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Workload, working hours and work-life balance among the employees of government service holders in Malaysia

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ABSTRACT :

Work-life balance has historically been a subject of fascination for individuals who are concerned with the correlation between the character of one's professional life and the quality of life in general. The objective of this research paper was to determine how long and how much employees' workload affects their work-life balance. A quantitative study was undertaken utilizing the cross-sectional survey method, wherein questionnaires were distributed to a sample of 50 government service employees in Malaysia. This study employed descriptive analysis and reliability analysis to ascertain the associations between the independent and dependent variables. The study's results indicated that workload exerted the greatest influence on work-life balance, with working hours following similarly. Additionally, the results indicated a significant and negative correlation between both variables and the work-life balance of employees. The findings of this study demonstrated that employees experienced a decrease in work-life balance as their burden and working hours increased. Therefore, the enhancement of employees' work-life balance can be achieved through the consideration of both their perceived working hours and the workload assigned to them.

Keywords: Workload. Working hours, Work-Life Balance, Malaysia.

Introduction :

Recently, the idea of work-life balance (WLB) has gained significant importance in the field of human resource management (HRM) literature. The focus is on efficiently managing one's professional job, family duties, and other personal interests [1]. Moreover, as globalization has evolved, the function of labour for people has also undergone similar changes [2] (Joshi et al., 2002). While employment is often seen as necessary, it is also a crucial element in enhancing personal fulfilment. One of the variables that helps achieve personal and professional objectives is the implementation of work-life perks and programs in organizations [2].

Due to increased awareness of the impact of stressful work environments in today's competitive world, there has been a significant increase in study on the subject of work-life balance, building upon previous studies. Work-life balance refers to how people perceive and manage their time between work, personal life, and family responsibilities, with the goal of minimizing conflicts between these roles [3], [4]. Balance is crucial in most aspects of life. Individuals who consistently devote themselves to their work experience stress and exhaustion. Overworked employees are more prone to have health issues throughout their lives. Additionally, they are more likely to be absent, less productive, and generally challenging to collaborate with. Sayers (2007) suggests that work-life balance significantly enhances workers' professional happiness and personal freedom. Both the employee and employer have a strong incentive to prevent these problems by implementing good human resource management [4].

This research aims to identify the elements that impact the work-life balance of government workers in Malaysia. To achieve the organization's high performance target, it is necessary for all workers at every level to be fully engaged [5]. In today's work environment, due to increasing responsibilities, a majority of individuals in organizations are required to routinely work overtime [6]. According to a researcher's observation and conversations with workers, it seems that the employees had a substantial burden and long working hours. Furthermore, this organization's role as an enforcement agency necessitated the completion of several duties regardless of the time, even outside of regular office hours [7]. The researcher has found two characteristics that could influence employees' work-life balance. The first element to consider is the workload. Engaging in overtime labour might lead to a disruption in the workers' work-life balance. The second aspect to consider is the number of working hours [8].

Literature Review

Work-life Balance

Employees have a significant role in the organization's success. The success of this endeavour relies upon the performance of the employees. According to Scholarios (2004), achieving a balance between work and personal life is important in influencing workers' attitudes towards their companies and overall lives [3]. Several variables influence employee performance, one of which is work-life balance. Employees who achieve a harmonious balance between their personal and professional lives often demonstrate superior performance in comparison to those who do not. Striking a balance between one's professional and personal or family life may be a tough task that significantly affects an individual's level of work and life happiness [9].
Deery (2008) suggested that there has been much focus on the challenges of achieving and maintaining a work-life balance across time [10]. It provided a more precise definition of work-life balance, explaining that it is a multifaceted term that can be understood by examining the individual meanings of "work," "life," and "balance." However, Guest (2002) contended that it is feasible to examine the trend and evolution of work-life balance, as it impacts the well-being of people and their job results [11], [12]. Dundas (2008) posited that work-life balance entails effectively managing and balancing one's professional responsibilities with personal problems [13]. In contrast, Greenhaus (2003) defined work-life balance as the degree to which an individual is equally involved in and content with their workplace and personal life. Therefore, workers with a strong work-life balance demonstrate equal dedication of time and effort to both their job and non-work areas [14]. According to a recent research by Astuti (2024), work-life balance refers to an individual's impression of how well they can manage their many life responsibilities [15]. This definition aligns with previous studies by Sarpong et al. (2024), Stevens et. Al (2024), and Munyeka et al. (2024) [16], [17], [18].

