

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WORK SOCIAL SUPPORT AND WORK-LIFE BALANCE IN HOTEL INDUSTRY

FATAHYAH YAHYA & JUSTINA YAP YEN YING

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to determine the relationship between work social support and work-life balance in hotel industry. A total number of 87 respondents were selected from a medium-scale hotel located in Kuching, Sarawak. A correlational research design was used in this study with a quantitative method. The result generated by a Pearson Correlation test showed there are positive relationships between all the three independent variables and work-life balance; organizational support ($r=+0.44$), supervisor support ($r=+0.41$) and colleagues support ($r=+0.45$). The significant value (r) concluded the strength of these three relationships is moderate. Based on these findings, several contributions are further discusses. Some recommendations were also suggested for the employer or organization, human resources practitioner and future researcher to encourage work-life balance practice in the workplace.

Keywords: *Work Social Support, Work Life Balance, Organizational Support, Supervisor Support, Colleagues Support*

ABSTRAK

Tujuan kajian ini adalah untuk mengenalpasti hubungan antara sokongan sosial kerja dan keseimbangan hidup berkerja di industri perhotelan. Seramai 87 orang responden telah dipilih dari sebuah hotel berkapasiti sederhana yang terletak di Kuching, Sarawak. Kajian ini menggunakan corak korelasi dengan kaedah kuantitatif. Keputusan yang dihasilkan oleh ujian Pekali Korelasi Pearson menunjukkan terdapat hubungan yang positif antara ketiga-tiga pembolehubah bebas dan keseimbangan hidup bekerja; sokongan organisasi ($r=+0.44$), sokongan penyelia ($r=+0.41$) dan sokongan rakan sekerja ($r=+0.45$). Nilai signifikan (r) turut membuat kesimpulan bahawa kekuatan ketiga-tiga hubungan adalah sederhana. Berdasarkan penemuan ini, beberapa sumbangan telah dibincangkan selanjutnya. Beberapa cadangan juga telah dicadangkan bagi majikan atau organisasi, pengamal sumber manusia dan penyelidik masa depan untuk menggalakkan amalan keseimbangan hidup bekerja di tempat kerja.

Kata Kunci: *Kerja Sokongan Sosial, Kehidupan Kerja Baki, Sokongan Organisasi, Sokongan Penyelia, Rakan sekerja Sokongan*

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Kuching is one of the famous tourist destinations in Sarawak. The tourism industry had shown considerable contributions to the economic development of Sarawak. Due to the increasing promotional activities by the government and growing reputation of Kuching as a tourism hub, the tourism industry are expected to grow rapidly in coming years. In order to sustain these increasing number of tourist arrival in the future, more and more construction of hotels have been done in Kuching.

In today's competitive business environment, many organizations perceive employees as an important asset, particularly in service based organizations due to the advantages of producing successful performances (Evans, Campbell & Stonehouse, 2003). Hotel industry is one of the most common service-based organizations. Globalization and competitive business environment have encouraged service-oriented organization such as hotel to be proactive in their human resources implementations in order to deliver high quality services to their customers. Therefore, work-life balance plays a crucial role in promoting employees productivity. There are many factors that contribute to work-life balance and one of it is a work social support given to the employees. By promoting a work social support in an organization, the satisfaction level of an employee can be enhanced; they will feel free to go to work and thus increasing the employee's productivity (Malik, Saif, Gomez, Khan & Hussain, 2010).

Work Social Support

Generally, there are two types of social supports, which are work social support and family social support. However in this study, only work social support will be discussed. One of the earliest definitions for social support comes from Cobb (1976) which defined it as a person's belief that he is appreciated, loved, and his well-being is taken care as part of mutual obligation of a social network. Ford et al. (2007) defined work social support as the extent to which individuals perceive that their well-being is valued by the workplace sources, such as supervisor, colleagues, and the wider organization where they are embedded and the insight that these sources provide facilitate to support this well-being. Based on above statements, Kossek, Pichler, Bodner and Hammer (2011) suggested that social support is an important job supply that makes the role demands for which support is given such as the incorporation of the work-family interface experienced more positively.

