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The Relationship between Work-Life Balance, Stress and Job Performance among Housemen in The Ministry of Health, Malaysia

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Abstract

Work life balance is one of the main factors that influence the individual job performance. Understanding the criticality of work-life balance and stress is important because these factors contribute to Housemen's job performance throughout housemanship in training hospitals. Therefore, the objectives of this study were to examine the relationship between work-life balance, stress and job performance among Housemen as well as to determine the predictors of work-life balance and stress toward job performance among Housemen in the Ministry of Health (MOH). This study involved a total of 150 Housemen who were practicing housemanship in MOH hospitals for at least one year. A quantitative approach was used, and a set of self-administered reported structured questionnaires was used for data collection. The data was analyzed by SPSS software version 26.0 using the Pearson correlation and multiple linear regression. The findings indicated that there was a significant relationship between work-life balance, stress and job performance among Housemen in MOH. Work-life balance was found to be a significant predictor of job performance among Housemen. The findings also provided insights for hospital management to review current approaches and work schedules, supervision, evaluation, and welfare of Housemen.

Keywords: Job Performance, Work-Life Balance, Stress, Housemen

Introduction

The workplace of the 21st century is a dynamic and highly stimulating environment that challenges individuals' skillset to deliver what is expected of them. The continuously changing workplace demands might increase stress levels and cause negative impacts on work-life balance, especially for young trainee doctors or commonly known as Housemen. The need for work-life balance is a critical aspect of a fast-changing modern lifestyle. This is due to arising concerns of work-family conflict, stress, emotion, and so on. Work-life balance is about achieving a sense of fulfilment of both satisfactions of working and personal life. While Housemen are expected to perform well in a limited amount of time and with limited resources, especially during the Pandemic Covid-19 period, they are also expected to stay fit and energetic to endure the housemanship and maintain mentally sound and remain high-spirited personally. In Malaysia, there were a total of 43,791 doctors for 2021 currently

serving in the Ministry of Health (Department of Statistic, Malaysia) and 15,658 of it is houseman.

The struggles of houseman in Malaysian hospitals received wide coverage in the media. Numerous complaints from house officers made waves in the local newspapers. Occasionally even parents' chip in to complain on the difficulties faced by their children working as a houseman. The plight of houseman in the Malaysian government hospitals necessitated a study to find out the main causes of stress of houseman. Previous studies have highlighted a number of causes for stress among housemen. Examples include the fear of making mistakes, work overload and uncooperative colleagues. Recently, the increasing trend of confirmed cases of COVID 19, healthcare workers including houseman continue to serve the country in the various roles of surveillance, screening, diagnosis, and treatment. Thus, building from the above conceptual framework, we aim to examine the relationship between stress and work life balance with job performance. However, very little is known about the impact of work life balance and stress on the performance of houseman who had to be available on duty during these tough times.

Work-life Balance and Job Performance

Work-life balance refers to striking a balance between one's career, family obligations, and other personal pursuits (Kerdpitak & Jermsittiparsert, 2020). According to earlier studies, an organisation should create efficient policies to prevent work-life conflict among employees, such as providing enough mentoring and support, flexible work schedules, and many others (Cegarra-Leiva et al., 2012) and positively influence their satisfaction (Allen et al., 2020) and performance (Hughes and Bozionelos, 2007). One of the most crucial challenges that human resource management in firms should address is work-life balance (Abdirahman et al., 2020). Previous study has been conducted between work life balance and job performance (Dousin et al., 2019; Kasau, 2017). Different studies in the realm of organizational and behavioral sciences reveal that work-life imbalance causes a decline in productivity and performance erosion (Susanto et al., 2022). Organizations that ignore the issue of work-life balance suffer from reduced productivity and employee performance (Naithani, 2010). Consequently, a worker who has a good work-life balance may be very productive and perform well (French et al., 2020). Thus, based on these discussions and research findings, we developed the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: Work-life balance has a positive effect on job performance

Stress and Job Performance

Two key streams that aid in understanding how stress is produced have been taken into consideration in studies on occupational stress. The first stream emphasises the typical stress associated with work (Roster & Ferrari, 2019; Yunita & Saputra, 2019). Stress is the main component that has negative effects when it comes to aspects that affect employees' performance (Kinyita, 2015; Yunita and Saputra, 2019). Employee performance, morale, and motivation are all negatively impacted at work. Additionally, it has a detrimental impact on job satisfaction, which interferes with one's motivation to work and lowers performance levels (Ram et al., 2011). Stressed employees not only have poorer job experiences but also suffer from poor health circumstances. Their ability to focus on their work is further diminished as a result, which lowers their results (Saleem et al., 2021). Whether the stress is

