

THE IMPACT OF WORK-LIFE BALANCE ON THE QUALITY OF LIFE AMONG WOMEN EMPLOYEES IN UNISZA, MALAYSIA

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ABSTRACT

The conflicting demands of work and personal life have always been the attention to many. Striking demographic shifts such as the increasing number of women in the work force, heightening the awareness of work-life issues. In contrast, conflicts between work and personal life priorities can be catalyst for a low quality of life. Thus this study aimed to investigate the impact of work-life balance on the Quality of Life (QoL) among women employees in UniSZA, Malaysia. Quantitative method was employed, whereby data were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with IBM-SPSS-AMOS program version 21.0. Three dimensions of work-life balance were assessed, Work Interference with Personal Life, Personal Life Interference with Work and Personal Life, and Work/Personal Life Enhancement. The findings revealed that there is direct impact of work-life balance on the quality of life among women employees in UniSZA, Malaysia.

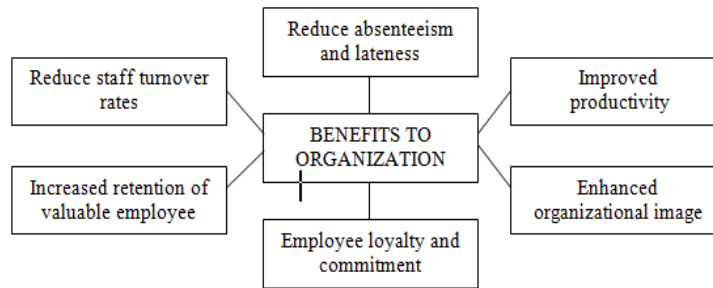
Keywords: Work-Life Balance, Quality of Life (QoL), Structural Equation Mode (SEM)

INTRODUCTION

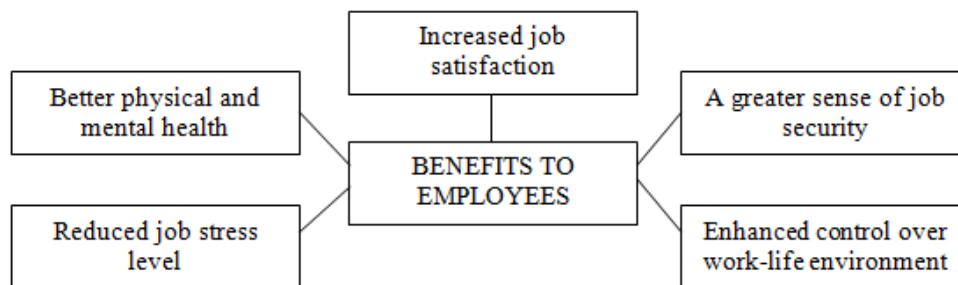
Paid work is fundamental to the lives of many and it has become increasingly difficult and onerous to manage successfully a job alongside care for dependents in the context of rapid family and labor change. Men and women juggle the competing demands of work and family, causing the overspill of stress due to work-life imbalance into both work and non-work life, more often, the family. Even though the labor market is long dominated by male, women, and during recent decades, mothers, have increased their participation in the labor market greatly and contribute to the concern on work-life balance. Malaysia generally witnessed an increasing rate in the female labor force participation, from 49.5% in 2012 to 54.3% in 2016 (Department of Statistics Malaysia). While there is room for improvement, the Women, Family and Community Development Ministry of Malaysia are committed in developing women leadership in politics, economic empowerment and others. The ministry also remains steadfast in its vision that more women must be uplifted and developed. But above all, work-life balance is the ultimate aspiration for women across Malaysia.

Defining Work-Life Balance and Quality of Life

Researchers have different approaches to operationally define work-life balance, and whether it simply means to devote an equal amount of time to paid work and non-paid roles. Greenhaus, Collins & Shaw (2003) defined balance in work-family context as the extent to which an individual is equally engaged in and equally satisfied with his or her work role and family role. Thus, employees who experience high work-life balance are those who exhibit similar investment of time and commitment, to work and non-work domains. Hartog & Frame (2003) viewed that work-life balance means that employees can freely use flexible working hours to balance their work or with other commitments such as family, hobbies, arts, studies, and not only focus on their work. According to Singh & Khanna (2011), work-life balance is a broad concept that involves determining the right priority between work (career and ambition) on one side and life (happiness, leisure, family and spiritual development) on the other. Others view living a balanced life as ‘a satisfying and productive life that includes work, play and love, and achieving satisfying experiences in all life domains (Kirchmeyer, 2000; Muda et al., 2019). Indicators of balance have been associated with greater employee commitment, job satisfaction (Kossek & Ozeki, 1999) and organizational citizenship behavior (Grzywacz & Carlson, 2007). Lazar, Osoian & Ratiu (2010) explained the organizational outcomes and employees’ benefits of work-life balance practices as in the following:



**FIGURE 1
ORGANIZATIONAL OUTCOMES OF WORK-LIFE BALANCE PRACTICES**



**FIGURE 2
EMPLOYEES’ BENEFITS OF WORK-LIFE BALANCE PRACTICES**

Quality of life, on the other hand concerns the affective beliefs and evaluations that people have about their lives and sometimes perceived as work demands that interfere with nonworking time (Rice et al., 1992; Muda et al., 2020). The World Health Organization (WHO) defines quality of life as an individual's perception of their position in life in the context of the culture and value systems in which they live and in relation to their goals, expectations, standards and concerns. It is a broad ranging concept affected in a complex way by the person's physical health, psychological state, personal beliefs, social relationships and their relationship to salient features of their environment (Mohamad et al., 2018). Measures of satisfaction and happiness are often used to operationalize perceived quality of life, as well evaluated according to how well one is doing financially, physically, emotionally and socially (Lauer & Lauer, 2014.). In today's working environment, the way organization action or inaction may lead to certain areas that affect quality of life: unequal opportunities for a high quality of life, inadequate protection of freedoms and rights, and the lack of responsiveness to needs.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study will investigate the impact of work-life balance among women employees in UniSZA, Malaysia on the Quality of Life (QoL), a prominent indicator of well-being. Three dimensions of work-life balance were assessed; Work Interference with Personal Life, Personal Life Interference with Work and Work/Personal Life Enhancement. Quantitative method is employed, whereby data were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with IBM-SPSS-AMOS program version 21.0. SEM is formed with two main models namely measurement model and Structural model. Before the SEM test is tested, prior adjustment tests should be made to ensure that the tested indicator actually represents the measured construct. There are two analyzes as prerequisites that must be met before the SEM analysis is performed: (1) Exploration Analysis Factor (EFA), and (2) Confirmation Factor Analysis (CFA). Validation Factor Analysis (VFA) is a test of measurement model to ensure that each construct meets procedures such as validity and reliability for each experiment being built. Comparison of model measurement is essential to ensure that any latent construct in this study is compatible with the data studied before SEM can be continued (Hair et al., 2006).

Using a purposive sampling, the study was administered to a group of 119 married women employees in University Sultan Zainal Abidin (UniSZA), one of the government higher education institutions in Malaysia. The level of work life balance was measured with the version of Work-Life Balance Scale adapted from Jeremy Hayman (2005). The scale is designed to assess three dimensions of work-life balance: work interference with personal life (for example, "My personal life suffers because of work"), personal life interference with work (for example, "My personal life drains me of energy for work"), and work/personal life enhancement (for example, "My job gives me energy to pursue personal activities"). Work personal life enhancement refers to "the extent to which experiences in one role improve the quality of life in the other role" (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006). The responses were given using seven point time related scale (for example, 1=Not at all, 4=Sometimes, 7=All the time).

Quality of life, the dependent variable, was assessed using a bipolar items that describes 'how you feel about your present life' adapted from Quinn & Sheppard (1974) namely; boring – interesting; miserable – worthwhile ; discouraging – hopeful ; disappointing – rewarding; hard –

easy; tied down – free. Each bipolar item has a seven-point scale where 1 represents the negative phrase and 7 represents the positive phrase.

The compatibility of the hypothetical models tested is verified using the Fitness Indexes to see the values of Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA<0.08), Comparative Fit Index (CFI>0.90) and Chi Square/Degree of Freedom ($\chi^2/df < 5.0$). According to Hair et al., (2006) if the value of χ^2 is less than 2.00 but significant, it should be noted whether the sample is large or vice versa. Sample size above 200 can cause χ^2 to be significant. Therefore, Hair and his colleagues propose two other indices namely CFI and RMSEA to ensure CFA analysis establishes a dimensionless research model. If the CFI value exceeds 0.90 and the RMSEA is less than 0.08 it is said that the existence of Unidimensionality exists for the formation of each construct.

ANALYSIS ON RESEARCH FINDING

Analysis by using SEM yields a standard regression value between the construct and the usual regression value, and both have their own utility. Figure 3 shows the standardized estimates regression weight findings, whereas Figure 4 shows a typical unstandardized estimates regression value as a result of the SEM procedure. An important summary of the SEM findings in Figure 3 (Standardized Estimates Regression):

1) The value of R^2 to build Quality of Life (QoL) is 0.84. This shows three constructs of predictors in the model (see arrow), namely Work Interference with Personal Life (WIPL), Personal Life Interference with Work (PLIW) and Work Personal Life Enhancement (WPLE) contributing 84% to Quality of Life (QoL) among the populations in the study.