Workload

Workload is a key factor in determining work-related stress levels among individuals. According to Adah et al. (2023), the workload intensity of job assignments is considered a contributing factor to mental stress experienced by workers [19]. He said that workload and stress concerns are becoming important and need thorough investigation for resolution. According to Elloy and Smith (2003), work overload occurs when employees are faced with several job demands that exceed their capacities. This encompasses both qualitative and quantitative overload: i) Qualitative overload refers to a scenario where the workload is too demanding and difficult to do, whereas ii) quantitative overload happens when there is an excessive number of activities that need to be accomplished [4].
In big firms, Lando et al. (2023) observed that workers were assigned several tasks that needed to be performed within a limited timeframe. This makes employees feel pressured to finish all their tasks to meet the deadline [20]. According to Awang et al. (2010), both deadlines and excessive workloads exacerbate work-related stress. According to research conducted by Awang et al. (2010), one participant said that work stress often arises when several tasks are assigned simultaneously, and dealing with the tight deadlines for each assignment makes it very unpleasant and seems unattainable [21]. As per another participant, some activities assigned are of great significance and purpose, yet they must be finished within a limited timeframe. In their study, Goh et al. (2023) concluded that workload has no direct impact on life satisfaction. However, they also suggested that individuals should not perceive their life satisfaction negatively solely based on high job demands. This is because the relationship between workload and life satisfaction may be influenced by factors such as need fulfillment and challenge [4], [21].

Working Hours

Research on discrepancies in working hours is also a prevalent subject of study in several other nations, such as the works of Jacobs and Gerson (2004), Reynolds (2004), and Wooden et al. (2009). HANGLBERGER'S [2010a] analysis of job satisfaction in 31 European nations reveals that the impact of working hours on job satisfaction differs depending on the welfare levels of each country [22]. Specifically, countries with lower welfare levels tend to have less negative impacts of working hours on job satisfaction. Moreover, job autonomy is only significant in nations with a substantial welfare status. CLARK [2005] emphasizes the significance of job characteristics in 19 OECD nations and argues that working hours only matter when there is a discrepancy between the actual and intended working time [22]. The study conducted by VALCOUR [2007] utilizes data from U.S. call center agents to examine the impact of working hours, job complexity, and control over work time on work-life balance satisfaction. In contrast to our findings, this study suggests an overall negative influence of the number of working hours on satisfaction with work-family balance. In the United Kingdom, WHITE ET AL. [2003] conducted a study on working hours and their impact on work-life balance. They discovered a conflict between high performance practices and work-life balance policies [22]. On the other hand, GASH ET AL. [2010] examined the effect of transitioning from full-time to part-time work on satisfaction for women in the United Kingdom and Germany. They found that decreasing working hours had a positive effect on life satisfaction [22].

Objectives

The study examined the factors that influence work-life balance in the governmental sector of Malaysia. Implementing this approach would enable organisations to formulate strategies for optimising staff growth, resulting in enhanced performance, increased employee retention, and decreased expenses. Therefore, this study assessed the following objectives:

1. To examine the relationship between work hours and work-life balance.
2. To investigate the relationship between workload and work-life balance.

Conceptual Framework

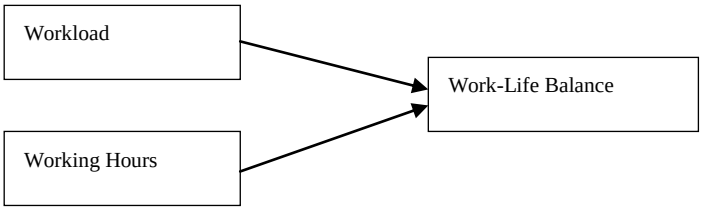

Figure1: Conceptual Framework

Hypotheses

H1: There is a significant relationship between workload and work-life balance.
H2: There is a significant relationship between working hours and work-life balance.

