

WORKLOAD, ROLE CONFLICT AND WORK-LIFE BALANCE AMONG EMPLOYEES OF AN ENFORCEMENT AGENCY IN MALAYSIA

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ABSTRACT

Work-life balance has continuously been a concern of those interested in the quality of working life and its relation to wider quality of life. This research paper was aimed to identify the effects of workload and role conflict towards employees' work-life balance. Quantitative research had been conducted using cross-sectional survey method by distributing questionnaires to 100 respondents in one of government enforcement agency in Malaysia as a sample. Descriptive analysis, reliability analysis, Pearson's correlation analysis and multiple regression analysis were applied in this study to measure the relationships between independent and dependent variables. The finding of the study revealed that, workload was the most dominant factor affecting work-life balance, followed by role conflict. It also showed that all of the two factors were significantly and negatively related with employees' work-life balance. These results explained that the higher workload and role conflict felt by the employees, the lesser the work-life balance enjoyed by them. Thus, employees' work-life balance can be improved by considering the amount of workload given to them as well as their feeling of role conflict in performing the job.

Key words: workload, role conflict, work-life balance, enforcement agency.

Introduction

Based on past research, a growing quantity of research on the work-life balance issue have been carried out due to the awareness of the effects of the demanding work environment in today's new age competition world. Work-life balance is defined as the perception of employees on work, personal and family time that are maintained and integrated with a minimum of role conflict (Clark, 2000; Ungerson and Yeandle, 2005). Balance is the key as the most things in life. People who are regularly tied to their jobs deal with the symptoms of tension and burnout. Overworked employees are more likely to suffer health problems in their life, in addition more like to be absent, less efficient and in overall quite difficult to work with. Referring to Sayers (2007), employees' professional satisfaction and personal freedom are contributed by work-life balance. It is in the finest interest of both the employee and employer to avoid these pitfalls through effective human resource management.

The emphasis of this study is to find factors that influence the employee's work-life balance among employees in one of government enforcement agency in Malaysia. In line with high performance objective in this organization, it requires comprehensive involvement from all level of employees. Nowadays, on requirement of growing duty, most of employees of this organization need to do overtime frequently. Based on one of researcher's observation and conversation with employees of this organization, it appears that the employees' workload were heavy. In addition, this organizations function as enforcement agency led many tasks to be carried out irrespective of the time, including outside of office hours. The researcher had identified two factors that may contribute to employee's work-life balance. First factor is workload. Performing overtime work may cause the employees to experience life imbalance. Second factor is role conflict. Nicklaus (2007) explains, role conflict is an incongruence of role expectation in which activities and behavior to be carried by the employees must comply with the job description and how employees should act in carrying their task.

Hence, in this study the researchers wanted to identify the relationship between workload, role conflict and work life balance among employees at one of the Malaysian government enforcement agency. It is noticed that no study has been done to study the factors affecting work-life balance particularly among enforcement agency employees in Malaysia. Thus this current study is carried out to fill this gap. Therefore the objectives of this study are to determine the relationship between workload and role conflict towards employee work-life balance at one of Malaysian government enforcement agency.

This paper consists of five sections. The following section reviews the literature on work-life balance, work load and role conflict. The third section discusses the methodology used in this study, including an explanation of the research design, sampling procedures, research instruments and data analysis techniques while section four discusses the research findings and its contribution to knowledge. Finally, section five summarizes the findings and integrates them to suggest an overall conclusion. This section also suggests relevant avenues for further research.

Literature Review

Work-Life Balance

Employees are major contributors to the success of the organization. While this successful depends on employee performance. According to Scholarios (2004), work-life balance plays a crucial role in shaping employees attitude towards their organizations and also life. There are many factors that affect the performance of employees, and one of which is the balance of life. Employees who obtain a balanced life and career usually have better performance compared to those who don't. To balance a career with personal or family life can be challenging and it has a great impact on a persons' work and life satisfaction (Broers, 2005).

