

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WORK HOURS AND MANAGEMENT  
SUPPORTS TOWARDS WORK-LIFE BALANCE: A STUDY IN  
CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY

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## ABSTRACT

Work-life balance (WLB) is one of an effective ways to boost up the working spirit of the employee in order for them to work effectively. When they get the right and adequate amount of WLB, employee will contribute more in their job performance. Thus, the organization will receive positive impacts which are; success and growth of the organization itself. Work hour (WH) and management support (MS) is one of the effective catalysts in increasing WLB among the workers. WLB is not solely lies on employee's shoulder but on employers as well. Nature of work in construction industry have different types of works, continuous and uncertainty in the projects. Therefore, these have created conflict in terms of work hours (WH) and management supports (MS) especially to the white collar workers. It is vital to know the level of WLB received by the workers and the relationship of WH and MS towards WLB among the construction workers. In this study, the independent variables are work hours and management support while the dependent variable is work-life balance. All the data were analyzed using SPSS such as descriptive analysis, Pearson correlation and regression analysis. The findings show positive relationship and moderate correlation between work hour and WLB. Whilst correlation for management support towards work-life balance shown a positive relationship and strong correlation for emotional and moderate correlation for instrumental. Other than that, work hours and management support have influence towards WLB.

## ABSTRAK

Keseimbangan kerja-hidup (WLB) adalah salah satu cara yang berkesan untuk meningkatkan semangat pekerja untuk bekerja dengan lebih efektif. apabila mereka mendapat WLB yang berkesan, maka pekerja akan menyumbang dengan lebih efektif kepada prestasi kerja mereka. Organisasi akan mendapat impak yang positif iaitu kejayaan organisasi dan perkembangan yang baik. Masa kerja (WH) dan sokongan pengurusan (MS) adalah salah satu instrumen yang berkesan untuk meningkatkan WLB di kalangan pekerja. WLB bukan terletak pada bebanan pekerja sahaja bahkan di bahu pekerja juga. Keadaan persekitaran kerja di dalam industri pembinaan mempunyai pelbagai cabang bidang pekerjaan yang luas dan pelbagai. Justeru itu, akan wujud konflik dari segi masa kerja dan sokongan pengurusan akibat daripada kepelbagaian itu terutamanya kepada para pekerja kolar putih. Adalah penting untuk kita mengetahui bagaimana tahap WLB dan hubungannya dengan masa kerja dan sokongan pengurusan di kalangan pekerja di dalam syarikat pembinaan. Di dalam kajian ini, pemboleh ubah tidak bersandar adalah masa kerja (WH) dan sokongan pengurusan (MS). Pemboleh ubah bersandar pula adalah keseimbangan kerja-hidup. Di dalam kajian ini, WH dikatakan mempunyai hubungan yang positif dan signifikan dengan WLB. Sementara itu, untuk MS dikatakan mempunyai hubungan yang positif dan sederhana tetapi tidak signifikan dengan WLB. WH dan MS juga didapati tidak mempunyai pengaruh ke atas WLB. Data dianalisis dengan menggunakan SPSS bagi menganalisis data deskriptif, korelasi Pearson dan analisis regresi. Dapatan kajian mendapati terdapat hubungan yang positif dan korelasi sederhana antara masa kerja (WH) terhadap keseimbangan kerja-hidup (WLB). Bagi sokongan pengurusan (MS) terhadap keseimbangan kerja-hidup mendapati terdapat hubungan yang positif dan korelasi kuat bagi emotional dan sederhana bagi instrumental. Akhir sekali, WH dan MS mempunyai pengaruh terhadap WLB.

