

The Impact of Work-Life Balance on Job Performance and Job Satisfaction among Healthcare Professionals in Malaysia

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Abstract

The ideas and methods of human resource management (HRM) have evolved in the modern era to incorporate the promotion of a healthy work-life balance (WLB). Flexible scheduling and encouraging management are two examples of these methods. Work-life balance (WLB) strategies have had a considerable effect on the recruitment, retention, motivation, and growth of the workforce. This research examines the effects of WLB policies and practices on the productivity of medical professionals in East Malaysia. The relationship between work-life balance practices and employees' productivity is explored, as is the function of job satisfaction as a moderator. For this research, questionnaires were sent out to 586 medical professionals in the East Malaysian states of Sabah and Sarawak during the 2021 and 2022 school years. Four hypotheses were tested using indicators of job happiness and productivity in addition to validated measures of work-life balance practices like flexible working hours and supportive supervision. The study's findings suggest that allowing employees more freedom over their schedules and providing them with more encouraging leadership can have a significant and positive effect on productivity on the job. Job satisfaction acts as a moderator between the positive effects of work-life balance policies like flexible scheduling and supportive management on employee productivity. Improving job happiness and, by extension, performance and productivity can be achieved through the use of effective work-life balance strategies. The study's primary goal is to inform efforts to improve Malaysia's healthcare industry's ability to recruit, retain, and inspire its medical professionals.

Keywords: work-life balance, job performance, job satisfaction, medical doctors, nurses, Malaysia

1. Introduction

In contemporary times, the notion of work-life balance (WLB) has emerged as a vital subject within the realm of Human Resource Management (HRM) scholarly works. The focus is placed on the efficient administration of individual professional job, familial obligations, and other personal pursuits (Uddin, 2021). Moreover, it is worth noting that the advent of globalization has brought about a concurrent transformation in the significance of labor for individuals (Hakanenet al., 2021). Despite work continuing to be seen as necessary, it is also a crucial determinant in enhancing personal pleasure. Therefore, firms should provide work-life benefits and initiatives to encourage their employees to reach their full potential in both their professional and personal lives (Hakanen et al., 2021).

The healthcare industry in Malaysia is seen as a key component of the country's plan for sustained economic growth. In the 12 National Key Economic Areas (NKEAs) outlined by Jumatli & Ismail in 2021, the healthcare industry is included as one of the essential contributors to the nation's Economic Transformation Programme. The industry has experienced growth in order to facilitate the advancement of medical tourism, which has garnered recognition as a leading sector within the South-East Asia region.

The healthcare industry in Malaysia is vital to the country's economy, yet there is a persistent skills gap, according to the World Health Organization (WHO). In the year 2015, the doctor-to-population ratio in Sarawak was observed to be 1:1104, whereas in Sabah during 2018, it was recorded as 1:1200. The aforementioned value remains far lower than the World Health Organization's recommended threshold for Malaysia, which is 1:600. The nursing profession is currently facing a severe personnel shortage, which has been exacerbated by a significant increase in the migration of nursing professionals seeking abroad employment opportunities (Iheduru- Anderson, 2020; Adamy et al, 2019; Alluhidan et al, 2020). Healthcare workers are renowned for their diligent and comprehensive approach to their work. Typically, individuals in this occupation are expected to fulfill extended work hours under conditions of heightened stress and limited work flexibility, resulting in notable consequences for their equilibrium between work and personal life, job effectiveness, and overall welfare. The scarcity of human resources in the healthcare sector in Malaysia has exacerbated this issue, as it compels healthcare workers to endure extended working hours, heightened stress levels, and reduced flexibility. The impact on their productivity and happiness at work is substantial when these elements are present. The healthcare industry in Malaysia might greatly benefit from improved human resource strategies and better work-life balance practices, which would be facilitated by a greater awareness of the importance of work-life balance. This research aims to shed light on the aforementioned problem by investigating the connection between WLB practices and workers' productivity on the workplace. In addition, the study investigates how job satisfaction plays a moderating effect between work-life balance practices and employees' productivity on the workplace. In the second section, we conduct a thorough literature review to investigate the connections between work-life harmony, job fulfillment, and productivity on the job. Section 3 will detail how the study's hypotheses were developed using the reviews as input. Sections 4 and 5 will elaborate on the quantitative research methods used and the subsequent data analysis. The last section will provide a brief overview of the project's key findings and discussions, as well as highlight its most significant contributions.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Work-Life Balance Practices