Deery (2008) proposed that over the years, substantial attention were given to issues relating to maintaining and obtaining work-life balance. He further defined work-life balance as concept of a complex task as it can be viewed from each the meaning of "work", "life" and "balance" itself. Guest (2002) on the other hand, argued that it is possible to explore work-life balance trend and development as it influence the employees' well-being and job outcomes. While Dundas (2008) argued that work-life balance is about managing and juggling efficiently between job and all aspect of personal matters, Greenhaus (2003) defined work-life balance as to what extent an individual is equally engaged in and equally satisfied with his or her job and personal life. Thus, employees who experience high work-life balance are those who exhibit similar investment of time and commitment to work and non-work domains (Virick, 2007; Omar , 2013). In a more recent study, according to Haa et al. (2014), work-life balance as an individual's perceptions of how well his or her life roles are balanced, which is consistent with recent study (e.g. Frone, 2003; Greenhaus & Allen, 2011; Haar, 2013; Kossek et al., 2014).

Workload

Workload is one of the indicators of work stress among employees. Referring to the intensity of job assignments workload is also said to be the cause of mental stress for employees (Shah et al. 2011). He added that, workload and stress issues are becoming a crucial attention crucial and require in-depth research to be resolved. Elloy and Smith (2003) suggested that work overload tends to happen when employee receives several work demands that are beyond their capabilities. This includes qualitative or quantitative overload: i) Qualitative overload is a situation where the work load is too challenging to be completed, while ii) quantitative overload occurs when there are too many tasks to be completed.

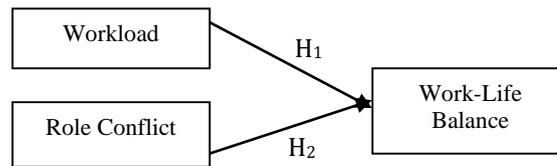
Shah et al.(2011) added, in large organizations, employees received several task to be completed within a short period of time. This causes employee to be pressurized in order to complete their entire task in order to meet the deadline. Awang et al. (2010), further added, the combination of deadlines and work overload makes work even more stressful. One respondent from a study by Awang et al. (2010), described that, job stress often occurs when several task were given together and coping with the tight deadline of each task makes it rather stressful and impossible. According to another respondent, some of the tasks given consist of very important and meaningful task however; they are to be completed in a short period of time. Goh et al.(2015) claimed that workload and life satisfaction does not have a direct effect, however, Goh further explained that his findings recommend that individuals do not evaluate life satisfaction poorly due to high job demands, as workload and life satisfaction might have other relationship influenced by need fulfillment and challenge.

Role Conflict

Role conflict occurs when there are unsuited demands placed upon an employee such that compliance with both would be tough. Nicklaus (2007) proposed four categories of role conflict: i) person role conflict which occurs when role expectation of others is incongruent with the personal orientations of the employees; ii) Inter sender conflict where expectations received from two different people are incompatible. Kamel (2011) further support, conflict could occur when message or instructions were received by and employee to perform the task from two or more managers; iii) Inter role conflict which occurs when employees need to carry out many roles at one time and the roles are incongruent and incompatible; iv) Intra sender conflict where resources and capabilities of employees conflict with the roles. Kamel (2011), added, when there are inadequate resource, conflicting request and different working style, it could create work stress.

Based on the literature discussed in the preceding section, researchers proposed the following framework (Figure 1). Figure 1 further explains the relationship between dependent and independent variable of the study.

Figure 1: Research Framework



Based on Figure 1, the hypotheses are as follows:

- H₁: There is a relationship between workload and work-life balance.
- H₀: There is no relationship between workload and work-life balance.
- H₂: There is a relationship between role conflict and work-life balance.
- H₀: There is no relationship between role conflict and work-life balance.

