

WORK-LIFE BALANCE PRACTICES AMONGST CONSTRUCTION
EMPLOYEES IN MALAYSIA

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DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to my family and friends who have been the source of encouragement and inspiration for me throughout this master's degree journey.

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ABSTRACT

The idea of work-life balance (WLB) is relatively fresh in Malaysia. WLB here/in Malaysia is in an environment where there is a shortage of understanding within the organisation and not enough knowledgeable workers that are bold enough to express this culture. With respect to work-life balance, many Malaysian based multinational companies begin to shape their workforce into a work-life balance inclined work structure. Regardless, there is a deficiency of work-life balance practice among construction companies in Malaysia. Balancing the right profession with a daunting timeline project can be difficult, as it can influence workplace satisfaction and a work-life balance. In fact, lack of support from the company can contribute to a greater struggle for a work-life balance. This research examined the work-life balance practices amongst employees of construction firms located in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. This study investigates the level of adoption of WLB in the organisation and the relationship of WLB with job performance (JP), employee turnover (ET), nature of interpersonal relationships amongst colleagues (IR) and job control (JC) as a moderating factor. These are the factors discussed to investigate a successful work-life balance practice and culture in an organisation. Data collection was via google form questionnaire distributed to employees from various construction firm in KL. 159 respondents were collected. Descriptive analysis was adopted for objective 1, while Partial Least-Square structural equation model analysis was adopted for objective 2 & 3 via software Smart-PLS. Findings from this study shows that level of adoption of WLB in construction firms are still lacking and require further improvement. The relationship shows that there is an effect of WLB with JP, ET & IR while JC does not have any moderating effect towards the relationship. Further research can be done on the influence of JC on WLB. This research can be utilized by the organisation resource management to assist their companies to make the most out of these factors using work/life initiatives to gain a competitive advantage in the market, as work-life balance has always been a focal point of those interested in the quality of working life and its relation to broader quality of life.

ABSTRAK

Idea keseimbangan kerja-kehidupan (WLB) agak segar di Malaysia. Pemahaman terhadap ideologi ini di dalam organisasi masih rendah dan tidak cukup pekerja berpengalaman yang berani untuk menyuarakan situasi budaya ini. Walaubagaimanapun, beberapa syarikat multinasional di Malaysia telah mula membentuk pekerja kearah budaya keseimbangan kerja-kehidupan. Walau apa pun, terdapat kekurangan amalan keseimbangan kerja-kehidupan di kalangan syarikat pembinaan di Malaysia. Mengimbangkan profesi dengan projek garis masa yang sempit mungkin sukar, kerana ia dapat mempengaruhi kepuasan kerja dan keseimbangan kerja-kehidupan. Sebenarnya, kekurangan sokongan dari syarikat boleh menyumbang kepada kesusahan untuk meyimbangkan kerja-kehidupan. Oleh itu, penyelidikan ini mengkaji amalan keseimbangan kerja-kehidupan di kalangan pekerja firma pembinaan yang terletak di Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Kajian ini menyelidiki tahap penerapan WLB dalam organisasi dan hubungan WLB dengan prestasi kerja (JP), pergantian pekerja (ET), sifat hubungan interpersonal di antara rakan sekerja (IR) dan kawalan pekerjaan (JC) sebagai faktor moderator. Inilah faktor-faktor yang dibincangkan untuk menyiasat amalan dan budaya keseimbangan kerja-kehidupan yang berjaya dalam organisasi. Pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui borang soal selidik google yang diedarkan kepada pekerja dari pelbagai firma pembinaan di KL. Seramai 159 responden dikumpulkan. Analisis deskriptif dijalankan untuk objektif 1, sementara analisis model persamaan struktur Partial Least-Square dilaksanakan untuk objektif 2 & 3 melalui perisian Smart-PLS. Hasil dari kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa tahap penerapan WLB di firma pembinaan masih rendah dan memerlukan pembaikan. Hubungan faktor yang dikaji menunjukkan bahawa terdapat kesan antara WLB dengan JP, ET & IR sementara JC tidak mempunyai kesan moderator terhadap hubungan faktor yang dinyatakan. Penyelidikan lebih lanjut mengenai pengaruh JC terhadap WLB boleh dilakukan kelak. Dengan itu, penyelidikan ini dapat dimanfaatkan oleh pengurusan sumber organisasi untuk membantu syarikat mereka memanfaatkan sepenuhnya faktor-faktor ini dengan menggunakan inisiatif kerja / kehidupan untuk mendapatkan kelebihan daya saing di pasaran. Ini kerana keseimbangan kerja-kehidupan selalu menjadi titik fokus mereka yang berminat dalam kualiti kehidupan kerja dan kaitannya dengan kualiti hidup yang lebih luas.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	TITLE	PAGE
	DECLARATION	iii
	DEDICATION	iv
	ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	v
	ABSTRACT	vi
	ABSTRAK	vii
	TABLE OF CONTENTS	viii
	LIST OF TABLES	xii
	LIST OF FIGURES	xiii
	LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	xiv
	LIST OF SYMBOLS	xv
	LIST OF APPENDICES	xvi
CHAPTER 1	INTRODUCTION	1
1.1	Introduction	1
1.2	Background of study	1
1.3	Problem Statement	3
1.4	Research Aim	5
1.5	Research Objective	6
1.6	Hypothesis of the research	6
1.7	Scope of study	7
1.8	Significances of study	7
1.9	Definition of Key Terms	8
1.10	Organisation of Chapters	9
CHAPTER 2	LITERATURE REVIEW	11
2.1	Introduction	11
2.2	Work-Life Balance	11
2.3	Work-life balance in construction sector	14

