



**Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development**

**WORK-LIFE BALANCE AMONG PROFESSIONALS WOMEN OF  
GENERATION X AND Y**

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**Bachelor of Science (Honours)  
(Human Resource Development)  
2020**



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X AND Y**

NUR AINON BINTI ABDULLAH

This project is submitted  
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for a  
Bachelor of Sciences with Honours  
(Human Resource Development)

Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development

UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SARAWAK

(2020)

The project entitled ‘Work-life Balance Among Professionals Women of Generation X and Y’ was prepared by Nur Ainon Binti Abdullah and submitted to the Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Bachelor of Science with Honours (Human Resource Development)

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Alhamdulillah, gratitude to Allah S.W.T for His countless blessings in my journey to finish this final year project and a big thank you to the people who had gave endless supported in accomplishing this project.

First of all, I would like to express the deepest appreciation to my supervisor, Assoc. Prof. Dr Surena Sabil, who assist, guide and teach me throughout the process of completing this project. Even though I have made many mistakes, but without their assistance, none of this will work out.

Furthermore, I would like to thank you to the public sector organizations that give very well cooperation and give useful information for me in order to complete the objective of the study. On top of that, I would like to give a special thanks to some of the supervisees that give a help and support along the way to complete this project notably in the process of gathering and analyzing the data. Next, I would like to thank to the Faculty of Cognitive Science and Human Development for assisting me in terms of technical stuff.

Lastly, I would like to give a special thanks to my loved one, my parent, who had been supported me with kindness and love throughout the entire process. Knowing that these people gave me a lot of help and support for the whole process in completing my final year project, I wish you success in the future endeavors. Thank you.

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## ABSTRACT

This research study explored the way professionals women of generation X and Y cope with home, work, family demands as well as self-care. It mainly focused on the balance they have been able to achieve in their lives as working women, wife, and mothers. This study used qualitative research to examine the challenges these women face in their working and personal lives, the impacts of the challenges, and the strategies and coping skills they utilize to maintain work and family life balance. Furthermore, this study used an interview format with a qualitative method based. In this approach, primarily open-ended questions were used. The major focus was to explore and then compared informants' responses to those questions. This method was chosen because it allows for a comparison of different experiences of a common topic. The challenges discussed by the professionals women of generation X and Y included: (a) unreasonable demands at work, (b) difficult allocating time between works and family and (c) less supportive relationship at work/home. The informants mentioned on the following impacts of the challenges faced by them: (a) stress, (b) unstable emotion, and (c) fatigue. Finally, the strategies the professionals women of both generation X and Y used to achieve work/family balance included (a) work smarter not harder, (b) leave work at work, (c) attend workshops/seminars/training, (d) set priorities, (e) schedule scrupulously, (f) flexible working hour, and (g) nursery existence.

*Keywords:* work-life balance, gender, professionals women, generation X, generation Y, challenges, impact, strategy

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of Study

In particular, work life balance is known as composing followed with the retaining friendly and a healthy workplace that authorize the individuals to achieve work life balance (Hasan et al., 2015). Similarly, it is an operational concept that encourage the employees to “divide their locus of attention, time and dynamism between work and the other important aspects of their lives”. It also involve a day-to-day intention to spend time with family members, peers, community involvement, spiritual, self development, personal care and other activities that is not related to work (Hasan et al., 2015). Thus, work life balance is critical issue for professional business career and for educational study.

In the previous years, work life balance frequently adapted in different fields such as sociology, psychology and many more. For instance, Allan, Loudoun and Peetz (2007) conduct a study about work life balance in scope of sociology. Both Greenhaus (2008) and Frone (2000) is an expertise on psychology which also have been conducted a study about work life balance in terms of psychology. In additional, Grady et al. (2008) did it in terms of human resource management and Sullivan and Smithson (2007) doing gender studies.

Referring to Deborah et al. (2013), work life balance theoretically can be achieved by simply allocating time between work and personal life. Jyothi and Jyothi (2012) in the other hands state that an understanding of work life balance terms is not only an equal balance between works and personal activities but also self achievement and enjoyment. Again Deborah et al. (2013) have mentioned that from theory to reality, this work life balance idea becomes more difficult as contextual conditions reforms the countryside and reshape the dynamic of work and life. For instance, earlier argument of women’s work life balance

usually involving with the balancing of work demands with those who raise the kids. Yet, Clark and Frone (2000) in their study on work life conflict agreed that the attention on the rules of work and family is important as family and work or career are consider as the very essential parts of one's life and it can cause a conflict and give negative impact of the employees' well-being if there is competing demands from work and personal life. Therefore, a good work life balance and well-being can be simply attained without role conflict and with the higher satisfaction level on work and family roles (Clark, 2000).

