

The Effect of Work Life Balance on Employee Behaviour in The Malaysian Hotel Industry

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Abstract

The research is specifically based on the evaluation of the impact of work-life balance on employee behaviour in the Malaysian hotel industry. For this purpose, the literature pointed out that the flexibility at workplace, career development, teamwork, financial assistance and family support are crucial. The deployment of methodological interventions has been specifically based upon quantitative assessment. A sample size of 100 respondents working in the Malaysian hotel industry was selected for this research. Using SPSS, the results show that statistically there is a significant and strong relationship between work-life balance and employee behaviour. All hypotheses involved in this research were accepted and closely related to employee behaviour. It was recommended that employee interactivity and giving the employees time off are essential for the concerned entities.

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1.0. INTRODUCTION

Employees' responsibilities and their job-related outcomes are determined and derived primarily based on the results they achieve. Employees' productivity and performance depend on the extent to which they are given flexibility in performing their duties and responsibilities. Employees are likely to perform well and achieve good results if they are given flexibility in their work life (Poulose & Sudarsan, 2018). However, when employees lack comfort and flexibility at work, it affects their performance and causes great damage to their work-life mechanism. Work-life balance is considered as one of the most important aspects that helps to ensure the balance between employees' professional and personal lives (Wood et al., 2020).

Due to increasing responsibilities at work, increasing demands at work, and increasing work-related stress, employees often experience burnout, resulting in failure to achieve desired goals. When employees are pushed to working long hours and given additional tasks, their productivity can decline. In certain circumstances,

employees are no longer able to perform well if they are the only person responsible for feeding their families and if they have a dual-earner family, they are likely to be very stressed (Adnan, 2019). In situations where individuals have major family responsibilities, the likelihood of work stress is high. In addition, it is noted that major work stress is likely to occur when work-related demands and responsibilities are beyond one's power and control. Especially, when the job description changes and does not match one's capabilities, stress is likely to increase (Dinh, 2020). Bjarntoft et al. (2020) introduced the idea that employees who face work stress mainly reflect it through their psychological and physical well-being. On the other hand, stress is likely to be reflected in employee behaviour when workplace competition is high and employees are unable to perform well in a particular organisational setting (Bhende et al., 2020).

Since the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak, several industries have allowed their employees to work from home to counter the spread of the pandemic. The hotel industry in Malaysia and around the world is among the

industries that have suffered drastically from the travel and leisure ban. The spread of the pandemic disrupted both inbound and outbound travel, which also affected the hotel industry. On the other hand, employees were able to work from home, which helped contain the spread of the disease, but it also affected employee competitiveness, care, work-life balance, and career development. In 2019, the Malaysia's Healthiest Workplace survey conducted by AIA Vitality Survey found that employees in Malaysia faced various work-life balance issues. Employees suffered from lack of sleep and were stressed, while 51% of employees faced at least one dimension of work-related stress. Therefore, employee-related challenges are certainly the most serious ones that cause employees to be inefficient at work. They also lead to major challenges, especially in the form of reduced productivity, workplace conflict, and attrition (Ang, 2021). The objective of this paper is to understand the complexity of work-life balance and its influence on employee behaviour in Malaysian hotel industry.

2.0. LITERATURE REVIEW

Work-life balance is highly determined by the way one manages to balance work and personal life and ensuring that competitiveness and productivity at work are managed simultaneously, which leads to spending a happy and healthy life (Kelliher et al., 2019). Work-life balance practises are mainly seen in the workplace because they are considered an organisational commitment to ensure the balance between a person's work and personal life (Wood et al., 2020). When employees have a good work-life balance, they are likely to maximise their productivity and growth (Le et al., 2020). Work-life balance is characterised as the way to create balance in employee performance. It is about finding a description of time that helps validate and accommodate necessities, qualities, and expectations based on known choices so that one knows how to structure one's life (Gagnano et al., 2020). The positive effects of work-life balance were mainly found based on the relationship between the individual and the organisation (Rodriguez-Sanchez et al., 2020).

