Factors Affecting Work Life Balance among Administrator in a Public University during COVID-19

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Abstract: This study is conducted to examine the relationship between job stress, supervisor support and work attitudes toward work-life balance during Covid-19 among employees in an administration office at a Public University in Selangor. The independent variables of this study consist of job stress, supervisor support, and work attitude; whereas the dependent variable in this study is work-life balance. The quantitative research method is selected and a questionnaire is used as the research instrument to collect data. There are 110 samples selected from the Administration office (N=110). The data collected is analyzed by using Statistical Packages for Social Science Version 26.0 (SPSS Version 26.0) software. Data was then analyzed both descriptively and inferentially. The results revealed that all variables have a significant positive relationship between supervisor support and work attitude with work-life balance and a significant negative relationship between job stress and work-life balance. The study emphasized the need for organizations to review the relevance of work-life balance programs, policies and activities that support and encourage employees to reduce stress in a workplace. Supervisor support also has the impact of making a positive work attitude among employees. This study gives insight to the organization in designing an appropriate system to enhance work-life balance.

Keywords: *Work-life balance, job stress, supervisor support, Covid-19, work attitude.*

1. Introduction

New Straits Times on April 7, 2020, reported that the Coronavirus pandemic is influencing each feature of our day-by-day lives, including the manner in which we work. New Straits Times on April 16, 2020, reported that work from home (WFH) used to be a privilege offered by a handful of companies in the country, but now, with the Movement Control Order (MCO) in place, it has become the norm. We can see that the pandemic is affecting employment matters. Employees, including women and working parents, are having the most difficulty which leads to work from a work-from-home dilemma. Apart from the private sector, public universities are no exception in facing this coronavirus pandemic where universities have taken the initiative to allow employees from both administrative and academics to work from home. Working from home (WFH) refers to an employee who works from their home or another place of residence rather than from the office (Hart, 2021). During this pandemic, WFH is considered a new norm of employment. However, despite the advantages of implementing the WFH policy to curb the Covid-19 pandemic, it has created a certain challenge.

Working from home has long been thought to be a good way to improve employees' work-life balance (Nakrošienė, Bučiūnienė & Goštautaitė, 2019). However, during this pandemic, it has been revealed that the employees were actually facing blurred work-life boundaries (Pluut & Wonders, 2020). Working remotely has been a lifesaver for many employers; however, the blurred lines between work and home have increased employee stress and negatively impacted overall well-being (Douglas, 2021). Apart from that, working from home also leads to a poor work-life balance (Abdullah, 2020) which also causes disrupted work, family, and social life These significant changes may have resulted in a shift in exposure to work-life conflict (Schieman, 2021). While this situation has developed into problems or challenges towards employment in Malaysia, the aim of this study is to examine the relationship between job stress and work-life balance, to examine the relationship between supervisor support and work-life balance, and to examine the relationship between work attitude and work-life balance.

2. Literature Review

Work-Life Balance: Work-life balance is always a priority for everyone because it has a relation with a wide quality of life. The meaning of work-life balance is different for each thing (Lockwood, 2003). According to Lockwood (2003), the definition of work-life balance from the employee viewpoint is the dilemma of

managing work obligations and personal/family responsibilities while a work-family view refers to the degree to which an organization's community acknowledges and values its workers' family commitments and duties, which allows management which staff to work together to meet their personal and job needs.

According to Hasan (2017), the work-life balance or family-friendly job policies are considered to be one of essential needs, particularly in this era for any working person. To gain true happiness in life, individuals are now introduced to the concept of work-life balance apart from being satisfied or doing well at work. While Hossain (2018) contended, these days, there has been an increasing number of individuals investing more time in work-related tasks. Moreover, with the accessibility of different advancements and developments, people are working longer and pushing harder toward efficiency. In an unfavorable way, they tend to spend less time on other activities of their lives. Research by Robert (2007) indicates that new technology leads employees to work longer and be able to work at any place and at any time to show career commitment. The workload was the top contributor to job stress, burnout and work-life balance (Kelly, 2020). In addition, Nadeem and Abbas (2009) stated that the long working hours, work pressure, high requesting jobs, use of sophisticated technology made it hard for employees to keep a balance between their activity and work commitments. In contrast, Hobson (2001) stated that work-life balance issues are caused by the top 10 stressful life events. It does not include work-related activities, but it reflects the variety of important life and family-related incidents such as death, serious illness, divorce, and institutional detention.