Methodology

For this research study researchers chose quantitative cross-sectional method using standardized questionnaires for conducting a causal study in order to identify the relationship between workload, role conflict and work-life balance. Descriptive (frequency analysis) study were undertaken to describe the characteristics of respondents (age, gender, education, year of employment, etc.). The unit of analysis for this study was the individual employees in one of a Malaysian government enforcement agency. For the purpose of this study, the researcher chose a non-probability sampling designs of convenience sampling. The total of sample size is 100. The researcher had used interval scale which also known as likert scale for all variables in this study ranging from 1 = ‘Strongly Disagree’ until to 5 = ‘Strongly Agree’. The measurements used in this study as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Adopted Measurements

Variables	Item	Source
Workload	I feel that there are too many deadlines in my work that are difficult to meet	De Bruin and Taylor (2006)
	I work more than 8 hours a day	
	I work for long hours even on holidays	
	I have to work very fast	
	My daily activities affected because of workload (i.e, exercise, eating time and sleeping time)	
	I like to wake up at night because of problem at work	
	I have no energy left at the end of the working day	
	I have unrealistic time pressure	
	I am so busy and find it difficult to concentrate on the job in front of me	
Role Conflict	I receive incompatible request from two or more people	De Bruin and Taylor (2006)
	I do things that are likely to be accepted by one person and not accepted by others	
	I am having uncertainties on what is expected from my work	
	I am having task that have no relation to the job function	
	I receive an assignment without the manpower to complete it	
	I have to buck a rule or policy in order to carry out an assignment	
	I work with two or more groups who operate quite differently	
	I always feel unable to influence my immediate supervisor’s decision and action that affect me	
I always feel that I have to do things on the job that are against my better judgement		
Work-Life Balance	I am successful in balancing my work and non-work life	Omar (2013)
	I am satisfied with the balance between my job and non-work life	
	I am satisfied with the way I divide my time between work and non-work life	
	I am satisfied with the way I divide my attention between work and non-work life	
	I am satisfied with how well my work life and my non-work life fit together	
	I am satisfied with my ability to balance the needs of my job with those of my non-work life	
I am satisfied with the opportunity I have to perform my job well and yet be able to perform non-work related duties adequately		

Results and Discussion

As per Table 2, the respondents consisted of 65% female and 35% male. Majority race were Malay with 84%, followed by Chinese with 9% and Indian with 7%. 45%, of the respondents were between 31 to 40 years old followed by respondents

between 21 to 30 years old with 44%, and the lowest percentage were respondents of above 41 years old (11%). Majority of respondents were also working in non-executive position (74%) and the rest of 26% were management and professionals. Most of the respondents were married (60%) as compared to single (38%) and divorced/separated (2%). The majority of respondents highest education level of respondents was diploma (45%), followed by bachelor degree with 31%, SPM/Certificate (18%) and a fair number of respondents with post graduate degree (6%). Most respondents earned below RM3000 monthly (66%) and had worked between 6 to 10 years (28%).

Table 2: Demographic Profile of Respondents

Demographic Profile	Category	No. Sample N=100	Percentage %
Gender	Male	35	35
	Female	65	65
Age	Less than 20 years old	-	-
	21 – 30	44	44
	31 – 40	45	45
	41 and above	11	11
Race	Malay	84	84
	Chinese	9	9
	Indian	7	7
	Others	-	-
Occupation	Management and Professional	26	26
	Non – Executive	74	74
Marital Status	Single	38	38
	Married	60	60
	Divorced / Separated	2	2
Education	SPM / Certificate	18	18
	Diploma	45	45
	Degree Graduate	31	31
	Post Graduate	6	6
Level of Income	Less than RM2,000	26	26
	RM2,001 - RM3,000	40	40
	RM3,001 - RM4,000	19	19
	RM4,001 - RM5,000	6	6
	More than RM5,001	9	9
Length of Service	Less than 2 years	25	25
	2 - 5 years	24	24
	6 - 10 years	28	28
	More than 10 years	23	23