The work-life balance tends to play an influential role in the importance of employee engagement and retention. Increasing engagement at work due to workplace comfort leads to maximising psychological well-being (Emre and De Spiegeleare, 2021). Employee

work-life balance allows organisations to focus on increasing employee performance by maximising their capability (Gomes et al., 2021). Kotera et al. (2020) found that employee psychological well-being becomes an achievable goal when a better work-life balance is in place. Fotiadis et al. (2019) asserts that to maximise work-life balance, organisations ensure that workplace conflict is minimised, which enables the creation of positive and effective psychological capital for employees and increases their creative performances. However, Dinh (2020) argued that the work-life balance of employees decreases when work pressure and uncertainty are high. Creating an effective environment to accomplish tasks requires support from employers and supervisors. Haider et al. (2018) found that affective events theory appears to be applicable as it encompasses a wide range of instruments that explain the mediating effect on employees' mental health due to poor work-life balance.

Work-life balance is considered as the one in which the employer aims to take measures to manage personal and professional life appropriately through favourable measures (Panda and Sahoo, 2021). Teng (2020) stated that work-life balance in such a context identifies satisfaction as a key role in maximising the individual's commitment in life. In addition, it is believed that a desirable psychological and physical workplace guarantees that professionals responsible for making decisions and taking actions for the good of the organisation also focus on effectively satisfying the needs of employees. Melo et al. (2018) also assert that work-life balance attributes lead to the maximisation of pleasure in the lives of professionals and are not limited to meeting the basic expectations of employees in the workplace, but also ensure that employees fit into a particular job role and that their needs are fulfilled.

2.1. Flexibility at the workplace

The workplace flexibility is defined as the arrangements in the workplace that enable employees to work comfortably and perform their work-related duties. The arrangements are mainly made during working hours by mutual agreement between professionals and management, which goes hand in hand with work scheduling to motivate professionals and employees to achieve work-life balance. This flexibility given to employees leads them to perform better and be more flexible in their work schedules (Kossek and Lee, 2018). The flexibility given to employees helps them to work

according to their well-being without putting pressure at work. This makes them realise how convenient they can manage their time to get freedom and opportunities to carry out their work-related activities (Panda and Sahoo, 2021). Wohrmann et al. (2021) added that the fundamental aspect of ensuring work-life balance is the extent to which an organisation initiates flexibility for its employees. The higher the flexibility, the better the outcome tends to be. Therefore, flexibility helps employees to work according to their well-being and perform organisational tasks efficiently. Pietras (2020) explained that flexible work arrangements usually help to increase employee motivation and morale by achieving a higher level of job satisfaction as well as a better work-life balance. When an employee's stress and fatigue are reduced through flexible working, it helps to maximise performance under the circumstances.

2.2. Career development and Progress

The career advancement and development is one of the effective methods of talent management that positively affects work-life balance, with the higher career-based perspective leading to prioritisation of work and ensuring work efficiency and effectiveness. Such satisfaction of professionals helps improve their perception that their appropriate roles match their strategic roles, which maximises their efficiency to perform well. In this way, the management of professional development and balanced view within the organisation depends on the environment and the nature of the company. Thus, the right level of work-life balance offered to employees helps to recognise their professional growth and practises to validate their development (Jung and Takeuchi, 2018). Providing employees with a better work-life balance ultimately helps them focus more on their professional development. Working efficiently to accomplish their work-related tasks maximises their learning, which ultimately leads to career growth (Panda and Sahoo, 2021).

Career development and advancement are thus possible when one is able to find stability in their personal and professional lives. This enhances learning opportunities and maximises focus on developmental aspects.

2.3. Teamwork and Communication

A work-life balance reflected in employees' well-being maximises their ability to work as a team. Their

team-building skills and leadership abilities are maximised because they become much more active in taking responsibility. In addition, encouragement, identification and coordination are maximised when higher levels of work-life balance are found (Berry and Hughes, 2020). Teamwork can be a reason for maximising work-life balance in certain situations. It helps encourage employees to participate well and create a learning environment where weaknesses in learning can be overcome. In this context, employees maximise their ability to volunteer and rethink their weaknesses to effectively cope with professional challenges (Sarker et al., 2021).

