

## Quality of Work Life of Librarians in Government Academic Libraries in the Klang Valley, Malaysia

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### ABSTRACT

The success of any organization is highly dependent on how it attracts workers, motivates, and retains its workforce. Today's organizations need to be more flexible and understanding, so that they are well prepared to develop their employees and enjoy their commitment. For most employees, going to work can be burdensome and somewhat forced upon them to carry out every day. However, for a few, their careers are the most important thing in their lives compared to others. The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between work and non-work variables and quality of work life. Therefore, it is anticipated that the contribution from this study will provide useful information to the top management level in organizations for the purpose of planning appropriate policies that can enhance employees overall life satisfaction. The research questions, which serve as a foundation of this study focus on the relationship between work and non-work variables and quality of work life. This study applied the quantitative research design as well as descriptive and correlation approach. Respondents are all librarians working in government academic libraries in the Klang Valley. An online survey was used to gather data for each participating library. The questionnaire was divided into two sections. Section A contained the socio-demographic information, while Section B contained seven parts of questions related to the study. The data was analyzed using Pearson Correlation Analysis. Findings from this study indicated that both work variables and non-work variables do matter in determining the quality of work life. The findings of this research also can be beneficial in Human Resource Management issues and trends in libraries administration.

**Keywords:** Quality of work life; work variables; non-work variables; Academic Libraries; Librarians

### INTRODUCTION

An academic library is recognized as an active institution of scholarly literature and holds numerous collections to meet their users' needs. For that reason, it strength has to feature prominently in the range of its resources and a quality workforce. Essentially, for an organization to be able to attract high quality workforce, it needs to provide a better quality of work life. The following elements are relevant to an individual's quality of work life; i.e. the task; physical work environment; and social environment within the organization; administrative system and relationship with peer or colleague. Quality of work life can be defined as "The quality of relationship between employees and the total working environment". The phrase "quality of work life" has also been used to describe working conditions and expectations of most workers in their work life.

Libraries like any other organizations are also are not immune to workplace stress and conflicts. It is estimated that 25% of workplace problems such as absenteeism, lower productivity, turnover and excessive use of medical benefits are due to family violence (ALA, 1999). Among the contributing factors that lead to the significance of this issue are the social and demographic changes that have added to the diversity in work and family structures. Many have to struggle with work and family demands simultaneously in order to balance work and life responsibilities. Librarianship and information work is one of the professions that continuously suffer from tension-related problems between its professionals and paraprofessionals.

In library science literature, the “greying of the profession” is a concept that elicits much attention, yet relatively little has been done to explore this phenomenon, particularly as it relates to the transformative change process in libraries. Karpiak’s (2000) investigation of social work faculty at midlife transitions provides a view of this phenomenon that might relate to similar aspects of librarianship. Similar to Karpiak’s (2000) findings on a call to stagnation and a call to consciousness, Smith (1995) notes for librarians “there is both a poignant awareness and a sense of frustration about the ways in which their career paths have been blocked or irrevocably altered, that they are faced with the loss of opportunities for advancement and achievement of goals”. In many ways, Smith (1995) views that librarians desperately try to realign themselves within their profession while turbulence and uncertainty abound. At present, the theoretical relationships between work and non-work are complex and largely unknown. Though the work-non-work issues in relations to quality of work life have been discussed and argued extensively for the past thirty years, but until now efforts to investigate work and family have been hampered by the absence of a strong theoretical framework. Therefore, this study has been carried out to examine the relationship between work variable, non-work variables and quality of work life, focusing on librarians working in public universities in Klang Valley.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### *Work Variables*

Kanter (1977) defined work as activities for which one is paid; the definition can be extended to include nonmarket and volunteer work. Other definition states work as a set of prescribed tasks that an individual performs while occupying a position in an organization (Kabanoff, 1980). One paradigm that studied the meaning of working indicated the following measures: work centrality, societal norms, valued outcomes and goals and the importance of goals and outcomes from each sphere (MOW International research Team, 1987). Most recently, Ballout (2008) defined work domain as work-related variables that may be important to employee reactions to work-family conflict and success in careers include: job involvement, job stressors, and job social support. Parasuraman et al., (1996) have evaluated various combinations of work variables in their studies. In this context, the relevant variables identified are: (1) Job Involvement (2) Work Role Conflict (3) Work Time and (4) Schedule Inflexibility