2.4	Job control	16
2.5	Job performance	18
2.6	Employee turnover	19
2.7	Nature of interpersonal relationship amongst colleague	20
2.8	Hypotheses Development	22
2.8.1	Work-life balance and job performance	23
2.8.2	Work-life balance and employee turnover	24
2.8.3	Work-life balance and nature of interpersonal relationship amongst colleague	24
2.8.4	Moderating effect of job control on the relationship between work-life balance and job performance	25
2.8.5	Moderating effect of job control on the relationship between work-life balance and employee turnover	26
2.8.6	Moderating effect of job control on the relationship between work-life balance and nature of interpersonal relationship amongst colleague	26
2.9	Conceptual Framework	27
2.10	Summary	28
CHAPTER 3	RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	29
3.1	Introduction	29
3.2	Research Methods	29
3.3	Data Collection Method	31
3.4	Quantitative Approach	31
3.5	Sampling Design	32
3.6	Pilot study	32
3.7	Questionnaire Distribution	33
3.8	Research Questions	34
3.9	Descriptive Analysis	35
3.10	Partial Least Square (PLS) Approach	36
3.11	Summary	36

CHAPTER 4	RESULT AND DISCUSSION	37
4.1	Introduction	37
4.2	Demographic profile of the respondents	37
4.3	Work-life balance practices (Objective 1)	42
4.4	Framework Model Analysis	43
4.4.1	Validity and Reliability test	46
4.4.2	Goodness of Fit and Model Significance	50
4.4.2.1	R-squared (R^2)	50
4.4.2.2	Predictive Relevance (Q^2)	51
4.5	Relationship analysis between the independent and dependent variables	52
4.5.1	Assessment of Significance Relationship of The Structural Model	52
4.5.2	Hypothesis Testing	53
4.6	Relationship between variables and moderator	54
4.6.1	Job Control as Moderating Effect	55
4.6.2	Hypothesis Testing	56
4.7	Summary	57
CHAPTER 5	CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS	59
5.1	Introduction	59
5.2	Work-life Balance Practices (Research Objective 1)	59
5.2.1	The level of adoption of work-life balance among construction firms	60
5.3	Relationship assessments (Research Objective 2 & 3)	61
5.3.1	Relationship analysis between the independent and dependent variables	61
5.3.2	Relationship between variables and moderator	62
5.4	Limitation of study	63
5.5	Contribution of the study	63
5.6	Recommendations	64
5.7	Implications of study	64
5.8	Summary	65

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE NO.	TITLE	PAGE
Table 3.1	Cronbach alpha of each variables	33
Table 3.2	Summary of research questions, data collection procedure and data analysis method	34
Table 4.1	Age group of respondents	39
Table 4.2	Home living locations	39
Table 4.3	Location of workplace	40
Table 4.4	Weekly working hours	41
Table 4.5	Utilization of employee leave	41
Table 4.6	Work-life balance practices adopted by construction firms	43
Table 4.7	Description of questionnaire	45
Table 4.8	Items measured for analysis	48
Table 4.9	Construct reliability and validity test	49
Table 4.10	Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio of correlations (HTMT)	50
Table 4.11	Coefficients of determination (R^2) and adjusted R^2 (R^2 adjusted)	51
Table 4.12	Predictive relevance (Q^2)	51
Table 4.13	Significance testing result of the structural model path coefficient	53
Table 4.14	Summary of hypothesis testing (H1 to H3)	54
Table 4.15	Path coefficients for job control moderation interaction analysis	56
Table 4.16	Summary of hypothesis testing (H4 to H6)	57