coming from challenge stressors or hindrance stressors will likely determine the relationship between job stress and performance (Schwepker & Dimitriou, 2021). Next, strain can negatively affect job performance. Work performance can be negatively impacted by stress. Stresses sap people's vitality because they're physically and emotionally exhausting (Crawford et al., 2010; Schwepker & Dimitriou, 2021). It's not always the case, though. Siswanto et al. (2019), for instance, mentioned work stress as an incentive to adopt new behaviours for higher performance. In a different recent study, Harras (2019) hypothesised that stress could flip the U-shaped link between employee performance and their job satisfaction. After a certain point, stress begins to lower motivation to work and lower performance because of unfair work distribution, irrelevant work, complexity, and boredom. At first, stress increases motivation to work (Saleem et al., 2021). Additionally, it is asserted that a person's performance increases as their tolerance for work-related stress rises to a certain point. However, once that amount is reached, additional work stress may have a negative impact on performance (Jackson & Frame, 2018). Thus, based on these discussions and research findings, we developed the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2: Stress has a significant effect on job performance

Conceptual Framework

As mentioned earlier, this study was aimed at investigating the relationship between work-life balance, stress, and job performance among housemen in Malaysia (Figure 1).

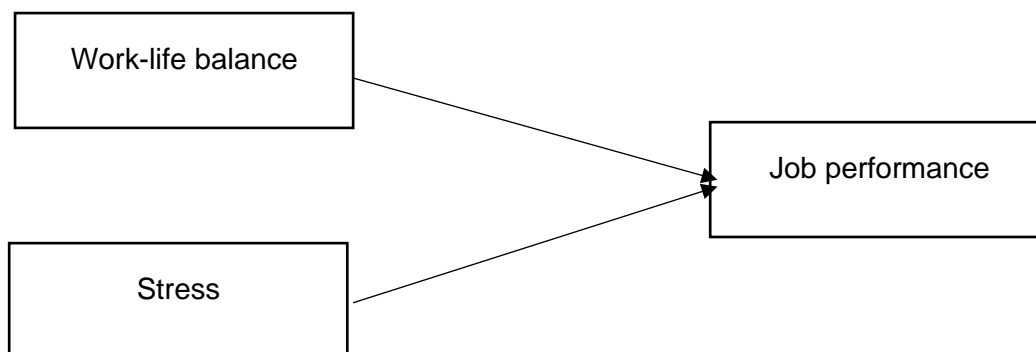


Figure 1: Research Framework

Method

Sampling

The study adopted a cross-sectional design involving 150 Malaysian Housemen who worked in Ministry of Health, who are undergoing horsemanship for at least 6 months and above. Sample size was determined by G Power technique and total minimum sample size suggested by G*Power was 138. This study employed a randomization sampling technique using Microsoft Excel to select the respondents. Informed consent was obtained from the participants while approval to conduct the study was granted by the Medical Research & Ethics Committee, NMRR ID-22-00429-YLS (IIR). Data were collected through online platform via email. The researcher then emailed a set of questionnaires (Google Form) to the respondents.

Measures

To measure the job performance, the Individual Work Performance Questionnaires (IWPO) by Koopmans et al (2012) was applied. The scale used a five-point Likert response format ranging from 1 Very Rarely or Never (once a month or less), 2, Rarely (a few times a month), 3, Sometimes (once a week), 4, Often (a few times a week) or 5, Very Often or Always (almost every day). The Cronbach alpha for job performance was 0.925. Next, stress was assessed on a scale by (Yusoff et al., 2011). Each item in this construct was measured using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 never, occasionally, sometimes, often to 5 always used in this questionnaire and the Cronbach alpha for this study was 0.874. Work life balance was measured using the General Stressor Questionnaire (GSQ) by (Yusoff et al., 2011). The scores were rated on a 5 Likert Scale (never, occasionally, sometimes, often or always) used in this questionnaire. High internal consistency was found for work life balance at 0.920 in this study.

Data Analysis

The SPSS® software version 26.0 was used for statistical analysis. Descriptive statistics were employed for the horsemanship' characterization. Pearson's correlation coefficient was employed to determine the correlation between the work life balance, stress, and job performance. Multiple linear regression analysis was carried out to assess the influence of the independent variables on the dependent variable, job performance.

