

Does work-life balance have a relationship with work performance?

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Abstract

Attaining work-life balance is challenging. Juggling work and personal affairs can be a highly demanding effort and the inability to attend to everything can leave one frustrated and exhausted. Increased level of stress, turnover and absenteeism rate are some of the negative repercussions of this. This study therefore, aims to further examine the relationship between work-life balance and work performance among non-executive level staff at Sarawak State Civil service. There were 44 acceptable self-administered questionnaires collected and analysed out of 64 questionnaires that were distributed for this exploratory stage of study. The result disclosed a significant but weak relationship between work-life balance and job performance. As the result, the study proposes to outline a work-life balance practices or programs such as job design that helps in employee productivity, employee assistance programs, health programs, aerobic sessions, family day and encouragement for employees to participate in seminars on stress and time management. Genuine concern and extensive involvement of the company in achieving the work-life balance will yield positive outcome from the employees.

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INTRODUCTION

In a society filled with conflict responsibility and obligations towards personal lives, family values and aging workforce, work-life balance issues have become serious consideration at the workplace. Many studies have been conducted on work-life balance for example one of the main Canadian study conducted by Lowe (2005), 1 of 4 employees experience high levels of conflict between work and family if the conflict overload, then close to 60% of employees surveyed experience work-family dispute. According to Lowe (2005), the factor that influences work-life balance the most is the amount of time spent at work. Based on The Sunday posted on 23 May 2013, a better pay and benefits were the main reason affected the Malaysian work-life balance. Other factors are management's issues with 52%, career advancement with 47% and better work-life balance with 45% emphasizing the growing importance of peer learning.

In the early 2010, the Managing Tomorrow's People survey found that 45% of Malaysian respondents did not mind carrying more responsibilities at work if they are

paid accordingly. The results also showed that 36% of the employees desired a better balance between work and life. Although the numbers reported was not more of population, it cannot be uncared for. The previous research showed that employees were no longer concerned only about pay, and place, emphasis on delivering value and working with companies with strong corporate responsibility. Price water house Coopers (PwC) also report Malaysians wanted a better work-life balance in addition to having salaries that match their work and responsibility. Therefore, the study attempted to investigate the relationship between work-life balance and job performance.

2. RESEARCH PROBLEM AND OBJECTIVES

Work-life balance seems harder to achieve nowadays. Inability to balance their work and life might affect the health of employees, increase their level of stress, turnover and absenteeism rate which give an impact on employees' job performance (Hana Hamidi, 2005). In Malaysia, more than 60% of workers felt that they did not

spend enough time with their families due to long working hours (Gomez, 2013). Nearly three-quarters of those surveyed said that they work extra hours daily and overtime was inevitable due to deadlines and work overload which result in nearly 75% choosing to stay late at the office. According to Community Business Hong Kong (2011), the survey they have made among the Hong Kong citizen, (43.4%) have felt burdened at work. Another 40.6% indicated that they had to postpone deadlines at work as a result of poor work-life balance. Finally, the organization's productivity and performance will be affected. Hence, this study was intended to investigate the relationship between work-life balance and job performance among non-executives' employees in Sarawak state civil servants. The survey by JobStreet.com (Digital News Asia, 2013) carried out on 954 Malaysian employees across various industries in the country, indicated that 63 per cent of workers do not spend enough time with their family due to long working hours, with many working two to five hours beyond their official 9-to-5 work hours daily mostly due to unreasonable deadlines and work demand. With respect to work-life balance practices, many employees reported that their organizations were not doing much to promote work-life balance. Indeed, 75 per cent of those surveyed mentioned that they were interrupted about work during their holidays.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1. Work Life Balance

Accomplishing a good balance in work and personal commitments is a concern for employees and organizations. Many evidences linked to work-life imbalance that would affect the health and well-being among individual and family (Brough & Kalliath, 2008). In order to attain good work-life balance, people must know how to balance between work and family/life. Work/family border theory was a new theory intended to cure the criticisms and gap between work and family (Campbell, 2000). It explained how individuals managed and controls the work family matters and borders between them in order to attain balance. Campbell (2000) argued that the connection between work and family system was not emotional, but human. People were border-crossers who make daily transitions between work and family. Campbell (2000) found that, work and home environment were contradiction of determining that makes work or family balance one of the most challenging concepts in study of work and the study of families. Based on

Campbell's (2000) theory, work/family attempt to explain this complex interaction between border-crosser and the work and family lives, to predict when conflict will occur and give a framework for attaining balance. She stated that, other researchers assumed that events at work affect events at home and reverse. For example, employees having a bad day at work are more likely to be in bad mood when they returned home. This clearly means work and family life influenced each other. Work-life balance focused on four factors: (1) work interference personal life, (2) personal life interfering with work, (3) works enhancing personal life, (4) personal enhancing work. In short, Norton (2013) also referring work-life balances as work-life conflict or work-family conflict.