Job Stress: According to Mansoor et al. (2011), "Stress is a condition which happens when one realizes the pressure on them or requirements of the situation are wider than they can handle, and if these requirements are huge and continue for a long period of time without any interval, mental, physical or behavioral problems may occur." Stress is anything or a situation where the person faces intense pressure that usually happens in the workplace known as job pressures such as short notices and deadlines, unnecessary health problems, family pressures and others. When people are faced with situations where the requirements of the work are so huge that they have difficulty to manage, it affects their mental being and disposition that will also contribute to physical and behavioral problems (Mimura & Griffiths, 2003; Rehman, 2012).

Perceived job threat-type stress applied more significantly and was a major indicator of work-life balance and work-life conflict scores than perceived work-type stress. Today's fact of working life is that workers are continually struggling to juggle their personal and job lives. It is always the effect or intervention of one on the other which leads to positive or negative 'spillover' in their attempt to reconcile both (Bell et al., 2012).

Unhealthy work environments affect employee's health both physically and mentally many organizations see stress as an indication of weakness and to avoid negative brunt, keep it hidden. Therefore this study looks forward to examining the relationship between job stress and work-life balance during COVID-19.
H1: There is a significant relationship between job stress and work-life balance.

Supervisor Support: Supervisor support is one of the resources that employees may need to cope with difficulties that stem from work–family conflict and family-work conflict (Karatepe, 2007). Moreover, supervisors serve as members of the company and are responsible for monitoring and assessing the success of employees. Employees consider the positive or negative attitude of their supervisor towards them as an indicator of the encouragement of the organization (Eisenberger et al., 1986). In addition, this indicates there will be an understanding of the level of support that the employee would expect of the organization in a wide variety of situations (Eisenberger et al., 1986). Hall (2007) stated that increased supervisor support also affects increases in job control, coworker support, collective efficacy, use of indirect coping mechanisms, and decreased job stress to employees.

According to Straub (2012), both colleagues and supervisors will help to minimize some of the organization's negative impacts. Co-workers have the right to temporarily relieve an employee from his or her work-related responsibilities to meet personal needs. The employee's pressure may decrease with the supervisor's support and the employee satisfaction may increase. Supervisors have the ability to control their employees whether they feel comfortable using work-life initiatives (Straub, 2012). In fact, recent findings have shown that expectations of supervisory assistance have a stronger effect on workplace performance compared with coworker support (Rousseau & Aube, 2010) or the provision of work-life balance policies alone (Allen, 2001;

Kelly, 2008). Supervisors play a significant part in whether or not employees feel confident managing their roles in work and life (Hammer, 2005).
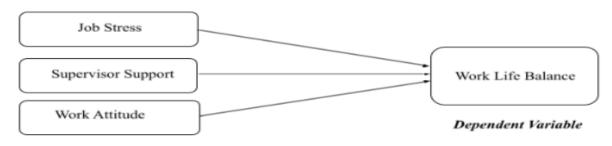
While supervisor support has a strong positive influence on the self-efficacy of employees (Ibrahim, 2018), Supervisor support also positively impacts job involvement and such influence is transmitted through job satisfaction (Elias & Mittal, 2011). This study aims to examine the relationship between supervisor support and the work-life balance of this administration office at a public university during COVID-19.
H2: There is a significant relationship between supervisor support and work-life balance.

Work Attitude: Noah & Metiboba (2012) refer to attitudes as propensities, or instincts, to respond to an event in a favorable or unfavorable way. The entity in the world around us may be just about anything. Employee happiness and behaviors are one of the main fields where workplace performance is assessed. Employee behaviors may provide useful insight into the efficacy of various management techniques. Job-related habits play a significant part in influencing the workplace job practices of managers (Noah & Metiboba, 2012). Many researchers agree that job attitude has a positive impact on performance (Manikandan, 2002). According to Robbins and Coulter (2005), attitudes are evaluation claims that have three components. The cognitive aspect is the values a person retains. The affective component is the mental or thinking portion of a disposition and the behavioral element is the deliberate component.

