



Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development

THE MEDIATING EFFECT OF SATISFACTION WITH WORK-FAMILY BALANCE ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WORK-LIFE FUSION AND BURNOUT AMONG EMPLOYEES AT PUBLIC SERVICE SECTOR

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Final Year Project Report

Masters

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STEPHANIE SINDUN JOHNNY

This project is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirement for a
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The project entitled ‘The Mediating Effect Of Satisfaction With Work-Family Balance On The Relationship Between Work-Life Fusion And Burnout Among Employees At Public Service Sector’ was prepared by Stephanie Sindun Johnny 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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ABSTRACT

The service sector workers are among the workers that have a high number of burnouts as the service industry plays a significant role in the world's economic nowadays. The daily customer complaints are the most challenging task to deal with which caused stress and most terrible is can lead to burnout. Fortunately, the development of technology in today's world really help a lot especially those who are a dual income family as they need to fulfil the work and family demands concurrently. Hence, this study aimed to determine the relationship between work-life fusion and burnout which mediated by satisfaction with work-family balance among the public service sector employees. A survey of 100 public service sector employees in Sibuluan, Sarawak revealed that satisfaction with work-family balance mediated the relationship between social media with depersonalization and personal accomplishment. The results from this study suggest the importance of HR Practitioner to rethink and redesign the policy by allowing the use of social media such as Facebook or Whatsapp in the workplace as it help the employee to manage the demand from work and family more organized. Besides that, this study also discussed on the practical implications and suggestions for future research in the same field of the study.

Keywords: Work-life fusion, Satisfaction with work-family balance and burnout

ABSTRAK

Pekerja di sektor perkhidmatan merupakan antara pekerja yang banyak mengalami burnout kerana industri perkhidmatan memainkan peranan yang sangat penting dalam penyumbangan kepada ekonomi negara pada masa kini. Rutin harian seperti menerima keluhan ataupun komplain dari pelanggan merupakan tugas yang agak mencabar kerana ia akan memberikan tekanan dan yang paling dasyat sekali adalah dapat menyebabkan burnout kepada pekerja. Dengan adanya teknologi pada masa sekarang, ia adalah sangat membantu terutamanya kepada pasangan yang saling bekerja kerana mereka perlu menunaikan tanggungjawab sebagai ibubapa dan pekerja pada masa yang sama. Oleh itu, kajian ini bertujuan untuk menentukan peranan pengantara oleh kepuasan dengan keseimbangan kerja dan keluarga ke atas hubungan pergabungan kerja dan kehidupan dengan burnout dalam kalangan pekerja sektor perkhidmatan awam. Keputusan soal selidik daripada 100 pekerja di sektor perkhidmatan awam di Sibul menunjukkan bahawa kepuasan dengan keseimbangan kerja dan keluarga berperanan sebagai pengantara di antara hubungan media sosial dengan depersonalisasi dan pencapaian peribadi. Keputusan daripada kajian ini mencadangkan agar pengamal pembangunan sumber manusia memikirkan dan menstrukturkan semula polisi dengan membenarkan penggunaan media sosial seperti *Facebook* ataupun *Whatsapp* di tempat kerja kerana ia membantu pekerja dalam menguruskan tanggungjawab sebagai ibubapa dan pekerja dengan lebih teratur. Selain itu, implikasi kajian dan cadangan kepada penyelidik juga turut dibincangkan.

Kata Kunci: Pergabungan kerja dan kehidupan, Kepuasan dengan keseimbangan kerja dan keluarga serta burnout

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Study

Burnout is a significant topic among the worldwide workers nowadays especially in the service industry as it plays a crucial role in today's world economics (Jeung, Kim & Chang, 2018). World Health Organization (WHO) has officially recognized "burnout" in the 11th Revision of the International Classification of Diseases (ICD-11) as an occupational phenomenon and not a medical condition (Moss, 2019). Besides that, Charlie DeWitt who was a vice president for business development at Kronos (company that provide human capital management and workforce management at Chelmsford, Massachusetts) said that the employee burnout has reached epidemic proportions (Wilkie, 2017). This indicated that the burnout among employee need to be look seriously by the employer. The employer needs to take some initiatives to decrease the number of employee's burnout in their organization. Moreover, as highlighted in the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) report, 75% of employees believe that workers have more on-the-job stress than a generation ago (The American Institute of Stress, 2020). This clearly shown that the percentage of the employees who is having stress on the work-related task is increasing across the year. The burnout among employee is not only serious in the international context but also in the Malaysia context. A survey has found that Malaysian employees are overworked, and sleep deprived, with 51 per cent suffering from at least one dimension of work-related stress as well as 53 per cent getting less than seven hours of sleep in a 24-hour period (Ram, 2019). From the results itself we can summarised that the Malaysian are having burnout that might not be noticed by us before. Hence, the term 'burnout' was founded by Herbert Freudenberger in 1974 then had further by Maslach and Jackson in 1981 that comprised it into three sub-variables which are emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and low personal accomplishment.

