PERCEPTION TOWARDS WORK-LIFE BALANCE AND EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Suzila Farni Binti Mohamad Ibrahim

Master of Science (Human Resource Development) 2011
PERCEPTION TOWARDS WORK-LIFE BALANCE AND EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

SUZILA FARNI BINTI MOHAMAD IBRAHIM

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science (Human Resource Development)

Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development
UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SARAWAK
2011
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Assalammualaikum, thank you Allah that gives me strengths to face the barriers and challenges in completing my Master Degree. I would like to specially express my gratitude to my supervisor, Dr. Zaiton Hassan for her guidance and valuable advice throughout the completion of this research.

Special thanks to Majlis Daerah Samarahan, Kota Samarahan that involved in the study especially to their Human Resource Executive for giving me the permission to conduct my study there. My sincere gratitude goes to all informants for their cooperation, time and effort for this study.

My gratitude also to my parents, Mr Ibrahim Hassan and Mdm Sa’diah Alii for their understanding and consistent encouragement that motivates me to complete this research. Not forgetting my beloved little brother Mohd Zulniqman and my beloved friend Hisham Yakob for their full support and always be there for me.

My heartiest appreciation to all my friends specially my classmate Siti Noor Haizan, Siti Aisan, Zulina, Alpha, Nadia, Florence, Micheal and Yakub for their brilliant ideas, information and support. Thanks to everyone that contributed directly or indirectly in completing this study. May God bless you.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements
Table of Contents
Abstract

CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>Background of the Study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>Perception</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>Emotional Intelligence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>Problem Statement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>Research Objectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>Research Questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>Definition of Terms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.7.1</td>
<td>Work-life Balance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.7.2</td>
<td>Emotional Intelligence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.7.3</td>
<td>Perception</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>Significant/ Contribution of the study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>Limitation of the study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.10</td>
<td>Summary</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 2 - LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction 16
2.1 Border Theory 16
2.2 Leadership Skills and Emotional Intelligence 18
2.3 Perspectives on the Study of Work-Life Balance 20
2.3.1 Traditional Perspectives on Work-Life Balance 20
2.4 Attractive Things Work Better 22
2.5 The Emotional Dimensions of Family Time and Their Implications for Work-life Balance 23

CHAPTER 3 - METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction 25
3.1 Research Design 25
3.2 Qualitative Analysis Design 27
3.3 Stratified sampling 27
3.4 Research Population and Sample 29
3.5 Instrument 29
3.6 Pilot Test 34
3.7 Validity and Reliability 34
3.8 Data Collection 34
CHAPTER 4 - FINDING AND DISCUSSION

4.0 Introduction 36

4.1 The Primary Findings 36
  4.1.1 Demographic Profiles of the Informants

4.2 The Questions
  4.2.1 What do you understand about work-life balance
  4.2.2 How many hours a day do you have, on average spend on household duties and caring tasks
  4.2.3 Have you ever felt that you do not have enough time to spend with your family or at work? Why
  4.2.4 Do you think that you already balance your work and life effectively? Justify your answer
  4.2.5 What is the meaning of Emotional Intelligence in your opinion
  4.2.6 Do you think that emotional intelligence
is important in everyday life? Why?  

