

**WORK-TO-LIFE CONFLICT AND JOB STRESS AMONG NURSES AT  
HOSPITAL ENCHE' BESAR HAJJAH KALSOM, KLUANG, JOHOR :  
EXAMINING THE ROLE OF SOCIAL SUPPORT AS MODERATOR**

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ENCHE' BESAR HAJJAH KALSOM, KLUANG, JOHOR : EXAMINING THE ROLE  
OF SOCIAL SUPPORT AS MODERATOR

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## ABSTRACT

This study aimed to examine the relationship between work-to-life conflict and job stress as well as the role of social support as a moderator at Hospital Enche' Besar Hajjah Kalsom, Kluang Johor. The objective of this study are to identify the level of work-to-life conflict and job stress. In addition, the objective of this study are also to study relationship between work-to-life conflict and job stress and to determine whether social support moderate the relationship between work-to-life conflict and job stress among the nurses at Hospital Enche' Besar Hajjah Kalsom, Kluang, Johor. This study used data collection method by using questionnaires and simple random sampling. A total of 191 set of questionnaires received were analysed using Statistical Package for social Science (SPSS) 20.0 software. The findings are presented in the form of percentage and mean, the analysis of correlation and hierarchical multiple regression. The study found that nurses in the hospital experience the moderate level of work-to-life conflict and job stress. The findings also found that there is significant relationship between work-to-life conflict and job stress. Furthermore, the results show that social support was unable to moderate the relationship between work-to-life conflict and job stress among the nurses. At the end of the study, several improvement proposals submitted to reduce work-to-life conflict and job stress among the nurses as well as making recommendations for future studies.

## ABSTRAK

Kajian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji hubungan antara konflik kerja ke keluarga dan tekanan kerja serta peranan sokongan social sebagai moderator di hospital enche' besar hajjah kalsom kluang johor. Objektif kajian ini adalah mengenalpasti tahap konflik dan tahap tekanan kerja disamping untuk melihat sama ada terdapat hubungan di antara konflik dan tekanan kerja serta seterusnya mengenalpasti sama ada sokongan social bertindak sebagai moderator terhadap hubungan konflik dan tekanan kerja di kalangan jururawat di hospital enche' besar hajjah kalsom, kluang, johor. Kajian ini menggunakan kaedah pengumpulan data secara soal selidik dan menggunakan persampelan rawak mudah. Sebanyak 191 set soal selidik yang diterima telah dianalisis dengan menggunakan kaedah perisian Statistical Package for social Science(SPSS) 20.0. dapatan kajian dipersembahkan dalam bentuk peratusan dan min, analisis korelasi dan analisis regrasi. Hasil Kajian mendapati nurses di hospital mengalami tahap konflik dan tahap tekanan stress yang sederhana. Dapatan kajian juga mendapati bahawa konflik mempunyai hubungan yang significant dengan job stress. seterusnya, hasil kajian menunjukkan bahawa sokongan social tidak dapat mengurangkan konflik dan stress di kalangan nurses. Di akhir kajian ini, beberapa cadangan penambahbaikkkan dikemukakan bagi mengurangkan lagi konflik dan tekanan kerja di kalangan jururawat serta mengemukakan cadangan untuk kajian-kajian akan datang.

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1 Background of Study**

Employees are important assets to the organization because without them the organization will not be able to achieve its objectives. According to Smith (2012), employee wellbeing should be a major concern to the organization. The interdependence between employees and the organization is so significant that the organization will not be able to function as effectively as it wants without the other.

There are various factors that may affect employee wellbeing, including poor working conditions, ambiguous role and responsibility, ludicrous work demands, nonsensical working hours as well as lack of supervisory and organizational support (Fu and Shaffer,

2001; Boren, 2010). Malaysia Psychiatric Association (2006) asserts that the consequences of these factors often lead to employee job stress. In addition, according to Murphy (1995); Palmer, Cooper and Thomas (2003), high cases of depressions, turnover rate, absenteeism, signs of fatigue and anxiety are among the indicators of an unwell employee.