A recent study has showed that Kuala Lumpur has the second highest number of people (22 per cent) working for 48 hours or more per week (Za, 2019). This revealed that Malaysian workers have poor work-life balance as they are more spending time in managing work than non-work spheres. When they have high workloads, this caused them to ignore the home related tasks due to the tiredness at work. In order to resolve this issue, the use of technology such as mobile phones and laptop may help in managing work and personal life if they can access to the social media and email. It is because technology enables the workers to engage in both work and non-work activities for 24/7 (Fujimoto, 2016). The usage of technology to meet both work and life demands able to make the workers get high levels of job and life satisfaction (Haeger & Lingham, 2014). The often use of communication technologies for tasks that is related to work will lead to work-life conflict and other related outcomes, such as job satisfaction, stress, and burnout (Wright et al., 2014).

In this modern era, WhatsApp was the most preferable application for workers to communicate with their work and family. According to the survey had conducted in Hong Kong, 80% of respondents said that WhatsApp had overtaken their lives while 40 per cent felt that the managers evaluate their performance based on their WhatsApp responses (Chan, 2019). In addition, Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (2018) said that there are 98.1 per cent of people has owned the WhatsApp's account. This had indicated that WhatsApp was the most popular application for managing and balancing on work and family domains. This is because it has blurred the boundaries between both domains and makes them fused together. Therefore, the term of 'work-life fusion' has been introduced by Haeger and Lingham in 2014 which consists of seven sub-scales that are Web 2.0 Usage, Skype Usage, Social Media Usage, Email Usage, Face to Face Expectations, Virtual Expectations and Concurrent Management.

1.2 Problem Statement

First and foremost, this study aims to contribute to Spillover Theory by examining whether the mediation of satisfaction with work-family balance in the relationship between work-life fusion and burnout can be explained by that theory or not. This study had examined that whether Spillover Theory can support the research's framework.

Presently, little study has given attention on the issue of burnout among the service sector's employees in Malaysia. Past research has linked burnout with organizational citizenship behaviour as mediated by flow experience among bank employees in Sarawak (Kasa & Hassan, 2017). Prior research has investigated burnout with the Big Five personality traits as mediated by emotions regulation strategy among Malaysian HR professionals (Santos et al., 2016). Kasa & Hassan (2016) has associated burnout with flow as moderated by individualism or collectivism in Malaysian Hotel Industry. There is little known research had investigated burnout with work-life fusion on the public service sector's employees. Therefore, this study had explored the relationship between work-life fusion and burnout as mediated by satisfaction with work-family balance.

Furthermore, Fujimoto et al. (2016) had investigated the effect of mobile technology usage on work engagement and emotional exhaustion in Japan. One of the findings from this study indicated that workers' mobile technology usage did not have any effect on their emotional exhaustion. However, the researcher suggest that the finding need to be tested in other contexts. Hence, this research had explored whether the use of technology for work-family balance will give effect to burnout.

Barnett et al. (2019) has studied on the mediation effect of satisfaction with work-family balance with workplace support and depression among Hospice Nurses. Therefore, more evidence on mediation of satisfaction with work-family balance need to be explored.

However, this study investigated the mediation effect of satisfaction with work-family balance with other variables which is work-life fusion and burnout that has been less explored to date.

There is a little research on work-life fusion as this topic is not much been explored especially in the Asian context. Haeger and Lingham (2014) has investigated a trend toward work-life fusion across generation in using technology during work. They suggest that more research is needed in that stream of work as it is an important aspect for personal and organizational lives. Therefore, the purpose of this research was to explore the relationship between work-life fusion and burnout as mediated by the satisfaction with work-family balance.

1.3 Research Objectives

1.3.1 General Objective

To determine the relationship between work-life fusion and burnout as mediated by satisfaction with work-family balance.