4.2.7 What are your emotions during the tasks  
of work-life balance? (Positive/ Negative)  

4.2.8 What kinds of situation that can make you  
feel that you will have the positive emotions the most?  

4.2.9 Have you ever felt negative emotions? When and why?  

4.2.10 How did you handle that kind of situation?  

4.2.11 Do you think that we should have different  
emotion in every different situations that we  
are facing? Why?  

4.2.12 Situation  

4.2 Result Framework  

4.2.1 Perception towards work-life balance  

4.2.2 Average time  

4.2.3 Do not have enough time spend with family?  

4.2.4 Have work-life balance  

4.2.5 Perception towards emotional intelligence  
in your own opinion  

4.2.6 The important of emotional intelligence  

4.2.7 Emotions during performing work-life balance tasks  

4.2.8 Situation to have positive emotion  

4.2.9 Ever felt the negative emotions?  

4.2.10 The solution to handle the negative situation  

4.2.11 Should one individual have different
emotions in different situations?

4.2.12 The emotion during the situation given

4.3 Discussion

CHAPTER 5 - DISCUSSIONS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction
5.1 Discussion of research findings
  5.1.1 Perceptions towards work-life balance
  5.1.2 Emotions during performing work-life balance tasks
  5.1.3 Situation to have positive emotion
  5.1.4 The emotion during the situation given
5.2 Result of the study
5.3 Contribution from the study
5.4 Suggestions for future research
5.5 Conclusion

REFERENCES

APPENDICES
ABSTRACT

PERCEPTION TOWARDS WORK-LIFE BALANCE AND EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Suzila Farni Binti Mohamad Ibrahim

This study was conducted to seek the perceptions of employees towards work-life balance and their emotional intelligence. A qualitative method has been used to collect data from four informants whom are employees in Majlis Daerah Samarahan, Kota Samarahan. The study managed to explore the perception towards work-life balance. Furthermore, the relation between work-life balance and emotional intelligence has been identified. There are some findings that correlate with prior researches and some new findings. In addition, the implications of this study towards the human resource field and methodology, limitations and direction for future research are discussed.
ABSTRAK

PERSEPSI TERADAP KESEIMBANGAN KERJA DAN KEHIDUPAN SEHARIAN DAN KEPINTARAN EMOSI

Suzila Farni Binti Mohamad Ibrahim

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

This chapter describes the background of the study, problem statement, research objectives, and research questions, significance of the study, the limitations and terms used in this study.

1.1 Background of Study

Work-life balance can be defined as a meaningful achievement and enjoyment in everyday life (Joshi & Melanson, 2005 cited Bird, 2003). The work-life balance definition can be wide. Several articles define work-life balance as the way one individual manage their work and their daily life tasks effectively. Work-life balance is one of the most important areas of human resource management which employees must emphasize in their life. According to Cieri, Holmes, Abbott & Pettit (2000):

"Work-life balance is an important area of human resource management that is receiving increasing attention from government, researchers, management and employee representatives and the popular media".

1
It can be one of evidence that prove a work-life balance is a vital area for us to focus on. The need of work-life balance among employees in organizations increased. One of the reasons is related to changing environment and technology in this century. These changes will affect the employees emotionally because the pressures of work are higher. According to Guest (2001), ‘the pressures of work, for those in work, have been intensifying in recent decades’. From the statement, it shows that the pressures of work can be one of the reasons that affect individual’s work-life balance in the workplace. Therefore, work-life balance is one of the solutions for employees to have a balance in their work and life. Work-life balance is a subjective area which sometimes employees do not realize whether they have the work-life balance or they do not have it. Hence, this research will emphasize on the employees’ perception towards work-life balance and their emotional experience during doing their tasks in order to achieve work-life balance.

In addition, according to Guest (2001), there are three factors that can contribute to imbalance work-life. The factors are developments at work, life outside work and individuals and their lives. These factors will increase the need to address the challenge of work-life balance as a contemporary policy issue. Moreover, according to Guest (2001), in the western countries, the demands of work begin to dominate life. As a result, this will create the sense of work-life imbalance ensues. Imbalance work and life can lead to a disaster in individual’s life. Thus, the work-life balance itself must be achieved. However, to achieve work-life balance, there must be challenges that will come out. Lockwood (2003) mentioned that:
"In organizations and on the home front, the challenge of work-life balance is rising to the top of many employers’ and employees’ consciousness. In today’s fast-paced society, human resource professionals seek options to positively impact the bottom line of their companies, improve employee morale, retain employees with valuable company knowledge, and keep pace with workplace trends."

A lot of employees did not realize that they might have imbalance work and life. This will affect the way they manage their time in daily life routine. However, if they do understand by the term of work-life balance, the other barriers will occur. Hence, the challenges of work-life balance must be solve positively with particular strategies.