3.2. Performance

Based on Performance Theory, there are six foundation concepts to form a framework that can be used to explain the performance improvement. The six components are context, level of knowledge, level of skill, level of identity, personal factors and fixed factors. Performance can be distinguished from such measure because it refers to the behaviours which an individual display that may or may not be within the control of the individual. From the researchers' perspectives, individual performance is seen as the actual behaviour that can be scaled and measured in terms of proficiency, rather than the outcomes which the employing organization derives from that performance, a definition which avoids the construct confusion referred to previously. Thus, job performance includes work behaviours which are relevant to organizational goals within the individual's control and measurable. Sometimes, the employee's job performance is not consistent due to lack of motivation, aspiration, support or even coaching by his/her supervisor or manager. Besides, lacking in management of time also affects the person's performance. According to Parker (2007), job satisfaction, self-efficacy, and job aspiration affect job performance. He found that job performance comprised of behaviours which are under an individual's control. He further explains that job performance is vital because it is a critical determinant of individual, team and organizational effectiveness. In relation to that, Memon et al (2016) discovered their interview findings to indicate that heavy workload is one of the major factors contributing to job stress and dissatisfaction that could affect work life balance later.

3.3. Relationship between Work-Life balance and Performance

According to Abdel Waleed Ahmad Razak (2011), job performance is the effort made by the employee within the organization in order to achieve a goal. It is whether a person performs their job well. Besides, it is the employee's ability to perform it effectively as the job requires the employees to understand their position in an organization that also expected them to meet the goal of job performance. Meanwhile, work-life balance according to Wheatley (2012) is referred to the ability of individuals, regardless of age or sexual orientation to join work and family obligation effectively. Over the most recent couple of decades, there has been a sensational increment in the measure of research dedicated to the linkages between work and family or individual life. The term “work-life balance” has become an increasingly inescapable concern to both employers and employees of most organizations. Work-life balance deals with an employee's ability to properly prioritize between work and the person's lifestyle, social obligations, health and family is the linkage with employee's productivity, performance and job satisfaction (Kumar, 2011). According to Beauregard and Hendry (2009), work-life balance may help to maintain an employee's productivity. They suggested that, to improve work-life balance in organizations, implementing programs such as job sharing, childcare, flexible working hours, telecommuting and family leave program will increase the organization and employee's performance. In view of Kahya (2007) explanation, in work execution, in spite of the fact that age, sexual orientation, experience, perception of time and relational influence have been considered in numerous studies, no research has been conducted on the potential impacts of employment qualities and working conditions on a task and the relevant execution. Kahya (2007) also expressed that, work type, work level, and occupation setting made diverse effects on work execution. It requires elevated level of expertise and obligation to play out the assignment effectively.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This is a cross sectional study conducted among the non-executive employees. Sixty-four (64) respondents were selected through convenience sampling of the respondents that were available on the day the self-administered questionnaires were distributed. The questionnaire consists of four sections. Section A on Demographic Background (6 items), Section B Work/life Balance that consists of question 1(10 items) and question 2 (5 items), Section C Impact of Work Life Balance

towards Employee Performance (8 items) and Section D is for respondents to provide their opinions or suggestions regarding the topics covered. Using Likert scale in section B, question 1 with “1 indicating the staff “strongly disagree”” until “5 indicating the staff “strongly agree””. The factors that contribute to the balancing of work-life (section B, question 2) based on their work/life balance using Likert scale with “1 is less important” and “5 is most important” and the impact of work/life balance towards employee performance using Likert scale with 1 to 5 ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree, respectively. Besides that, an open-ended question is also being used to study the staff’s opinions about improvements needed in work/life balancing programs in their departments. Each constraint produced in the questionnaires was adapted from prior researchers’ work. (Deery and Chien, 2008). The questionnaires contained questions related to work-life balance and work performance.

5. FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Sixty-four (n=64) employees were chosen to answer the questionnaires but only 44 questionnaires were returned giving the response rate of 69%. As a result, only the 44 questionnaires were analysed.

Table 1 Reliability Analysis

| Construct | Cronbach's Alpha | No. of item |
|-------------------|------------------|-------------|
| Work-life balance | 0.542 | 8 |
| Work-life balance | 0.750 | 5 |
| Job Performance | 0.833 | 8 |

Table 2 exhibit the reliability analysis for the factors that determine the level of the employees' work life balance, the factors that contribute to work-life balance and the relationship between work-life balance and job performance. As indicated by Sekaran (2003), the closer the value is, to 1.0, the better it is. Sekaran (2003) likewise referenced that the outcome for unwavering quality that is under 0.6 is viewed as poor yet acceptable. Meanwhile, reliability ranging from 0.7 is adequate and more than 0.8 is viewed as an extremely solid in reliability. In view of the outcome, all the constructs are reliable.