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE NO.	TITLE	PAGE
Figure 2.1	Conceptual Framework for this study	27
Figure 3.1	Methodology of the study	30
Figure 4.1	Gender of respondents	38
Figure 4.2	Academic Qualification of respondents	38
Figure 4.3	Respondents service to their employers	40
Figure 4.4	Reasoning of utilizing less than 8 days of employee leave benefit	42
Figure 4.5	Path model analysis (Smart-PLS)	44
Figure 4.6	Reiteration of path model analysis	47
Figure 4.7	Moderating effect path model analysis	55

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

WLB	-	Work-Life Balance
JP	-	Job Performance
ET	-	Employee Turnover
IR	-	Interpersonal Relationship
JC	-	Job Control
AVE	-	Average variance extracted
SSO	-	Mean value prediction
SSE	-	Prediction error when using the model prediction

LIST OF SYMBOLS

α	-	Cronbach Alpha
R^2	-	R-Square
Q^2	-	Predictive Relevance
p	-	Significance value

LIST OF APPENDICES

APPENDIX	TITLE	PAGE
Appendix A	Questionnaire	75

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This chapter will address the context of the research, the problem statement, the purpose of the study, the goals of the study, the study hypothesis, the scope of the study, the importance of the study and the arrangement of chapters on work-life balance practices amongst construction employees in Malaysia.

1.2 Background of study

Work-Life Balance (WLB) is both a relational structure and a debate. It tends to be either defined as a personal perspective or a desire, with a particular emphasis on time-squeezed white-collar employment, or used as a term to describe methods, practices or policy initiatives in the workforce that aim to enhance those individual experiences (Lewis & Beauregard, 2018). It is no stranger that having a WLB is high demand in this working era. There are many organisations that have acknowledged WLB as part of their organisation culture and as a core of the organisation welfare. Practicing policies such as flexible working hours, seasonal time-off, leaving on-time are among the attraction of having a work-life balance in an organisation. The term 'work-life balance' has gained popularity in public disclosure. To some, having a work life balance is to be able to have a satisfaction in their job despite the late hours clocked in, to others, it is the added wellness benefits (i.e. flexible working hours, parental leave etc).

There is no single definition of the word WLB. In particular, various and intertwined WLB ideologies within organisations and even among academics is complex and changing over time and space (Lewis, Gambles, & Rapopot, 2007). With that, what is termed as “balance”? This has become a topic across a number of professional researchers (Lewis, Anderson, Lyonette, Payne, & Wood, 2016). It was originally perceived by the researcher as suggesting a low level of tension between work and non-work demands (Wayne, Butts, Casper, & Allen, 2015). However, it also means an expectation of fair involvement in work and non-work tasks.

Organisations on a global scale are moving towards a culture of WLB for their workforce. Policies such as flexible working arrangements, seasonal time-off, adequate parental leaves, study leaves and many more are being practiced worldwide in numerous large and medium-sized businesses. In Australia, studies have shown that the implementation of reducing the average weekly working hours from 48 hours to 40 hours has impacted the workforce to have a more work-life balance within the organisation and community.

Work-life balance is a modern Western term used to describe the influence of the work and life realms of employees. Cultural gaps occur in the definition of this term and are not well known in Malaysia (Lakshmi, 2013). The idea of work-life balance is relatively fresh here. This is an environment where there is a shortage of understanding within the organisation and not enough knowledgeable workers that are bold enough to express this culture. While certain companies promote their strategies and initiatives in terms of a balanced work lifestyle, the ideology they represent may not be acceptable or desirable to other administrators at the job level who implicitly influence corporate behaviour and culture. This is the society that requires a lot of attention and information exchange to bring an end to the situation. In that regard, several multinational corporations in Malaysia have started to mould their workers into a work-life balance culture. Their wellness programs include having a flexible working arrangement, the ability to ‘work from home’ when necessary, extended maternity and paternity leaves, special days off, no need of a medical leaves and many more. There is a great deal of confidence in these

organisations between workers and managers to maintain that business as usual and their job is always accountable.

Despite that, these multinational corporations do not necessarily include all the working sector. There is a deficiency of work-life balance practice among construction companies in Malaysia (Subramaniam & Selvaratnam, 2010) (Jaharuddin & Zainol, 2019). Balancing a good profession with a daunting timeline project can be difficult, as it can influence workplace satisfaction and a work-life balance. In fact, lack of support from the company can contribute to a greater struggle for a work-life balance. This study will assess the work-life balance practices in the construction's firms located in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. This study will examine the level of adoption of WLB in the organisation, the relationship of WLB with job control, job performance, employee turnover and the nature of interpersonal relationship amongst colleague. These are among many factors that help shape a successful work-life balance practice and culture in an organisation.

