

# A Correlational Study on Work-Life Conflict, Promotion, and Salary towards Career Satisfaction among Contemporary Malaysian Employees

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## Abstract

This study investigates the correlational relationships between work-life conflict, promotion opportunities, and salary satisfaction with career satisfaction among contemporary Malaysian employees. It aims to provide empirical insights into how these factors collectively influence career fulfillment in Malaysia's evolving workforce landscape. A quantitative research design was employed using a structured questionnaire distributed to 152 Malaysian employees across various sectors. Reliability and normality tests confirmed the robustness of the measurement scales. Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationships among the variables. The results revealed strong and statistically significant positive correlations between career satisfaction and all three independent variables: work-life conflict ( $r = .790$ ), salary satisfaction ( $r = .840$ ), and promotion opportunities ( $r = .860$ ). These findings suggest that employees who experience higher levels of promotion and salary satisfaction, and even those navigating work-life conflict, tend to report greater career satisfaction. Organizations should prioritize fair promotion practices, competitive compensation, and supportive work-life policies to enhance career satisfaction and employee retention. Understanding the nuanced role of work-life conflict may help HR practitioners design more empathetic and flexible workplace strategies.

**Keywords:** Career Satisfaction, Work-Life Conflict, Promotion Opportunities, Salary Satisfaction, Contemporary Malaysian Employees

## Introduction

Career satisfaction has become a cornerstone of employee well-being, organizational performance, and national productivity in today's competitive and rapidly evolving workplace. It is defined as an individual's subjective evaluation of career achievements,

progression, compensation, and work-life balance and is widely recognized as a multidimensional construct influencing job performance, retention, and mental health (Greenhaus et al., 1990; Judge et al., 1995). In Malaysia, globalization, digitalization, and shifting generational expectations have transformed workforce dynamics, making career satisfaction an essential focus for both employers and policymakers. The Randstad Malaysia Job Market Outlook (2025) highlights that employees increasingly prioritize career growth, salary competitiveness, and flexible work arrangements, signaling a shift from traditional job security toward holistic career fulfillment.

Among the numerous factors influencing career satisfaction, work-life conflict, promotion opportunities, and salary satisfaction have received growing scholarly attention. Work-life conflict, defined as the tension arising from incompatible demands between work and personal life (Byron, 2005), has been shown to negatively impact job satisfaction, emotional well-being, and career engagement (Ahmad et al., 2025; Boamah et al., 2022). In Malaysia, rapid urbanization and dual-income households have intensified these pressures, particularly among younger professionals and working women (Latif et al., 2023). Promotion opportunities serve as a key indicator of recognition and career advancement, with employees who perceive fair and frequent promotions reporting higher levels of motivation, loyalty, and career satisfaction (Ng et al., 2005; Zainuddin & Rahman, 2024). Salary satisfaction also remains a critical determinant, as financial compensation reflects both economic value and social status. The Department of Statistics Malaysia Salaries & Wages Report (2023) reveals that rising salary expectations and perceived pay inequities are contributing to dissatisfaction and turnover among Malaysian workers.

Despite these insights, limited empirical research has holistically examined how these three factors interact to shape career satisfaction in Malaysia. Existing studies often treat work-life conflict, promotion, and salary satisfaction in isolation, overlooking the complex interdependencies that may exist among them. This fragmentation poses a challenge for employers and policymakers seeking integrated strategies to enhance employee engagement and retention. The application of theoretical frameworks such as the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) remains underutilized in Malaysian HR research. TPB posits that behavioral intentions, such as career commitment, are shaped by attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control, offering a valuable lens through which to examine career satisfaction (Ajzen, 1991). Safri et al. (2025) emphasize that employee engagement significantly enhances organizational performance by fostering higher levels of commitment, productivity, and innovation across departments.