Methodology

Data Collection and Selection

The data for this research was gathered using an online survey conducted using Google Forms. The researchers used the Purposive sampling approach to identify an appropriate sample size for the investigation [23]. The survey form was administered to a total of 120 government service workers, out of whom 100 individuals provided responses. This indicates a response rate of 83.33%, which meets the minimum requirement of 50% as established by Babin and Black [24]. The survey of three demographic inquiries and twelve structured items that used the Likert Scale, spanning from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree) [25].

Analysis Model and Tool

Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was used to ascertain the relationship between the independent and dependent variables [26]. Partial Least Squares (PLS) is a widely used statistical technique in the field of multivariate analysis. It is especially advantageous when working with datasets that include a substantial quantity Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) is a statistical method used in many study fields such as marketing, genetics, and software engineering. This approach entails iteratively optimizing both the measurement model and the structural model [27]. It is especially valuable in situations with limited sample sizes, non-normal data distributions, and intricate models with many observable variables and interactions. Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) provides benefits compared to conventional Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) in certain specific situations. The PLS-SEM technique was implemented using SmartPLS 3.2.8 [28].

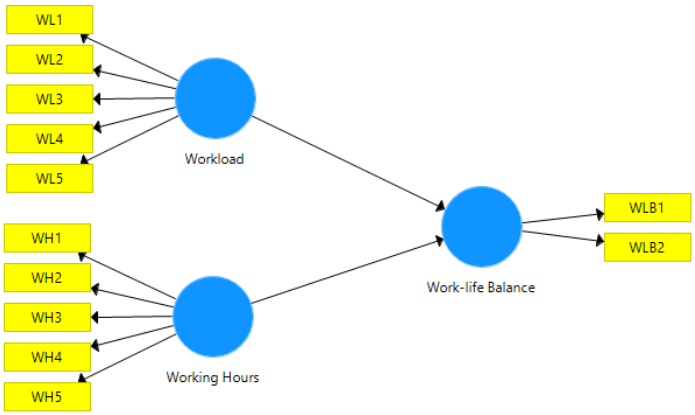

Figure 2 Conceptual Model in SmartPLS

Results and Findings

The relevant connections were detected using SmartPLS 3.2.8, and a thorough grasp of the model was established by applying the PLS-SEM approach with bootstrapping. After the building process was completed, a visual depiction of the finished model was created, as shown in Figure 3.

Table 1 Bootstrapping Parameters

Subsamples	500
Number of Results	Complete Bootstrapping
Test Type	Two Tailed
Significance Level	5%

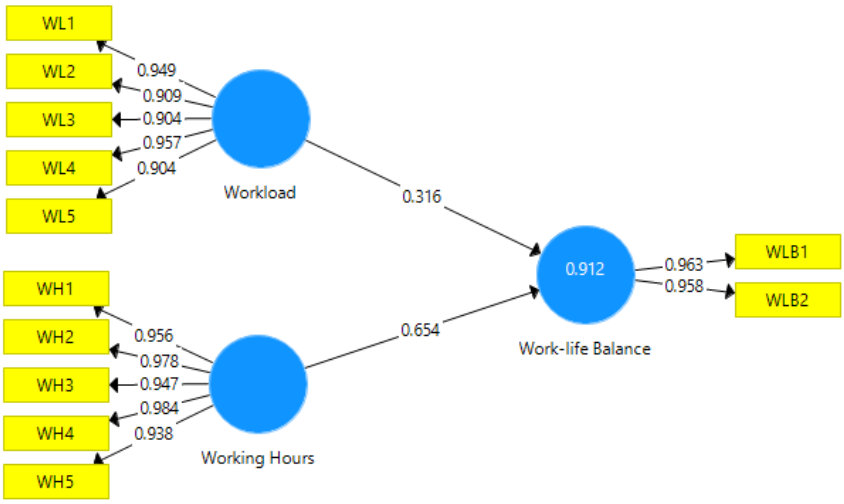

Figure 3 The Conceptual model with outer loading, path coefficients and constructs as Cronbach's Alpha

Convergent and Discriminant Validity

Convergent validity, which is a part of construct validity, evaluates how well a measurement aligns with other measures that are believed to measure the same underlying concept [29]. Essentially, it assesses the degree to which a measurement shows consistency with other measurements of the same concept.