### *Job Involvement*

Kanungo (1982) defined job involvement as a cognitive belief state reflecting the degree of psychological identification with one’s job. Lawler and Hall (1970) argued that job involvement is a cognitive state of psychological identification with the job and depends on the degree to which the job is perceived to meet one’s salient needs, be they intrinsic or extrinsic. Most literatures discussing job involvement use different terms to explain the same concept. Terms such as job involvement, work involvement and work centrality have been used interchangeably. Ballout (2008) noted that job involvement is one potential work-related variable that may cause work-family conflict. Moreover, individuals who are highly involved in their jobs or careers may devote more time and effort to the work role than to family role.

### *Work-role Conflict*

Work role conflict is defined as the extent to which a person experiences incompatible role pressures within the work domain (Kopelman et al. 1983). Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn, Snoek & Rosenthal (1964) first introduced the definition and meaning of work role conflict. Their classic research study view role conflict in general as a simultaneous occurrence of two (or more) sets of pressures such that compliance with one would make more difficult compliance with the other. Kahn’s (1964) framework outlined three significant factors affecting work-role conflict, namely: i) organizational, ii) personal and iii) interpersonal.

### *Work Time*

Work time is an important factor in work domain based on the conception that personal resources are scarce, hence time involvement in work domain will rob off time available for non-work activities. The employment act and labour laws of Malaysia (Section 60A (9) Employment Act 1955) define number of hours worked as “the time during which an employee is at the disposal of the employer and is not free to dispose of his own time and movements” (Chuan, 2001).

### *Schedule Inflexibility*

As indicated in a number of literatures (Frone et al., 1997; Gutek et. al., 1991; O’Driscoll et. al., 1992; Parasuraman et al., 1996; and Wallace, 1997), the number of hours worked has been almost universally cited as the key source of inter-role conflict. This notion holds true in an objective sense, nonetheless many studies denoted that work time per se do not automatically lead to inter-role conflict. Under the condition that workers are able to control their work schedules, the potential inter-role conflict can be minimized (Seron & Ferris, 1995 and Wallace, 1997). In this context, the perceived work schedule inflexibility refers to individual’s subjective assessment that his or her work schedule does not provide the flexibility needed to handle family responsibilities, regardless of the type of schedule (Grigsby & Hammer, 1994).

### **Non Work Variables**

The word “non-work” has often been used interchangeably with the word “family”. The effects of non-work or family life upon the work setting are essential though they are often overlooked in many organizations (Crouter, 1984). Kanter (1977) has outlined four ways in which non-work domain influences work domain. Firstly, the family makes its presence felt in the workplace via cultural traditions. Secondly, the influence is specific to family-owned or family-dominated businesses, settings in which a family can directly define the operations of a workplace. Thirdly, it pertains to the activities of other family members who get involved in the employee’s work life. Finally, emotional climate at work could affect families and vice versa. Parasuraman et al., (1996) postulated that non-work variables are evident through (1) Family Involvement and (2) Family Conflict.

### *Family Involvement*

Family involvement has been associated with gender, parental demands, and working spouse. Gender is perhaps the socio-demographic characteristic most often included in studies of work-family conflict and career success (Ballout, 2008). The evidence suggests that there are gender differences in work-family conflict due to social role differences between working men and working women. Traditional gender roles assumed that men are primarily responsible for family financial support by working, while women are primarily responsible for childcare and household duties (Loscocco, 2000). In his research, Ballout (2008) indicates that parental demand can affect work-family conflict and subsequently success in careers. Due to the increased demands of spending a great amount of time at home taking care of their children, investing the required time and energy at work to support their career advancement and success, employed parents tend to experience more family interfere work conflict and work interfere family conflict than employed non-parents. On the other hand, non-parents often have more flexibility in managing their time and personal life, and fewer familial responsibilities, which less likely to experience family-to-work conflict.