Perceived Organizational Support

Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, and Sowa (1986) refers perceived organizational support as employee's overall perception on the extent to which an organization or employer appreciate their employees, supports their socio-emotional needs by providing resources to help managing a demand or role, and concerns about their employee's well-being. Perceived organizational support can be content specific to

one setting (work or family). For instance, it can be family-supportive organizational perceptions (FSOP) whereby it refers to the extent to which an organization or a employer is perceived as family supportive (Allen, 2001). Organizational support had been recognized as one of the important factors in increasing the organizational commitment and job satisfaction of employees. Therefore, organizational support plays an essential role when it comes to retaining employees in an organization as well as achieving work life balance. According to Kanaga and Browning (2007), employees are prone to compare recent organization and job position with the previous one. This mental process applied by employees relatively affects employee's perception of their organizational support.

Rose, Hunt and Ayers (2007) found that in most research, there is a negative relationship between perceived organizational support and work-family conflict or family-work conflict. The lower the conflict experienced, the higher the perceived support. According to Colakoglu, Culha, and Atay (2010), affective commitment is positively affected by perceived organizational support. In other words, if the employees obtain greater support from the organizations they work for, they will feel more attached to that organization. Previous finding from Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002) is consistent with the finding of Colakoglu, Culha, and Atay (2010). Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002) suggested that employees will attach to the organization they work for in an affective way, if the employees feel that they are cared and valued by that organization.

Supervisor Support

According to Milliken, Martins, and Morgan (as cited in Chen, Liu, & Yang, 2013), managers or supervisors play a vital role in promoting the work-life balance programs as they can encourage employees to participate or even discourage employees from participating work-life balance programs. Allen (2001) also claimed that there is a significant relation between supervisor support and family-supportive work environments, which mean employees whose supervisors supported their efforts to balance work and family, are likely to achieve work-life balance.

According to Kossek et al. (2011), employee's view on organizational support also outlined by the supervisors in an organization and it is related to work-life balance. Perceived supervisor support is defined as the employee's perception on which their supervisor are concerned about their work and family well-being (Kossek et al., 2011). Supervisor's supportive behaviors usually include instrumental support, emotional support, creative work-life management and role modeling behaviors (Hammer, Kossek, Yragui, Bodner, & Hanson, 2009). When a supervisor listens and shows their subordinates that he or she concerns about their work-life requirement, the supervisor is said to be engaged in emotional support. Whereas, a supervisor engage in instrumental support when he or she reacts to employee's work-life requirement whenever it is needed. Supervisor are engaging in the third dimension of support which is the role modeling behaviors when the supervisor constantly show

subordinates ways to balance their work and life behaviors on the job. The fourth dimension of support is creative work-life management whereby with the purpose of ensuring employee effectiveness on and off the job, the supervisor reschedules a work day.

Colleagues Support

It is essential to remember that colleagues support can also be related to an employee's organizational commitment, job satisfaction, organizational citizenship behaviors, and work-life balance. When a colleague assists an employee to deal with the competing demands between an individual work and non-work life, work-life balance will increase. (Thompson & Prottas, 2006). When colleagues are constantly supportive of one another, an employee's job satisfaction will also increase (Pollock, Whitbred, & Contractor, 2000).

Whether a working environment will be unpleasant or pleasure for employees to spend their time can be influenced by colleagues support. As a result of increasing focus on team structures of work in organization and diversity in the working place, concern in colleagues support has been highlighted recently (Hodson, 1997). Liao, Joshi, and Chuang (2004) defined colleagues support as the degree that an employee perceives other workers at their workplace as being supportive and helpful to them. Colleagues support may include actions such as giving them tangible help, concern for fellow colleagues or provide them with valuable information (Ducharme & Martin, 2000). Colleagues support can also be tied to an employee's work-life balance, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and organizational citizenship behaviors. Hegtvædt, Clay-Warner, & Ferrigno (2002), stated that the level of colleagues supportiveness had the greatest contribution on employee resentment in connection with the use of work-life or family policies. Work-life balance can be improved when a colleague helps an employee cope with the competing demands between one's work and non-work life (Frone, Yardley, & Markel, 1997; Thompson & Prottas, 2006).