2) The correlation value between two free constructs on the model shown by double-headed arrows is also analyzed. The correlation between WIPL and PLIW is 0.49, WIPL and WPLE is 0.39 and PLIW and WPLE are 0.41. This shows that the SEM model is valid and has no multicollinearity problem.

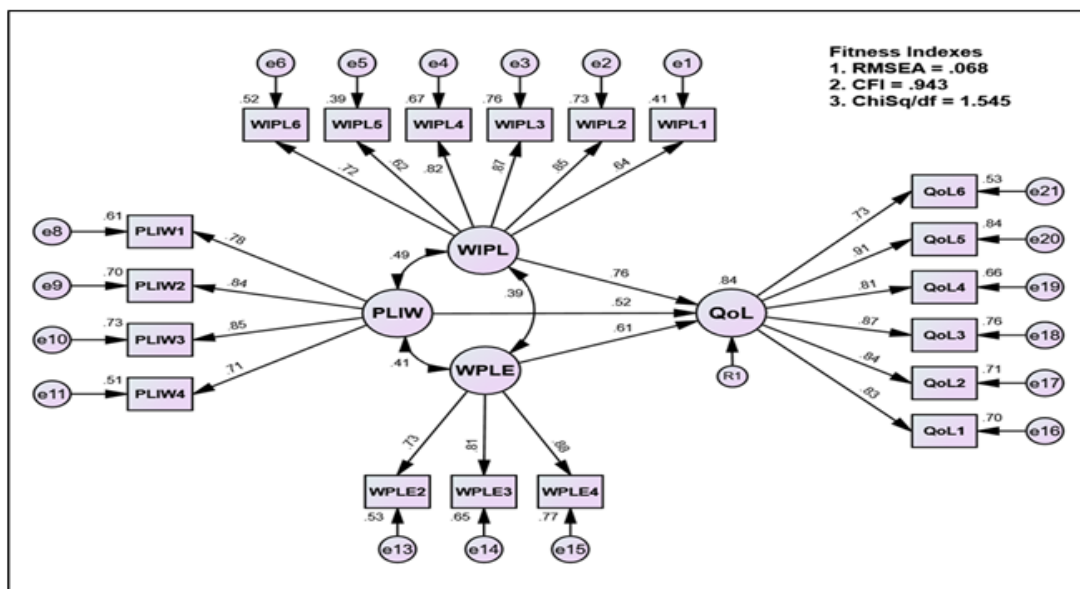


FIGURE 3
SEM FINDINGS INDICATE THE STANDARDIZED REGRESSION VALUE BETWEEN CONSTRUCT

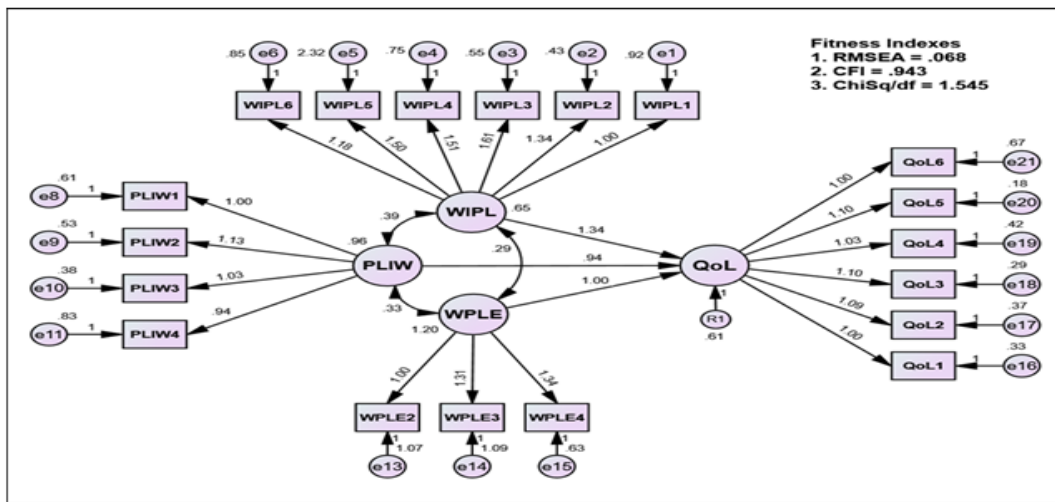


FIGURE 4
SEM FINDINGS INDICATE THE UNSTANDARDIZED REGRESSION VALUE BETWEEN CONSTRUCTS

Figure 3 shows the findings of regression values between the constructs in the model, to build the required regression equation and to test the next hypothesis. An important summary of the SEM findings in Figure 4 (Unstandardized estimates regression value): Regression equations for WIPL, PLIW, WPLE and QoL are as follows: $QoL = 1.34WIPL + 0.94PLIW + 1.00WPLE$ ($R^2 = 0.84 = 84\%$)

Table 1 shows the approximation of the direct effects of each independent construct on the dependent construct in the model as shown in Figure 3 and 4 above.