### *Family Conflict*

Work-family conflict arises from factors within the work domain and family domain. Work-family conflict can affect the well-being of a person, influencing a person’s satisfaction with his/her job, marriage and life (Kim and Ling (2001). Indeed, much of the past research concerning work-family conflict has failed to take into consideration the complex nature of the work-family issues (Rotondo et al, 2003). Coming home from work so emotionally and physically exhausted that

one cannot effectively function or fulfill role demands at home would be an example of strain-based conflict. In any form, conflict can originate in one domain and spill over into the other, causing experienced stress to the individual(s) affected. Effective coping ameliorates experienced stress, and our explanation of how coping styles may affect levels of work-family conflict follows (Rotondo et al, 2003).

### *Quality of Worklife*

Shamir & Salomon (1985) have defined quality of work life (QWL) as a comprehensive construct that includes an individual's job-related well-being and the extent to which work experiences are rewarding, fulfilling, and devoid of stress and other negative personal consequences. Sirgy et al (2001) mentioned in their research that a new measure of QWL was developed based on need satisfaction and spillover theories. The measure was designed to meet the needs of an employee to capture the extent to which the work environment, job requirements, supervisory behavior, and ancillary programs in an organization. They further explained that QWL differs from job satisfaction whereby job satisfaction is construed as one of many outcomes of QWL. Besides, QWL does not only affect job satisfaction itself but also satisfaction in other life domains such as family life, leisure life, social life, financial life, and so on. Abo-Znadh and Carty (1999) noted that quality of work life efforts not only on how people can do work better, but also on how work may cause people to be better. Moreover, QWL in an organization also concerns about participation of workers regarding problem solving and decision making. Higher quality of work life would then correlate with lower work-to-family interference (Cheung and Tang, 2009).

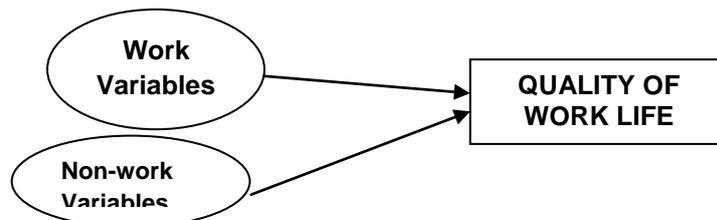
## **RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WORK VARIABLE, NON-WORK VARIABLE AND QUALITY OF WORK LIFE**

The most important domains of adult life are epitomized by work and family (non-work) for most individuals and these realms are often regarded as the backbone of human existence. Millions of people all over the world juggle these two domains: (1) to balance their lives; (2) to minimize the potential conflicts that arise from the "balancing act"; and (3) to improve the quality of living (Md-Sidin et al., 2010). The challenges that can create work-family conflict are in meeting the (often) incompatible demands of work and family (Eby et al., 2005). Ballout (2008) proposed that non-work variables to affect individuals' perceived career aspiration and success. In particular, he expected that such demographic variables to affect the way individuals make allocation investments to family responsibilities and career aspirations. According to Ashforth et al (2000), social identity theory focuses on the choice made by individuals in role transitions involving home, work, and other places and postulates that roles can be arrayed on a continuum, ranging from high segmentation to high integration. While Ruderman et al. (2002) explored the benefits of multiple roles for managerial women and found that women managers who integrated careers with family and other non-work roles were successful and satisfied in engaging in both managerial and personal roles.

Towards this, a study was conducted to achieve the following objectives:

1. To investigate the relationships between work variables and quality of work life
2. To investigate the relationships between non-work variables and quality of work life.

### **RESEARCH MODEL/ FRAMEWORK**



**Figure 1: Relationship of the independent variables and dependent variable**

The diagram in Figure 1 indicates the conceptual framework as the best plan to show the relationship of the independent variables and dependent variable. The dependent variable is the primary interest of study whether this variable can be affected by the independent variables.

