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The Impacts of Dual Earner Income on Work-Life Balance

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Abstract

Work-life balance is not a new thing in today's era. People are striving their best in order to achieve good well-being, balancing their working and personal life in today's high cost of living. Therefore, most families are forced to get more pay through dual income earner. This article examined the relationships between both parents' work-life balance and life satisfaction and systematically reviews journal articles on the topic of dual earner income and Work-Life Balance. The following themes were used to assess the selected studies specifically to identify: (i) the importance of Work-Life Balance (WLB); and (ii) the impacts on dual earner income on Work-Life Balance (WLB). Online university database was used to identify relevant studies on the objectives of this paper. The findings of the study found due to work-to-family and family-to-work challenges, dual-earner income households struggle to preserve work-life balance. Employers should provide flexible working arrangements to their employees in order to give working parents options while managing their employment and family commitments. For further researches, a qualitative research should be carried out in searching broader views and opinions from respondents about the impacts of experiencing dual earner income families towards the children's wellbeing.

Keywords: Well-Being, Work-Life Balance, Dual Earner Income, Flexible Working Arrangements, Life Satisfaction

Introduction

It is often challenging for people to combine work and life in today's fast-paced environment. The relations between work and life are unquestionably hot topic among scholars. Previously, researchers studied dual-earner families and single parents in the workforce and discovered that work and family roles are interconnected (Shipmon-Friedli, 2022). Employers are becoming more aware of the significance of these two factors. Dual earner income is nothing new these days due to increased living expenditures, a better educational background, and many other factors.

Malaysia's employment composition has also altered in numerous ways. Malaysia, being one of the countries with the lowest female labor-force participation rates, has been affected by the issue of talent drain (Kim, 2015). Nonetheless, the growth in female labour force

participation to 6.39 million (+21.6 thousand persons) accounting for 38.8% of overall labour force participation has affected the rise of dual earner families (Department of Statistics, 2022). This pattern has opened the way for a shift from a traditional family structure to a companion family system (Fatimah et al., 2009). The traditional family system is one in which family members play conventional roles.

Parenting has never been more difficult. Juggling parenting obligations with the demands of working from home, managing house tasks, which includes overseeing home-based teaching and learning for children, is difficult to manage and a first experience for most parents during these challenging times. As a result, the position of parents has grown increasingly complex, and according to a survey, only half of working parents (52.0%) preferred to work from home (LPPKN, 2021). On the economic level, the lockdown has caused financial difficulty for many families. More than a quarter of parents (27.8%) polled in March 2021 admitted that their family's finances worsened during the MCO 2.0 compared to the preceding MCO. The emphasis in the traditional family structure is on raising the family. The roles of the father and mother are reversed, with the father serving as the primary source of income and the mother as the primary carer. On the opposite, in a companionship family structure, the father and mother's roles are built on love, communication, and tolerance because both parents work and are responsible for the family's upbringing. In such a system, both men and women participate in activities related to work and family.

According to the Shakil et al (2011), they found out that household duties and office environment are closely associated to women's work and life conflict. As a result, dual-earner couples are now struggling to establish a balance between work obligations and other elements of life, such as caring for children and the elderly (Munn & Chaudhuri, 2016). In many modern countries, the companionship-based family arrangement predominates over the conventional one. Likewise, the companionship-based family arrangement is often prevalent in Malaysia.

In 2021, Jayasingam et al., discussed how most executives regard work-life balance (WLB) as a passing trend and opt to ignore it. This is supported by another researcher claimed that organizations rarely have family policies (Shipmon-Friedli, 2022). Unfortunately, most managers and companies fail to recognize that work and life are inextricably linked, necessitating a work-life balance to improve employee well-being. Recent studies suggest that the association between the family and work domains has been extensively researched among workers because negative relation between these domains are frequently associated with undesirable outcomes for individuals, families, businesses, and society, resulting in dissatisfaction with family, job, marital, parental, and life (Schnettler et al., 2018). According to Bataineh (2019), work-life balance and happiness have a favourable and significant impact on employee performance. Job satisfaction, on the other hand, has no effect on employee performance (Bataineh, 2019).