Demographic Profile

The study sample comprised 150 Housemen aged 25 to 33 years. The highest proportion of respondents (32.0%) were aged 26 years. Female houseman (56.0%) outnumbered male students (44.0%). Most participants were Malay (44%), followed by Chinese (26.7%) and Indian (18.7%). Majority respondents were single (80%). The demographic profiles of the respondents are shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Demographic profile of the respondents (n=150)

Demographic	Frequency (n)	Percent (%)
Gender		
Male	66	44.0
Female	84	56.0
Ethnic		
Malay	67	44.7
Chinese	40	26.7
Indian	28	18.7
Bumiputera Sabah	4	2.7
Bumiputera Sarawak	8	5.3
Age		
25 years old	5	3.3
26 years old	48	32.0
27 years old	46	30.7
28 years old	20	13.3
29 years old	9	6.0
30 years old	6	4.0

31 years old	2	1.3
32 years old	8	5.3
33 years old	6	4.0
Marital Status		
Single	120	80.0
Married	26	17.3
Divorced	4	2.7
Training Hospital Location		
Central Zone	39	26.0
South Zone	30	20.0
East Zone	24	16.0
North Zone	35	23.0
Borneo Zone	22	15.0

Results

Coefficient Correlation

The relationships between work life balance and stress with job performance were analyzed using the Pearson product-moment correlation are shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Coefficient correlations among work life balance and stress on job performance

Variable	r	Sig.
Work life balance and job performance	0.371**	0.000
Stress and job performance	-0.272**	0.001

** Significant at $p < 0.001$ level

The Pearson product-moment correlation analysis results (Table 2) depicted a positive correlation of work life balance and stress with job performance. The higher relationship value was between work life balance and job performance ($r=0.371$, $p < 0.001$). Whereas stress revealed a negative relationship with job performance ($r = -0.272$, $p < 0.001$).

Regression Analysis on work life balance and stress on job performance among housemen in Malaysia

Table 3 shows the results of the regression analysis conducted to test the hypotheses pertaining to the main effects of work life balance and stress with respect to the job performance among houseman in Malaysia. In determining the extent to which the research data fitted the multiple linear regression model, it was found that work life balance explained a significant amount of the variance that accounted for the job performance among the houseman in Malaysia ($F= 11.799$, $p < 0.000$; $\beta = 0.396$, $p= 0.001$). Hence, work life balance made the stronger unique contribution in explaining the variation in job performance, whereas the effect of stress was no longer significant ($p= 0.787$). The coefficient of determination, $R^2 = 0.138$ indicated that about 13% of the variance in job performance among houseman in Malaysia was explained, mainly by work life balance.

Table 3

Multiple regression analysis of work life balance and stress on job performance

Variable	Unstandardized Coefficient		Standardized Coefficient	t	Sig. (p)
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
Constant	2.874	0.430		6.677	0.000
Work-life Balance	0.213	0.064	0.396	3.307	0.001
Stress	0.022	0.081	0.032	0.271	0.787

$R = 0.372, R^2 = 0.138, F = 11.799, p = 0.000$

Discussion

This study was aimed at determining the relationship between work-life balance, stress, and job performance among Housemen in Malaysia. The present result showed that work life balance has positively impacted job performance among houseman in Malaysia. This indicated that houseman who have higher level of work life balance are more likely to demonstrate excellent job performance. The findings are consistent with various studies that highlight the important role of work life balance in enhancing the job performance of houseman in Malaysia (Talukder et al., 2018; Soomro et al., 2018). Employee performance and productivity are both negatively impacted by poor work-life balance (Johari et al., 2018). It is obvious that when a company gives its employees the necessary mechanisms to balance their personal and professional lives, it will be able to get better performance out of them. Undoubtedly, a worker who maintains a positive work-life balance will be able to complete the tasks that have been allotted to them more successfully and effectively. This shows that housemen who can balance work and life while maintaining self-control and problem-solving abilities are able to give their best efforts at work. This is due to the fact that happier houseman generally has better attitudes at work. Houseman's ability to focus on their work and raise their performance level is aided by their overall psychological health and sense of harmony in their lives. Next, the present research study results show that stress has an affirmative and negative influence on the job performance of houseman in Malaysia. This conclusion is consistent with a study of Perez-Floriano and Gonzalez (2019) who found that stress negatively influence job performance. Similarly, Bjaalid et al. (2019) suggested that institutional stress has negative effects on hospital employees' work motivation and job performance. There were a range of potential sources of stress experienced by houseman for example, long working hours, shift work, insecurity regarding career progression, excessive workload, high job demands, fatigue, work-life imbalance and bullying have been suggested as important in understanding doctors' mental health (Petrie et al., 2021) and this will lead to their job performance.

Limitations, Implications and Future Recommendations

In this study, as information was collected via a self-administered questionnaire, there might have been recall bias and reporting bias by participants. This study was cross-sectional and, therefore, it was not possible to examine the causality between the variables. The sample in this study comprised housemen (junior doctors) who are undergoing internship training in

Ministry of Health (MOH) Hospitals in Malaysia; in future research, the study population could consist of respondents from different types of position such as specialists, dentists, pharmacists, medical assistants, and nurses, to determine their perspectives of work-life balance, stress level, and job performance while working in MOH. The results from this study could help organizations understand the predictors of job performance, especially among housemen. This study adds to the literature on work life balance and stress in relation to the job performance of houseman during the Covid 19 pandemic in Malaysia.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no competing interest in conducting this study.

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