Table 2 Deleted Items

| Item no. | Corrected item-total correlations | Question |
|----------|-----------------------------------|---|
| 8 | 0.000 | I will not cancel important social arrangements due to work |

| | | |
|---|-------|---|
| 9 | -0.68 | I am considering changing my career to achieve a better work-life balance |
|---|-------|---|

Two items were deleted because they provide the lowest score of 'corrected item-total correlation'. The two questions were question 8; "I will not cancel important social arrangements due to work" with the lowest 0.000 and question 9; "I am considering changing my career to achieve a better work-life balance" with the lowest correlation value of -0.68. The overall scale was 0.463. If these items were removed from the scale, the Cronbach's alpha of item deleted column shows that the overall reliability would increase slightly to 0.560. Therefore, the deleted items are considered appropriate. The reliability is poor but acceptable. Job Performance referred in section C which has 5 questions. The Cronbach's Alpha was 0.750 which means the reliability is acceptable. Factors of Work-life balance referred in section B question 2 consists of 5 questions. The Cronbach's Alpha of 0.833 showed good reliability.

Table 3 Skewness and Kurtosis for Normality Test

| Construct | Skewness Value | Kurtosis Value |
|-------------------|----------------|----------------|
| Work-life Balance | -0.269 | 0.357 |
| Job Performance | -.309 | 0.840 |

The normality was analysed by utilizing the values of skewness and kurtosis. The skewness which fall between - 1.00 and +1.00 and kurtosis value between - 3.00 and + 3.00 (Sekaran, 2003), are considered as normal values . Table 4 demonstrate that the scores for work-life balance have skewness estimation value of - 0.269and kurtosis of 0.357. For job performance, the skewness value is between -0.309 and kurtosis of 0.840. Thus, an assumption was made that the data were approximately normally distributed in terms of skewness and kurtosis.

5.1. Respondent’s Profile

Table 4 Demographic profile of respondents (n=44)

| Variables | No of respondents | Percentages (%) |
|---------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| Gender | | |
| Male | 16 | 36.4 |
| Female | 28 | 63.6 |
| Age | | |
| < 25 | 8 | 18.2 |
| 26-30 | 18 | 40.9 |
| 31-35 | 5 | 11.4 |
| 36-40 | 2 | 4.5 |
| > 40 | 11 | 25.0 |

| Number of Years of Working | | |
|----------------------------|----|------|
| Less than 1 year | 14 | 31.8 |
| 2 to 5 years | 16 | 36.4 |
| 6 to 10 years | 5 | 11.4 |
| More than 10 years | 9 | 20.5 |
| Working Hours | | |
| 7:30 a.m. – 4:50 p.m. | 1 | 2.3 |
| 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. | 36 | 81.8 |
| 8:30 a.m. – 5:30 p.m. | 2 | 4.5 |
| Flexible | 2 | 4.5 |
| Other | 3 | 6.8 |
| Working Shift | | |
| Dayshift | 12 | 27.3 |
| Nightshift | 1 | 2.3 |
| Others (Office Hours) | 31 | 70.5 |
| Number of Working Days | | |
| < 5 days | 3 | 6.8 |
| 5 days | 41 | 93.2 |
| 6 days | 0 | 0 |
| 7 days | 0 | 0 |

Research Objective 1: To investigate the level of work-life balance

The items were analysed using Likert scale, with "1 indicating the staff "strongly disagree"", "2 indicating "disagree", "3 indicating "neutral", "4 indicating "agree"" and "5 indicating the staff "strongly agree"".

Table 5 Mean and Standard Deviation Level of Work-life Balance (n=44)

| | Mean (M) | Standard Deviation (SD) |
|--------------------------|----------|-------------------------|
| Work-life Balance | 3.167 | 0.456 |

The total mean was 3.167 with standard deviation of 0.456. Table 5.1 (in Appendix 1) explains the overall results for work-life balance. The mean score for the statement "I start and finish my work on time" was 3.81 and the standard deviation was 0.971. It shows that most respondents start and finish their work on time. This question has the highest mean score which indicates the respondents' agreement on this statement. The second work item was for the statement "I would rather work overtime than have a leave" for which the mean was 2.52 and the standard deviation was 0.999. This question has the second highest mean score which indicates the respondents' disagreement of the statement. The third work item of the level of work is "I take my work home" with a mean of 2.318 and standard deviation of 1.029. Overall, most of the respondents answered neutral on their voting for these statements.

Table 5.2 (Appendix 2) shows the 5 questions regarding the level of personal life of the employees. The

highest mean from the above table was (M=3.59; SD=0.756) for the statement “I can spend time I want on my self-development (personal development)” which means the respondents were having good time with their self-development and agreed with this statement. The second highest mean score (M=3.43; SD=0.756) was for “I am too tired to carry on a conversation when I get home from work”. Therefore, the respondents were too tired to carry on a conversation when they get home from work.