Therefore, this study aims to bridge these gaps by exploring the correlational relationships between work-life conflict, promotion opportunities, and salary satisfaction in shaping career satisfaction among contemporary Malaysian employees. By applying TPB, the research provides a comprehensive framework for understanding how attitudes toward work-life balance, promotion prospects, and salary perceptions influence career satisfaction. The findings are expected to offer actionable insights for organizational leaders, HR practitioners, and policymakers striving to cultivate a more satisfied, resilient, and future-ready workforce.

The novelty of this research lies in its integrated approach to examining three critical factors which work-life conflict, promotion, and salary satisfaction, within a single framework

grounded in TPB, which has rarely been applied to career satisfaction studies in Malaysia. Unlike prior research that addresses these variables in isolation, this study captures their combined influence and interdependencies, offering a holistic perspective on employee well-being. Its contribution to social science is twofold: theoretically, it extends TPB to the domain of career satisfaction in a Malaysian context, practically, it provides evidence-based insights for designing HR policies that balance organizational goals with employees' personal and professional needs. By situating the analysis within Malaysia's evolving labor landscape, the study adds contextual depth to global discussions on workforce sustainability and employee engagement.

## **Literature Review and Hypothesis Development**

### *Work-Life Conflict and Career Satisfaction*

Work-life conflict refers to the tension that arises when the demands of work and personal life are incompatible, leading to stress and dissatisfaction (Yohannes, 2021). Numerous studies have demonstrated that work-life conflict negatively affects employees' overall well-being and job satisfaction (Salazar & Diego-Medrano, 2021; Yang et al., 2024). The relationship between work-life conflict and career satisfaction can be more nuanced, as employees who manage to balance these demands effectively may experience greater career fulfillment (Boamah et al., 2022). In the Malaysian context, rapid economic development and evolving social roles have intensified work-life pressures, making it critical to understand how these conflicts impact career satisfaction (Wai et al., 2024). Previous research indicates that unresolved work-life conflict can diminish career satisfaction by increasing stress and reducing engagement (Boamah et al., 2022). Strategies that reduce work-life conflict often contribute positively to employees' perceptions of their career success and satisfaction (Perreault & Power, 2023). Given these findings, this study hypothesizes that work-life conflict significantly relates to career satisfaction among contemporary Malaysian employees. Therefore, it is proposed that:

*Hypothesis 1 (H1): Work-life conflicts has significant positive relationship with the career satisfaction among the contemporary Malaysian employees.*

### *Promotion and Career Satisfaction*

Promotion opportunities serve as a key motivator for employees, signaling recognition, career advancement, and increased responsibility (Ng et al., 2005). The availability and fairness of promotion have been linked to higher job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Greenhaus et al., 1990; Lambert et al., 2001). Promotions not only provide financial benefits but also enhance self-esteem and perceived career progress, which positively influence career satisfaction (Lee & Bruvold, 2003). In Malaysia, where hierarchical career structures and social recognition are culturally significant, promotion opportunities strongly affect employee attitudes and retention (Salleh et al., 2019). Empirical studies show that employees who perceive frequent and fair promotion chances are more likely to report higher levels of career satisfaction (Kuvaas, 2006). Thus, it is logical to expect that promotion opportunities contribute positively to career satisfaction in the Malaysian workforce. Therefore, it is proposed that:

*Hypothesis 2 (H2): Promotion has significant positive relationship with the career satisfaction among the contemporary Malaysian employees.*

### *Salary and Career Satisfaction*

Salary satisfaction is a critical determinant of overall career satisfaction, as financial compensation is often viewed as a tangible reward for employees' efforts and contributions (Williams et al., 2006). Research indicates that perceived fairness and adequacy of salary influence employee morale, motivation, and job retention (Heneman & Judge, 2000; Lambert et al., 2001). In Malaysia's growing economy, salary expectations are rising, and dissatisfaction with pay has been associated with lower career satisfaction and higher turnover intentions (Ahmad & Schroeder, 2003). Salary not only meets basic financial needs but also serves as a benchmark for career achievement and social status (Judge et al., 2010). Consequently, employees who are satisfied with their salary are more likely to report higher career satisfaction. The relationship between salary and career satisfaction is thus well documented across various industries and cultural contexts. Hence, it is proposed that:

*Hypothesis 3 (H3): Salary has significant positive relationship with the career satisfaction among the contemporary Malaysian employees.*

### **Underpinning Theories**

#### *Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)*

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) has been widely applied to examine the factors influencing individual attitudes and behaviors in various contexts, including workplace-related outcomes. According to TPB, as illustrated in Figure 1, behavioral intentions are shaped by three key components: attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control, which together predict actual behavior (Ajzen, 1991).