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**LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

<b>WLB</b>	-	Work- Life Balance
<b>WH</b>	-	Work Hour
<b>MS</b>	-	Management Support
<b>SD</b>	-	Standard Deviation

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Overview

It was said that in 1930's, the work-life programmes was existed. One of the largest manufacturing companies of ready-to-eat cereal, Kellogg's, was the first company that structured the work-life program in the company (Lockwood, 2003). The company was aware of the work-life needs of its employees and had made some change in its human resource system during the Great Depression in late 1930's. Kellogg's instituted the six-hour day, four times shifts of work to replace the eight hours of working day, three times shifts. This changed has resulted in high employee morale, efficiency and also productivity. After that, during 1960's and 1970's, the practices of work-life were focusing on issues related to struggle of working mothers with their work demands and domestic home chores (Kadarko *et al.* 2014).

In the 1980's, many pioneering organizations have recognized the value and needs for their female employees. Organizations such as IBM and Merck have changed its internal workplace policies, benefits and procedures (Kadarko *et al.* 2014). This include the maternity and paternity leave, employee assistance program (EAP), flexi-time, home-based work and also child care referral. Back in 1990's, work-life balance have been solidified as the vital issues in any organization, employee and also employers itself. The awareness of the work-life balance as the

basic referral for any future employee in choosing a job has also increased (Bird, 2006).

This chapter discussed the background of the study as well as the problem statement, research objectives and research questions. Apart of that, the scope and limitation of this study, significance and operational definition of this study will also be discussed.

## **1.2 Background of the Study**

The good and well-coordinated responsibilities management between work and family can be referred as the work-life balance (Lingard and Francis, 2008). The importance of having live in a state of equilibrium between work and life does not lies only at the employee but as well as on the shoulder of the employer. As mentioned by Naithani (2010), there is a need to have employees with improved work-life balance during the current situation of economic. During this situation, employees tend to increase their job performance in order to contribute for more meaningfully to organizational success and growth. When they experienced balance in their work and family responsibilities, they will increase their job performance in order to contribute for more meaningful organizational success and growth. Other than that, they will not jeopardizing their safety, health and well-being (Organization of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) 2014).

Many factors contributed to the problems of work-life balance. One of the known sources of work-life balance problems is overworked and had been coined only during the last 20 years (Roberts, 2007). Not only that, there are previous studies mentioned that employee is the scarce and valuable resources of the organization (Turner *et al.* 2009). Importantly, the changing in workforce

demographics also contributes in finding the state of equilibrium in the work and life (Lingard and Francis, 2009).

Apparently, the pressures and demand on workload perceived by the employee had put a greater demand on their personal care and family responsibility. Lingard and Francis (2009) mentioned that one of the factors that can be linked to the work life balance is mainly the working hours which is linked to construction industry where the workers are expected to work long hours due to demanding working environment.

This statement has been supported by the research conducted by Hyman and Summers (2014) who stated that nature of work and physical and psychological demands will put on employees in a situation whereby they are unable to exert any control over work-domestic demands.

There are also concerns on weekend work and irregular work hours. In this industry, it is not a surprise that the employees also need to work on non-standards work schedules, including to work on weekend (Lingard and Francis, 2009). Thus, it will create several outcomes of work life conflicts for instance, a study in Australian civil engineer found that work-family conflict was strongly correlated with decreased in mental health (Francis, 2003).

Not only that, it will also reduce quality of family relationships, organisational commitment, job satisfaction; by inability to give proper attention and time to non-work executive (Papalexandris and Kramar, 1997). On a survey conducted towards the bus drivers in UK, they have found a clear link between work life problems and withdrawal behaviour of colleagues as well as own behaviour and it also become a major reason of turnover (Papalexandris and Kramar, 1997).

Organization of Economic Country Development (OECD) in its better life index, as showed in its official websites,([www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org/topics/work-life-balance/2014](http://www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org/topics/work-life-balance/2014)) one of the important aspects of work-life balance is the amounts of time spent at work. They noted that long work hours may jeopardize employee's personal health, safety and increase stress. In addition, countries that have high proportion of high working hours were Turkey 43% and followed by Mexico with nearly 29% as in 2012.