Job stress could be considered as a common illness faced by today's employees due to numerous disturbances and pressure at workplace. Ongori and Agolla (2008) assert that job stress is now becoming a great concern to organizations, employees and other stakeholders in organizations as a result of fast-paced working environment, as well as the fast changing technological development we are now experiencing. Furthermore, Malaysian Psychiatric Association (2006) claimed that employees often experience job stress for various reasons such as poor working condition, overwhelming work pressure, lack of incentive, lack of recognition by the management and conflicts with colleagues. Job stress also occurs when the work hours are long and inflexible. More hours are spent at work mean less time spent at home, causing a condition that researchers refer to as work-life conflict. Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) defined work-life conflict as a form of inter-role conflict in which the pressures from work and family domains are mutually incompatible. Palmer et al. (2003) contends that job stress often leads individuals to experience exhaustion, depression, as well as becoming emotionally unstable and most likely to get burnout. When employees are experiencing these conditions, conditions referred to as work-life conflict, the organization will most likely suffer if no appropriate intervention is considered and taken (Fu and Shaffer, 2001).

Thanacoody, Timothy and Gian (2009), propose that in order to control or reduce employees work-to-life conflict, social support is the key. Social Support refers to the support system and organizations may provide to its employees. This support system

usually comes in the form of emotional support (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Ahmad, 2007; Jensen, 2007), instrumental supports (Pitt-Catsouphes, Matz-Costa & MacDermind, 2007; Jensen, 2007; Thanacoody et al., 2009) or informational support (Jensen, 2007; Thanacoody et al., 2009). It is imperative that organizations provide these supports as a preventive action to avoid job stress from occurring among its employees. Wallace (2005) also found that social support can act to buffer the negative effect of job stress and work-to-life conflict. It shows social support is one of the variables which can help to reduce job stress among nurses. Therefore, the organization should emphasize social support as an important element in managing problems such as work-to-life conflict and job stress. When social support is ignored by the organization, it can give adverse effects on the performance of the organization. Welfare of nurses should be a priority because they deal with the patients which are the client of the organization. When nurses are not able to provide the best service to patients, the organization itself will receive many complaints and that hospital will earn a bad reputation among the hospitals in Malaysia.

## **1.2 Problem Statement**

Work-to-life conflict is a matter that should be of concern to every organization. Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) stated that participation in one role makes it difficult to participate in another role. Therefore, interrole conflict will occur. In fact, this is more likely to occur when the employee is married especially female (Lo, 2003). The multiple roles that the employee has to play as wife, mother and worker often increases the likelihood for job stress to happen. Work-to-life conflict can occur when there is conflict that comes from work which interrupts daily life of the employees (Greenhaus and Beutell,

1985; Fu and Shaffer, 2001). Three dimensions of work-to-life conflict are always faced by working people, particularly married people, namely time-based conflict, strain-based conflict and behavioral based conflict (Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985; Carlson et al., 2000; and Fu and Shaffer, 2001). Therefore, if the level of work-to-life conflict is out of control, it will give a significant impact to the individual and organization. Blackman and Murphy (2012) stated that work-to-life conflict caused damaging effects on essential individual outcomes and organizational outcomes. For example, Zhang, Griffeth and Fried (2012) contended that work-to-family conflict is critical and often is associated with work-related consequences such as job stress.

Job stress is highly likely to occur among workers whose jobs require them to be on-call or jobs that require them to spend more time at work than their normal working hours. Strenuous working conditions and jobs that require high demands of accuracy and precision are also among the contributing factors that cause employees to experience job stress. Hence, it is not surprising when a study indicates that nursing is Malaysia's fourth most stressful job (Parzi & Ahmad, 2011). According to Beh and Loo (2011), nurses have very demanding and strenuous working hours. On top of the high demand of accuracy and precision expected of the profession, nurses are also front liners who not only have to entertain the doctors and the patients, but also the public. Hence, at the end of their shift, they are found not only to be physically but psychologically drained as well which often affects their personal life. Hence, having nurses who have high level of job stress should be avoided because the consequences could be dire to not only to the individuals, but also the organization and the public as well.