In the context of career satisfaction among contemporary Malaysian employees, TPB provides a useful framework for understanding how employees' attitudes toward work-life balance, promotion opportunities, and salary satisfaction influence their intention to remain committed and satisfied in their careers. Employees with positive attitudes toward their work-life balance and promotion prospects are more likely to develop strong career satisfaction intentions.

Subjective norms, representing perceived social pressures from colleagues, supervisors, or cultural expectations, also affect employees' career satisfaction by shaping their motivation to conform to organizational or societal standards. Perceived behavioral control, or the employees' confidence in managing work demands and achieving career goals, can enhance their career satisfaction by fostering a sense of empowerment. Empirical evidence suggests that these TPB components interact to influence employee career-related behaviors such as job engagement, retention, and satisfaction (Karadag & Şahin, 2023).

Thus, applying TPB in this study allows for a comprehensive examination of how work-life conflict, promotion, and salary satisfaction collectively impact career satisfaction intentions and outcomes among Malaysian employees, offering practical insights for organizational interventions aimed at improving workforce satisfaction and productivity.

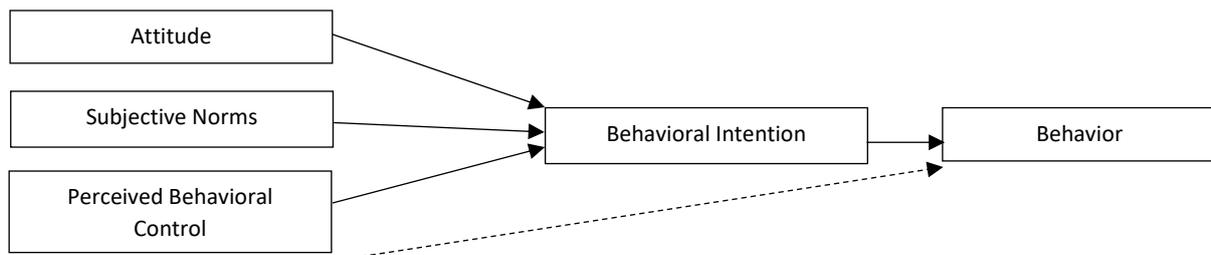


Figure 1: Theory of planned behavior model

## Methodology

### *Data Collection and Sample Strategy*

This study employed a quantitative research design using a structured questionnaire to collect primary data from contemporary Malaysian employees across various industries. The questionnaire was developed based on validated scales from previous literature, covering constructs such as work-life conflict, promotion opportunities, salary satisfaction, and career satisfaction. A non-probability purposive sampling technique was adopted to target working professionals who could provide relevant insights into the study variables. The survey was distributed electronically via email and social media platforms to ensure broad reach and convenience, particularly among urban and semi-urban working populations. Prior to full deployment, a pilot test was conducted with 20 respondents to ensure clarity, reliability, and internal consistency of the instrument.

A total of 152 valid responses were collected and analyzed. The sample comprised employees from diverse sectors including education, finance, healthcare, and telecommunications, reflecting the heterogeneity of Malaysia's contemporary workforce. Inclusion criteria required participants to be currently employed full-time and possess at least one year of work experience to ensure informed responses regarding career satisfaction and related factors. Ethical considerations were strictly observed, with informed consent obtained from all participants and assurances of anonymity and confidentiality provided. The final dataset was screened for completeness and normality, confirming its suitability for parametric statistical analyses such as reliability testing and Pearson correlation.