Work-life Balance

Work-life balance has a great influence on both the organizations and their employees. As the workforce continues to change over time, the area of work-life balance research is getting more prominent (Kossek, 2005). Kossek (2005) mentioned that the responsibilities upheld by the single parent family, dual-earner couples, and employees who have elderly parents are increasing constantly. The main interest of this study is a work-life balance. For the purpose of this research, work-family balance is considered synonymous with work-life balance. Work-life balance is defined as the ability to combine people's work life and family life effectively (Hughes & Bozionelos, 2007). All employees, regardless single or married, having children or none, they are all incorporated in work-life balance. Hughes and Bozionelos (2007) stated that work-life balance consists of many different activities that employees look forward to engage in outside of work. For instance, spending time with friends or for hobbies can be included in work-life balance.

However Perrons, Fagan, McDowell, Ray, and Ward (2005) argued that the balance between work and family life does not consider an evenly divided energy and time between work and leisure only, but also individual's starting points and vary expectations for how an individual organize their work and lives. Regardless of work-life balance policies supporting employment legislation, employee's' privileges usually depend "on the immediate decisions of supervisor and line manager, who are often under pressure to meet efficiency targets" (Perrons et al., 2005, p.56). Overall work-life balance of employees and organizational outcomes might be influenced in a negative way because of these increased pressures (Anderson, Coffey, & Byerly, 2002). In addition, these increased pressures will further influence the organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and organizational citizenship behaviors of employees (Bragger, Rodriguez- Srednicki, Dutcher, Indovino, & Rosner, 2005). As a result, high turnover rate in an organization could be happening.

According to Higgins, Duxbury, and Irving (1992) due to women role as main caretakers for their elderly parents, kids, and homes, working women are facing well-documented conflicts. Therefore, women are going through more interruptions compared to men due to the common household problems such as the responsibility of the women for kids and other family members. Family front researcher explained that if spouse perform only the smaller part of the housework, the other partner will feel that they failed to achieve their own work-family balance (Milkie & Peltola, 1999). Whereas Kiecolt (2003) discovered that if compared to those with high work-home satisfaction, individual who think of work as a safe place will spend less hours at work.

Manfredi and Holliday (2004) found that work-life balance has been widely discussed since the launch of a major government campaign in 2000 which aimed at encouraging employers to adopt flexible working arrangements. In order to engage employers in this process, it is important to demonstrate the benefits that can be derived from employment policies and practices that support work-life balance, and the scope that exists for mitigating their negative effects on the management of the business (Manfredi & Holliday, 2004). Manfredi and Holliday (2004) also found that majority of respondents believe that it's important to achieve a balance between work and personal life and most agree that doing so is a joint responsibility of employer and employee.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Hospitality industry is one of the world's fast growing industries. However, according to Hemdi (2006), most of the hotels around the world are facing high turnover rates problem and they also stated that this high turnover rate is detrimental to organizations. One of the main reasons which contributed to the high turnover is the inability of employees to manage work-life obligations (Griffeth & Hom, 2001).

Work-life balance has vital implications for both employees and their organizations in reducing turnover rate. This area of research is becoming popular at times as the workforce continues to change (Kossek, 2005). There has been an increasing trend for organizations to implement more work-life balance policies such as five day work per week, flextime, family leave, and employee assistant programs to improve employee morale and productivity by reducing absenteeism and turnover (Chan, 2007).