2.4. Financial and Non-financial Benefits

The financial support helps maximise employees' trust in the organisation because they are paid for their efforts and they do not have to focus on finding more ways to maximise their income. Financial support in this context includes organising cultural and social activities, offering sponsored leave by the company, maximising salary and benefits and offering paid leave. It is therefore recognised as one of the effective ways to maximise employee engagement in fulfilling their work-related duties (Neal and Lyons, 2020). When employees receive such benefits, they believe that the company values their needs. This eventually leads to maximising their interest in the workplace and improves their engagement in their personal and social lives as well. On the other hand, non-financial benefits include opportunities such as performance-based promotions, professional recognition and career development, which are designed to maximise employees' performance while working for a particular company. These efforts aim to maximise employees' interest and self-esteem so that they can perform their jobs and fulfil their personal responsibilities efficiently (Panda and Sahoo, 2021).

2.5. Family and Support

The work-life balance has the ability to increase positive energy at work, which is useful for achieving better results. Family and work support is essential to convince professionals to achieve a proper work-life balance (Tamunomiebi and Oyibo, 2020). Family and social support in the form of counselling and psychological support is one of the most effective and influential ways to maximise employees' ability to achieve work-life balance. Employees fail to achieve work-life balance due to their increasing job

responsibilities. This imbalanced behaviour not only creates challenges to achieving their professional goals, but also affects their mental health and well-being. This change in attitude increases negative energy in the workplace and affects mental health. Promoting mental health and helping employees manage their family and social lives ultimately improves their effectiveness in managing their professional tasks (Panda and Sahoo, 2021).

In certain circumstances, when there is rightful family support given to employees, it eventually maximises employee ability to work in comfort at their jobs. The more the support the better the outcome tends to be to achieve effective results.

2.6. Work-Life Balance outcome to Employee Behaviour

An effective work-life balance is one of the most effective ways and is considered beneficial for organisations to reduce employee absenteeism (Oludayo et al., 2018). Work-life balance is considered one of the effective ways to improve employee behaviour (Soomro et al., 2018). However, Perrigino et al. (2018) stated that employee behaviour and commitment to achieve satisfaction in accomplishing work tasks receive less attention because work-life balance is mainly based on individual flexibility. An individual is likely to feel more comfortable performing work tasks when there is less conflict. Neumann et al. (2018) claim that employee work-life balance focuses on organisations maximising and improving their performance by providing them with a supportive and flexible environment that maximises their psychological well-being. Employee behaviour is subject to various organisational initiatives. Employees are able to understand the complexity of work tasks when the organisation knows the specific needs of employees (Wood et al., 2020). In addition, Li et al. (2018) stated that it is important for organisations, as well as employees, to create a balance between the needs of their employees.

A lack of balance leads to major challenges and threats to employee performance. It can be concluded that effective work-life balance programmes not only leads to maximum employee satisfaction, but also encourage their positive behaviour, and ensure their effective engagement.

2.7. Theoretical Framework

Employee behaviour is a highly discussed and debated research phenomenon in literature. There are different theories and models related to employee behaviour. Different factors influencing consumer behaviour have been discussed in literature. Present research analyses the effects of work-life balance on consumer behaviour through social exchange theory and behavioural theory. Social exchange theory is one of the most influential conceptual paradigms to understand the workplace behaviour of employees. This theory implies that social exchange involves a series of interactions that generate obligation (Chernyak-Hai and Rabenu, 2018). According to this theory, the interaction between employee and organisation is contingent on the strategies developed to ensure the work-life balance. Strategies of the organisation to create work-life balance are the source of interactions that have potential to generate high quality relationship. Second theory is behavioural learning theory which focuses on the idea that behaviour is learned through the interaction with the environment. At workplace, behavioural learning theory plays a significant role in influencing employee behaviour through motivation (Kwon and Silva, 2020). Flexibility, career development, teamwork and communication, financial and non-financial benefits and family support are the positive reinforcement that influence the behaviour of employees. Therefore, behavioural learning theory and social exchange theory have important implications in this research.

3.0. METHODS AND DATA COLLECTION

Quantitative research method is used to identify the effects of work-life balance on employee behaviour. Based on the purposive sampling, 100 respondents were selected from management, operations, and front-line working staff of the hotel industry in Selangor and Kuala Lumpur only. The sampling used by the researcher in this study is convenience sampling based on the respondent's convenience and interest. In order to conduct the empirical study based on a quantitative method, the instrument chosen for data collection was a questionnaire. The credibility of the sample size of 100 is high because the availability of respondents is an important issue. The study area was selected because the hospitality industry is very popular there and the influx of customers in the area increases promptly.