### *Construction of the Research Instrument and Measures*

The research instrument was developed based on established scales from prior empirical studies to ensure validity and reliability in measuring the constructs of work-life conflict, promotion opportunities, salary satisfaction, and career satisfaction. Each construct was operationalized using a 5-item Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), allowing for nuanced responses and facilitating parametric statistical analysis. Items were adapted to reflect the Malaysian employment context, with language and phrasing tailored to ensure clarity and cultural relevance. The questionnaire was reviewed by academic experts for content validity and pilot-tested with a small sample to refine item wording and structure.

To ensure internal consistency, reliability analysis was conducted using Cronbach's Alpha for each construct. The results demonstrated excellent reliability across all scales: Work-Life Conflict (.961), Promotion (.956), Salary Satisfaction (.959), and Career Satisfaction (.961). These values exceed the commonly accepted threshold of .70, indicating that the items

within each scale consistently measure their respective constructs. The high reliability coefficients affirm the robustness of the instrument and its suitability for examining the correlational relationships among the variables in the Malaysian workforce. This methodological rigor enhances the credibility of the findings and supports the use of the instrument in future research on career satisfaction.

### *Ethical Considerations*

This study was conducted in strict adherence to ethical research standards to ensure the protection and dignity of all participants. Ethical approval was obtained from the relevant institutional review board prior to data collection. The research design, instruments, and procedures were carefully reviewed to ensure compliance with ethical guidelines concerning human subjects, particularly in relation to informed consent, voluntary participation, and data confidentiality.

Participants were fully briefed on the purpose, scope, and nature of the study before completing the questionnaire. Informed consent was obtained electronically, with clear instructions emphasizing that participation was entirely voluntary and that respondents could withdraw at any time without penalty. No coercion or incentives were used, and participants were assured that their responses would be used solely for academic purposes. The questionnaire did not collect any personally identifiable information, thereby preserving anonymity and minimizing potential risks.

All data collected were stored securely and analyzed in aggregate form to prevent individual identification. The researchers took deliberate steps to ensure that the findings would not compromise the privacy or professional standing of any participant. By upholding these ethical principles, the study maintains its integrity and contributes responsibly to the academic discourse on career satisfaction among Malaysian employees.

## **Data Analysis and Results**

### *Normality Analysis*

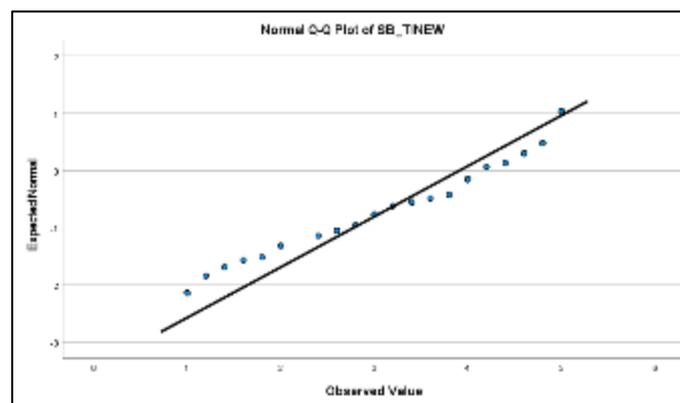


Figure 1: Normality analysis

To ensure the appropriateness of parametric statistical techniques such as Pearson correlation and regression analysis, a normality test was conducted on the dataset. The Q-Q plot, presented in Figure 1, illustrates that the observed values closely follow the expected diagonal line of a normal distribution. This visual alignment indicates that the data are

approximately normally distributed, satisfying one of the key assumptions for conducting parametric analyses.

The normality of the data is particularly important given the study's objective to examine the correlational relationships between work-life conflict, promotion opportunities, salary satisfaction, and career satisfaction among contemporary Malaysian employees. A normally distributed dataset enhances the reliability of the statistical inferences drawn from the analysis, ensuring that the relationships identified are not artifacts of skewed or non-random data patterns. This is crucial for maintaining the internal validity of the study and for accurately interpreting the strength and direction of the associations among variables.

