2011). Hence, it is significant to investigate this issue in deeper research

to ensure the quality of life of women. This is because it may affect the productivity of workers, thus could give a great contribution to the success of an organization.

Subsequent section of this study will discuss on previous literatures regarding work life balance and quality of life, followed by research methodology, discussion and analysis and the last part is conclusion.

EMPIRICAL FINDINGS ON PAST RESEARCHES

The issue of work life balance has been discussed since a long time ago due to its important contribution towards productivity. By looking at literature, numerous studies have been conducted on work-life balance.

Jeffrey, Greenhaus, Karen and Jason (2003) had done their study on members of American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (AICPA). The authors measured work life balance in three aspects; time balance, involvement balance and satisfaction balance. The study found that the workers who devoted most of the time on the family, more involved in family and more satisfied with the family had resulted in the highest quality of life. However, those who were spent most of the time on work, involved more on work and more satisfied with work than family would have the lowest quality of life, and those who had a balance time between work and family will have middle involvement and satisfaction.

Other study by Jarod, Marcello, Albert and Ollier (2014) discussed on the relationship between work life balance and job satisfaction, life satisfaction and mental health. These job satisfactions, life satisfactions and mental health are among the indicators to measure the quality of life of a person. The study was done across six countries; New Zealand, Spain, France, Italy, Malaysia and China, to identify the differences across culture. The study found that work life balance had positively associated with job satisfaction and life satisfaction. Meanwhile, mental health which was measured by anxiety and depression was negatively related with work life balance.

This idea has been reinforced by Hazel, Felix and Reuben (2015). Hazel et. al. This study focussed on the workers of banking sector in Malaysia and found that Time Balance and Involvement Balance are positively related with quality of life. However, Satisfaction Balance appears to have no relationship with quality of life.

However, looking on female worker specifically, only few study discussed on this issue. Most of the existing only focus on work life balance of female worker without discussed on the implication of work life balance on quality of life.

Hetanshi (2014) had done an analysis on 94 women workers both public and private sectors in Ahmedabad, Gujarat for both single and married women. The study revealed that most of work-related factors had negative impact on quality of life. Working women in both sectors felt stressed and believed that work life balance was affected since they had minimum time for self and family. Therefore, it is unfavourable to employed women since it has severe implications on, family, organizations and society.

While Sudaresan (2014) has investigated the factors affecting work life balances among female worker in India. This study analyzed randomly selected working women across organizations/institutions in Bangalore City and they found that the imbalance time on work and family, whereby they spend most of the time on excessive suffer from job burn-out, high levels of stress and anxiety and therefore they do not experienced quality of life.

This idea supported by Lakshmi and Gopinath (2013). They have done a descriptive analysis on work life balance of female worker in SRM University, Kattankulathur. They found that there are some of the female worker who are able to achieve a high work life balance and some of them who have a poor work life balance. For those who have imbalanced work-life status will have specific counselling for them to enable them to learn how to manage themselves better since it will affect their performance at the work place.

On the other hand, other study done by Fathima Aroosiya (2018) has identified the level work life balance of working women in married working women of government schools and divisional secretariat in Nintavur, Sri Lanka. The study adopted the questionnaire from Hayman which consist of 15 questions and employed descriptive statistics. The results of the study revealed that the level of work life balance of working women in Nintavur was low level.

Hence, this study aims to investigate the implications of work life balance of female workers on their quality of life in the case of female lecturers in UiTM Pahang, Kampus Jengka. This study also investigates whether there are differences between marital statuses in terms of quality of life.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this study, a self-structured questionnaire was designed and distributed to 41 female lecturers out of 100 lecturers from all faculties in UiTM Cawangan Pahang. The samples were selected by using convenience sampling method.

Based on the literature review and the gap identified, there are three elements involved in measuring work life balance included; time balance: an equal amount of time devoted to work and family role, involvement balance : an equal level of psychological involvement in work and family roles and satisfaction balance : an equal level of satisfaction with work and family roles. While quality of life was measured based on the WHO Quality of Life Scale that consist of 26 items based on several factors included physical health, psychological status, social relationship and environment.

The questionnaire has comprised three sections; demographic profile in Section A, Section B for the components of work life balance and Section C for the Quality of life.

The data obtained in this study was analysed using multiregression to analyze the impact of work life balance on quality of life. On the other hand, to indentify the differences between marital statuses on quality of life, the study uses descriptive analysis. Statistical Package for Social Sciences, version 22.0 was used to generate the findings.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The study was done on 41 female lecturers of UiTM Pahang, Kampus Jengka. 63.4% of the respondents are married where the other 36.6% are single. Most of the respondents aged between 25 to 35 (54.8%), followed by the age group between 36 to 45 years old, 33.3%. There is only 4.8% from age group below 25 years old and between 46 to 55 years old. Half of the respondents are senior lecturer, 56.1%. Only 14.6% hold an administration post, which is as coordinator. In terms of year of service, most of them have 5 to 10 years of experience (43.9%), followed by less than 5 years of service (26.8%), 10 to 15 years of service (24.4%) and more than 20 years of experience (4.9%)

Table 1: Demographic Profiles

Demographic variable	No.	%
Status		
Married	26	63.4
Single	15	36.6
Age		
Under 25 years old	2	4.8
25 to 35 years old	23	54.8
36 to 45 years old	14	33.3
46 to 55 years old	2	4.8
Over 56 years old	0	0
Position		
Senior Lecturer	23	56.1
Lecturer	7	17.1
Lecturer (Temporary)	11	26.8
Administration Position		
Head of Schools	0	0
Coordinator	6	14.6
None	35	85.4
Year of Service		
Below 5 years	11	26.8
5 to 10 years	18	43.9
10 to 15 years	10	24.4
15 to 20 years	0	0
More than 20 years	2	4.9