Work-life balance, as defined by De Clercq and Brieger (2021), is "the extent to which one's personal and professional responsibilities are shared and valued by one's partner" (both at work and at home). The concept being discussed pertains to the skillful administration of equilibrium across three fundamental aspects of persons' lives, namely organization, social interactions, and personal well-being (Bekalu et al, 2019; Uddin, 2021). Multiple research have elucidated the primary components of work-life balance (WLB) practices and their resultant effects. Workplace regulations and providing support for work-life balance (WLB) plans were found to improve employee well-being, organizational commitment, and job satisfaction, according to the study's authors. Dorta-Afonso et al. (2021), Boyd and Nowell (2020), DiPietro et al. (2020), Kim et al. (2019), and Hauff et al. (2022) are just a few of the research groups that

back this recommendation. When workers are unable to strike a balance between their work and home lives, it can lead to interpersonal difficulties. To paraphrase Adisa et al. (2021), when one's professional and personal lives collide, conflicts arise as a result of the competing demands of one's career and one's family. Therefore, it is recommended that businesses adopt policies to improve workers' WLB, as doing so has been demonstrated to raise both employees' and the company's productivity and performance.

The spillover effect theory, as proposed by Schnettler et al. (2021) and Maria Arzu et al. (2022), is considered one of the early hypotheses in the field of work-life balance (WLB) research. The concept pertains to an individual's emotions, attitudes, and actions in their professional endeavors, which might be influenced by external factors such as their familial relationships, hence resulting in a possible transfer of effects between these two domains (Maria Arzu et al., 2022). Positive spillovers have the potential to boost individual performance, as stated by Ko, M. C. (2022), while negative spillovers may have the reverse impact. It has been found that having understanding managers or coworkers can help reduce negative work-family spillovers, which is an important consideration when implementing WLB practices. In addition, the phenomena of work-to-family spillover is expected to benefit from the introduction of a flexible work schedule that prioritizes the interests of employees. Thus, it is possible to strike a healthy work-family balance by instituting family-friendly policies and employee-centric, flexible work practices (Ko, M. C., 2022; Ninaus, Diehl, & Terlutter, 2022).

In the medical field in Malaysia, the topic of WLB has been the focus of a large number of empirical studies. Chung et al. (2020) analyzed the shift from a clinician-centric to a patient-centric focus within the healthcare system. This shift led to an increase in work pressure experienced by doctors, subsequently contributing to elevated levels of work-related stress and burnout. The shortage of healthcare workers in Malaysia, combined with an increase in the country's patient population, has led to a hectic clinical schedule marked by long hours and tight deadlines (Pudasaini et al., 2022; Chung et al., 2020). To better understand the causes of work-family conflict among Peninsular Malaysian physicians, Poulouse and Dhal (2020) undertook an in-depth study examining the roles of work overload, spouse support, and workplace involvement. Their research shows that doctors' exhaustion and lack of interest in their families is caused by the time constraints imposed by their jobs. The long-term effects of these factors on doctors' motivation are uncertain. Navajas-Romero et al.'s (2020) research of nurses' perceptions of their work-life balance was undertaken in a similar setting. A work-life balancing strategy and the use of voluntary alternate scheduling were advocated by the researchers as ways to reduce work-life conflicts. According to Mishra and Bharti (2023), nurses are more likely to be satisfied with their lives and their careers if they have strong social support networks. Palumbo's (2020) hypothesized that medical residents' relationships with their supervisors, the amount of work overload, and the work environment might all have an effect on employee emotional exhaustion and motivation, lending credence to the present study. A lack of well-being among Malaysian medical residents was hypothesized to be preventable by the use of good mentoring, reward, and fair assessment processes.