### **Research Hypothesis**

- H1:** There is a relationship between Work variables and Quality of Work Life.  
**H2:** There is a relationship between Non-work variables and Quality of Work Life

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **Sample of the Study and Data Collection Method**

The nature of this study adopts the descriptive design research, and conducted in a quantitative manner. . A quantitative approach was used to gather the data by distribution of questionnaire to the sample that has been determined. An online survey was used to gather data once at the same point of time for each participating library. The samples were the librarians working in Public Universities academic libraries in the Klang Valley, namely: Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Universiti Malaya (UM), Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM), Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM), Universiti Islam Antarabangsa Malaysia (UIAM) and Universiti Pertahanan Malaysia (UPNM). Of the 250 online surveys e-mailed to all the librarians, only 130 completely answered and replied, achieving 60% reply rate.

### *Instrumentation*

A self-administered questionnaire was designed to gather data from subjects on the studied variables. There were two variables used in this study which were work variables and non-work variables. The questionnaire was divided into two sections. Section A contained the socio-demographic information, while Section B contained seven parts of questions related to the constructs. Table 1 depicts the measures of the study variables.

<b>Study Variables</b>	<b>Sources of Scale</b>	<b>Type of Scale</b>
<b>Work Variable</b>		
1. Job involvement	Kanungo (1982)	A Five-point Likert-Scale from "Strongly Disagree" (1) to "Strongly Agree" (5).
2. Work-role conflict	Kopelman et al., (1983)	
3. Work Time	Greenhaus et al., (1989)	
4. Schedule Inflexibility		
<b>Non-work Variable</b>		
1. Family Involvement	Yogev and Brett (1985) Kopelman et al. (1983)	A Five-point Likert-Scale from "Strongly Disagree" (1) to "Strongly Agree" (5).
2. Family Conflict		

**Table 1: Measures of the Study Variables**

## **ANALYSIS AND RESULTS**

### *Reliability Analysis*

According to Nunnally (1970), the reliability score range from 0.50 to 0.60 is considered sufficient for the early stage of the study. However, Nunnally (1978) and Hair, Anderson, Tatham and Black (1998) declared that coefficient of 0.70 is desirable. Based on that, a

reliability test had been carried out and as shown in Table 2, below, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient value for all variables in the study revealed a range of coefficient values from 0.837 to 0.889 accordingly. The independent variable of work variables had a high reliability coefficient of 0.884. The other independent variable of non-work variable resulted a coefficient value of 0.889.

**Table 2: Reliability Analysis**

Variable	No of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Work variables	19	0.884
Non work variables	12	0.889
Quality of work life	7	0.837

### **Hypothesis Testing**

The relationship between work variables and quality of work life was investigated using Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient. Preliminary analyses were performed to ensure no violation of the assumptions of normality, linearity and homoscedasticity. As shown in Table 3 below, there was a significant correlation between the dimensions of job involvement and work role conflict with  $r=.533$  ( $p<.01$ ). This was followed by a correlation between job involvement and work time with  $r=.592$  ( $p<.01$ ), while job involvement with schedule inflexibility recorded  $r=.454$  ( $p<.01$ ). There was also significant correlation between work role conflict and work time with  $r=.703$  ( $p<.01$ ), work role conflict and schedule inflexibility with  $r=.585$  ( $p<.01$ ). Correlation between work time and schedule inflexibility was also found to be significant with  $r=.611$  ( $p<.01$ ). The results concluded that the four dimensions of work variables were significantly related and correlated with each other and were moving in the same direction as one variable or construct. The findings also concluded that there was a significant relationship between all the dimensions of work variables with quality of work life.

**Table 3: Pearson Product-Moment Correlations between Measures of Work Variables and Quality of Work Life**

Scales	1	2	3	4	Mean	SD
Job Involvement	-				4.0062	.49112
Work role conflict	.533**				3.9646	.43095
Work time	.592**	.703**			3.8331	.46765
Schedule Inflexibility	.454**	.585**	.611**		3.7436	.50071
Quality of work life	.848**	.596**	.603**	.486**	3.8857	.49914

Note: N = 130

\*\*  $p < 0.01$

Table 4 presents the correlations among the two dimensions of non-work variables and quality of work life. The result indicated that there were significant positive correlations between family involvement with family conflict with  $r=.696$  ( $p<.01$ ). It can be concluded that all the variables in this study correlate and have positive relationships among them and therefore, both hypotheses were supported.