## **1.2 Problem Statement**

As mentioned before, the purpose of this research study is to explore work-life balance among professionals women of generation X and Y and to have a better understanding on what challenges they are facing. Even though there is a specific research on relating a generational differences to the work life balance issues, they are few research conducted on generation differences and work life balance among women (Deborah et al., 2013). It is necessary to consider their priority needs since these generations will have a significant present in the workforce.

Noted that different generation has different values, so it will forms a different perspective on a person about work life balance (Herachwati et al., 2019). For example, generation X view work life balance as an one's need that creates a necessity for additional research on work life balance that involving flexible work schedule, autonomy, impressive work-related task and career development (Jorgensen, 2003). Unlike the previous generations, generation Y or millenials likely to have lower job satisfaction and commitment (Lyons & Kuron, 2014). Therefore, this generation will speculate that they doing a mistake in choosing a job if they could not achieve work life balance.

The definitions of work life balance is of course different across the generations (Deborah et al., 2013). Generation X, according to Hammil (2005) was the first generation that survive in the new family systems developed by the Boomers. Therefore, this people are likely to be mentioned as people with high autonomy. They are very persistent to be committed, accountable and powerful. They are risk taker, problem solvers, goal oriented and flexible. On the other hand, generation Y according to Hammil (2005) was the first generation that live with the internet. They are technically savvy and very dependent on it. This generation well understand as they need to switch the jobs for every five years because they believe they will praised by the respect instead of the titles. Generation Y also a goal oriented, an independence, sense empowered and very dependent on technology as technology will enable them to communicate, run the business and build a relationship with people all over the world.

Both generation X and Y see problems at workplace differently than Boomers. These generations are more likely to have a higher level of efficiency on the future. Both generations insist to become an expert in technology in order to assist them in doing their job while actively seek for the work life balance (Sonier, 2012). In additional, “work and life negotiation is mediated by generational behaviour and understandings of the workplace” (Favero & Heath, 2012) as “both generation X and Y expect higher value on adjusting family needs with the needs of their jobs” (Klun, 2008). Again, generation X and Y employees seek better place (job) in order to have a better work life balance (Favero & Heath, 2012).

### **1.3 Objective of Study**

The report describe the findings of a project that focused on understanding the work-life balance among professionals women of generation X and Y in Malaysia. Practically, this research begin with gathering the data and information straightforwardly from a selected

professionals women in difference generation of X and Y in their own place in order to have a broad insights about their personal life and work experience. This collecting data process are occurs in the informant's place as it allows the informants to naturally and truthfully react due to a safe place. The researcher hence eagerly studying and discovering the challenges that professionals women of generation X and Y are facing in their personal life and at the workplace. Furthermore, the researcher's targets were also to pinpoint the impacts of the challenges faced by these professional women of generation X and Y in order to achieve work-life balance and to identify the best strategy to tackle those problems. The researcher hereby want to question the challenges faced by both women of generation X and Y, the impacts of the challenges faced by both women of generation X and Y and lastly the strategies they utilize to maintain and have a better work life balance. In summary, the study explores the following questions:

- I. What challenges are faced by women of generation X with respect to their careers, family, and the interaction between the two?
- II. What challenges are faced by women of generation Y with respect to their careers, family, and the interaction between the two?
- III. What are the impacts of the challenges faced by women of generation X on work life balance?
- IV. What are the impacts of the challenges faced by women of generation Y on work life balance?
- V. What are the best strategy utilize by professionals women of generation X to cope with those challenges to have a better work life balance?
- VI. What are the best strategy utilize by professionals women of generation Y to cope with those challenges to have a better work life balance?