The confirmation of normality supports the use of Pearson correlation coefficients and further regression modeling to assess the predictive power of the independent variables on career satisfaction. Given the high reliability scores of the measurement scales and the normal distribution of the data, the study is methodologically robust and well-positioned to contribute meaningful insights into the dynamics of employee satisfaction in Malaysia's evolving labor market.

#### *Reliability Analysis*

Table 1

#### *Work-Life Conflict*

#### **Reliability Statistics**

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.961	5

The Work-Life Conflict scale, comprising 5 items, demonstrated excellent internal consistency with a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.961. This high reliability coefficient indicates that the items consistently measure the underlying construct of work-life conflict among contemporary Malaysian employees. A Cronbach's Alpha above 0.9 is generally considered excellent, which suggests that the scale is very reliable and that the items are well-correlated without redundancy. This reliability level ensures that the respondents' answers on work-life conflict are stable and dependable, making the scale suitable for capturing the nuances of how work and personal life demands may interfere with one another in this population.

Table 2

#### *Promotion*

#### **Reliability Statistics**

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.956	5

The Promotion construct was measured using a 5-item scale, yielding a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.956, indicating strong internal consistency. This suggests that the items collectively measure employees' perceptions of promotion opportunities reliably. High reliability in this scale means the instrument effectively captures how Malaysian employees perceive career advancement, recognition, and growth prospects within their organizations. The consistency

also implies that the responses are coherent across the items, supporting the validity of using this scale to assess the impact of promotion on career satisfaction.

Table 3

*Salary***Reliability Statistics**

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.959	5

The Salary scale, which consists of 5 items, reported a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.959, reflecting excellent internal consistency. This indicates that the measurement items reliably assess employees' satisfaction with their salary, including perceptions of fairness, adequacy, and competitiveness. The high reliability supports the premise that salary satisfaction is a clearly defined and consistently understood construct among participants. This level of reliability is essential in ensuring that the analysis of salary's influence on career satisfaction is based on dependable and accurate data.

Table 4

*Career Satisfaction***Reliability Statistics**

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.961	5

For Career Satisfaction, the 5-item scale achieved a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.961, again indicating excellent internal consistency. This means the items reliably capture employees' intentions to leave their current organization. The consistency in responses ensures that the scale is a valid instrument to assess career satisfaction among Malaysian contemporary employees. This is crucial as turnover intention is often used as an outcome variable linked to factors such as work-life conflict, promotion, and salary satisfaction, thus requiring precise measurement for meaningful conclusions.

*Correlation Analysis*

Table 5

*Correlations***Correlations**

		SB_WLCNEW	SB_SNEW	SB_PNEW	SB_CSNEW
SB_WLCNEW	Pearson Correlation	1	.825**	.794**	.790**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<.001	<.001	<.001
	N	152	152	152	152
SB_SNEW	Pearson Correlation	.825**	1	.834**	.840**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001		<.001	<.001
	N	152	152	152	152
SB_PNEW	Pearson Correlation	.794**	.834**	1	.860**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	<.001		<.001
	N	152	152	152	152
SB_CSNEW	Pearson Correlation	.790**	.840**	.860**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	<.001	<.001	
	N	152	152	152	152

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 5 presents the Pearson correlation coefficients among the four key variables examined in this study: Work-Life Conflict (SB\_WLCNEW), Salary Satisfaction (SB\_SNEW), Promotion Opportunities (SB\_PNEW), and Career Satisfaction (SB\_CSNEW). All correlations are statistically significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed), indicating strong and positive associations among the constructs based on responses from 152 contemporary Malaysian employees. These results provide compelling empirical support for the study's hypotheses and reinforce the theoretical assumptions underpinning the research framework.