New technology was expected would shorten the working hours and thus will increase the time for the employee to indulge with leisure and other personal care (Lingard and Francis, 2009). Alas, the rapid development of technology has put the employees not only to work in long hour cultures but also has interrupt their personal life as they can be contact and expected to be reachable and available outside the working hours.

### **1.3 Problem Statement**

A survey by JobStreet.com (Jobstreet, 2013) reported that 63% 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 (due to unreasonable deadlines and too much work) and mostly unpaid.

Align with the WLB practices, many employees reported that their organizations are not doing much to promote work-life balance. Other than that, out of 75% respondents mentioned that they were interrupted about work during their holidays. The finding have supported that technological advances have created a blurring between the boundaries of work and non-work (see Lewis, 2008), whereby employees may be contacted by employers at any time via emails, text messages and others. This blurring of work-life boundaries can be seen as a mechanism by which



organizations maintain their hold on employees (Fleming & Spicer 2004), which ultimately results in even more work-life interference for employees.

While work-life and family-friendly policies and legislations have made great strides in the UK, the US, and Australia (Dex & Smith, 2002), similar policies have only been actively pursued in Malaysia over the last decade on 1980. Though the country has had family-based policies, specific policies on work-life balance are scattered and largely incorporated into the general policies such as the National Policy for Women 1989, the National Social Policy 2003, the National Child Policy 2009, and the National Child Protection Policy 2009, and the National Family Policy 2010 (Ministry of Woman Development and Rural Area 2016). Action to advocate for work-life balance has only become more visible following the 1Malaysia Family First Movement under the National Blue Ocean Strategy that was launched on June 17, 2012. Under this initiative, several types of programs are planned, including those relating to family-friendly issues (Noor *et al.*, 2015).

In particular, the flexWorkLife.my program, a collaboration between the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development and TalentCorp, was launched on July 2013. This program aims to share best practices and address key issues such as governance, framework, implementation, strategy, evaluation, and impact of creating a flexible and supportive working environment.

From theoretical perspective, Theory of work-fit model by Turner (2013) that derived from the person-environment (P-E) theory (Edwards, 1996; Edwards and Cooper, 1990) can be linked to WLB. The theory posit that when an individual perceives that they have enough resources to meet other demands such that role performance is effective. In this case, the resource are work hour and management support.

Fisher (2001) stated that WLB have four components which are time, behaviour, strain and energy. Issues of WLB among construction workers were

mostly emphasizing on the working hour's causes by job demands and inability to perform domestic roles which was the behaviour. Unlike any others economic industry, the nature of construction industry are discontinuous, dispersed, diverse and distinct (Tan and Pheng, 1996). Thus, the need to work on demanding working hour can reduce the balance between work and life. This is supported by the fact from surveyed data by Statistic Bureau of Malaysia showed that the gross output of construction sector posted a strong growth of 19.3 per cent in 2013. The strong growth was supported by the on-going projects under the Economic Transformation Programme (ETP).

In the data, it was stated that the total number of persons engaged in this industry also increased 4.7% by 1,075,950 persons in 2013. Data provided by Bureau of Statistic Malaysia shown an upward trend for Malaysia GDP from year 2013 until January 2016. At the beginning of year 2016, the GDP was RM11,992 billion. This have shown the importance of construction industry in Malaysia as one of the main contributor for Malaysia GDP. This shows that construction industry as one of the economic booster for the nation. Thus, the burden on the employee's shoulder have been heavier from any other industry.

Other than the growth of employment, the variety of the characteristics and skills base of the workers in constructions sector is probably wider than any other sectors. Types of professions and talents for instance are the town planners, architect, quantity surveyor, civil and building services engineers and many more (Walker, 2011). Every job will have a different range of responsibility and own personality type and attitudes to their work.