1.2 Perception

Perception is the process by which organisms interpret and organize sensation to produce a meaningful experience of the world. Sensation usually refers to the immediate, relatively unprocessed result of stimulation of sensory receptors in the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, or skin. Hence, perception can be defined in a broaden definition which it came from the individuals’ knowledge about one particular thing. Thus, there will be massive interpretation about work-life balance that can be discovered from this study.
1.3 Emotional Intelligence

Emotional Intelligence (EI) refers to an emotional and social skill set that can underpin a student's success in their university education and their professional workplace, either domestic or global. There are numerous types of emotions such as happy, sad, enjoy, angry, devastate, and etc. Emotion is a social and dynamic communication mechanism. According to Hook (2008), emotion processes are part of human's social ways of being in the world; they dye the dreams, hopes, and experiences of the world. If one individual aim to design for emotion, they need to place them in the larger picture of experiences if they are going to address aspects of aesthetic experiences in their design processes. The statement shows that emotions are related to human's experiences. There are numerous emotions occurred due to one individual's experiences.

However, emotional experience is always difficult for users to accurately communicate. Many users tend to use their own words to describe the very subjective experience. Emotional intelligence and emotional experience is related to each other. This is because according to Goleman (1995), emotional intelligence can be defined as describes the ability, capacity, skill or, in the case of the trait EI model, a self-perceived ability to identify, assess, and control the emotions of one's self, of others, and of groups. Therefore, the activities or skills are part of human's experiences. In addition, emotions will appear in each experience. If one individual able to manage their emotional experience effectively, therefore, they are able to manage their emotions effectively and this is also known as emotional intelligence.
According to Norman (2003), emotions, moods, traits, and personality are all aspects of the different ways in which people's minds work, especially along the affective, emotional domain. Emotions change behavior over a relatively short term, for they are responsive to the immediate events. Emotions last for relatively short periods, minutes or hours. Moods are longer lasting, measured perhaps in hours or days. Traits are very long-lasting, years or even a lifetime. And personality is the particular collection of traits of a person that last a lifetime. But all of these are changeable as well. We have multiple personalities, emphasizing some traits when with families, a different set when with friends. We change our operating parameters to be appropriate for the situation we are in. Therefore, the border theory by Clark (2000) is practical to use and adapt in different kind of situations. According to Clark (2000), the border theory is emphasizing on how one individual be able to manage and adapt themselves in different kind of situations with their role, responsibilities and also their emotions as well.

"Work-family border theory "is devoted only to work and family domains. The outcome of interest in this theory is work-family balance, which refers to satisfaction and good functioning at work and at home, with a minimum of role conflict".

Moreover, Clark also mentioned that in border theory, one individual's roles can be flexible. The main reason is to avoid role conflict. For instance, a male doctor might be called upon to play the role of father at any point or place during the day. For that reason, the emotions will also change suitable with one individual's role and responsibilities.
Thus, work-life balance and emotional intelligence is related to each other. When the situation of work-life balance is differ for instance at the workplace and at own house, the emotions will change too. The emotions and behavior with colleagues and family is different. It will not be the same. Hence, when the work-life balances change, emotions will change at the same time.

1.4 Problem Statement

There are several problems that related to work-life balance. Lots of journals mentioned about the negative emotions and relate it with work-life balance. From the literature that been conducted, most of the previous research mentioned on emotions has concentrated upon the negative emotions such as stress, fear, anxiety and anger. But positive emotions are as important as negative ones. However, the positive emotions are barely been discussed. Therefore, for this research, it is crucial to explore more about the positive emotions that exist and relate it with work-life balance.

Furthermore, in other literatures that have been conducted, emotionally negative family time was associated with a lower degree of work-family balance. This statement was mentioned by Offer & Schneider (2008). For that reason, I believe that what it really means is when a family does not have a positive emotion during spending time together, therefore they do not have their work-life balance. If they have work-life balance, probably it is in a low quality of work-life balance.
1.5 Research Objectives

The main objective for this study is to explore the employees' perception towards work-life balance. In addition, this study also emphasize on how far the employees understand or realize that do they have a work-life balance or they do not have a work-life balance in their daily life. Work-life balance is a subjective area in Human Resource Management and it is hard for us to really realize and apply it in our daily life routine.