The Table 3 shows the descriptive statistics of all study variables. The mean for role conflict was the lowest i.e. 2.82 out of 5, while workload was 2.92 and the highest was work-life balance at 3.32. These indicate that in average employees were neither agreed nor disagreed to the items that have been asked in the questionnaire. Hence it can be concluded that their workload, role conflict and work-life balance were at moderate level. Pearson Correlation was used to analyze the strength of association between all variables in this research study. The first independent variable which is workload indicated that $r = -0.736$ while $p = 0.000$. The result shows that there was a negative significant and strong association between workload and work-life balance. The second independent variable which is role conflict indicated that $r = -0.605$ while $p = 0.000$. The result showed that there was a negative significant and strong association between role conflict and work-life balance. The association between both independent variables i.e. between workload and role conflict indicated that $r = 0.623$ while $p = 0.000$. The result shows that there was a positive significant and strong association between both variables. Therefore, the findings confirmed that increasing workload and role conflict will decrease the employees' work-life balance.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics, Cronbach Alpha, and Pearson Correlation of All Study Variables

Variables	Workload	Role Conflict	Work-Life Balance
Workload	(.84)		

Role Conflict	623**	(.87)	
Work-Life Balance	-.736**	-.605**	(.90)
Mean	2.92	2.82	3.32
SD	.601	.673	.769

Note: ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed); Entries in parenthesis indicate Conbrach Alpha values.

Table 4 describes the result for multiple regression analysis performed for the framework proposed in this study. Based on the Table 4, the multiple regression model with all predictors produced $R^2 = .577$. The 0.577 of the R Square represents that there is 57.70% of the variation of the work-life balance can be explained by the two (2) independent variables which include workload and role conflict. Meanwhile, the remaining 44.30% of the variation of dependent variable was interpreted by other factors. This means that, there are other additional variables that are important that affects work-life balance that have not been considered in this study. In addition, Table 4 also shows that the study model was fit, which the significant value that is less than 0.01 ($p < 0.01$) with F value of 66.242. Through to that, it was found that both of independent variables are significant, with $p < 0.01$ i.e. workload and role conflict with $\beta = -0.752$ and $\beta = -0.273$ respectively. Thus, both of variables of workload and role conflict have significant negative effects towards employees' work-life balance. Therefore, it was proven that both of the hypotheses which are H_1 , i.e. there is a relationship between workload and work-life balance among employees and H_2 , i.e. there is a relationship between role conflict and work-life balance among employees were supported, while both of H_0 were rejected. Hence, if workload among employees were to be increased, their work-life balance will reduce. In addition, any increasing in role conflict among employees will reduce their work-life balance.

Table 4: Multiple Regression Analysis

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	6.286	.263		23.927	.000
Workload	-.752	.108	-.588	-6.961	.000
Role Conflict	-.273	.096	-.239	-2.831	.006
F value	66.242				
Sig	.000				
Adjusted R2	.569				
R2	.577				

Conclusion

The main objective of this study was to examine the factors that affecting work-life balance among employees at one of the Malaysian government enforcement agency. The result of this research has steered the researcher to answer two research objectives that the researcher intended to achieve. Where two hypotheses were accepted and null hypothesis (H_0) was rejected. The significant relationship between workload and role conflict with work-life balance were identified using multiple regression analysis. To further identify which is the most influential factor among the two significant factors, regression analysis was used. As per Table 4, it indicated that standardized coefficients beta for workload was higher than role conflict i.e. -0.588 and -0.239 respectively. Therefore this study concludes that workload is stronger than role conflict in negatively predicting work-life balance among employees. This further suggests that the employers need to be aware of workload segregation hence to take action to avoid increment of workload and role conflict among employees. This could be done by introducing flexible work options. While the present study only incorporated 2 variables that affect work-life balance, future research is recommended to examine other factors that affect work-life balance besides workload and role conflict.

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