Working on longer hour and less support from the management have an impact towards employee's work-life balance. Literary, there is a need to know about how and why individuals engage in different patterns of long work hours. Lingard *et al.*(2010) stated that some people may work on long hours due to meet the work deadlines.

Other research had suggested that working on long hours may have effect on other aspects of an individual's life. In a study conducted in UK stated that, 80 percent of the workforce would like to spend more time with their family while 66 percent said that job demands sometimes interfered with their family life (Crompton and Lyonette, 2007).

Mainemelis (2001), on the other hand mentioned that others employee work long hours due to enjoying and absorbing the job. Some research also agreed with the willingness and enjoy to do the job as the main reason why some managers and professionals work long hours (Hochschild, 1997; Lewis, 2003; Hewlett and Buck Luce, 2006). For them, the positive benefits that could possible arise when working long hours is job and career satisfaction, seem to outweigh any disadvantages (Burke, 1999).

According to Lingard and Francis (2008) the rapid increased and change of work and demographic shifts have resulted a 'time squeeze' for family who have been in the midst of juggling in between paid jobs and family goal and responsibilities especially for dual earner family. Female entrants mostly face disadvantaged when entering professional and managerial roles within the construction industry. On the other hand, male entrants are likely resembles the breadwinner-homemaker division whereby they own adaptive strategies in their job roles.

The result of high and excessive job role demands of the construction industry was a deciding factor in unequal sharing of domestic and caring responsibilities for most couples. The inability to provide regular and reasonable hours of employment in the construction industry is likely to cause most of the female and younger male employee entrants who want to have more hands on experience of parenting left the industry.

The result showed a significant discrepancy on structural where the job schedule demands and expectations of the employee's availability to work on excessive work hours and weekend work in construction industry is not align with the social and demographic changes that occurring within the Australian workforce. Thus, it creates imbalance between work role and domestic life role.

Lingard (2014) explored the work conditions and circumstances that impact the worker's work-life experiences in the small-to-medium sized enterprise (SMEs) in the Australian construction industry. The findings showed that work-life research undertaken in the large construction firms may not be representative of the work-life experiences of workers in small or medium sized construction firms.

From the Australia Work and Life Index (AWALI) survey data on 2014; there are significant differences between the work-life experiences of construction workers in different sizes of companies. Highest AWALI scores indicates that the higher levels of work-life interference in firms and the one who scores it was the firms that have employed workers between 16 and 99 workers (mid-size range) have lower work-life balance.

Reasons that cause the high AWALI scores among workers in this size are because; (a) unpredictable nature of construction work, (b) high job demands, (c) high pressure on workers to work long and extra hours, and (d) lack of formal human resource management practices. Through interviews with the participants, the white collar workers described their work environment characteristic by high levels of trust and close relationship between managers and workers. Informal work-life support work well and perceived to have a beneficial effect.

This give the idea that the flat organizational structures work well in small firms as the result of close relationship and informal work-life support. During the transition from small to medium sized firms, the scarcity of resources will continue to force and '*ad hoc*' approach to support the work-life balance. As the managerial

prerogative plays a critical role in determining access to work-life support, it will inherent risk as the relationships become less personal and more hierarchical, it will rise the inequality.

Turner *et al.*, (2009) in their findings showed that barriers for WLB in construction industry are (i) project culture,(ii) project resourcing, and (iii) schedule demands of the construction stages whilst the participants believed that way to facilitate WLB in the project requires, (i) "project alliance" delivery model, (ii) flexibility of working hours and (iii) project management team's support.

There are several gaps which have been found in the study on work-life balance. For instance, overemployment can occur either when the actual work hours increase or desired number of hour decrease, while underemployment can occur when either actual number of hours decreases or the desired number of hours increase (Reynolds and Aletraris, 2010). This is a subtle difference but it may have a large impact on employee's well-being. For instance, it is possible that the effect of work hour discrepancy on absence is stronger among employees whose hour discrepancy is due to actual hours fluctuations than among those employees whose hour discrepancy is due to the changes in personal preferences.