Apart from that, one of the specific objectives is to investigate the emotional experience of work-life balance during tasks implementation. The emotional experience during the work-life balance tasks is either positive or negative emotions. This is vital because in every task that we are doing, the emotions exist. Therefore, the real purpose of doing this is to know how much positive or negative emotions involve during the tasks implementation. Hence, it will be related to emotional intelligence.

Furthermore, the other objective is to discover the positive emotions towards work-life balance and relate it to emotional intelligence. In emotional intelligence theory by Goleman (1995), one individual that has the positive emotions is the one that has the emotional intelligence. Although there are some emotions such as stress and pressure is known as negative emotions, however if this kind of emotions will drive one individual to complete their tasks for instance, it will be consider as a positive reaction derive from negative emotions. Therefore, if the result of work-life balance is positive, the emotions itself will automatically will be part of emotional intelligence.
Furthermore, the other objective is to identify which element affects the other element. For this objective, the highlight is whether work-life balance will affect emotional intelligence or emotional intelligence will affect work-life balance. There are some people who declare that they have work-life balance but they have a disturbance for their emotions. The actual question is they really have work-life balance in their daily life? Because the real definition of work-life balance according to Bird (2003) is work-life balance can be define as a meaningful achievement and enjoyment in everyday life. Therefore, if someone declared that they already balance their work and daily life routine but at the same time they do not feel any enjoyment doing it, can this be consider as they have work-life balance? Hence, this objective is vital so that the strongest elements can be practice among the employees or even anyone.

1.6 Research Questions

There are several research questions that can be derived from the research objectives. These questions will be elaborate more so that this it can achieve the study's main objective which is the employees' perception towards work-life balance and emotional intelligence. The research questions are:

1. What is the employees' perception towards work-life balance?
2. When can they feel the positive emotions during the tasks of work-life balance?
3. What are the emotional experience of work-life balance during tasks implementation (positive, negative)
4. Which factor affects the other factor? (Work-life balance / emotional intelligence)
These questions are the main questions that will cover the research objectives. The informants will be asked with probing questions in order to complete the research questions and to achieve the main objective for this study. The probing question is one of the best techniques in interview session. Often, we want or need more information than we get when we ask a question during an interview. Probing is asking follow-up questions when we do not fully understand a response, when answers are fuzzy or ambiguous or when we want to obtain more specific or in-depth information. Probing questions often begin with “what” or “how” because they invite more detail. Questions that begin with “Do you...” or “Are you...” invite personal reflection.

1.7 Definition of Terms

1.7.1 Work-life Balance

Conceptual definition

Work-life balance can be defined as a meaningful achievement and enjoyment in everyday life (Joshi & Melanson, 2005 cited Bird, 2003). When we are able to achieve certain goals in our life and we enjoy while doing the tasks and achieving it, then it is known as work-life balance.
Operational definition

Work-life balance can be defined as when one individual are able to balance their activities between their work and daily life routine. The success of having a work-life balance is when one individual can enjoy their time while doing the tasks and every single time is a quality time for them.

1.7.2 Emotional Intelligence

Conceptual definition

The phrase “emotional intelligence” was coined in 1990 by a Yale psychologist, Peter Salovey, and John Mayer, also a psychologist from the University of New Hampshire (Salovey and Mayer 1990) to describe certain qualities, for example, understanding one’s own feelings, empathy for the feelings of others, and the regulation of emotion in a way that enhances living. Five years later, Goleman (1995) claimed that success in life is more markedly influenced by emotional intelligence than by IQ. Emotional intelligence refers to a set of capabilities that are separated from IQ but necessary for success in life, in the workplace, in intimate personal relations, and in social interactions. Goleman (1995) has extended the work of Salovey and Mayer (1990) by separating the components of emotional intelligence into: (i) personal component, and (ii) interpersonal component.
Operational definition

Emotional intelligence can be defined as when one individual able to manage their emotions and adapt their emotions with their environments and situations effectively. The best example for emotional intelligence is actors and actresses. When they have to act like a sad person, they will cry and have a sad emotion. Once the scene is over, they will be in normal emotion. Probably they will laugh. Therefore, this is known as emotional intelligence. In the workplace for instance, emotional intelligence is vital because it can lead one individual to be success.