Numerous critical factors, such as flexible working hours and supervisory support, are highlighted in the evaluations and shown to contribute to a healthy work-life balance. Researching how WLB affects healthcare workers' performance and satisfaction at work is widespread. However, there is a lack of studies examining the healthcare sector in East Malaysia at the moment.

2.2 Job Satisfaction

Within businesses, the concept of job happiness is of paramount importance because of its effect on productivity and morale. The word "job satisfaction" refers to how a person feels and thinks about their employment. Attitudes and actions of employees in the context of an organization include not just their professional life but also their social ties inside the workplace, recognition, and group dynamics (Newman & Ford, 2021). Several variables, including employees' attitudes, job performance, turnover rates, absenteeism, grievances, and unpunctuality, can be used to gauge job satisfaction (Sydney-Agbor, 2020).

2.3 Job Performance

Job performance is defined as "how workers react to ongoing issues, conditions, and circumstances at work" (Lonska et al., 2021). Further, it can be defined as the extent to which one's productivity in relation to their peers is measured across a wide range of job-related behaviors and outcomes (Galanti et al., 2021). Evidence from previous studies suggests that employees' job performance suffers when they have to choose between their personal lives and their careers (Irawanto, Novianti, & Roz, 2021; Obrenovic et al., 2020). As a result, a healthy work-life balance is crucial for boosting employee productivity on the job.

3. Methodology

3.1 The Development of Research Hypotheses and Conceptual Framework

Recent years have seen a rise in the number of research examining the value of work-life balance (WLB) within an organizational framework, for both employers and employees. Employees' job satisfaction, organizational loyalty, health, and productivity have all been shown to improve when WLB practices are put into place, according to studies by Rodriguez-Sánchez et al. (2020) and WiradendiWolor (2020). Reducing tensions between work and family is a key factor in achieving this goal. Workplaces should implement WLB programs to help employees maintain a healthy work-life equilibrium (Dorta-Afonso et al., 2021; Irawanto et al., 2021; Rodriguez-Sánchez et al., 2020; Sydney-Agbor, 2020). To help their employees achieve a better work-life balance, scholars agree that companies should establish human resources policies that support flexible working hours (Aziz-Ur-Rehman & Siddiqui, 2019; Gashi et al., 2022). Studies have demonstrated that when WLB policies are effectively applied in the workplace, beneficial results can be shown in areas such as employee commitment, motivation, and performance. This, in turn, helps keep talented people from leaving the company and increases retention. The following hypothesis can be drawn from these discussions:

H1: Performance on the workplace is significantly correlated with employees' ability to set their own schedules.

Human resource management methods that promote healthy work-life balance are analyzed as they pertain to the concept of supportive supervision in Malaysia's healthcare industry. The states of Sabah and Sarawak in East Malaysia have made it a priority to make various changes in human resource management (HRM) regulations in order to attract and retain qualified medical personnel. Proactively facilitating job promotions and career advancement, as well as recognizing outstanding performance through the presentation of exemplary service awards, are two examples of HRM practices that show support for employees, as stated by Azizi et al (2021). Doctors who are interested in locum tenens work have the chance to increase their income from the private healthcare sector while still keeping their jobs in the public healthcare sector thanks to this option. Considering the importance of the healthcare industry to Malaysia's economy, it is vital that the federal and state health ministries continuously

improve their HRM policies and practices. It's hypothesized that a company's management style might have a major effect on its workers' productivity and happiness on the job. The following hypothesis can be derived from these arguments:

H2: When managers are encouraging and invested in their employees' success, it shows in their work.