Well-conducted intervention studies is needed so that researchers can explore the effect of different kinds of change in work time arrangements and for studies that compare the effects of different kinds of nonstandard work arrangements (eg, different kinds of shift arrangements and compressed work hours).

As stated by Kompier and Kristensen (2001), intervention research is not easy to conduct in a methodological sensible manner. Those studies should be supplemented by process evaluations with systematic documentation of the change process and the implementation of the intervention (Semmer (2006); Neilsen *et al.* (2006)).

There is also some vitality to include a wide range of outcome measures, such as effects on work life balance and other social outcomes, well-being, health, absence, work environment, and, if possible, also productivity, injuries, errors and quality of service or product (Colligan and Rosa (1990)).

In addition, effects on some outcomes may be positive, while effects on others may simultaneously be negative. Other than that, the need for more well-designed and well-conducted studies of the consequences of long hours, overtime work, and nonstandard hours for children's development, performance, and well-being and for marital-quality satisfaction (Lingard and Francis, 2009).

Study based at Australia construction industry put a high emphasis on reducing working hour and days. The study mentioned that the intervention should include the managerial 'decision maker' in managing, supporting and implementing the intervention. (Townsend *et al.* 2011).

Lingard *et al.* (2012) stated few study has been investigated about why work hours were negatively correlated with WLB in the construction sample. They stated that by adopting a more fine-grained analysis of the impact of work time demands on work-family interaction to ascertain whether substantive difference in experiences arising from formal and informal hours and/or standard.

Pasamar (2015) stated the vitality to furnish more details concerning the components of work-life (WL) culture (i.e, support received from the supervisor or colleagues or the gender attitudes in organization, different target groups of employees and their relationship with WL benefits). The study also highlighted the importance consideration to take employee point of view to enhance understanding of the gap between the availability and use of WL benefits.

#### **1.4 Research Objectives**

The researcher has proposed these objectives of this study which as follow:

1. To measure the level of work-life balance experienced by the employees.
2. To identify the relationship between variables.
  - (a) To identify the relationship between working hours and work-life balance in the construction organization.
  - (b) To identify the relationship between management support and work-life balance in the construction organization.
3. To identify the influence of work hours and management support towards work-life balance.

## **1.5 Research Questions**

The focus of this study is to have better understanding the relationship of working hours and management support towards work-life balance (WLB). In the previous discussion, work-life balance (WLB) practices have become the key success to the job performance especially in the construction sectors. The following research questions will be asking and imply in the construction companies in Johor Bahru area as one of the city with a rapid development:

1. What is the level of work-life balance experienced by employees in the construction organization?
2. What is the relationship between working hours and work-life balance in the construction organization?
3. What is the relationship between management supports with work-life balance (WLB)?
4. Does work hours and management support influence work-life balance?

## 1.6 Scope and Limitation of Study

The context of this study is the work life balance in the construction companies. Construction sector is one of the main contributors on Malaysia Gross Domestic Product (GDP) as well as in 11<sup>th</sup> Malaysia Plan.

Thus, the involvement in this sector will generate higher GDP for Malaysia in the future for the nation growth. The intended populations for this study are employees working construction industry, specifically the within Johor in private sector.

According to Bureau of Statistic Malaysia, the private owned construction projects (POCP) continued to dominate in 2013, contributing 75.6 per cent (RM98.1 billion) as compared to 73.4 per cent (RM79.5 billion) in 2012. This was mainly driven by a strong growth registered by civil engineering (45.3%) and residential sub-sectors (25.7%). Apart from that, this sector is mostly used in the previous study related to the work life conflicts (Lingard and Francis (2009); Turner *et al.*(2013).