**Table 4: Pearson Product-Moment Correlations between Measures of Non-Work Variables and Quality of Work Life**

Scales	1	2	3	Mean	SD
Family Involvement	-			4.0714	.52081
Family conflict	.696**			3.7892	.52551
Quality of work life	.428**	.377**		3.8857	.49914

Note: N = 130

\*\*  $p < 0.01$

## **DISCUSSION**

Drawing from the findings in this study, clear relationships were evidenced between all variables in both work and non-work and quality of work life. In the past, the structure of adult life was quite homogeneous, where career and family choices were indubitably distinguished. However, the family structure and employing organization becomes more diversified, varied and complex, resulted in work life and non-work life intermingled together. According to Morf (1989), work and family life have become so intertwined that it is practically impossible to consider either environment in isolation from one another. Among the contributing factors that lead to the significance of this issue are the social and demographic changes that have added to the diversity in work and family structures. This phenomenon consequently creates conflict within the two spheres. For example, a high proportion of female participation in workforce increases demand for flexible working hours and childcare facilities within the boundary of a workplace. Many have to juggle work and family demands simultaneously to balance work and life responsibilities. This scenario has direct effects on organizations because they have become increasingly dependent on women, and therefore they have been more likely to provide work-family programs or benefits that are responsive to this group.

Quality of work life also includes the level of job satisfaction among staff, their salary/remunerations paid by the employer, whether they are always being motivated by their colleagues or superior. All this can contribute toward reducing the stress experienced by staff when carrying out their job functions and allowing for staff to spend extra time with their family. Safe and healthy environment is also included, and this focuses on the hazards of the physical environment. High risk and dangerous work environments can affect employees' focus and accidents have been known to happen as a result of loss of focus. As a consequence, they are forced to discontinue their work either temporarily or permanently. This will then effect on their job performance. Stresses experienced due to work overload and under load, work shifts or changes need to be improved on or sufficiently reduced to ensure emotional stability among employees.

Yet, for individuals who have jobs which provide meaningful work and offer opportunities for promotion and financial rewards usually require extraordinary devotion, which often forces workers to give their families less attention than is required for building a satisfying and involving home life (Lambert, 1990). The 1990 Relocation Study (Brett, Stroh & Reilly, 1990 & 1992) indicated that putting together career, marriage and family would affect career progression, marital satisfaction and quality of life. As such, millions of people in Malaysia and all over the world have to juggle these two most important spheres (work and non-work) in their schedule everyday in order to balance both domains, minimize the potential conflict resulted from these interactions and improving their quality of life.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The objective of this study is to investigate the relationship between work and non-work variables and quality of work life. It is important to know the result of the findings whether the librarians are affected by the two variables towards the quality of work life in their career. From a practical standpoint, findings from this study indicated that both work variables and non-work variables do matter in determining the quality of work life. In this respect, organizations need to pay great attention to the practices and provide a productive and welcoming work environment conducive to their employees in gaining recognition to their career achievements. Hence, the organizations can formulate practical and effective plans to improve the working climate in order to achieve the desirable quality of work life. It is worth mentioning that quality of work life increases when the librarians are satisfied with their level of work variable and non work variables. Therefore it is hoped that the findings from this study would be beneficial to libraries in identifying whether or not their librarians had achieved the quality of work life as they expected.

## LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

There were several limitations regarding this study that need to be highlighted so that it can be considered for future research. Firstly, the total of respondents (130) is considered small compared to the actual number of librarians working in Public Universities academic libraries in the Klang Valley. Even though the total of response is enough but by providing bigger samples in future research, the results will be much more accurate. It is also suggested that the study to be expanded including librarians working in private universities as well. Therefore, a comparison can be made before making a more meaningful conclusion. Secondly, this research only focused on work and non-work variables but not the inter-role conflict. It is worth to study whether the work variables and non-work variables relationship will result in inter-role conflict.

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