1.7.3 Perception

Conceptual definition

Perception is the process by which organisms interpret and organize sensation to produce a meaningful experience of the world. Sensation usually refers to the immediate, relatively unprocessed result of stimulation of sensory receptors in the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, or skin. Perception, on the other hand, better describes one's ultimate experience of the world and typically involves further processing of sensory input. In practice, sensation and perception are virtually impossible to separate, because they are part of one continuous process.
Thus, perception in humans describes the process whereby sensory stimulation is translated into organized experience. That experience, or percept, is the joint product of the stimulation and of the process itself. Relations found between various types of stimulation (e.g., light waves and sound waves) and their associated percepts suggest inferences that can be made about the properties of the perceptual process; theories of perceiving then can be developed on the basis of these inferences. Because the perceptual process is not itself public or directly observable (except to the perceiver himself, whose percepts are given directly in experience), the validity of perceptual theories can be checked only indirectly.

**Operational definition**

Perception can be defined as one individual’s point of view and their opinion about certain things or situations. Every person came from different school of thought. Therefore, perception is something that abstracts and the definition is varying from one person to another.

1.8 Significant Contribution of the study

There are several contributions from the study. One of the contributions is perception towards work-life balance can be explore and emotional experience during work life balance’s tasks can be recognize. Other than that, this study will discover between work-life balance and emotional intelligence, which element will strongly affect the other element.
Moreover, the other contribution is towards methodology. As this is a qualitative study, the data collected from survey questionnaires along with interviewing session were interpreted and figures were used to explain the findings. This method can be replicated in future research and may serve as reference for future researchers.

In addition, another contribution is towards human resource practitioners. Findings from the study help human resource managers to understand work-life balance and emotional intelligence and practice it for their work-life balance and guide their team (employees) on how to achieve it. Furthermore, it also can be practice for any employees or even anyone who wants to achieve work-life balance and to have emotional intelligence in everyday life. Other than that, knowledge and good understanding in work-life balance and emotional intelligence helps them to feel enjoy with their work-life balance tasks. They will be able to understand about their feeling more so that the negative emotions can be reduce while achieve their work-life balance.

Furthermore, this study also contributes to the organizations. Finding from the study can be used by the managements to view and understand the perceptions of their employees regarding on organization's efforts to ensure that they will achieve work-life balance and emotional intelligence together. Thus, the organizations and employees will practice the work-life balance and emotional intelligence in everyday life and will be forward looking organizations.
1.9 Limitation of the study

One of the limitations of the study is this study only focusing on one organization which is Majlis Daerah Samarahan. Majlis Daerah Samarahan is located at Kota Samarahan, Sarawak. The main function for Majlis Daerah Samarahan is to provide an infrastructure and tremendous services for citizen.

In addition, the other limitation is all informants are from Majlis Daerah Samarahan only. Therefore, any suggestion or point of view about this study is only from informants of Majlis Daerah Samarahan. Furthermore, there are only four (4) staffs have been selected for this study. The staffs are from different department, background of study and experience of work. If the other researchers who want to make a research about the same study but using the different organization or informants, the result might be differ from this study. This is because the informants could be from a different background and the way they thinking is also different with one and another.

Furthermore, the other limitation is this study is only using an interviewing, observation, document analysis and acquisition the information from the secondary data such as journals, articles for data collection. These are part of qualitative technique. The informants will be given the open-ended questions first, and then they will be interviewed in dept for further information. If the respond from the informants are not apparent, there will be a follow up session with the informants so that their answers are fulfilled the questions and objectives of the study.