Methodology

This paper used literature searching as a method and review past studies to identify, analyze and synthesize findings on this topic. Online university database was used to identify relevant studies on the following objectives of this paper:

- (i) the importance of Work-Life Balance (WLB); and

- (ii) the impacts on dual earner income on Work-Life Balance (WLB).

In order to accomplish the objective of this paper, the authors reviewed the empirical research papers which are ranged between the years of 2003 to 2022. The articles were comprehensively searched through several online databases, such as Emerald Insight and Google Scholar. The results of the review were written in subsequent sections of the impacts of dual earner income on work-life balance.

Literature Review

Work-life Balance

The phrase WLB has been a popularly debated term or topic since the late 1970s, originating in a western country, the United Kingdom (Kim, 2015). This paper's discussion on WLB is about the balances of an individual's job and personal life and is defined by the United Kingdom Department of Trade and Industry as below: "WLB is about adjusting working patterns regardless of age, race or gender, (so) everyone can find a rhythm to help them combine work and their other responsibilities or aspirations" (Maxwell, 2004).

Therefore, work-life balance is an essential element for employees at all levels to have in order to maintain the health of the overall organization. According to Fisher-McAuley et al., (2003), in research by Greenhaus et al (2003), WLB was explained as:

An individual's orientation across different life roles, an inter-role phenomenon; it is the extent to which an individual is engaged in and equally satisfied with his or her work role and family role consisting of three components of work family-balance: time balance (whereby equal amounts of time are devoted to work and family), satisfaction balance (whereby an equal level of psychological involvement in work and family roles exists), and satisfaction balance (whereby an equal level of satisfaction is derived from work and family roles) (p. 510).

Work to family conflict occur when participation in a work activity interferes with participation in a competing family activity or when work stress has a negative effect on behaviour within the family domain. On the other hand, family to work conflict occur when participation in a family activity interferes with participation in a competing work activity or when family stress has a negative effect on performance in the work role (Greenhaus et al., 2003).

Work-life balance is an essential topic for companies since it is necessary for employees to be happy and satisfied at work. (Shipmon-Friedli, 2022). Employees perform best and are most productive when their lifestyles are balanced; consequently, agree that employers should establish and execute work-life balance rules, because doing so helps both employees and employers (Jayasingam et al., 2021; Bataineh, 2019; Shipmon-Friedli, 2022). Employees realise that it is an organization's duty to be productive, but they also believe it really should play a role in promoting work-life balance, despite employer and employee opinions differ. In some cases, human resources departments are responsible with mediating between career women and the organization's work-life balance standards (Thomas, 2018). This level of responsibility implies that careers are entitled to such organisational assistance. However,

organizational expectations fail to acknowledge social change around the paternal parenting role (Burnett, et. al., 2010).

Flexible Working Arrangements

According to Choo et al (2016), workplace flexibility can be defined as the ability of employees to make changes on where, when and the total time they would spend or engage in work-related tasks. Because there are more dual-earner couples, women, and single-parent families in the workplace, as well as people with elder care duties, flexible working options are in more demand. Employees with flexible working arrangements have more influence over how they work, which helps to reduce the consequences of work stress. Subramaniam et al (2015) tested and showed in their study that working arrangements influenced women's well-being in terms of work-life balance. There is a wide range of flexible working arrangements that organizations can provide for the male and female employees to help them to accommodate changing family patterns (Subramaniam et. al., 2015 & Bakar et. al., 2013). It was also discovered that a flexible work schedule was significantly and positively associated to work-family conflict (Choo et al., 2016; Ramakrishnan & Arokiasamy, 2019). Therefore, companies and employers play an important role in ensuring the employees' work-life balance.

Dual Earner Income Parents

The strong Islamic cultural impact in Malaysia has long stressed the role of women as spouses, mothers, and homemakers (Isaa et al., 2016). Men used to be the breadwinners, but now they also help out around the house and on the other side, whereas women were once primarily responsible for housework, they are now an important part of the labour force (Rehman & Roomi, 2012; Burnett et al., 2010).