Work attitudes include participation in the workplace and responsibility to the supervisor for job-specific activities (Jawad, 2012). A substantial body of work has found that job attitudes are related to a number of activities that are important to the company, including role success, patriotism, innovative performance and competitiveness (Judge, 2012). Work-life balance affects the attitudes of the employees towards their organizations and lives. Work-life balance is particularly important when organizations have to manage highly technical professionals because their high commitment and loyalty are necessary for the organization's success (Scholarios & Marks, 2006). How does the work attitude in this administrative office affect the work-life balance during Covid-19? This study further examines the relationship between work attitude and work-life balance.
H3: There is a significant relationship between work attitude and work-life balance.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

3. Research Methodology

The research design for this study is descriptive, clarification and correlational that is set in an Administrative office of a Public University with a total of 110 respondents. The correlational method consists of three (3) independent variables which are job stress, supervisor support and work attitude that can influence work-life balance among employees. The non-probability sampling technique was used to select the respondents to participate in this study. This study adopted the survey approach for primary data collection. The questionnaire design includes 5 sections which are Sections A, B, C, D and E and it consists of 56 questions altogether. In this study, the data collected will key into the computer software IBM SPSS Statistics 26 which is easy to calculate research that is using quantitative study. The study of reliability, descriptive analysis, correlation and regression were conducted in the procedures of data analysis.

4. Findings and Analysis

Profile of Respondents: In total, Female respondents are 59 (60.8%) while male respondents are 38 (39.2%) of the population. In addition to that, in terms of age distribution, the highest number of respondents belongs to the age group of 31 - 35 years old with 32 (33%) respondents. As for the respondent's educational background 36 (37.1%) of respondents have a degree, 29 (29.9%) of respondents have a diploma, 14 (14.4%) of respondents with SPM qualification, followed by 10 (10.3%) have a PhD qualification and 8 (8.2%) of the respondent have Master. The majority of the respondents were married (83%). Other than that, the highest number of respondents in a group of less than 3 with 62 (63.9%), followed by group no kids with 23 (23.7%), 4 – 6 with 11 (11.3%) and more than 6 with 1 (1.0%). The majority of the respondents experienced 4 - 6 years of service which is 28 (28.9%) of respondents, followed by 23 (23.7%) of respondents in 7 – 10 years of service and 1 - 3 years of service which is 18 (18.6%) of respondents, 17 (17.5%) of respondents in 11 - 15 years of service and 11 (11.3%) of respondents is more than 15 years of service in organizational. Besides that, in this administration office, the majority of respondents work for a female immediate supervisor with 73 (75.3%) and 24 (24.7%) respondents work for a male immediate supervisor. 84 (86.6%) of the respondents prefer to work from the office while 13 (13.4%) of the respondents prefer to work from home.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics, Cronbach Alpha, and Pearson Correlation of All Study Variables

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

Variables	JS	SS	WA	WLB
JS	(.74)			
SS		(.96)		
WA			(0.71)	
WLB	-.350**	.513**	.426**	(.76)
Mean	3.55	2.68	3.77	3.62

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

The result in the table above shows the findings that supervisor support is strongly correlated with work-life balance (r=0.513, p<0.000) clearly indicates a significant positive relationship between supervisor support and work-life balance. These research findings demonstrate a correlation to Smith and Gardner (2007) which indicate that supervisor support is significantly positively related to work-life balance which is based on their correlation finding.

The relationship between work attitude and work-life balance is also seen to have a significant relationship. The relationship between work attitude and work-life balance is positively significant. The results show that (r=0.462, p<0.000) which indicates that there is a correlation between work attitude and work-life balance.