Work-Life Conflict demonstrates a strong positive correlation with Career Satisfaction ( $r = 0.790$ ), which may initially appear paradoxical. Conventionally, work-life conflict is associated with stress, burnout, and reduced job satisfaction. However, in the context of contemporary Malaysian employees, particularly those in urban, competitive sectors, this relationship may reflect a deeper complexity. Employees who are highly committed to their careers may experience greater work-life conflict due to increased responsibilities and time demands, yet simultaneously perceive their career trajectory as fulfilling and successful. This suggests that career satisfaction may not solely depend on the absence of conflict, but rather on how individuals interpret and manage that conflict in pursuit of professional goals. It also highlights the importance of organizational support systems that help employees navigate work-life tensions without compromising their sense of achievement.

Salary Satisfaction is also strongly correlated with Career Satisfaction ( $r = 0.840$ ), affirming the critical role of financial compensation in shaping employees' perceptions of career success. In Malaysia's evolving economic landscape, where cost of living and income expectations are rising, salary remains a tangible and symbolic indicator of professional value. Employees who perceive their salary as fair, adequate, and competitive are more likely to feel validated in their roles, which contributes positively to their overall career satisfaction. This finding aligns with previous research emphasizing the motivational and psychological impact

of compensation, particularly in cultures where financial stability is closely tied to social status and self-worth. Moreover, the strong correlation between salary and promotion ( $r = 0.834$ ) suggests that these two factors often reinforce each other, with promotions typically accompanied by salary increases, further enhancing career satisfaction.

Promotion Opportunities exhibit the highest correlation with Career Satisfaction ( $r = 0.860$ ), making it the most influential predictor among the three independent variables. This underscores the importance of career advancement, recognition, and upward mobility in shaping employees' professional fulfillment. In Malaysian organizational culture, where hierarchical progression and titles carry significant weight, the perception of fair and frequent promotion opportunities can greatly enhance employees' engagement and loyalty. Employees who feel that their contributions are acknowledged and rewarded through promotion are more likely to view their careers as successful and meaningful. This finding also supports the Theory of Planned Behavior, where positive attitudes toward promotion and perceived control over career advancement contribute to stronger behavioral intentions related to career satisfaction and retention.

Work-Life Conflict is strongly correlated with both Salary Satisfaction ( $r = 0.825$ ) and Promotion ( $r = 0.794$ ), suggesting that employees' ability to manage personal and professional demands may influence how they perceive other career-related rewards. For instance, individuals who successfully navigate work-life tensions may be more likely to pursue promotions and negotiate better compensation, thereby enhancing their overall career satisfaction. Conversely, those who struggle with work-life balance may perceive limited access to advancement and financial rewards, which could diminish their career outlook. These interrelationships highlight the interconnected nature of the variables and suggest that career satisfaction is shaped by a constellation of factors rather than isolated influences.

Therefore, the correlation analysis provides robust evidence that work-life conflict, salary satisfaction, and promotion opportunities are significantly and positively associated with career satisfaction among contemporary Malaysian employees. These findings not only validate the study's hypotheses but also offer practical implications for organizational leaders and HR practitioners. By recognizing the multifaceted drivers of career satisfaction and addressing them through integrated policies, such as flexible work arrangements, transparent promotion pathways, and competitive compensation structures, organizations can foster a more satisfied, resilient, and high-performing workforce. The strength of these correlations also supports the subsequent use of regression analysis to further explore the predictive power of each variable in determining career satisfaction outcomes.

## **Discussions**

The findings of this study reveal strong and statistically significant positive correlations between work-life conflict, promotion opportunities, salary satisfaction, and career satisfaction among contemporary Malaysian employees. Notably, promotion emerged as the strongest predictor of career satisfaction ( $r = .860$ ), followed closely by salary satisfaction ( $r = .840$ ) and work-life conflict ( $r = .790$ ). These results suggest that employees who perceive frequent and fair opportunities for advancement, receive competitive and equitable compensation, and navigate work-life tensions with resilience tend to report higher levels of

career satisfaction. While the positive correlation between work-life conflict and career satisfaction may appear counterintuitive, it reflects a nuanced reality in Malaysia's competitive labor market: employees who are deeply engaged in their careers may experience more conflict due to high involvement, yet simultaneously derive a sense of achievement and purpose from their professional roles. This aligns with the notion that career satisfaction is not merely the absence of stress, but the presence of meaningful progression, recognition, and reward. The interplay among these variables underscores the complexity of career satisfaction as a multidimensional construct influenced by both tangible and psychological factors.

