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DETERMINANTS OF WORK-LIFE BALANCE FOR WORKING MOTHERS

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In recent years, work-life balance issues especially for working mothers have become a prominent concern in the society and emphasis on work-life balance policies has emerged due to change in demographic composition of the workforce. The main objective of this study is to examine the relationship between family responsibility and childcare arrangement on the work-life balance. A purposive non-probability sampling technique method was used to select the respondents. Based on the G Power calculation, this study requires a minimum sample size of 96 working mothers in Malaysia. The findings revealed that the family responsibility has a significant impact meanwhile childcare arrangement had no significant impact on the work-life balance. In addition, this study provides discussion and recommendations for the future reference that has been applied based on developed countries which could help working mothers in Malaysia to achieve the real work-life balance in a harmonious way.

Keywords: Working mother, work-life balance, family responsibility, childcare arrangement.

1. Introduction

According to Dhingra and Dhingra (2021), the work-life balance (WLB) of an individual is said to be stable when he or she can accomplish the many duties allocated to him or her at work and home. However, becoming a mother is a prime stage in every woman's life cycle and the conflict of having to take care of children and to fulfil job requirements usually leads to most working mothers opting to withdraw from employment (Weis, 2016). Malaysia aims to become a high-income country by increasing work opportunities for men and women alike. Promoting women in the labour market is crucial in Malaysia, as the country has a lower percentage of working women compared to other Asian countries, while having a larger percentage of female graduates each year (Hassan, 2020). Malaysia's female labour force participation percentage has increased dramatically in recent years, from 50.7% in 2015 to 52% in 2019. However, because of the Covid-19 pandemic, it falls to 51.7% in 2020 and drops to 51.5% in 2023, remaining low in comparison to other nations in the area (Department of Statistic, 2020). This falls well short of the 12th Malaysia Plan's goal of achieving at least 59% female labor-force participation by 2025. Finding a work-life balance, on the other hand, is a difficult undertaking for women, particularly moms. According to a study conducted by the Malaysian Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme in 2014, approximately 67 percent of married women professionals who took part in the survey chose to quit their jobs to oversee their children or to obey their husband's request to leave the

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workforce. Islahi (2017) revealed that work itself did not significantly impact working mothers. Instead, the dual responsibilities at home and work intensify their stress. A lack of personal time and social interactions further exacerbates this stress. The study showed that full-time working mothers exhibited a 40% increase in chronic stress symptoms linked to hormones and blood pressure. Even with reduced hours or job flexibility, their stress level remained high at 37%, as noted by Chandola in 2019.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Work-Life Balance

According to Omar et al. (2022), almost all working mothers strive for and seek to attain work-life balance. The study was done by choosing 100 working moms from Malaysia's National Sports Council. The findings revealed that working mothers struggle to balance workplace responsibilities with family commitments. Stress management, workplace culture, and the employer's role are all important factors in assisting working mothers to achieve work-life balance.

2.2 Family Responsibility and Work-Life Balance

Vernia and Senen (2022) conducted a study to assess the impact of family responsibility on work-life balance. Work-life balance, according to the authors, is a state that employees experience in the form of connection to the workforce and family, so that they feel pleased with their duties at home and roles at work. The findings indicate that family responsibility has a detrimental influence on work-life balance. Working mothers who are unsatisfied will experience an imbalance, which is both an issue and a big danger to their welfare and performance.

H1: Family responsibility is positively related to work-life balance.

2.3 Childcare Arrangement and Work-Life Balance

Luppi and Arpino (2020) investigated the effects of childcare arrangement on working mothers' satisfaction with work-family balance. The study looked at the effects of paid and unpaid childcare arrangements on working mothers' happiness with work-life balance and the obstacles they confront. The study revealed that working mothers who utilise both paid and unpaid childcare are the most satisfied with work-family balance, and those who encounter difficulties in finding inexpensive and flexible paid childcare have a lower level of satisfaction with work-family balance.

H2: Childcare arrangement is positively related to work-life balance.

3. Methods

This study is a descriptive study that focuses on working mothers in Malaysia. The data were collected using Google form starting from 1st of March 2022 until 30th of May 2022. A purposive non-probability sampling technique was used with the general criteria in which the respondent must be a working woman with children. Based on the G Power calculation, the minimum sample size for this study is 96 of working mothers in Malaysia. However, this study exceeded the number by obtaining 110 respondents. The 110 responses were returned and usable for the final analysis using the structural equation model partial least square (SEM-PLS 4.0). The questionnaire was adopted and adapted from a few selected established questionnaires and measured with 5-point Likert-scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Work-life balance items were measured from the study of Fisher et al. (2019), and family responsibility questions were adapted from Herlin (2010) respectively.

4. Result and Discussion

4.1 Validity and Reliability Analyses

Hair et al. (2011) highlighted the importance of assessing the quality of the measurement model through convergent validity, which considers factor loadings, average variance extracted (AVE), and composite reliability (CR). In this study, all indicator loadings exceeded the threshold of 0.5 (see Table 1), indicating that each item reliably measures its intended construct. Additionally, AVE values ranged from 0.661 to 0.730, exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.5, suggesting that the constructs capture more variance than measurement error. Furthermore, CR values ranged from 0.915 to 0.923, surpassing the threshold of 0.7, indicating high internal consistency. These results collectively demonstrate strong convergent validity, indicating that the measurement model effectively measures the intended constructs.