However, prior literatures primarily investigated about the impact of family support towards work-life balance (Kossek, 2005; Hughes & Bozionelos, 2007; Milkie & Peltola, 1999). Besides, most of the research done pertaining work-life balance was focusing more on family social support whereby they focus on how married woman or men achieves work-life balance (Milkie & Peltola, 1999; Kossek, 2005; Hughes & Bozionelos, 2007). There are a lot of previous researches related to work-life balance (Anderson, Coffey, & Byerly, 2002; Bragger, Rodriguez- Srednicki, Dutcher, Indovino, & Rosner, 2005; McDowell, Ray, and Ward, 2005; Perrons et al., 2005). However, most of the research focuses on women and the family social support (Higgins, Duxbury, and Irving, 1992; Milkie & Peltola, 1999; Kiecolt, 2003). Some research also mostly discusses about the policies that promote work-life balance which are provided to the employees (Manfredi & Holliday, 2004). On the other hand, there are many researchers conducted a research on the work social support (Rose, Hunt and Ayers, 2007; Colakoglu, Culha, and Atay 2010; Kossek et al., 2011; Selvarajan, Cloninger, and Singh, 2013; Hegtvedt, Clay-Warner, & Ferrigno, 2002).

Hence, research done on hotel industry is still lacking. In particular, the research on the work social support related to organizational support, supervisor support, and colleagues support that will influence the work-life balance of employees in a hotel industry. The work social supports are important as well as to promote work-life balance because supervisor and colleagues are the individuals that are closest to the employees during the long working hour. Hence, they may influence a large effect on employee's work-life balance. Thus, a comprehensive study on the impact of work social support is therefore necessary to gain a better understanding of the work-life balance lifestyles in order to help the organization to perform better implementation of work-life balance policy in the future.

OBJECTIVES

This research is aimed at determining the relationship between work social support (organizational support, supervisor support colleague's support) and work-life balance of a hotel in Kuching, Sarawak. In particular, this aim of this research is; to determine the relationship between perceived organizational support and work-life balance; to determine the relationship between supervisor support and work-life balance; and to determine the relationship between colleagues support and work-life balance.

HYPOTHESES

- Ha1: There is a significant relationship between perceived organizational support and work-life balance.
- Ha2: There is a significant relationship between perceived supervisor support and work-life balance.
- Ha3: There is a significant relationship between perceived colleagues support and work-life balance.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design, Population and Research Instrument

The research design used in this study is a correlational research design. Quantitative research method is used to identify the influence of work social support has on the employee's work-life balance. Our respondents are the employees of a medium scale hotel in Kuching. Therefore, the data was collected from these respondents through distributing the questionnaires. The number of sample required in this research was based on the total number of employees in the hotel which is 106 people. According to the table for determining sample size from a given population by Krejcie and Morgan (1970), the suitable sample size of this research is 80. The sampling used by the researcher in this study is convenience sampling. Convenience sampling is a non-probability sampling technique where subjects are selected because of their convenient accessibility and proximity to the researcher (Castillo, 2009). In this study, we investigate the relationship between work social support and work-life balance within hospitality industry. Hence, the researcher decided to choose one of the newly opened hotels that is available in Kuching.

The instruments/questionnaires used in this study are in bilingual; English and Malay. The questionnaires were divided into three sections; Section A, Section B and Section C. Section A consists of the respondent's demographic such as gender, race, education level, and organization tenure. Section B consists of the independent variables; 7 items of the perceived organizational variable (Eisenberger et al., 1986), 14 items of the supervisor support variable (Hammer et al., 2009) and 10 items of the colleagues support variable (Ducharme and Martin, 2000). The last section which is Section C consists of the 15 items of the work-life balance variable (Baral & Bhargaya, 2011 & Greenhaus, Ziegert & Allen, 2011). Five-point Likert Scale was used in the questionnaire for Section B and Section C.