Construct		Construct	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Label
QoL	<---	WIPL	1.344	0.139	9.666	***	Significant
QoL	<---	PLIW	0.936	0.119	7.868	***	Significant
QoL	<---	WPLE	0.997	0.110	9.085	***	Significant

*** Significant value at the level of significance, $p < 0.001$

Hypothesis testing in Table 2 is based on the SEM findings from Figure 3 above.

Direct Effect Hypothesis	P	Decision
H ₁ : Work Interference with Personal Life (WIPL) has a significant impact on Quality of Life (QoL) among women employees in UniSZA	0.001	Supported
H ₂ : Personal Life Interference with Work (PLIW) has a significant impact on Quality of Life (QoL) among women employees in UniSZA	0.001	Supported

H ₃ : Work Personal Life Enhancement (WPLE) has a significant impact on Quality of Life (QoL) among women employees in UniSZA	0.001	Supported
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Impact of Work Interference with Personal Life (WIPL) on Quality of Life (QoL)

Table 2 shows that Work Interference with Personal Life (WIPL) has a significant direct impact on the Quality of Life (QoL) with estimated regression value (β) is 1.344 at significant level 0.001 (Estimate=1.344, CR=9.666, $p < 0.001$). This means that the construct of Work Interference with Personal Life (WIPL) has a positive and significant influence on the construct of Quality of Life (QoL). This means that if the Work Interference with Personal Life (WIPL) increased by 1 unit, the Quality of Life (QoL) will increase by 1.344 units. The findings of this study indicate that the construct of Work Interference with Personal Life (WIPL) has a positive and significant influence on the construct of Quality of Life (QoL).

Impact of Personal Life Interference with Work (PLIW) on Quality of Life (QoL)

Table 2 shows that Personal Life Interference with Work (PLIW) has a significant direct impact on the Quality of Life (QoL) with an estimate of regression value (β) is 0.938 at a significant level of 0.001, (Estimate=0.938, CR=7.868, $p < 0.001$). This means that the construct of Personal Life Interference with Work (PLIW) has a positive and significant influence on the construct of Quality of Life (QoL). This means that if the Personal Life Interference with Work (PLIW) increases by 1 unit, the Quality of Life (QoL) will increase by 0.938 units. The findings of this study indicate that the construct of Personal Life Interference with Work (PLIW) has a positive and significant influence on the construct of Quality of Life (QoL).

Impact of Work Personal Life Enhancement (WPLE) on Quality of Life (QoL)

Table 2 shows that the Work Personal Life Enhancement (WPLE) has a significant direct impact on the Quality of Life (QoL) with an estimate of regression value (β) is 0.997 at a significant level of 0.001 (Estimation=0.997, CR=9.085, $p < 0.001$). This means that the construct of Work Personal Life Enhancement (WPLE) has a positive and significant influence on the construct of Quality of Life (QoL). This means that if the Work Personal Life Enhancement (WPLE) increased by 1 unit, Quality of Life (QoL) will increase by 0.997 units. The findings of this study indicate that the construct of Work Personal Life Enhancement (WPLE) has a positive and significant influence on the construct of Quality of Life (QoL).

Where the results yield that work-life balance has a direct impact on the quality of life of the employees, organizations can implement various work-life balance initiatives that may assist employees to better balance their work and family responsibilities, gain improvements in well-being and provide organizational benefits such as through the implementation of flexi working hours, telecommuting or job-sharing. As discussed by previous studies, the effects of introducing work-life balance practices on employee attitudes and perceptions include job satisfaction, commitment, job stress and better physical and mental health (Lazar & Ratiu, 2010) which are among the contributing factors to increased quality of life.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study is to examine the impact of work-life balance on the quality of life among women employees in UniSZA, Malaysia. Investigations to examine work-life balance are gaining increasing importance because of new economic forces that changed the landscape and making more women juggling between work, family and personal life. The idea of managing work and having a balanced life is becoming major challenge. In general, the study found that the dimensions of work-life balance; work interference with personal life, personal life interference with work, and work/personal life enhancement have direct impact on the quality of life of women employees in UniSZA. The impact of the three dimensions of work-life balance on quality of life was consistent with previous studies. Due to the limitation of the present study, considerable future research on the impact of work-life balance on individual wellbeing and perceived quality of life may benefit both, the employees and the organizations.

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