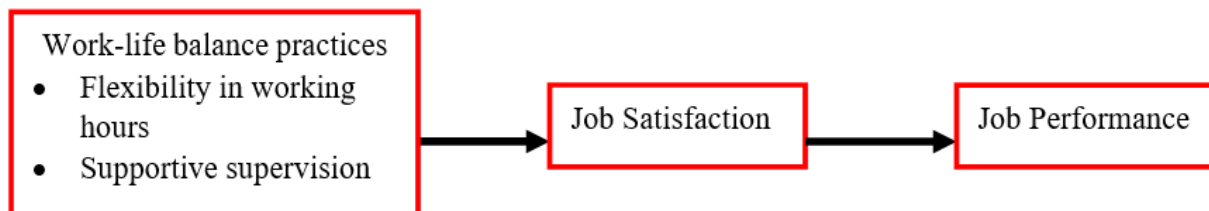
Jung et al. (2023) looked into how factors like happiness and contentment at work affected the correlation between WLB and productivity on the job. According to the results of their study, a person's level of satisfaction with life outside of work can moderate the link between WLB and performance on the job. The authors argue that improving workers' ability to strike a healthy balance between their professional and personal lives can boost productivity on the workplace. In addition, a comparable research strategy was investigated in a study by Gaikwad et al. (2021). According to the study's authors, job fulfillment plays a significant role in moderating the connection between WLB and productivity on the job. These results provide the basis for the proposed mediation hypotheses:

H3: The relationship between work schedule flexibility and productivity is complicated, but job happiness plays a crucial mediating role.

H4: Positive supervision has a major impact on employee performance, and job happiness acts as a mediator between the two.

This research relies on the previously described literature review for its theoretical foundation. Work-life balance (WLB) policies, such as job sharing and encouraging managers, have been shown to boost productivity and morale in the workplace (see Figure 1.0).

Figure 1.0. Conceptualization of the links between WLB practices, productivity at work, and contentment in one's career



3.2 Research Methodology

Taking into account the mediating influence of job satisfaction, this study aimed to investigate the relationships between WLB practices and employee job performance among doctors and nurses in the East Malaysian states.

As a quantitative study, this one mostly relied on survey questionnaires to collect its information. Part A of the questionnaire gathered basic demographic data; Part B examined work-life balance and scheduling flexibility with four questions; Part C investigated work-life balance and encouraging management with five questions; Part D evaluated work output with nine questions; and Part E measured contentment on the job with seven questions. After incorporating data from other researchers' studies into the final questionnaire survey's design, its validity and reliability were evaluated. The validity and reliability of the questionnaire were, however, also evaluated in the present investigation. A group of highly qualified professionals, including three doctors, two nurses, and a state health department representative, conducted the thorough evaluation.

Each variable in the study was tested in a pilot study to determine how reliable they would be. According to the findings, the Cronbach's alpha was higher than the cutoff suggested by Sekaran and

Bougie (2016), which was 0.7. According to the results, employees who are allowed some leeway in their schedules report a higher level of WLB. The correlation between WLB and helpful supervision is quite high (0.856) in Section C. There is also a strong link between WLB and job performance (0.938) and job satisfaction (0.913) as seen in Sections C and D, respectively.

Researchers in East Malaysia's Sabah and Sarawak states surveyed medical staff in that country. Participants were selected using a stratified random selection method. Hospitals were first stratified into groups for easier survey administration, and then survey questionnaires were randomly distributed to hospital wards. According to Shabir and Gani's (2020) requirements, there must be at least 66 people involved. A total of 610 questionnaires were sent out, and 586 were used for analysis using SPSS version 22.0, yielding an 80.5% response rate.

4. Results

For this inquiry, data was analyzed using SPSS 22.0. To investigate the structure of the measurements, principal component analysis was utilized. The mediation hypotheses were tested using the procedure described by Cheema et al. (2020).

In this study, data were obtained from a single source utilizing a standardized approach and a 7-point Likert scale (Steiner et al., 2018). Harman's single component analysis technique was used to check for CMV (Steenkamp&Maydeu-Olivares, 2021). A single component must either (a) emerge from the factor analysis or (b) account for most of the covariance among the measurements for this strategy to be effective (Steenkamp&Maydeu-Olivares, 2021). After performing a principal component analysis (PCA) on the entire set of questions, we found that the first component accounts for 38.3% of the diversity among them. This percentage is much less than half, as defined by the 50% cutoff (Steenkamp&Maydeu-Olivares, 2021). That there are no issues with CMV (common method variance) is demonstrated here.

