The Impact of Work-Related Antecedents on Work-Life Balance

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Abstract

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to examine the impact of work-related factors including workload, role conflict, supervisor support and flexible working arrangement on work life balance. This study also aims to discover the R-square of the developed model.

Design/methodology/approach: A simple random technique was conducted and a total of 136 usable questionnaires were collected from supporting staff at a private sector particularly information technology companies in Klang Valley. The multiple regression analysis was employed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

Findings: The results reveal that workload and role conflict has significant and negative impact on work-life balance. Meanwhile, the supervisory support and flexible working arrangement significantly positive impact on work-life balance. Further, the r-square indicates that 66.6 percent of the variance in work-life balance can be influenced by work-related factors.

Research limitations/implications: Some limitations were observed, in which the number of responses is rather moderate and it might not be able to capture and generalize in this context. In addition, the work related factors only focuses on workload, role conflict, supervisory support and flexible working arrangement.

Practical implications: This study provides a comprehensible and clear understanding on how work related factors play important role in enhancing the employees' work-life balance.

Originality/value: Research on the significance of workload, role conflict, supervisory support and flexible working arrangement and work-life balance particularly in the information technology context has not been sufficiently explored. This study shed new light to the private sector eco-system stakeholders in stimulating employees' work-life balance.

Keywords: Work life balance, workload, role conflict, supervisory support, flexible working arrangement

Introduction

According to the 2021 Global Work-Life Balance Index, Kuala Lumpur is the most overworked metropolis in the world (The Star, November 21, 2021). AIA Vitality's Malaysia's Healthiest Workplace Survey also found that Malaysians work an average of 15 hours more per week than they are supposed to. Traditional Malaysian workplace culture was quoted as one of the reasons Malaysians struggled to find work-life equilibrium (AIA, 2017). Malaysian employees are still struggling to achieve work-life balance. Work-family conflict for working parents and female workers in Malaysia has also increased due to the increasing percentage of women in the workforce and dual-earners (Le, Newman, Menzies, Zheng, & Fermelis, 2020).

According to Jayasingam, Su, & Mohd Zain (2021), the Ministry of Women, Family, and Community Development does not have a policy on work-family and work-life balance. It currently solely offers program-based activities targeted at achieving work-family balance. Similarly, there were no policies relating to work-life balance in the Malaysian Ministry of Human Resources' acts and policies. Furthermore, according to Noor and Mohd (2015), despite the availability of regulations promoting work-life balance, these measures are either under-utilized or restricted to employees who have family commitments. Such a restricted focus on work-life balance policies may result in undesirable workplace attitudes and behaviours. To compound issues, the private sector is excluded from these rules since Malaysia continues to prioritise economic development in order to achieve development status (Noor & Mohd, 2015). Higher work demand also means that the employees are expected to have longer working hours. Although the Malaysian Employment Act specifies a maximum work week of 48 hours, this is rarely enforced in private-sector companies (Noor & Mohd, 2015). In a study conducted by Ramos et al. (2015), found that employees in Malaysia's banking industry put in an average of 52 hours per week, compared to their counterparts in Singapore, Australia, and Hong Kong. Malaysian workers put in an average of 15 extra hours per week (AIA, 2017). People's health and physical activity are negatively impacted by longer work hours (The Edge, 2018), but would also limit their time to focus on non-work life demands (New Straits Times, June 25, 2019; HR Asia Media, 2019).

A number of studies have been carried out to understand the work-related factors contributing to work-life balance in Malaysia (Jackson & Fransman (2018), Wong et al. (2017), Omar et al. (2015), Subramaniam et al. (2015), Razak et al. (2014), and Kumarasamy et al. (2015). Employee well-being can only be improved when employers and organisations acknowledge the interdependence of work and personal life. The failure to acknowledge the importance of work-life balance and address employees' needs for work-life balance might result in employees viewing the organization in a negative light. The lack of work-life balance might also lead to increased work stress (Agha, Azmi, & Irfan, 2017; Shah, 2014), lower quality of life (Ramos, Francis, & Philipp, 2015), poor emotional and physical health (Shah, 2014), declining productivity and job satisfaction (Agha, Azmi, & Irfan, 2017) and intention to leave (Pradana & Salehudin, 2015).