The relationship between job stress and work-life balance is seen to have a significant relationship. The relationship between job stress and work-life balance is negatively significant. The results show that (r=-0.350, p<0.000) which indicates there is a correlation between job stress and work-life balance. The negative correlation signifies that as the job stress increases, the work-life balance decreases and vice versa.

Table 2: Multiple Regression Analysis – Coefficients

Table 12: Multiple Regression Analysis – Coefficients[a]

	Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.	Tolerance
(Constant)		2.284	0.025	
Supervisor Support (IV)	0.264	2.245	0.027	0.521
Job Stress (IV)	-0.220	-2.215	0.029	0.730
Work Attitude (IV)	0.278	2.652	0.009	0.658

F value   15.300
Sig   .000
Adjusted R2   .309
R2   .330

The R square value shows the percentage contribution of the independent variables from the dependent variables. As measured in the table above, the R square value is 0.330 which means that 33% of independent variables are job stress, supervisor support and work attitude. Hence, the 67 percent variation that influences work-life balance is explained by the other factors that were studied in isolation.

H1: There is a significant relationship between supervisor support and work-life balance

The above-mentioned hypothesis predicts a relationship between the variables, which indicates that supervisor support can affect the work-life balance of the employee. The previous study proved that support from supervisors creates a sense of reciprocity among employees, who then perform better, hence, support from supervisors is another crucial factor in the work-life balance (Baral and Bhargava, 2010).

Based on the findings of this research, the p-value of supervisor support is 0.027 which implies that the relationship of this variable is significant with the work-life balance as it is below 0.05 (β = 0.264, t = 2.245, p = 0.027). Therefore, H1 is supported implying that there is a significant positive relationship between supervisor support and work-life balance, which means that as the value of supervisor support increases, the work-life balance will also increase.

H2: There is a significant relationship between job stress and work-life balance

A relationship was found between job stress and work-life balance. The results are consistent with the previous studies showing the correlation between job stress and work-life balance. Work-life balance/work-family conflict affects job satisfaction, family satisfaction, life satisfaction, career satisfaction and job stress. (Adams, 1996; Fisher-McAuley, 2003).

Based on the findings of this research, the p-value of job stress is 0.029 which implies that the relationship of this variable is significant with the work-life balance as it is below 0.05 (β = -0.220, t = -2.215, p = 0.029). Therefore, H2 is supported implying that there is a significant negative relationship between job stress and work-life balance, which means that as the value of job stress increases, the work-life balance will decrease and vice versa.

H3: There is a significant relationship between work attitude and work-life balance.

Work attitude has a significant impact on work-life balance and the results are consistent with previous research findings. Previous research by Elsa (2010) found that employee positive perception and attitude toward work-life balance and job satisfaction is central to productivity for an institution. A study by Helmle (2014) found that work-life balance has a positive significant impact on employee performance. Employees with a positive mood with just limited work and limited home pressures are more likely to experience satisfaction with their work. Having a healthy work-life balance makes it easier for employees to perform their tasks more efficiently (Bataineh, 2019).

Based on the findings of this research, the significance value of work attitude is 0.009 which is less than 0.05. The value 0.009 implies that the relationship of this variable is significant with the work-life balance (β = 0.278, t = 2.652, p = 0.009). It shows that work attitude has significantly affected work-life balance. Therefore, H3 is supported where work attitude has a positive relationship on work-life balance.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study was conducted to analyze the relationship between job stress supervisor support and work attitude toward work-life balance. Based on the findings of this study, it could be concluded that job stress, supervisor support and work attitude affect work-life balance. Supervisor support and work attitude have a positive significant relationship with work-life balance while job stress has a negative significant relationship with work-life balance. The most significant factor that influenced work-life balance was supervisor support due to the results being positively significant. To conclude the finding, all the hypotheses are accepted.

Quality work-life balance is desired by everyone. The organization must have knowledge of the factors that affect work-life balance such as supervisor support, work attitude and job stress to each of their employees. With this knowledge, the organization will be able to improve the quality of work-life balance among its

employees by holding effective activities and programs. Therefore, employees will be able to improve job satisfaction and work performance. This can benefit the organization.

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