Data Analysis Procedure

The correlation test was used to identify the relationship between the independent variable with the dependent variable. Independent variable refers to the work social

supports which are the employee's perceived organizational support, supervisor support and colleagues support. The dependent variable refers to the work-life balance of the employees. A cross-sectional survey was used to gather information from the respondents.

RESULT

Demographic Information

In this study, a total number of 110 sets of questionnaires were distributed to the employees of a medium scale hotel that was newly opened and is located in Kuching. However, the researcher only managed to get back a total number of 87 sets questionnaires from the respondents. The hotel is currently having a total number of 106 employees including the management level. Collectively, 86% of their employees had taken part in this study.

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by Demographic Characteristic

Demographic Characteristics	Frequency	Percent %	Cumulative Percent (%)
Gender			
Male	51	58.6	58.6
Female	36	41.4	100.0
Age			
21-25	19	21.8	21.8
26-30	32	36.8	58.6
31-35	20	23.0	81.6
36-40	13	14.9	96.6
41-45	3	3.4	100.0
Race			
Malay	30	34.5	34.5
Chinese	24	27.6	62.1
India	2	2.3	64.4
Others	31	35.6	100.0
Marriage Status			
Single	46	52.9	52.9
Married	41	47.1	100.0
Education Level			
SPM	27	31.0	31.0
STPM	16	18.4	49.4
Diploma	31	35.6	85.1
Degree	13	14.9	100.0
Organizational Tenure			
Less than 2 years	21	24.1	24.1
2 years but less than 5 years	28	32.2	56.3
5 years and above	38	43.7	100.0

Reliability of the Instruments

Table 2: Reliability of the Instruments (N=87)

Section	Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	No. of Items
B	Perceived Organizational Support	0.82	7
	Supervisor Support	0.95	14
C	Colleagues Support	0.93	9
	Work-life Balance	0.91	10

Hypotheses Testing

Pearson correlation test was used to analyze the relationship between the independent variable (perceived organizational support, supervisor support, colleagues support) and the dependent variable (work-life balance).

Ha1: There is a significant relationship between perceived organizational support and work-life balance.

The result showed there is a correlation between perceived organizational support and work-life balance ($r=+0.44, p=0.00$). Therefore, the hypothesis 1 was accepted. The independent variable is a perceived organizational support while the dependent variable is a work-life balance. The r-value is +0.44, indicating that there is a positive relationship between perceived organizational support and work-life balance with a moderate strength. The higher the perceived organizational support, the higher the work-life balance will be.

This result is supported by the research done by Komodromou (2013) reported that there was a positive relationship between work-life balance benefits as perceived by employees and their perceptions of organizational support. Besides, Grover and Crooker (1995) also reported the work-life balance benefits improved with the perceived organizational support. This finding also consistent with the research done by Clark and Reis (1988) that implied, if an organization provide benefits (e.g. through work-life balance) to their employees without been request, the organizations are actually shows that they value and concern for their employees' well-being. This showed that the increase in the work-life balance had promoted the perceived organizational support. This value and concern for the employee will further develop a more personal form of relationship between the employees and the organization rather than just a working relationship (Clark & Reis, 1998).

Ha2: There is a significant relationship between supervisor support and work-life balance.

The result showed there is a correlation between supervisor support and work-life balance ($r=+0.41, p=0.00$). Therefore, the hypothesis 2 was accepted. The r-value is +0.41, indicating that there is a positive relationship between supervisor support and work-life balance with a moderate strength. The higher the supervisor support will result a higher level of work-life balance. The findings of this study are aligned with a research done by Selvarajan, Cloninger, and Singh (2013) concluded that a supportive supervisor may not directly reducing the burden of an employee's family responsibilities but they may help to make an employee's work responsibilities less overwhelming and hence reducing a work interfering with family conflict, which in turn may help reducing a family interfering with work conflict.

Ha3: There is a significant relationship between colleagues support and work-life balance.