Leka et al. (2003), Health Advocate (2009) stated that job stress happens when there is the existence of work-to-life conflict. Therefore, Allen and Armstrong (2006) found that

work-to-life conflict relates to the health and well-being of employees. Hence in this study, the relationship between work-to-life conflict and job stress is postulated. Therefore, in order to reduce or buffer the relationship between work-to-life conflict and job stress; having social support is good for help. Park, Wilson and Lee (2004) state that social support at work can be a powerful source of reducing the level of work-to-life conflict and job stress.

In addition, Md Sidin, Sambasivan & Ismail (2010), stated that many researchers generally agree that social support may moderate the relationship between these two variables. Therefore, the study also postulated that social supports will moderate the relationship between work-to-life conflict and job stress. Beh and Loo (2012) also agree that when there is a lack of social support at work, employees tend to experience job stress. Social support is claimed to consistently have a positive relationship with job stress, such that the more social support received by the employees, the lower the level of their job stress (Kato, 2008).

### **1.3 Research Question**

1.3.1 What is the level of work-to-life conflict among nurses at Hospital Enche' Besar Hajjah Kalsom, Kluang, Johor?

1.3.2 What is the level of job stress among nurses at Hospital Enche' Besar



Hajjah Kalsom, Kluang, Johor?

- 1.3.3 What is the relationship between work-to-life conflict and job stress among nurses at Hospital Enche' Besar Hajjah Kalsom, Kluang, Johor?
- 1.3.4 Does social support moderate the relationship between work-to-life conflict and job stress among nurses at Hospital Enche' Besar Hajjah Kalsom, Kluang, Johor?

#### **1.4 Research Objective**

- 1.4.1 To determine the level of work-to-life conflict among nurses at Hospital Enche' Besar Hajjah Kalsom, Kluang, Johor.
- 1.4.2 To determine the level of job stress among nurses at Hospital Enche' Besar Hajjah Kalsom, Kluang, Johor.
- 1.4.3 To determine the relationship between work-to-life conflict and job stress at Hospital Enche' Besar Hajjah Kalsom, Kluang, Johor.
- 1.4.4 To determine whether social support moderates the relationship between

work-to-life conflict and job stress at Hospital Enche' Besar Hajjah Kalsom, Kluang, Johor.

## **1.5 Hypothesis**

H1 : There is a significant relationship between work-to-life conflict and job stress among nurses at Hospital Enche' Besar Hajjah Kalsom, Kluang, Johor.

H2 : Social Support moderates the relationship between work-to-life conflict and job stress among nurses at Hospital Enche' Besar Hajjah Kalsom, Kluang, Johor.

## **1.6 Scope of Study**

The study is conducted at Hospital Enche' Besar Hajjah Kalsom, Kluang, Johor. Respondents of the study will be nurses working at Hospital Enche' Besar Hajjah Kalsom. There are 379 nurses currently working at Hospital Enche' Besar Hajjah Kalsom.

There are many factors that can affect or contribute to nurses' job stress. However, the study only focused on three dimensions of work-to-life conflict in studying the relationship with job stress among nurses which are time-based, strain based and behavioral-based conflict. Meanwhile, job stress is measured through two components of job that causes stress namely, job demand and job control. In addition, the researchers also examined the effects of social support on the relationship between work-to-life conflict and work stress among nurses at Hospital Enche' Besar Hajjah Kalsom, Kluang Johor.

Variables are used as independent variable is work-to-life conflict dimension. The dependent variable is job stress and its components. The moderator variable used is social support.

### **1.7 Significance of Study**

It is hoped that the finding of this study will provide an improved understanding of work-to-life conflict and job stress and its affect on nurses in public hospital. When the level of understanding is high, it is easy for organization and nurses to identify problems and to control the situation. By having this research, the organization can communicate about this matter towards their nurses by conducting the seminar or produce the leaflet.