## **1.4 Significance of Study**

Personally, it is significant to gain some insight on this issue for a few reasons. By conducting a research on this issue, the researcher can learn on how to avoid turnover intention among female workers in Malaysia as work life conflict issue can lead to employee turnover (Kumara & Fasana, 2018). Thus, work life balance is an important aspect in retirement decision (Uriarte-Landa & Hebert, 2009). In addition, as employees get older, they might face work life conflict as they usually facing a big changes in their personal life which usually involve a family matters, their well-being or passion except of work (Uriarte-Landa & Hebert, 2009). Previous study also insist to expand the context of work life balance research in advance of the backgrounds of families with children to consist of midlife employees (Yeandle, 2005; Hirsch, 2003; Gardiner et al., 2007). Hence, the researcher would like to consider the significance of work life balance itself in order to increase employees' loyalty as well as their productivity at work (Dhas, 2015).

The significance of studying women of generation X and Y is because they own different goals, desires, life and work expectations (Otken et al., 2013). This also means that they also to some extent have different conflicts in handling their work-life balance. This is also agreed by Klun (2008), because according to him, "Each generation brings distinctly different sets of values, expectations, attitudes, and motivational factors to their work". In line with Minhas (2020), "Members of generation X and the millennial generation differ in their view regarding work-life practices and support". Besides, these generations are mostly employed nowadays and dominate the current workforce. Thus, it is at high importance to study and understand this new generations profile in order to find out what should be the new human resources management strategies and implementations to help these women in order to obtain a healthy work life balance (Otken et al., 2013).

## **1.5 Limitation of The Study**

This research however only focusing on professionals women in grads of 41 and above and were born between 1965 to 1980 for generation X and 1981 to 1999 for generation Y. The study also might be able to list out just a few strategies and challenges that these generations encounter while balancing their family and work since in the recent years the landscape of the workforce in Malaysia has changed. Besides, the results of this research cannot be extrapolated to the generation X and Y in the other areas since Malaysia and other country might have different context for example different of working hours. The study also of course depending on participant willingness.

## **1.6 Definition of Terms**

### **1.6.1 Conceptual Definition**

The following terms used throughout the study and were defined for purposes of the research:

**Work Life Balance.** According to Apaydin (2011), work life balance can be defined as “employees’ maintaining a balance between work and non-work responsibilities, activities and desires”.

**Generation X.** Hammil (2005) have defined this generation as the first generation to grow up in the new family systems created by the Boomers. This generation tends to be compromised of independent individuals. They are risk takers, problem solvers, tend to be goal oriented and demand flexibility.

**Generation Y.** Hammil (2005) have also described the generation Y as the first generation to grow up with the internet. Also called as ‘Millennials’, this generation

as .described by Hammil (2005) are both technologically savvy and very dependent upon it. They are also over stimulated and become easily bored. Similar with the previous generation, they are goal oriented and are also team players, extremely independent and always feel empowered.

### **1.6.2 Operational Definition**

**Work Life Balance.** Work life balance can be measured by the extent of agreement with statements on a Likert scale about general feelings regarding balance between work, family and personal life of professionals women belong to generation X and Y in Malaysia.

**Generation X.** Lancaster and Stillman (2010) have described this generation as people who was born between 1965 and 1980.

**Generation Y.** Lancaster and Stillman (2010) have described this generation as people who was born between 1981 and 1999.

### **1.7 Summary**

To sum up, this chapter has justified on the main view of the research titled work-life balance among professionals women in Malaysia according to their generation. This chapter has highlighted on the relevant information required to organize the research including the objectives, research questions, significance and limitations of the study as well as the definition of important terms used in this study. Next chapter will discuss the literature review for this study.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

Exploring work-life balance among professional women of generation X and Y is the main idea for this study in order to better understand about what challenges they are facing. Honestly, the researcher have done a complete literature review to investigate work-life balance among the two generations, X and Y. The literature reviews were gained from websites, journals, books and census reports. All the literature reviews was mainly published between 2010 and 2019. Researcher also have used certain key words, but were not generalized to work-life balance, women, generation X and generation Y. In this chapter, the researcher have organized literature review by parts including work life balance of women, generation X, generation Y, and work life balance: challenges and strategies. All the points outlined in the literature review in line with the aim of the study, that is to explore work-life balance from women of generation X and Y perspective.