Table 1. Methods such as the Pearson and Cronbach alphas

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|-------------------------------------|---------|----------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| 1. Gender | 1 | | | | | |
| 2. Maritalstatus | 0.136** | 1 | | | | |
| 3.WLB: Flexibility in working hours | -0.012 | -0.178** | 0.757 | | | |
| 4. WLB: Supportive supervision | -.0.003 | -0.063 | 0.533** | 0.856 | | |
| 5.Jobsatisfaction | -0.115* | -0.173** | 0.395** | 0.578** | 0.913 | |
| 6.Jobperformance | -0.021 | -0.141** | 0.344** | 0.473** | 0.490** | 0.938 |

Gender: 1 =female,2 = male;Maritalstatus: 1= married, 2= single,3=divorced

*p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001; Cronbach alphas are presented on the diagonal in bold.

The results of the Pearson correlation are shown in Table 1.0. All correlation coefficients were found to be less than 0.90, indicating that there were no major collinearity issues with the data (Chien et al., 2020). In addition, all Cronbach alpha coefficients were higher than 0.7, the cutoff set by Sekaran and Bougie (2016).

According to the findings presented in Table 1.0, there is a noteworthy positive connection ($r=0.344$, $p<0.01$) between the flexibility of working hours and job performance. Consequently, this supports the first hypothesis (H1). Furthermore, it is worth noting that supportive supervision, as measured by the WLB (Work-Life Balance) scale, exhibits a noteworthy and statistically significant positive association with job performance ($r=0.473$, $p<0.01$). This finding provides support for Hypothesis 2.

We followed the methods outlined by Siddique et al. (2020) to examine Hypotheses 3 and 4. Mediating effects can be detected using this strategy if the independent variable has a significant relationship with the mediator, the independent variable has a significant relationship with the dependent variable, and the strength of the relationship between the independent and dependent variables decreases when the mediator is included in the regression analysis. Partial mediation occurs when Condition 3's independent variable has a sizable effect. Full mediation has occurred when Condition 3 holds and the independent variable has no effect. Condition 2 and 3 by themselves, according to Siddique et al. (2020) and Bartram et al. (2012), are adequate to demonstrate the existence of mediation effects.

Results from the analyses performed to test Hypothesis 3 are shown below. Flexibility in working hours was found to strongly predict job performance ($b = -0.141$, $p<0.001$), meeting the first condition of the work-life balance (WLB) literature. Condition 2 is met when researchers examine the link between WLB and job satisfaction and find that flextime is a significant predictor of happiness on the job ($b = -0.173$, $p<0.01$). (iii) Furthermore, a regression study was run to determine how much of an effect WLB, and more especially scheduling freedom, has on employees' happiness on the job. The findings supported Hypothesis 3: WLB positively affected job satisfaction ($b=0.313$, $p<0.001$). Here are the results of the tests performed on Hypothesis 4: Condition 1 is met if there is a positive correlation between WLB and supportive supervision and subsequent job performance ($b = 0.344$, $p < 0.01$). Condition 2 is met since there is a positive correlation between WLB and supportive supervision, which in turn increases job satisfaction. Condition 3 was met when a positive relationship was shown between job satisfaction and WLB and supportive supervision ($b = 0.313$, $p < 0.001$). Thus, it is clear that job satisfaction acts as a full mediator between work-life balance practices (such as flexible working hours and supportive supervision) and performance on the job, confirming Hypotheses 3 and 4. The analysis of work fulfillment's moderating role is shown in Table 2.0.

Table 2. Testing mediating effect of job satisfaction

| Variables | | |
|---------------------------------|----------|----------|
| | Step1 | Step2 |
| WLB(Flexibilityin workinghours) | 0.129** | 0.090* |
| WLB(Supportive supervision) | 0.405*** | 0.245*** |
| JobSatisfaction | | 0.313*** |
| RSquare | 0.236*** | 0.300*** |
| Adjusted RSquare | 0.233*** | 0.293*** |
| RSquare Change | 0.236*** | 0.064*** |

Dependent variable:Jobperformance,N=586,* $p<0.05$,** $p<0.01$,*** $p<0.001$

5. Discussion

All of the study's variables were found to be both reliable and valid. In addition, there was a distinct and statistically significant link between all of the factors. There is a direct and significant link between employees' willingness to work flexible hours and their productivity on the job. Dorta-Afonso et al. (2021) and Davidescu et al. (2020) have found results consistent with this one. In addition, Mishra and Bharti (2023) and Palumbo (2020) found that there is a connection between having a supportive supervisor and an employee's productivity on the work.