1.3 Problem Statement

Employment is always given preference over all else is important in life. Our ability to succeed socially would make us lay aside our own well-being. Developing a healthy workplace balance or work-life fusion is essential, however, not only for maximizing our physiological, emotional and intellectual well-being, but also for our future. A good work-life balance has many good impacts, including reduced stress, a decreased risk of burnout and a better sense of well-being. This helps not just employees, but also enterprises. Work-life balance is not so much about dividing the hours of the day equally between work and personal life, but also about having the flexibility to do something in your professional life, while still providing time and energy to enjoy your personal life.

A survey of which cities around the world advocated the most cohesive work-life balance undertaken by the US-based mobile access technology firm Kisi (2019) found that the top-ranked cities were Helsinki, Munich, Oslo, Hamburg & Stockholm. Unfortunately, Kuala Lumpur was ranked last (40th) out of the 40 cities included. Wong's paper, published in *The Star* in 2019, notes that the data analysed were focused on work intensity, institutional support, regulations and sustainability. As a result, cities were ranked in order of their performance in promoting a work-life balance for their people. The report reveals that Kuala Lumpur has the second largest number of people (about 22%) working 48 hours or more per week with an average working time of 46 hours a week. Compared to Oslo, where the number of hours employed is 38.9 per week, followed by Sydney and Melbourne at 39.8 per week. The 20-factor index listed the top 40 metropolises around the world that not only recognize the importance of work-life balance, but both specifically and implicitly encourage it through legislation and economic resources.

The disparity between recognizing and fostering work-life balance awareness is unparalleled. Lack of awareness of a work-life balance may lead to stress, mental illness, depression, depletion of health and many more. This may affect the job performance and job satisfaction of the employees. Which then shapes the environment of the working condition and the industry culture in understanding and acknowledging a work-life balance practice and culture. A research by Dlamini et al (2019) on work-life balance practices in the construction industry in Swaziland found that issues such as family tension, emotional fatigue and job frustration have a negative effect on the organisation and success of projects due to lack of work-life balance practices among construction firms. A research near to home by Wong et al (2017) reveals that there is a supportive link between respect for managers, support for colleagues and flexible job conditions to maintain a stronger work-life situation. However, this findings of this study could not be generalized specifically towards construction industry as the sample studied were on multiple service sectors.

There are many work-life balance factors being discussed by researchers worldwide. The factor of job control as a moderating variable would enhance and aid in achieving work-life balance practices. With having job control, factors such as job performance will be more effective, less employee turnover and a better culture of interpersonal relationship amongst employee can be taken into consideration as a work-life balance factor to achieve achieve (Razak, Yusof, Azidin, Latif, & Ismail, 2014). De Lange et al (2003) stated that job control is often associated to a healthy well-being at work, such as decreased stress, fatigue, and burn-out / tiredness. The level of job control or expertise is seen to have the biggest effect on an employee's performance. A research demonstrates that the influences of the work environment have a significant impact and influence on the success of the project within the organisation and reflect the job performance of the employees (Abdul Razak, Jaafar, Abdullah, & Muhammad, 2006). Furthermore, high employee turnover is a result of a higher strain contributed to the disparity between work and personal life (Kumara & Fasana, 2018). In addition, a contributing factor into having a work-life balance is by valuing interpersonal relationships between employees in an organisation by growing employee engagement, creating positive and creative environments which implicitly reduce the intention of turnovers (Berman, West, & Richter, Jr., 2002). As such, the willingness of workers to achieve work-life balance with organisational encouragement will contribute to greater dedication to work, stronger engagement and improved job performance. This study aims to shed lights on the importance of work-life balance practices amongst construction employees in Malaysia.

1.4 Research Aim

This research's aim is to investigate the work-life balance practices amongst construction employees in Malaysia. This study is essential as it would be an eye-opening awareness to the construction industry how there is lack of work-life balance practices amongst construction firms in Malaysia especially in Kuala Lumpur and it has impacted the employees' view in regards to having work-life balance as part of their career prospect.

1.5 Research Objective

The main research objective is to examine the relationship between work-life balance practices in construction firms and their employees' satisfaction on its work-life balance factors. The objectives below are the specific objective of this study.

1. To study the level of adoption of work-life balance among construction firms in Kuala Lumpur.
2. To determine the effect of WLB on job performance, employee turnover and nature of interpersonal relationships amongst colleagues
3. To examine the moderating effect of job control on the relationship between work-life balance and job performance, employee turnover and nature of interpersonal relationships amongst colleagues.