The application of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) provides a robust framework for interpreting these relationships. According to TPB, career satisfaction can be viewed as a behavioral intention shaped by attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. Employees who hold positive attitudes toward their career prospects and compensation are more likely to develop strong intentions to remain committed and satisfied in their roles. In the Malaysian context, where collectivist norms and hierarchical structures influence workplace dynamics, subjective norms play a critical role in shaping career satisfaction. For instance, societal expectations around career advancement and financial success may reinforce employees' motivation to pursue promotions and higher salaries, even at the expense of personal time. Moreover, perceived behavioral control, such as the ability to balance work and family responsibilities, can empower employees to navigate career challenges more effectively, thereby enhancing their overall satisfaction. The strong intercorrelations among the variables suggest that these TPB components do not operate in isolation but interactively influence career-related outcomes.

From a practical standpoint, these findings carry significant implications for organizational leaders, human resource practitioners, and policymakers seeking to improve employee well-being and retention. Organizations must recognize that career satisfaction is not solely driven by financial incentives or promotion pathways, but also by the broader context in which employees manage their professional and personal lives. Strategies that promote transparent promotion criteria, equitable salary structures, and flexible work arrangements can collectively enhance career satisfaction. Implementing mentorship programs, career development workshops, and performance-based incentives may foster a culture of recognition and growth. Simultaneously, offering flexible scheduling, remote work options, and wellness initiatives can mitigate work-life conflict and support employees' holistic well-being. In the Malaysian workforce, where rapid urbanization and evolving family roles are reshaping employee expectations, such integrated approaches are essential. Organizations may develop a more engaged, devoted, and productive workforce that sees career happiness as a dynamic and attainable goal rather than a static consequence by addressing the interdependencies among work-life conflict, promotion, and wage satisfaction.

Several contemporary Malaysian studies published between 2023 and 2025 reinforce the positive relationships identified in your research. For instance, Wai et al. (2024) examined job satisfaction in family-owned organizations and found that promotion opportunities and salary fairness were among the strongest predictors of employee retention and career satisfaction. Their findings align with your correlation results, particularly the strong association between promotion ( $r = .860$ ) and career satisfaction. Boamah et al. (2022), although slightly earlier,

provided evidence that work-life interference and burnout significantly affect faculty turnover intentions and career satisfaction, suggesting that even when work-life conflict is present, employees may still report high career engagement if other career rewards are perceived as meaningful. These studies validate your hypothesis that career satisfaction is shaped by a complex interplay of advancement, compensation, and personal balance.

National-level data from the Department of Statistics Malaysia (DOSM) in the 2023 Salaries & Wages Report highlights rising salary expectations and dissatisfaction among younger professionals, which correlates with your finding that salary satisfaction ( $r = .840$ ) is a key driver of career fulfillment. The Randstad Malaysia Job Market Outlook (2025) further supports this by noting that employees increasingly prioritize career progression and competitive pay over job stability, especially in high-growth sectors like the digital economy and construction. These macro-level insights complement your micro-level survey data, suggesting that Malaysian employees' perceptions of career satisfaction are increasingly shaped by tangible rewards and recognition. Together, these studies affirm the relevance and timeliness of your research, offering a robust foundation for future policy and HR interventions. Safri et al. (2024) findings also align with this study's observation that employees who effectively manage work-life tensions may still report high career satisfaction.

## **Conclusion**

This study set out to examine the correlational relationships between work-life conflict, promotion opportunities, salary satisfaction, and career satisfaction among contemporary Malaysian employees. Drawing on the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), the research explored how employees' attitudes toward their work conditions, perceived social expectations, and sense of control over their career trajectories influence their overall satisfaction. The findings revealed that all three independent variables, including work-life conflict, promotion, and salary satisfaction are significantly and positively correlated with career satisfaction. Promotion emerged as the strongest predictor, followed closely by salary satisfaction and work-life conflict. These results suggest that Malaysian employees derive a sense of fulfillment not only from tangible rewards such as salary and advancement but also from their ability to navigate the demands of work and personal life. The positive correlation between work-life conflict and career satisfaction, while initially counterintuitive, may reflect the complex realities of modern professional life, where high engagement and ambition often coexist with personal strain.