To identify the implications of work life balance to quality of life, the study has identified three components of work life balance; time balance, involvement balance and satisfaction balance. Therefore, this study runs the multiple regression analysis to investigate the impact of work life balance and quality of life as in equation (1).

$$Quality\ of\ Life\ (QOL) = -1.371 + 0.213TB + 1.247SB + 0.013IB \quad (1)$$

(0.548)** (0.090)** (0.143)*** (0.142)

Notes: Figure in () denote t-stastical value and ***, ** and *denotes significance level at 1%, 5% and 10% level, respectively

Whereby;

- TB = Time Balance
- SB = Satisfaction Balance
- IB = Involvement Balance

It was found that all components positively related and contributed significantly to quality of life except for involvement balance, which is not significant. Besides, the result of F-Test also shows that the overall model is significant at 10% significant level. Having balance in time spent and satisfaction balance towards career and personal lifestyle help them to have better quality of life. Among these two factors, satisfaction balance seems to give the highest impact to quality of life. It is normal for people to satisfy with his /her work, thus will feel good and have self-achievement.

This result was consistent to the previous studies where the impact of happiness in workplace and work life balance positively affect the employee performance (Bataneh, 2019), job satisfaction (Mas-Machuca, Berbegal-Mirabent and Alegre, 2016) and quality of life (Greenhaus, collins and Shaw, 2003). However, we found that there is an absence of association between involvement balance and quality of life

This finding explains that these individuals who are balanced, experience less work family conflict than that of imbalanced individuals. Time devoted to one role (i.e., work) generally means that time is also denied from other roles (i.e. family). By investing balanced amount time on work and family roles, this female lecturer will likely experience better quality of life. Similarly, individuals who achieved a balance in terms of satisfaction in their combined roles between work and family experience better quality of life than that of those who are not. It is normal for people to satisfy with his /her work, thus will feel good and have self-achievement.

However, the study did not find support for the relationship between involvement balance and quality of life. A possible reason is because these individuals are in the early years of their career, they are likely to believe that by involve long hours into their work would help them in their career. Therefore they will feel their quality of life is better by focus more on their career. Besides, the flexible working hours may also contribute for the non-significant relationship between involvement balance and quality of life. Although their working hours are long, but they still can involve in their family matters. No matter their involvement towards work and family are balanced or not, their quality of life are not affected.

Next, this paper has also explored the differences in quality of life between married and single female lecturer in UiTM Pahang. The result is portrayed in Table 2

Table 2: T-tests for Comparisons of Quality of Life between Marital statuses

		Levene's Statistics		t-test for Equality of Means					
		F	Sig.	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% CI
Quality of Life	Equal variances assumed	0.009	0.923	-0.677	39	0.503	-0.13974	.20657	[-0.55765, 0.27808]
	Equal variances not assumed			-0.675	29.127	0.505	-0.13974	.20707	[-0.56317, 0.28369]

The study was participated by 63.4% of married female lecturers and 36.6% of single female lecturers, and the Levene's test (F=0.009, sig=0.9237) had indicated that equal variance assumed. Then, by referring to the t-test, it also indicated that there was equal variance assumed; therefore, the null hypothesis cannot be rejected. The results of t-test proved that there was no significant difference; for married female lecturer (M=3.9103, SD=0.63505) and single female lecturers (M=4.0500, SD=0.64072) conditions; $t(39) = -0.677, p = 0.503$. This means, the marital status does not give any significant difference in determining the quality of life of women worker. It does not matter whether to be married or single. This result is contradict to the study by Kyu-Tae Han, Eun-Cheol Park, Jae-Hyun Kim, Sun Jung Kim, Sohee Park (2014) where the finding discovered that the quality of life of single women was good as compared to married women.

CONCLUSION

Women workers are likely to experience multiple roles with different task, responsibility and commitment. Being a lecturer, they need to fulfil the work-related job such as lecturing, supervising, researching, and administrative work. Moreover, at the same time they have different roles as a mother, a daughter or a sister that lead to a greater challenge due to fulfil the demands of all roles. They need to do a lot of activities at home included looking after their child, cooking, cleaning and other household activities. Thus, these female lecturers need to struggle managing their multi-roles in daily life effectively and trying to maintain a healthy work life balance.

Essentially, there are lot of studies in the literature regarding this topic, but limited study has been done on the female lecturers especially in Malaysia. Hence, this study has proven that the impact of work life balance is positively related and contributed significantly to quality of life. It showed that the female lecturers who can maintain time and satisfaction balance will have better quality of life. Balanced individuals will experience low level of stress since they have completing their roles in workplace and home. Besides, they are feeling that they are participating their activities with full heartedly since there is no pressure on them.

Having healthy work life balance is essential to employees. This may contribute to higher level of productivity as a whole organisation. Thus, this study should also be considered as a guideline to organisation in order to create and enhance work life balance environment of working women in organisation. Having a good quality work life balance will improve not only physical, emotional and mental health, but also a career health. Corresponding to Aydin (2016), work life balance has strong impact to the career success. Hence, this is beneficial to both, employees and employers.

This study has given the interesting conclusion in relation to work life balance and quality of life among female lecturer. Nevertheless, the research had several limitations that should be addressed in future research. The item that the study include in order to measure the independent variables may not comprehensive enough. Therefore it may lead to the exclusion of the valuable information and findings. Next, the study has been focused on female lecturer in UiTM Pahang, Kampus Jengka. The study should be extend to the other universities and also consider the private institution since the working environment may be different and it may capture different conclusion.

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