The result showed there is a correlation between colleagues support and work-life balance ($r=+0.45, p=0.00$). Therefore, the hypothesis 3 was accepted. The r-value is +0.45 indicating that there is a positive relationship between colleagues support and work-life balance with a moderate strength. The higher the colleagues support, the higher the work-life balance will be. This result is supported with the study conducted by Van de Ven (2011) indicating the support from colleagues could contribute in helping employees experiencing a work-life balance. Besides, Kopp (2013) reported that colleagues' supports are positively related to employee work-life balance.

SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

This study is conducted to identify the relationship between work social support and work-life balance in a medium scale hotel. This study can be used as a guideline for the organization on promoting a work-life balance in the workplace. Organization will be able to design policies or rules that can be a win-win situation for both the employees and the organization. In addition, organization will be able to understand the important of work-life balance in improving employee's job performance and thus increasing the organization profit. For example, by practicing flexibility in the employees' schedules, enable the employees to handle their family responsibilities constructively. Thus, this will reduce family stress and conflict, and promoting the work life balance in both family and work domain.

In order to assist employees attain work-life balance, many practices or policies are currently being used in the organization. Before that, it is essential to clarify that certain work-life balance programs assist employees to reduce the total stress levels by rebalancing their life and work. Whereas, certain programs only assists employees cope with their stress or handle their stress effectively. Therefore, researcher had suggested few recommendations for organization. The organization itself must

recognize the important of work-life balance in their organization. They need to understand that sometimes they have to reduce their employee workload to address workers' need for work-life balance. Hence, organization must ensure that they have programs or policies available that tolerate the employees to attend to their personal lives when required. Furthermore, it is important for the employees to understand that they will not be penalized for utilizing those programs or policies (Batt & Valcour, 2003). The organization should provide support in terms of training and development so that their employees will have the skills needed to accomplish their task or job with lesser stress. High levels of empowerment can be provided to the employees as well so that they will have the decision-making authority to get their job done.

Support from human resource practitioner is the key in helping employee achieving work life balance. This is because when employees encounter problems regarding their job, human resource practitioner is the person that they can ask for help besides their direct manager. Human resource practitioner can provide closer support to the employee in achieving work life balance as they can act as the employee's friend or colleagues rather than superior of the employee. For example, if the organization practicing employee's flexibility in work, the human resource practitioner can approve their employee's emergencies leave when they have emergency case regarding their family members. At the same time, human resource practitioner can express their concern for the employee by giving advice or encouragement. Actions taken by the human resource practitioner will directly reflect the organization practices. If needed, human resource practitioner may provide training to supervisors on ways to handle situations concerning employee work-life balance. Human resource practitioner can also practices periodically ask the employees whether they are satisfied with their current levels of work-life balance. The human resource practitioner can arrange for a meeting with the employees, if the employee is unhappy with his or her work-life balance. Through the meeting, they can discuss together on ways to help the employee promote work-life balance.

This study was conducted in one of the hotels in Kuching only. Therefore, it is recommended that future researcher can conduct more studies about the relationship between work social supports and work life balance in other industry such as manufacturing, construction and service industry. More study can also be conduct on occupational that usually have longer working hours or night shift such as nurse, chef, police and fireman. It will be an advantage if future study can cover more places instead of Kuching only. Studies done on different industries can lead to a big difference in the findings. Furthermore, different cultures may have different level of emphasis on work-life balance. For example, employees in Malaysia have lower emphasis on work-life balance if compared to western countries (Hassan, Dollard, & Winefield, 2010). Therefore, this study could be repeated with an emphasis on examining diverse cultures.

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Profil Penulis:

Fatahyah Yahya, PhD
Senior Lecturer
Department of Counselling
Faculty of Cognitive Science and Human Development
University of Malaysia Sarawak
yfatahyah@fcs.unimas.my

Justina Yap Yen Ying
Student
Department of Cognitive Science
Faculty of Cognitive Science and Human Development
University of Malaysia Sarawak
justina_tea@hotmail.com