The statement “I have time and energy to engage in a conversation when I get home from work” with a mean score (M=3.40; SD=0.622) indicate that the respondents agreed that they have time to engage in a conversation when they get home from work. The response for the last two statements with a mean score of (M=3.15; SD=1.077) “my family never complains that I do not spend enough time for them” and the lowest score (M=3.09; SD=1.052) “I allowed contact from work when on holiday” show that the respondents are neutral on both statements. In summary, most of the respondents chose neutral on their rating for these statements.

Research Objective 2: *To determine the factors that contribute to work-life balance*

The Likert scale used is “1 indicating “less important”” “2 indicating “slightly important”,” “3 indicating “neutral”,” “4 indicating “moderately important”” and “5 indicating the factor is “the most important”.”

Table 6 Factors that Contribute to Work-life Balance (n=44)

| Item | Mean | Standard Deviation |
|--------------------------------------|------|--------------------|
| More flexible hours | 3.65 | 0.963 |
| Work from home | | |
| Time off during emergencies & events | | |
| Support from family members | | |
| Support from supervisor/colleagues | 4.04 | 0.861 |

There are five (5) factors that contribute to work-life balance. They are “more flexible hours”, “work from home”, “time off during emergencies and events”, “support from family members” and “support from supervisor/colleagues”. From the factors above, the highest factor that contributed the most to work-life

balance is the support from family members with a mean score of (M=4.09; SD=0.772) and the second highest score is support from supervisor/colleagues with a mean score of (M=4.04; SD=0.861). Beauregard and Hendry (2009) found that the major part of work-life balance is focused on the employee's family responsibility. Family is a responsibility and has an effect on the employees' achievement and their performance. Beauregard and Hendry (2009) are also of the opinion that supervisor support would affect the degree to which work-life were seen by employees as achieving their work-life balance needs support from the organization.

Research Objective 3: *To investigate the Relationship between work-life balance and job performance*

Table 7 Correlation analysis between work-life balance and job performance

| Variable | Correlation Value | Significant |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------|-------------|
| Work-life balance Job Performance | 0.274 | 0.036 |

The analysis of the relationship between work-life balance and job performance shows that there is a significant relationship between work-life balance and job performance where the result (r=0.274; p=0.036) is acceptable but weak. According to Saira, Zahid and Mehmood (2013), employees' performance depends on the satisfaction of work-life balance. Helping employees meet family and social needs reduces their stress levels and would give them more energy to work better. In this way, employees can perform better, build their confidence and increase job satisfaction.

6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the study, it is recommended that companies provide work-life balance practices or programs such as health programs, aerobic sessions, family day and encourage employees to attend motivation or work management seminars to increase their work-life balance and therefore increase their work performance. The above should also include a reward system towards highlight the excellent performance of employees as a form of motivation. Work-life balance must be supported and encouraged at all levels of an organization. The employees should be able to prioritize their work with the support rendered. This will help them to manage their time

in working on their tasks given to improve productivity. The employees must be responsible with each given task and submit before the deadlines, so that they have time to do other assignments. In conclusion, work-life balance plays an important role in attaining the organizational aspirations and individual performance. Other than that, support from family members is the main factor which can lead to improvement in employees' performance.

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Appendix 1

Table 5.1: Level of Work (n=44)

| Item | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree | Mean | Standard Deviation |
|--|-------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|----------------|--------------|--------------------|
| I start and finish my work on time | 1 | 3 | 10 | 19 | 11 | 3.81 | 0.971 |
| I take my work home | 11 | 14 | 14 | 4 | 1 | 2.318 | 1.029 |
| I would rather work overtime than have a leave | 9 | 9 | 21 | 4 | 1 | 2.522 | 0.999 |
| Total | 21 | 26 | 45 | 27 | 13 | 2.886 | 0.646 |

Appendix 2

Table 5.2: Level of Personal Life (n=44)

| Item | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree | Mean | Standard Deviation |
|---|-------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|----------------|--------------|--------------------|
| I allowed contact from work when on holiday. | 4 | 7 | 17 | 13 | 3 | 3.09 | 1.052 |
| I have time and energy to engage in a conversation when I get home from work. | 0 | 2 | 23 | 18 | 1 | 3.40 | 0.622 |
| I am too tired to carry on a conversation when I get home from work. | 0 | 4 | 20 | 17 | 3 | 3.43 | 0.759 |
| I can spend the time I want on my self-development (personal development) | 0 | 3 | 16 | 21 | 4 | 3.59 | 0.756 |
| My family never complains that I don't spend enough time with them. | 4 | 7 | 14 | 16 | 3 | 3.15 | 1.077 |
| Total | 8 | 23 | 90 | 85 | 14 | 3.336 | 0.545 |