#### **2.2 Discussion of Related Topic**

##### **2.2.1 Work Life Balance of Women**

Balaji (2014) in his study have mentioned that women are likely to merge their career with motherhood based on study in West. Meanwhile in India, many women are actively looking for job because they need to increase their family income. Those women are particularly comes from the lower middle class. Women in India, they responsible to afford good life for their children and parents. They even pay for their children's tuition fees and develop a better plan for their children's future. According to Balaji (2014), women are likely

to have a self-fulfillment in demanding jobs and anyways they are very encouraged to seek for it. Women also experience intensified pressures in order to endure for their kids by affording them “intensive parenting” that strongly related with child caring and their development.

Tunji-Olayeni et al. (2017) stated about work life balance of women in the context of male dominated fields for example in the manufacture industry. The study noted that indeed, women experience work life balance issue in male dominated fields as they play both tasking roles at workplace and home. In line with Balaji (2014), Olayeni et al. (2017) have stated that women typically afford for the family’s financial by paying all the fees and still, they make sure that they do not neglect their spouse and their children at the same time. Generally, this circumstances might lead to negative impacts of their family relationship, work performance and as well as their well-being. Further, Tunji-Olayeni et al. (2017) found that respondents (women) reported that they have few choices for them to leave their current job. This “positive disposition” encouraging them to deal with the problems arise when they get home and in the workplace due to a few opportunity outside as it is hard to get an employment nowadays. Therefore, they willingly deal with the issues they experienced instead of lost the job and have difficulty to give a good life for their family.

Doble and Supriya (2010) have highlighted the perception of work life balance according to the gender differences. The results prove that many women asked for improvement in work life balance. The study however mentioned that women prefer flexible working hours as it will increase their work life balance. They notice that if they have a chance to be a part time worker, it could increase their work life balance. Specifically, 87% of men while 84% of women in the study are agreed if they have the freedom to work from home. More women sense more strongly than men that if there is a choice to handle emergencies at home. Meanwhile, women in overall seek for childcare facilities as it will successfully boost their

work life balance. In short, women typically “see options such as part time work, availability of child care facility and flexibility to meet emergencies at home, will improve their work life balance”. Moreover, on the another finding of this study, women felt they have inadequate time spent with their families and thus, the stress of work give negative impacts on the quality of their family life. Yet, men and women in this study seems to be agreed that a good work environment would encouraged them to obtain work life balance.

### **2.2.2 Work Life Balance of Generation X**

Deborah et al. (2013) in their study opined that generation x basically is the main caregivers as they care for their family needs, children and aging parents. Noted that in the study have mentioned women are more concerns toward parenting and care giving. Somehow, this generation were likely to respond negatively to the younger generation as these younger generation seemed to not work as hard as them and were not thinking about family matters and also make fun of their jobs. And the women from each generation typically had negative perspective on women from other generation in contexts of work life balance.

Otken and Erben (2013) in their study to examine on how work life balance affecting individual happiness from the views of generation x and y have found that when work interfere personal matters, it will negatively impacts on happiness of generation X. In other words, spillover from work to family will lead to unsatisfied workers of generation x.

Lirio (2014) purpose is to gain insight on how managers of generation X dominate needs of international business travel with demands for family responsibility. It emerged that managers of generation X perceived balance in terms of the work that enable them to carry out family responsibilities and not about when family needs influenced on their works. The finding shows their partners or children did not prevent or limiting them to pursue their

global career. Furthermore, generation x views the global trip as “in harmony with family” if they frequently going home for their families. It was mentioned that the family was also well understand of their work that requires them to being away from their spouse and children. Some managers stated that travelling globally could be very tiring and very intense. Instead of jet lag, most of them directly doing house chores when they are back. In additional, women in generation X also mentioned that one of the partner will always be with their children if one of them is travelling away. Then, it can be seen that global career did not affecting too much on their balanced of work and personal life. Therefore, most of the global managers of generation X opined that they manage their work and family needs reasonably well.

### **2.2.3 Work Life Balance of Generation Y**

Deborah et al. (2013) stated that generation Y do not have much family conflict on their age because they just start their careers and do not have interest to marry yet. They still do not have children yet or aging parents. While generation X views them as not working so hard and make fun of job, generation Y on the other hands perceive generation X just revolved around standard nine to five working hours. These “older women” are not working overtime and have zero problem on work life balance perhaps due to technology that ease their work. These younger generation have mentioned that work becomes effortless nowadays due to technology and thus, the organization allows women to work from home. After all, these young generation still have negative thought in technology as it can be a burden as well.