The research focused on;

- a) Data were collected at construction company that undergo project in Johor Bahru area mainly at Iskandar Regional Development area. This is due for the rapid development happened here and for the researcher convenience.
- b) The selected company are public listed in Kuala Lumpur Stock Exchange (KLSE) and a well-known company.
- c) The research focused on working hours, management support and work-life balance perceived by the employees.



Data were collected from the construction companies in Johor Bahru area only. Thus, the outcomes of this study depicted the situation in the stated location only and at the stated company only. The study do not covered other states in Malaysia.

This study selected Johor as the location for data collection is due to the practical reasons of convenience, as well as rapid development happen here in Johor. Bureau of Statistic Malaysia reported that Johor was the number one contributor in gross output for year 2013 in southern region in Malaysia.

## **1.7 Significance of Study**

The rationale of this study is to examine the relationship of the working hours and managements support towards the work-life balance in the construction field. The achievement will encompass both strains and performance of employee as the parameters.

The reason is that the equilibrium state of life in personal and career of an employee has played an important function in the development of organization. The well managed work-life balance can enhance the competitive position and improve the business performance of the company worldwide regardless the scale, as well as to the construction organizations (Hamizan, 2014).

The findings of this study will encourage the organization in the construction sector to implement the best work-life balance practices and intervention in order to improve the company productivity, generate wealth revenue and ultimately improving Malaysia economic development.

Having able to counter the work life imbalance among the employees will brings more competitive advantages for the company to implement the best work-life balance practices in their work system.

## **1.8 Operational Definitions**

Operational definition is a description of variables, terms or object in term of the specific process or set of validation tests used to determine its existence, duration, and quantity. At the level of operational definition, the study has specified and proposed the elements of the definitions of construct that will be used. The elements are as follows.

### **1.8.1 Work-life Balance (WLB)**

Work-life balance was defined as a state of equilibrium whereby the demands of job and personal life are equal. Greenblatt (2002) described WLB as levels of conflict between work and non-work demands that is acceptable. Therefore in this research, work-life balance that will be study is focusing on four source of components (Fisher, 2001); time, behaviour, strain and energy.

### **1.8.2 Work Hours**

Personal control of time imply the choice to work harder, prioritize other things on different aspects of life and their own responsibilities in achieving 'balance', overlooking structural, cultural, and practical constraints and include the

differences in gender in these constraints (Caproni, 2004). Therefore, focused items were management policies, personal interest, and assessment tools.

### **1.8.3 Management Support**

Management support is defined as the support that the employee received from the upper managerial (Doolen and Worley, 2006). Focused items were emotional and instrumental support.

### **1.8.4 Construction Company**

In this study, construction company is defined as construction industry that build buildings with the use of highly technological machines, material and components. This study mainly focusing on construction company with G1 contractor license as listed in CIDB.

### **1.8.5 Managers position**

The study focus on managers position is the managers in site ranging from senior project manager, project manager, maintainance and engineering (M&E) manager, and safety & health manager.

### **1.8.6 Executive position**

Executive position is focusing on M&E (maintenance and engineering) staff, safety & health staff, architect, surveyors, quality assurance and control staff, and also civil resident engineer staff.

## **1.9 Organization of the Thesis**

Chapter one discussed regarding the background of the study as well as the problem statement, research objectives and research questions. Apart of that, the scope and limitation of this study, significance and operational definition also have been discussed.

In following chapter two, the study reviewed several relevant literature related to the definitions of work-life balances (WLB), working hours and management support. This section also includes the theory, past study on each variables, findings from the various authors regarding the relationship of working hours and management support towards work-life balance.

Further extend, this chapter will also include the factors that lead to work-life balance, gap on work-life balance, conceptual framework and lastly portrayed the framework of this research.

On chapter three, the method and procedures of the research that used in this study will be discuss. The research design, population and sampling, research instrument as well as data analysis exercised will be discussed.

Chapter four portrayed the analysis of the data that have been collected. Chapter five provide the summary of the study, reviews, interpret the findings and implication of study and recommendation for future study.

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