According to Schnettler et al (2018), whereas female labor-force participation in Chile is lower than in Latin America (55%) and developed countries (61%), it has climbed from 31% in 1990 to 48% in 2017. At the other hand, Boiarintseva et al (2021) stated that according to US data for couples with children, the "new traditional" family structure has become the dual-earner married couple, with 42% of families with children falling into this group". It clearly to be seen, female employment has increased during the last few decades. The impact of work-life balance on women focuses on their job advancement and the impact it has on their home lives as women perform the majority of household chores, such as childcare and housework for family members (Thomas, 2018). As a result of this shifting trend, more employees than ever before are required to juggle numerous duties such as job, child raising, and personal activities.

Table 1

Trends in Dual Earners and Single Parenthood in Eighteen OECD Countries

Country	Observation Period	Dual Earners	
		First Year	Last Year
Australia	2004–2010	59.8	63.0
Austria	1994–2010	53.4	67.2
Belgium	1985–2010	49.3	59.3
Canada	1987–2010	64.9	70.9
Denmark	1987–2010	65.1	68.1
Finland	1987–2010	71.0	67.2
France	1984–2010	41.6	62.0
Germany	1984–2010	54.5	62.2
Greece	1995–2010	27.4	49.7
Ireland	1994–2010	41.5	50.6
Italy	1986–2010	31.5	49.7
Netherlands	1990–2010	45.9	69.2
Norway	1986–2010	71.1	67.9
Spain	1990–2010	31.1	54.8
Sweden	1992–2005	59.5	61.1
Switzerland	1992–2010	41.7	71.6
United Kingdom	1998–2010	61.8	61.1
<i>United States</i>	<i>1991–2010</i>	<i>67.7</i>	<i>60.1</i>

Source: Nieuwenhuis (2022)

According to Nieuwenhuis (2022), Table 1 demonstrates that the proportion of dual earners has grown in most nations, even it was not all. As we can see from the table, it showed an increasing trend in dual earner income among families. Walsh and Murphy (2021), both researchers studied gender disparities in working parents' life satisfaction and hypothesised a considerable negative influence on working mothers' life happiness as compared to working fathers. They found there is a negative relationship between life satisfaction for working mothers with child/children aged between 5 and 12 years. In another words, if both parents work, mothers' life satisfaction decreases significantly (Burnett, 2010 & Walsh et al., 2021). Previous studies have also revealed that women develop in their careers more slowly than men due to childcare responsibilities (Isaa et al., 2016). When spouses spend more time at work and less time at home, it can cause neglect and create instances where divorce is inevitable due to the imbalance of work and life (Thomas, 2018).

In Hong Kong particularly, Kim (2021) studied the relationships between nonstandard work schedules (NWSs) and child development. The study revealed that Paternal NWSs were found to be negatively related to total child development. This link was especially strong among low-income families. Maternal NWSs, on the other hand, were not linked to child development outcomes.

In Pakistan, establishing work-life balance is one of the most important motivators for people to start their own enterprises (Rehman & Roomi, 2012). Their own enterprises provide individuals with the flexibility, control, and independence to balance their family and societal

obligations (Rehman & Roomi, 2012; Subramaniam et al., 2015). Strategic planning, organisation, and delegation are the most effective ways women utilise to balance work and family life.

Discussion

This review intends to assess the impacts of dual earner income on work-life balance. All of the above studies demonstrate similarities in the increasing trends of dual-earner income households and the difficulties they face while attempting to preserve work-life balance.

Dual earner income families face struggles in maintaining work-life balance due to the work to family and family to work conflicts. Employers should provide flexible working arrangements to their employees so that working parents have options while still balancing their job and family commitments. Maintaining work-life balance has a positive effect on family institutions, either to parents and to children.

This review paper opens up the opportunities for future research, in which researchers could do qualitative research in searching broader views and opinions from respondents about the impacts of experiencing dual earner income families towards the children's wellbeing. By doing that, we might find more detail facts about this issue, and can improve the work-life balance among family institutions.

Conclusion

It can be concluded that being dual earner income parents in today's era isn't easy in maintaining work-life balance. It is indeed, families could earn more income, get out from poverty, improve family living style, and even can improve educational background of the children. However, most of them have to forsaken their work-life balance. They can't focus on tasks, cannot improve productivity and quality of doing jobs, and worst part is, father or mother will be stressed out the most in juggling between their personal and working lives. Work-life balance is becoming never-ending topic among scholars, employers and parents. Hoping in the future, employers and employees can closely work together in finding solutions and ways in achieving ultimate work-life balance.

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