Aydemir et al. (2016) in their study on differences of work life balance and work values among different generation have mentioned that the perspective and understanding toward

work life balance have only a slight difference among different generations. On the other hand, they view differently toward work values. Particularly, unlike Baby Boomers, generation Y do not so fond of leisure. This was quite surprising as generation X expected to have more free time and doing something they like except for work. Yet, it is acceptable as generation Y eager to climb the corporate ladder faster. Thus, generation Y were expected to be more independence than the previous generation which is generation X. Generation Y also have found to be more “ascetism” than the other generations as this generation Y likely to have everything instantly.

According to Herachwati et al. (2019), in Indonesia particularly, generation Y view work life balance as a demands for having a good life. Work life balance, according to them was essential for their self development. In additional, they perceive work life balance as a necessity to gain family support and an advantage for them once they enter the workforce.

Otken and Erben (2013) found that any improvement occurs whether it is in work or personal life, it would positively affect happiness of generation Y, as well as generation X. As for generation Y, Otken and Erben (2013) encourage these generation to adapt the work demands within their personal life and yet, there are few of them willingly to adjust their lives into work.

#### **2.2.4 Work Life Balance: Challenges and Strategies**

Mos et al. (2018) have identified few challenges experienced by the generation Y. In their study have mentioned that generation Y wish to have a good time with their children and spouse. However, the respondent also mentioned that they had difficulty in allocating time between work and family problems as this negatively affect their family relationship. Literally, this is for the sake of workload that need to be completed on particular time frame.

Gautam and Jain (2018) in their research found that the personal life of an employees would be negatively affected if their work life is imbalanced. Furthermore, compensation factors also have influenced the well-being of employee in term of balancing work and personal life. The researcher have listed down some strategies for employees to obtain work life balance. The study's finding show that the respondents view that working environment is a significant element to achieve balance work and personal life. Next, they were very sure that they require flexible work schedules to have a balance between work and personal life. Technology have been mentioned as a significant tools to obtain work life balance. Have a great relationship with the superior might be a reason for them to get work life balance. They believed spouse that actively support them can lead to have a better work life balance. Furthermore, have a quality time with family and members could boost their work life balance as well.

Alsos et al. (2016) stated that "time squeeze" can be referred as a challenge to have a better work life balance. Time squeeze is "the feeling that 24 hours is too short to finish all job tasks in the firm and at home as well as demands on self-realization or hobbies". Sometimes, women with career basically needed at work and at home at the same time and it is quite difficult to prioritize which part we need to spend our quality time on. This would give difficulty for married women with children especially. Again, flexible working hours is the best way to obtain work life balance. According to the researcher in their findings, respondents in Norway are likely to purchase household services as it can reduce the workload at home and a way for them to cope with the work life balance issues. In order to be more available for the family, the spouse or partner decided to change his or her job. Of course, a better work life balance can be achieved when the individual have a good relationship with the partner because the partner itself can motivate and support or help by

doing the house chores, limited their work time and changing job to be more available for the families.

Balaji (2014) in his study on work life balance of women employees revealed that working hours per week, amount of overtime, inflexible working hours, employers who do not provide support and unfriendly policies in an organization can lead to work life conflict as for women. A strategy mentioned in the study was dual role demands by husbands can help women in obtaining a better work life balance. The study asserted that a husband's encouragement and engagement can reduce the levels of role conflict faced by the women.

Amin et al. (2019) however in their study have described that workload and working environment have significant influence toward woman worklife balance. Some recommended made by the researcher based on the result such as manage employees' work load by pay attention to their working hours, educational background and the type of work given. The organization also has to give competitive salary and comfortable facilities in order to increase female employee satisfaction. The company also should maintain the work environment by provide comfortable working facilities and maintain the good relationship between employees by some activities such as daily sharing session, outbound and gathering.

Cabrera et al. (2019) in their study stressed that married career women and working mothers are confronted with many issues. At the forefront of these issues is the work-home interface. As revealed in the study, their difficulties circle around having lesser time to do their hobbies, socialize, and engage to leisure activities to relax. They also felt that their relationship with their partners and their families were already at the expense of missing their inputs.

Das (2016) have mentioned significantly in his study, it is suggested that management should investigate the major reasons of unhealthy work life balance and analyze the