In addition this study will help the organization to identify level of work-to-life conflict in order to ensure they will be more focused on their work. One example, the organization will be taking note at the nurses' work schedule and workloads. The organization needs to

take care of their employees, especially nurses which provide a service to their patients. If they have problems they cannot focus on their work and will treat the patient badly.

Other than that the findings will provide information to the organization about the level of their nurses' job stress. Hence, this information will be able to help the organization to come up with preventive action such as giving training on managing stress as well as continuously improving and adjusting work schedule that may help minimize the work-to-life conflict they are facing.

## **1.8 Definition of Terms**

### **1.8.1 Conceptual Definition**

Concepts and key variables in this study need to be clarified in order to provide the correct interpretation. Description of a concept is very important in any study. It gives meaning and a clear understanding of the researchers on the use of a concept.

#### **1.8.1.1 Job Stress**

Job stress can be defined as harmful physical, negative emotional responses such as frustration, worry, anxiety and depression attributed to work related factors and that occur when the requirements of the job do not match the capabilities, resources and needs of workers. It is also an adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or other types of demand placed on them (Palmer et al., 2003; Palmer and Cooper, 2007; Jahanzeb,2010).

Ongori and Agolla (2008) define job stress as the perception of a discrepancy between environmental demands (stressors) and individual capacities to fulfill the demands.

#### **1.8.1.2 Work-to-life Conflict**

Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) defined work-life conflict as a form of inter-role conflict in which role demand originating from work domain are incompatible with role demands stemming from the family domain. Galinsky, Ellen, Bond & Friedman (1996) describe the work-life conflict as the psychological point where work roles and family roles intersect.

Work-to-life conflict occurs when work responsibilities hinder performance of family responsibilities such as the role as a mother and employees and will obstruct the

ability to provide adequate child care. In other words, work-to-life conflict happens when problems are faced at the workplace.( Zhang et al. , 2012; Ballout, 2008)

### **1.8.1.3 Social Support**

Social support can be defined as whether an individual perceives that his or her needs for support, information and feedback are fulfilled. (Wadsworth and Owens, 2007).

Meanwhile, Michel, Mitchelson, Pichler & Cullen (2010), defined social support as instrumental aid, emotion concern, informational and appraisal functions of others in the work (family) domain that are intended to enhance the wellbeing of the recipient.

## **1.8.2 Operational Definitions**

Operational definition is a definition used by researchers to explain the respondents, the variables to be tested in this study. This gives an overview of how the concepts to be studied might be identified and measured.

### **1.8.2.1 Job Stress**

In this study, job stress is referred to as a negative emotional state brought on by frustration, worry, anxiety and depression which effect from job demand and job control (Jahanzeb, 2010; Park, 2002). Job demand refers to the amount of workload or responsibility received by individuals whereas job control is the amount of control employees have over their work environment and workload (Galsema, Margot, Maes, Akerboom & Verhoeven, 2005).

### **1.8.2.2 Work-to-life Conflict**

In this study, work-to-life conflict is conflict that comes from work that will affect the employees' lives and it is operationalized by these three indicators which are time-based conflict, strain-based conflict and behavioral-based conflict.

Carlson, Kacmar & Williams (2000) define time-based conflict as the belief that the time demands of the work role will interfere with effective participation in the family role in the future. Strain-based conflict, on the other hand, is the belief that work role may interfere with individuals' effective participation in the family role in the future. Last but not least, behavioral-based conflict is referred to as role behavior that is incompatible with others' expectation of that same role (Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985). For example, behavioral-based conflict happens when the behavioral styles that one exhibit at work (impersonality, logic, power, authority) may not be compatible with behaviors desired by their children within the family domain.

### **1.8.2.3 Social Support**

In this study, social support is referred to as workplace support, i.e. the support received from colleagues and superiors at the workplace (Wardsworth & Owen, 2007; Baker, Elizabeth, Israel & Schurman, 1996), as well as support received from the organization (Park, 2002; Eisenberger, Cummings, Armeli & Lynch, 1997; Lynch, Eisenberger and Armeli, 1999).



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