With the help of SPSS, the scientific findings were analysed, for which regression analysis and Pearson correlation matrix were performed. Pearson correlation matrix was used to examine the relationship between variables. In addition, descriptive frequency test and Cronbach's alpha test were also performed. The questionnaires were divided into seven sections. Section A consists of the respondent's demographic; Section B consists of the flexibility at workplace; Section C consists of the career development opportunities at workplace; Section D consists of the teamwork and communication at workplace finance and non-finance benefits; Section E consists of the family support; Section F consists of employee behaviour.

4.0. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Testing the reliability of the data is certainly one of the preliminary steps in data analysis. According to Quinlan et al. (2019), if the data set is not reliable, i.e., if the value of Cronbach's alpha falls below 0.6 (60%) in the calculation, no further tests can be performed. However, in the present case, the results table below clearly shows that this value is 0.873, which is equivalent to 87%. This confirms that the data provided by the employees of various hotels in Selangor and Kuala Lumpur are reliable and suitable for further analysis.

4.1. Demographic Analysis

According to this research, 68% of the respondents were male and 32% were female. This percentage difference does not indicate bias, but rather shows that more males than females were interested in the responses among the employees surveyed. In addition, 36% of respondents were between 18 and 27 years old, followed by 33% of those who were between 28 and 37 years old. Finally, 31% of respondents were either 38 years old or older. In addition, 44% of employees had more than 5 years of working experience, while 25% of respondents had less than 2 years of working experience.

4.2. Hypotheses Testing: Linear Regression Test Analysis

H1: Flexibility significantly influences employee behaviour in the workplace.

The first hypothesis aimed to investigate the impact that flexibility could have on employee behaviour in the hotel industry. The results obtained were presented in the

summary of the linear regression model and the coefficient table.

Table 1: Regression model summary of flexibility at workplace

R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std. Error of the Estimate
0.894	0.799	0.797	0.262

Table 1 shows the R square value responsible for determining the intensity of the influence of one variable on another. Since it was calculated as 0.799, which is equivalent to 80%, it can be concluded that flexibility certainly has a strong influence on employee behaviour in the Malaysian hotel industry.

H2: Career development opportunities significantly influence employee behaviour at workplace.

The second hypothesis was to investigate whether employee behaviour in the Malaysian hotel industry is influenced by career development opportunities. The statistically calculated results were analysed below. Table 2 shows that the R value is 0.737 (or 73.7%), so the influence is again quite high. This interpretation indicates that career development opportunities are an important component of work-life balance and have a noticeable influence on employee behaviour.

Table 2: Regression model summary of career development opportunities at workplace

R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std. Error of the Estimate
0.858	0.737	0.734	0.299

H3: Teamwork and communication significantly influence employee behaviour at workplace.

In addition, the third hypothesis was dedicated to the study of the influence that teamwork and communication apparently have on the behaviour of employees in the Malaysian hotel industry. The analysis of the results table was carried out in the following.

Table 3: Regression model summary of teamwork and communication at workplace

R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std. Error of the Estimate
0.387	0.150	0.141	0.538

Based on Table 3, the R square value can be used to determine that it is 0.150, which is only about 15%, so

teamwork and communication contribute greatly to maintaining work-life balance and eventually causing a strong influence on employee behaviour. This calculated value is obviously lower than that of the previous two factors of flexibility and career development opportunities.

H4: Financial and non-financial benefits significantly influence employee behaviour at workplace.

The penultimate hypothesis designed for this study addresses whether financial and non-financial benefits related to work-life balance impacts the behaviour of hotel employees in Malaysia.

Table 4: Regression model summary of finance and nonfinance benefits

R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std. Error of the Estimate
0.845	0.714	0.711	0.312

Table 4 shows the R square value of 0.714 or 71.4%, which is quite satisfactory and confirms that financial and nonfinancial benefits certainly have a strong influence on employees' behaviour.

H5: Family support significantly influences employee behaviour at workplace.

The last assertion made and tested in this research was related to whether family support has an impact on changing the behaviour of hotel employees in Malaysia. The results obtained are as follows.

Table 5: Regression model summary of family support

R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std. Error of the Estimate
0.876	0.768	0.765	0.281

From the summary of the model in Table 5, the R square value of 0.768 or 76.8% has a stronger impact, which means that family support enables employees in the Malaysian hotel industry to maintain their work-life balance and consequently improve their behaviour at work.