Notably, the work-life balance is a common topic of study. However, research on the work-life balance of private sector employees in Malaysia has received little attention. Therefore, the aims of this study is to examine the influence of work related factors (workload, role conflict, supervisory support, and flexible working arrangement) towards work-life balance among supporting staff at Information Technology Companies in Klang Valley.

Literature Review
Workload and Work-Life Balance
According to Vashdi, Katz–Navon & Delegach (2021), "workload" is defined as the amount of work a person has to perform in a short period of time. Job overburden occurs when a person's expectations surpass their ability. A recent study by Holland et al. (2019) conducted an online survey among 2984 nursing profession inAustralia found that workload is the most influential factor on work-life balance. Another study by Kumarasamy et al. (2015) on the work-life balance of 1566 police officers from 12 police headquarters in Peninsular Malaysia concludes that overwork can have negative impact on the work-life balance. A study by Johari et al. (2018) on educators in the Northern Region of Peninsular Malaysia found that there is a strong association between the workload and work-life balance. Workload was the most influential factor influencing work-life balance, and it was significantly and negatively related to employees' work-life balance. Hence, the first hypothesis was developed:

H1: There is significant relationship between workload and work-life balance

Role Conflict and Work-Life Balance

Role conflict is characterized by the need for more compatibility or consistency in fulfilling the obligations and expectations associated with multiple roles (Bowling et al., 2017). This study refers role conflict as the perception that employees have regarding what is expected from them according to their job description and how others at work believe they should perform their role. A study by Omar et al. (2015) examined the connection between role conflict and work-life balance. Role conflict was a factor in needing a better work-life balance. The results explained that employees with higher role conflict demonstrated lower satisfaction toward work-life balance. Further, Razak et al. (2014), conducted a study among 80 employees in a private company in Malaysia, found that role conflict was a significant factor in work-life balance. The findings supported previous studies like Aazami et al. (2015) that role conflict could result in higher work stress and negatively affect employees' work-life balance. Thus, the second hypothesis was formulated for this study:

H2: There is significant relationship between role conflict and work-life balance

Supervisory Support and Work-Life Balance

Supervisors have a pivotal role in cultivating a work environment and fostering employees' performance. According to Park et al. (2018), employees who feel supported by their managers are more likely to work hard and create high-quality results. A study conducted by Wong et. al (2017) among 98 employees in Kuching's service sector revealed a moderate positive relationship between supervisor support and work-life balance. A study by Talukder et al. (2018) investigated the relations between supervisor supports, work-life balance, job attitudes, and performance of employees in the Australian financial sector and found that supervisory backing has a significant impact on work-life balance. A good relationship between a leader and subordinates is essential for work-family balance in the workplace (Oludayo & Omonijo, 2020). Therefore, the third hypothesis was developed:

H3: There is significant relationship between supervisory support and work-life balance

Flexible Working Arrangement and Work-Life Balance

Flexible working arrangement (FWA) refers to a work mode allowing greater flexibility regarding physical workspaces, working hours, and employment agreements (Groen et al., 2018). Flexibility is recognized as one of the significant shifts in the future of work and workplaces (Kossek et al., 2021). A recent study by Wong et al. (2017) found a moderate and positive relationship between flexible working arrangements and work-life balance. It is consistent with Mas-Machuca et al. (2016) and Ariffin et al. (2016) that flexible working schedules helped employees to balance work and non-work domains. Moreover, a study conducted by Subramaniam et al. (2015) among female employees from 14 organizations in the services industry in Klang Valley, Malaysia showed that FWA affected the employees' work-life balance. Further, Ahmad Suhaimi and Seman (2019) stated that flexible working hours as one of the work-life balance practices in an organization. Thus, the forth hypothesis was formulated:

H4: There is significant relationship between flexible working arrangement and work-life balance

Method

The context of this study involved supporting staff of Private Sector particularly in the Information Technology companies in Klang Valley. Employees in the private sector were

chosen as the study population because they are frequently linked to lengthy and irregular work hours, as well as high job demand (Zivcicová, Bulková, & Masárová, 2017; Noor & Mohd, 2015; AIA, 2017) which might limit their time to focus on non-work life demands (New Straits Times, June 25, 2019; HR Asia Media, 2019).