1.6 Hypothesis of the research

The hypothesis of the research is stated below:

- H1: There is a relationship between work-life balance and job performance
- H2: There is a relationship between work-life balance and employee turnover
- H3: There is a relationship between work-life balance and nature of interpersonal relationship amongst colleague in an organisation
- H4: The perceived job control that moderates the relationship between work-life balance and job performance
- H5: The perceived job control that moderates the relationship between work-life balance and employee turnover
- H6: The perceived job control that moderates the relationship between work-life balance and nature of interpersonal relationship amongst colleague

1.7 Scope of study

The scope of work for this research paper will cover the work-life balance practices adoption in construction firms in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. In this research we will focus on the relationship of work-life balance with a moderating factor of the perceived job control towards job performance, employee turnovers and the nature of interpersonal relationships amongst colleagues. This research process began with a literature review and questionnaire design. An online survey will be distributed to various employees working in the construction sector. This study specifically aims towards employees working in the construction sector which differ in firms e.g. developers, contractor, suppliers, consultant firm etc.

1.8 Significances of study

While living in an age in which unparalleled advancements in technology and communication have been made, we have neglected to tackle the most important component of changing our daily lives, to strike a balance between work and leisure. According to a report by Harvard and Stanford scholars, work stress leads to at least 120,000 deaths each year with an approximate cost of USD190 billion (MYR 794 billion). This statistic reveals that it is not just individuals or employees, but also companies that employ them to ensure that the expectations of their employees are satisfied. It is the product of a more competitive economic and healthier population.

The goal of this study is to introduce knowledge of work-life balance practices to the construction sector. With fast progress in digitization and timeline projects, there is a need for further work and awareness-raising on this condition mostly for the well-being of people and other counterparts (i.e. psychology & economy).

1.9 Definition of Key Terms

The work-life balance (WLB) is not simply defined by the time split between work-life and non-work-life. It must be done by mitigating the tension between these two realms by juggling various functions and tasks (Lewis & Beauregard, 2018).

Job control (JC) or judgment versatility refers to the degree to which a person thinks or perceives that he or she can assert leverage over the tasks he or she faces and is most commonly operationalized through the construction of competence independence and decision-making authority. The competence discretion component often tackles concerns relating to the diversity of activities, while the decision-making power component relates to the capacity to make independent choices and to have a voice in what happens at the workplace (Pinto, Dawood, & Pinto, 2014).

Job Performance (JP) refers to the act of performing a job. Jobs performance is a method of achieving an aim or of establishing goals within a career, role or company, but not the direct outcomes of tasks carried out within a job. Labour output is not a single occurrence, but a "complex activity." Work production is simply a behaviour and a separate individual from the outcomes of a given job, leading to progress and quality (Campbell, 1990).

The turnover (ET) of workforce is the rotation of workers across the labour market; between businesses, positions and occupations; and between employment and unemployment (Abassi & Hollman, 2000). The phrase "turnover" is defined by Price (1977) as the ratio of the total number of members of the organisation left over during the time deemed to be divided by the average number of persons in that organisation over the period.

Interpersonal relationship (IR) are social associations, connections, or affiliations between two or more people. In the workplaces, interpersonal relationships are day-to-day encounters between colleagues or supervisors and employees. These relationships are a common part of the work atmosphere and are generally pleasant and creative, but also a cause of friction and dissatisfaction (Obakpolo, *Improving Interpersonal Relationship in Workplaces*, 2015). The nature of the interpersonal relationship between colleagues is the degree of mutual contact and mechanisms within the organisation.

1.10 Organisation of Chapters

Chapter 1 presented the background to the study, the main topic of the research. It addressed the aims of the research, the objectives of the study, the research hypothesis, the scope of the study, the significance of the study and the structure of the chapters.

Chapter 2 studied the related literature, including novels, journal publications, magazines, web journals and records of prior experiments in the area of work-life balance practices, job control, job performance, nature of interpersonal relationship amongst employee which are amongst the factor accommodating work-life balance practices.

Chapter 3 addressed the research methods, that involved a process for gathering data, and will be a quantitative approach. In addition, Chapter 3 addressed sampling structure, survey questionnaires, questionnaire respondents and distribution of questionnaires.

Chapter 4 discussed the data analysis of the study. Demographic profile of the respondents was categorized. Reliability and validity test were performed to determine the internal consistency of the questions. Statistical analysis was conducted for second and third objectives.

Chapter 5 discussed the findings and recommendation to improve this study. Then, conclusions were drawn from the research and several ideas for related future work were suggested. Following these concluding chapters were appendices which included the survey questionnaire used.

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