Table 1: Validity Test Results

Construct	Item	Loading	CA	CR	AVE
Childcare Arrangement (CCA)	CCA1	0.858	0.872	0.915	0.661
	CCA2	0.776			
	CCA3	0.879			
	CCA4	0.837			
	CCA5	0.702			
Family Responsibility (FR)	FR1	0.865	0.907	0.909	0.730
	FR2	0.888			
	FR3	0.865			
	FR4	0.850			
	FR5	0.803			
Work-life Balance (WLB)	WLB1	0.872	0.915	0.923	0.705
	WLB2	0.896			
	WLB3	0.888			
	WLB4	0.829			
	WLB6	0.859			
	WLB7	0.675			

*AVE: Average Variance extracted; CA: Cronbach Alpha; CR: Composite Reliability

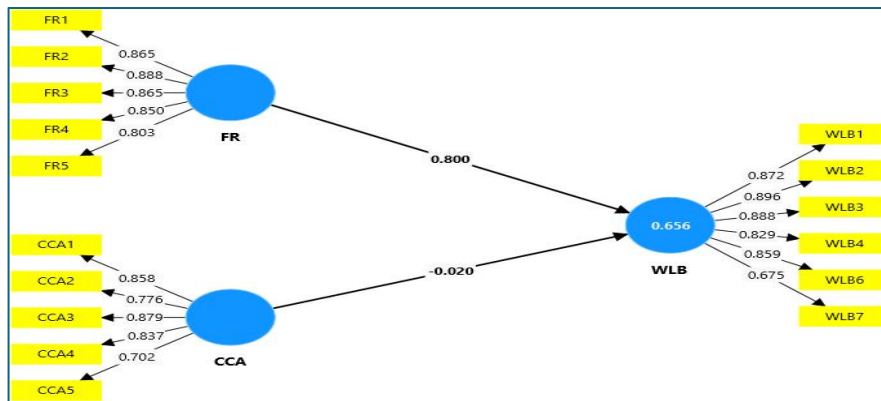
According to Henseler et al. (2015), the measurement model's discriminant validity was assessed using the heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) ratio of correlations. This method compares the correlations between different constructs (heterotrait) to the correlations within the same construct (monotrait). A threshold value of less than 0.85 has been suggested in the literature (Clark & Watson, 1995; Kline, 2011) to determine discriminant validity. Additionally, Voorhees et al. (2016) proposed a more stringent threshold of less than 0.90. In this study, the HTMT ratios presented in Table 2 are all below the recommended thresholds, indicating strong discriminant validity. This shows that our measurement model's components are diverse and measure various fundamental ideas.

Table 2: Heterotrait-monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

	CCA	FR	WLB
CCA			
FR	0.523		
WLB	0.430	0.885	

Structural Model

Figure 1: Structural Model



4.2 Hypotheses Testing and Discussion

Path analysis was used to evaluate the basic model, with R² values and the importance of path coefficients acting as major assessment criteria, according to Hair et al. (2011). Cohen (1988) suggested that a good model should have an R² value of over 0.26 for endogenous latent variables. In this study, the R² value was found to be 0.656 (see Figure 1), indicating that family responsibility and childcare arrangement can explain 65.6% of the variance in work-life balance among working mothers in Malaysia.

Table 3: Result of Direct Effect

Direct Relationship	Hypothesis	Beta	Standard deviation	T statistics	P values	Results Hypotheses
CCA-> WLB	H1	-0.020	0.076	0.263	0.793	Not supported
FR-> WLB	H2	0.800	0.048	16.688	0.000	Supported

Next, the significance of hypotheses was assessed using path coefficients and the bootstrapping technique. The results revealed that the relationship between childcare arrangement and work-life balance was not significant ($\beta=-0.020$, $t=0.263$, $p>0.00$), while the relationship between family responsibility and work-life balance was significant ($\beta=0.800$, $t=16.688$, $p<0.00$). Therefore, H1 was not supported, and H2 was supported. In line with past researchers, Baker (2020) mentioned that working mothers were almost three times more likely than working men to be out of the labor force, with family responsibilities listed as the primary reason. Family responsibilities encompass

various aspects, such as caring for children, managing household chores, and attending to the needs of other family members.

5. Conclusion, Contribution, Limitation and Future Research Agenda

There are many factors that contribute to work-life balance. However, the determination of this study is to identify the factors influencing work-life balance among working mothers in Malaysia which include family responsibility and childcare arrangement. Future research should divert the focus on other factors that may contribute to work-life balance such as economic aspects and nature of the work. Working mothers often bear a significant portion of these responsibilities, which can affect their ability to balance between work and personal life. Therefore, it is mandatory for the Human Resource Management for each of the organizations to enhance the work-life balance policies. For example, providing a flexible working arrangement, such as part-time work, flextime, and telecommuting options allow working mothers to adapt their work schedules to better meet their family's needs, including childcare responsibilities. These initiatives could help Malaysia's governments to achieve the work-life balance as mentioned in the National Transformation 2050 (TN50) and Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 3, which aspires to guarantee healthy lifestyles and promote well-being for people of all ages.

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