To examine job satisfaction's moderating role in the association, this study followed a strategy provided by Siddique et al. (2020). Job satisfaction was found to be moderated by and substantially correlated with WLB practices like flexible working hours and supportive supervision in three different contexts. Workers' output is similarly interconnected.

These results are in line with those found by Gaikwad et al. (2021) and Jung et al. (2023), who found that promoting a healthy WLB for employees improved their productivity and happiness on the job. According to the findings of the mediation analysis, including job satisfaction in the second stage of analysis explained 30.0% of the variation in the dependent variable, which was performance on the job. The study's findings suggest that promoting a healthy work-life balance has a major impact on workers' productivity and happiness in the workplace. Implementing flexible working arrangements and providing supporting supervision are crucial aspects in boosting employee recruitment, retention, and motivation in a high-intensity work environment. The healthcare industry in East Malaysia, like that in other parts of the world, requires workers to adhere to set schedules and work in shifts, which might exacerbate existing tensions between work and personal life. The examined conflict included the difficulties people have in balancing the various needs that arise from their various roles as workers, friends, and family members. This result is consistent with the work of Aarntzen (2021) and Brown & Yaukey (2022). This study's results lend further support to the hypothesis of the spillover effect, which was first postulated by Schnettler et al. (2021) and later refined by Maria Arzu et al. Employees have noted that employer-oriented flexible work schedules and the presence of supportive supervisors can potentially mitigate the negative effects of work-family spillovers (Frezza et al., 2019; Ko, M. C., 2022; Jacobi, 2023; Ninaus, Diehl, & Terlutter, 2021). Achieving a healthy work-life balance is thought to boost productivity and satisfaction on the job.

Although a formal work-life balance (WLB) plan has the ability to reduce this worry, it may have serious financial repercussions for the vast majority of businesses (Jung et al., 2023) if it were to be implemented. However, due to the country's cultural emphasis on teamwork, harmony, interdependence, and empathetic colleague interactions (Badru, 2022; Chung et al., 2020; Xu, 2019), a more flexible work structure is feasible in Malaysia. Within the framework of East Malaysia's high-power distant culture, the phenomena of helpful supervision may be seen (Kakemam et al., 2020). In this cultural context, subordinates are expected to defer to and follow the lead of their superiors. The supervisors were praised for their extensive medical knowledge, abilities, and skills, as well as their high levels of integrity on the job and their cognitive and practical intelligence, by Kakemam et al. (2020). As a result, having managers and other high-ranking medical professionals on board is essential to creating an environment that encourages a healthy work-life balance and thus reduces tension between the workplace and the rest of one's life. In turn, this boosts healthcare workers' productivity and satisfaction on the job.

6. Conclusion

It is imperative that the federal Ministry of Health and state health departments quickly implement a comprehensive and radical modification of their WLB policy in light of the results of this study. For the sake of fostering a WLB culture that is both healthy and productive among medical professionals, this shift is crucial. Numerous factors, such as the number of physicians per capita in a state, the size of a department's personnel, and the marital and parental statuses of employees, must be taken into account while formulating this policy. An effective way to reduce work-life and family conflicts is to implement a WLB policy that is flexible enough to meet the needs of a wide range of workers and positions. In the public sector, in particular, this strategy has the potential to boost employee motivation, hence increasing the rate at which new employees are recruited and existing ones are retained. The steadfast commitment and dedication of the organization and management is also crucial to the success of implementing and maintaining this strategy over the long term. The positive effects of WLB on workers' productivity, happiness, and health should be recognized by their employers. They must also show they are willing to invest time and energy into creating a positive work environment by enforcing a strong WLB policy. This study successfully incorporates WLB techniques, employee job performance, and job satisfaction in the setting of healthcare professionals in East Malaysia. All of the study's hypotheses were confirmed, thus the researchers may declare victory.