The online questionnaire was used as the main method in collecting data. In total, 200 survey questionnaires were emailed to supporting staff by employed simple random sampling technique. For the final confirmation, a follow-up call was made three days prior to the appointment, which serves as a reminder. Hence, 136 responses were received within a two-month period.

This questionnaire was comprised of three sections, Section A is focused on Demographic Information such as gender, age, educational background, and ethnic. . Section B is measured work-related factor, which is represented by workload, role conflict, supervisory support, and flexible working arrangement. The total 20 items of workload were used and adopted from Boyar et.al (2007), role conflict (Omar et. al, 2015), supervisory support (Hammer et. al, 2009), and flexible working arrangement (Prem et. al (2021). In measuring work-life balance (Section C), this study adopted 15 items from Banu and Duraipandian (2014). A 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree) was used to measure the level of respondents' agreeableness on the statement.

This study employs the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) to measure the model. A descriptive statistics was used to determine the total score and mean score of the variables. This study also used Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient to test and analyze the relationship of work-related factors and work-life balance. In addition, this study used Multiple Regression analysis to comprehensively understand the relationships and interactions among multiple independent variables in relation to a single dependent variable.

Findings

Table 1: Demographic Profile

Criteria	Category	Number	Percentage
Gender	Male	72	53%
	Female	64	47%
Age	18-30	42	31%
	31-40	73	53%
	41-50	20	15%
	51-60	1	1%
Education Level	SPM	5	4%
	STPM/Diploma	29	21%
	Bachelor Degree	87	64%
	Master Degree	15	11%
Ethnic	Malay	102	75%
	Chinese	15	11%
	Indian	16	12%
	Others	3	2%

A total of 136 respondents participated in the survey, where 53 percent of them were males and 47 percent were females. 73 respondents (53%) were between 31 and 40 years old, while 42 respondents (31%) were between 18 and 30 years old, 20 respondents (15%) between 41 and 50 years old, and only one respondent (1%) were above 51 years old. Majority of the respondents were Malays (75%), followed by 16 Indian respondents (12%), 15 Chinese

respondents (11%), and 3 respondents from other ethnics (2%). About 64 percent of the respondents possessed Bachelor Degree, while 21 percent had STPM/Diploma, followed by Master Degree and SPM level, with 11 and 4 percent respectively.

Table 2: Multiple Regression - Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients			95.0% Confidence Interval for B	
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1 (Constant)	-1.452	.853		-1.702	.091	-3.140	.236
Workload	-1.226	.130	-.618	-9.458	.000	-1.483	-.970
Role Conflict	-.300	.115	-.151	-2.606	.010	-.528	-.072
Supervisory Support	.484	.132	.210	3.664	.000	.223	.746
Flexible Working Arrangement	.572	.130	.226	4.387	.000	.314	.830

a. Dependent Variable: Work Life Balance

As shown in Table 2, the results indicate that workload has a significant and negative impact on work-life balance (B = -0.618, t = - 9.458, p = 0.000). Besides, the relationship between role conflict and work-life balance has significant and negative impact on work-life balance (B=-0.151 t=-2.606, p= 0.010). Further, the results revealed that supervisory support has significant and positive impact on work-life balance (B=0.210, t=3.664, p=0.000). In addition, flexible working arrangement has significantly and positive impact on work-life balance (B=0.226, t=4.387, p=0.000). Therefore, H1a, H1b, H1c, and H1d were supported.