The study contributes to the growing body of literature on employee well-being in Malaysia by offering a holistic view of the factors that shape career satisfaction in a rapidly evolving labor market. It underscores the importance of integrated human resource strategies that address both extrinsic motivators, such as fair compensation and promotion pathways and intrinsic factors like work-life balance and perceived control. For practitioners and policymakers, these insights highlight the need to design workplace policies that are not only performance-driven but also empathetic to employees' lived experiences. By fostering environments that support career growth, equitable rewards, and flexible work arrangements, organizations can enhance employee satisfaction, reduce turnover, and build a more resilient and motivated workforce. Therefore, this study affirms that career satisfaction is a multifaceted construct, deeply embedded in the interplay between organizational practices and individual perceptions, and that addressing these dimensions

collectively is key to sustaining employee engagement in Malaysia's dynamic employment landscape.

### **Limitations**

While this study offers valuable insights into the correlational relationships between work-life conflict, promotion, salary satisfaction, and career satisfaction among Malaysian employees, several limitations must be acknowledged. First, the use of a non-probability purposive sampling method limits the generalizability of the findings. Although the sample included diverse sectors, it may not fully represent the broader Malaysian workforce, particularly employees in rural areas, informal employment, or gig-based roles. The cross-sectional design captures perceptions at a single point in time, which restricts the ability to infer causality or observe changes in career satisfaction over time. Longitudinal studies would be more effective in tracking how these variables evolve with career progression, economic shifts, or organizational changes.

The reliance on self-reported data introduces potential biases such as social desirability and response consistency. Participants may have over- or under-reported their satisfaction levels due to personal expectations or perceived norms. Moreover, while the constructs were measured using validated scales, cultural nuances specific to Malaysian work environments, such as collectivist values, hierarchical structures, and ethnic diversity, may influence how respondents interpret items related to promotion and salary. Future research could benefit from mixed-method approaches, incorporating qualitative interviews or focus groups to capture deeper contextual insights. Expanding the scope to include additional variables such as organizational culture, leadership style, or psychological empowerment may also enrich the understanding of career satisfaction dynamics in Malaysia.

### **Future Research**

Building on the findings of this study, future research should consider adopting a longitudinal design to examine how career satisfaction evolves over time in response to changes in work-life dynamics, promotion trajectories, and salary adjustments. A longitudinal approach would allow researchers to capture the temporal shifts in employee perceptions, especially in light of economic fluctuations, organizational restructuring, or life-stage transitions. Additionally, expanding the sample to include employees from rural regions, informal sectors, and gig-based employment would enhance the generalizability of the findings and offer a more inclusive understanding of career satisfaction across Malaysia's diverse labor landscape. Comparative studies between public and private sector employees could also reveal sector-specific drivers and barriers to career fulfillment, providing targeted insights for policy and HR interventions.

Future studies could integrate additional psychological and organizational variables to enrich the explanatory power of the model. Constructs such as job autonomy, leadership style, organizational justice, and psychological empowerment may interact with promotion, salary, and work-life conflict in shaping career satisfaction. Mixed-method approaches, combining quantitative surveys with qualitative interviews or focus groups, could uncover deeper contextual and cultural nuances, particularly in understanding how employees interpret career success and satisfaction within Malaysia's collectivist and multi-ethnic society. Researchers may also explore the mediating or moderating roles of variables such as

emotional intelligence, resilience, or digital work environments, especially as remote and hybrid work models become more prevalent. These directions would not only strengthen the theoretical framework but also provide actionable insights for organizations striving to build more adaptive, inclusive, and satisfying career ecosystems.

### Acknowledgement

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