4.3 Pearson Correlation Test Analysis

The Pearson correlation test was performed to determine the relationship between the five independent variables and the dependent variable. The result shows

that workplace flexibility has a significant relationship with the behaviour of hotel employees in Malaysia because the significant value is 0.000, indicating a significant relationship. It was also analysed using Pearson correlation value that the relationship is quite strong as this value is 0.894 or 89.4%. The second independent variable was professional development opportunities, and as shown in the table above, there was also a significant relationship (significant value = 0.000) with employee behaviour. The strength of this relationship was also strong in this scenario (Pearson correlation value = 0.858). Teamwork and workplace communication, as well as financial and nonfinancial benefits, were also significantly related to employee behaviour in the context of Malaysian hotels, as the significant values for each of these factors were 0.000 and the Pearson correlation values were 0.387 and 0.845, respectively. Finally, family support also yielded remarkable results with a strong relationship.

After the comprehensive analysis of the data using statistical means and methods, it was summarised that all five hypotheses were accepted. It was confirmed that the behaviour of hotel employees in Malaysia was influenced by factors such as workplace flexibility, teamwork and communication, career development opportunities, financial and non-financial benefits, and family support. Overall, these factors contributed to employees' ability to maintain their work-life balance. In addition, the descriptive frequency test revealed that, the majority of employees surveyed confirmed the presence of the effects, but on the other hand, a few employees refused to receive any type of support to maintain their work-life balance.

5.0. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings confirmed that work-life balance is among the top concerns of employees in all sectors, including the hotel industry in Malaysia. From the statistically determined results, it was found that the majority of employees consider this as the cause of their pleasant and confident attitude towards work. Based on the survey results, it was found that work-life balance is important to employees as it allows them to manage both their personal and professional lives side by side without any negative impact. Employees expressed satisfaction with the fact that they felt more comfortable and were better able to focus on their personal and family lives

when it was possible for them to work and live their personal lives simultaneously. As stated in the discussion, these findings have also been endorsed by previous researchers.

Furthermore, it can be inferred from the findings that work-life balance has a greater impact on employee behaviour. As learned, employees felt more involved in their work when they had sufficient time for their families. Employee behaviour was significantly impacted as they were able to work with full dedication and without distractions. Employees had time for their personal lives after work, which increased their interest in work, meaning they were psychologically and emotionally satisfied and therefore better able to contribute to their organisational tasks. These findings are consistent with the claims of several scholars and previous researchers, e.g., Li et al. (2018); Panda and Sahoo (2021), who expressed similar opinions to those in this study. It was found that among several other factors that influence employee behaviour, work-life balance ranked first because it influences employees more in terms of psychological satisfaction and happiness. However, the results also suggest that monetary and non-monetary benefits are also a type of attribute that helps employees manage work-life balance.

Furthermore, in summary, it was found that employee behaviour was influenced differently by the various components of work-life balance. For example, in the survey, some employees advocated teamwork and communication as factors that contribute to maintaining work-life balance, while others advocated flexibility at work, i.e., the freedom to work from anywhere when needed. In contrast, some employees considered family support to be the most important factor that helped them maintain a work-life balance. All in all, these factors ultimately contributed to positive employee behaviour.

Furthermore, the first recommendation for practitioners is that the management should consider adopting the practice of interacting with the employees on personal basis more frequently. This shall help the managers in realising and identifying what aspects and what factors impact employees' behaviour in a significant manner. Interacting with employees is a reliable suggestion because it will assist the management to determine how to facilitate employees in maintaining their work-life balance.

Secondly, the management of hotels is strongly advised to focus on giving employees time off so that like their guests, the employees can also travel and enjoy time with their loved ones. As a matter of fact, hotels may also consider organising training trips for their employees where families are also allowed. In this way, employees will be able to avail career development opportunities while also maintaining work-life balance by having their families alongside.

Considering the various limitations that had been encountered in this research, future researchers may attempt to explore the influence of work-life balance on behaviour of employees working in an industry other than the hotel sector. This shall help in broadening the view on whether the impact is similar across different industries. Secondly, future researchers may develop their interest in determining factors of work-life balance other than those identified and examined in this study. For example, they may ponder upon areas like total time off from work for personal reasons, etc. and study how it impacts employee behaviour.

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