Table 2 Construct Reliability and Validity

	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Workload	0.916	0.919	0.960	0.923
Working Hours	0.979	0.980	0.984	0.923
Work-Life Balance	0.958	0.959	0.967	0.985

This table presents the dependability and validity of workload, working hours, and Work Life Balance. [27] quantifies the degree of internal consistency, namely the extent to which the items on a scale assess the same underlying construct. For all four configurations, Cronbach's Alpha ratings that above 0.7 are considered acceptable. Another metric of internal consistency is rho_A, as described in reference [30]. This version of Cronbach's Alpha takes into account the quantity of scale items. All four structures have strong rho_A values, all of which above 0.8. Composite Reliability is a statistical method that assesses the internal consistency of a measurement scale using structural equation modeling [27]. All four structures have robust Composite Reliability scores over 0.8. The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) [31] is a measure of convergent validity, which assesses the extent to which scale components effectively measure the same concept. All four structures have AVE values that are deemed acceptable, with values above 0.5. The table demonstrates that the four structures are both reliable and accurate. This implies that they have the capability to accurately assess the dimensions of their planned constructions.

The Fornell-Larcker criteria is a technique used by researchers to assess the discriminant validity of measurement models [32]. According to this criteria, the square root of the average variance obtained from a concept must be higher than the correlation between that concept and any other concept. Once this criteria is met, the accomplishment of discriminant validity is attained [32].

Table 3 Fornell-Larcker criterion

	Workload	Working Hours	Work-Life Balance
Workload	0.961		
Working Hours	0.948	0.961	
Work-Life Balance	0.925	0.932	0.925

The Fornell-Larcker criterion is a method used in structural equation modeling (SEM) to assess the discriminant validity of latent constructs in a measurement model. Discriminant validity refers to the extent to which different constructs in the model are truly distinct from each other. The Fornell-Larcker criterion compares the square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each construct with the correlations between constructs.
The correlation between Workload and itself is 0.961, which is found by taking the square root of the AVE for Workload. This gives us a correlation of 1 (the diagonal element). To find the square root of the AVE for Working Hours, we need to find the link between Working Hours and Workload. This is 0.948. The square root of the AVE for Working Hours is higher than this association (0.948), which means it can tell the difference between things. Work-Life Balance: 0.925 is the square root of the AVE for this topic. Working Hours and Work-Life Balance are related to each other by 0.925 and 0.932, respectively. The square root of the AVE for Work-Life Balance is 0.925, which means that these two relationships (0.925 and 0.932) are less than it. This suggests that they can be used to tell different things apart.

Hypotheses Testing

Table 4 Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis		Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P Values	Decision
H1	Workload-> Work-Life Balance	0.654	0.653	0.072	9.068	0.000	Supported
H2	Working Hours -> Work-Life Balance	0.316	0.316	0.071	4.420	0.000	Supported

The findings derived from the examination of two hypotheses demonstrate that workload (H1) and working hours (H2) both has significantly positive relationship with worklife balance. In conclusion, the aforementioned findings emphasize the significance of employers placing a high priority on the creation of a positive work-life equilibrium, guaranteeing effective leadership and management, and providing competitive remuneration and perks in order to augment the overall level of job contentment among their workforces.

Recommendation

Longitudinal studies: Subsequent study should investigate longitudinal designs to evaluate the evolution of workload, working hours, and work-life balance over time, as well as their influence on employee outcomes.
Comparative analyses: Include studying and comparing various sectors and nations to get insights into the variances in work-life dynamics and the efficacy of interventions.
Technological Innovations: Technological advancements such as flexible work arrangements and workload monitoring may improve work-life balance practices in the digital era.

Conclusion

The examination of workload, working hours, and work-life balance among government employees in Malaysia uncovers separate concepts with different connections. The workload is a prominent component highlighting specific areas where focused interventions may be implemented to enhance employee well-being and organizational efficiency. Gaining insight into these interactions may provide valuable guidance for developing strategies and implementing measures to cultivate a more salubrious and efficient work atmosphere for civil servants in Malaysia.

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