Table 3: Model Summary – Work Related Factor

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
					Change Statistics				
1	.816a	.666	.656	1.05521	.666	65.271	4	131	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Work Life Balance

b. Predictors: (Constant), Workload, Role Conflict, Supervisory Support, Flexible Working Arrangement

The Table 3 shows that R-squared value of 0.666, indicating that approximately 66.6% of the variance in work-life balance can be explained by the included work-related factors (workload, role conflict, supervisory support, and flexible working arrangement). The predictor variables collectively played a crucial role in shaping employees' work-life balance.

Discussion and Conclusion
The result indicates that workload has a significant negative impact on work-life balance. It is consistent with studies conducted by Holland et al. (2019), Johari et al. (2018) and Omar et al. (2015) where employees who experience higher workloads are more likely to struggle with balancing their work responsibilities with their personal and family life, leading to reduced work-life balance. Even with a high workload, if individuals have control over when and where

they work, it can provide them with a sense of autonomy and the ability to align work and personal responsibilities more effectively, contributing to higher satisfaction with work-life balance.

The multiple regression analysis demonstrates that role conflict has a significant negative effect on work-life balance. The results were in line with few past studies like Razak et al. (2014), Omar et al. (2015), and Aazami et al. (2015). Some individuals may view role conflict as a natural part of their multiple roles and find satisfaction in managing and integrating them effectively. Others may be able to adapt their roles and find a better balance, and adequate resources and support can help them manage role conflicts more effectively. In conclusion, role conflict alone may not necessarily lead to dissatisfaction with work-life balance if employees perceive it as manageable or acceptable.

A supervisory support has a significant and positive work life balance. The findings in this study supported previous studies like Uddin et al. (2020), Manandhar (2019) and Wong et al. (2017). These studies have shown a strong correlation between supervisor support and employees' satisfaction with their ability to balance between work and non-work demands. A good relationship between leaders and employees is important for employees' work-family balance (Oludayo & Omonijo, 2020). Supportive supervisors can advocate for and facilitate flexible work arrangements, such as flexible working hours, telecommuting options, or compressed workweeks, which can help employees to have greater control over their work schedules and adapt their work hours to better accommodate their personal and family responsibilities.

Employees who have more flexibility in their work arrangements tend to experience better work-life balance. The correlation analysis also supports this finding, showing a significant positive correlation between flexible working arrangement and work-life balance. The results were in line with Ongaki (2019) and Hidayah et al. (2021) who found that flexible working arrangements such as flexible work schedules and telecommuting had no direct effect on work-family conflict. Similarly, Myers (2020) claimed that the use of flexible work arrangements as an organizational resource did not significantly buffer the negative effects associated with strain-based work-to- family conflict. These studies described the impact of flexible working arrangement on work-life balance from a high degree of job autonomy and flexibility in the allocation of time and energy.

In a nutshell, offering flexible work options, such as remote work, flexi working hours and compress work week which can help reduce work-life conflict and support employees in managing their personal and family responsibilities. Further, regularly assessing workload distribution and fostering open communication with employees is crucial to achieving this goal. Moreover, the effective leadership is essential in promoting work-life balance within the company. In addition, regularly gathering employee feedback through surveys and feedback sessions, companies can gain valuable insights into work-life challenges and use this input to refine and improve work-life balance initiatives continuously. In conclusion, implementing these strategies can help private sector companies create a positive work environment that prioritizes work-life balance, increasing employee satisfaction and productivity.

This study was conducted to determine the influence of work related factors in enhancing employee work-life balance, particularly in private sector particularly Information Technology companies in Klang Valley. However, some limitations were observed, in which the number of responses is rather moderate and it might not be able to capture and generalize in this context. Perhaps, future study should be considered to develop the research population to other companies or sectors in Malaysia with hectic lifestyles. In addition, comparative studies can be done with other geographical areas between urban or rural areas among private sector employees (Information Technology companies).

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