1.3.2 Specific Objectives

- To identify mediating role of satisfaction with work-family balance in the relationship between social media and emotional exhaustion.
- To identify mediating role of satisfaction with work-family balance in the relationship between social media and depersonalization.
- To identify mediating role of satisfaction with work-family balance in the relationship between social media and personal accomplishment.
- To identify mediating role of satisfaction with work-family balance in the relationship between email and emotional exhaustion.

- To identify mediating role of satisfaction with work-family balance in the relationship between email and depersonalization.
- To identify mediating role of satisfaction with work-family balance in the relationship between email and personal accomplishment.

1.4 Research Hypotheses

H₁: Satisfaction with work-family balance mediated the relationship between social media and emotional exhaustion.

H₂: Satisfaction with work-family balance mediated the relationship between social media and depersonalization.

H₃: Satisfaction with work-family balance mediated the relationship between social media and personal accomplishment.

H₄: Satisfaction with work-family balance mediated the relationship between email and emotional exhaustion.

H₅: Satisfaction with work-family balance mediated the relationship between email and depersonalization.

H₆: Satisfaction with work-family balance mediated the relationship between email and personal accomplishment.

1.5 Conceptual Definitions and Operational Definitions

Work-life fusion

Conceptual Definition: Haeger and Lingham (2014) has defined work-life fusion as the management of work and life spheres on steroids with technology as the enhancement or catalyst.

Operational Definition: Technology such as social media and email that helps in managing work and life domains simultaneously.

Satisfaction with work-family balance

Conceptual Definition: The cognitive appraisal of one's degree of success in meeting the demands of work and family roles and the positive feelings or emotional states that coming from that appraisal (Valcour, 2007, p.1513).

Operational Definition: The positive or negative feelings of a person due to their successfulness in fulfilling both work and family demands.

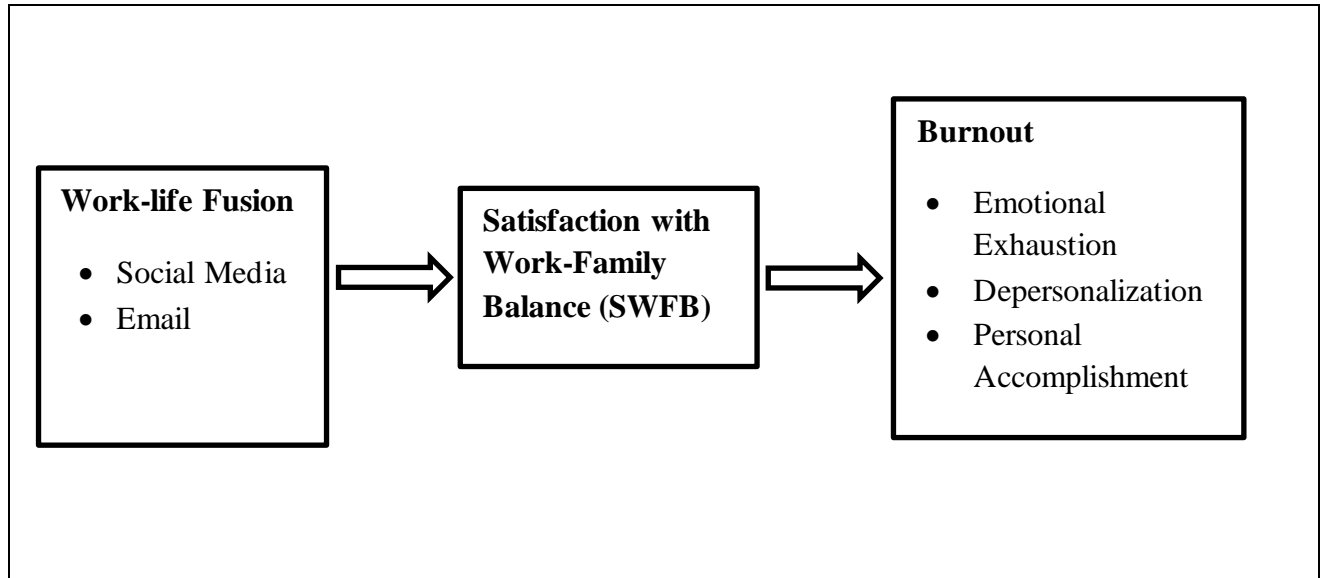
Burnout

Conceptual Definition: Maslach and Jackson (1981) described burnout as a response to chronic work-related stress that consists of three components which are emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment (Canadas-De la Fuente, et al., 2015).

Operational Definition: Burnout refers to the syndrome of feeling emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and personal accomplishment towards one's work.

1.6 Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 Conceptual Framework



1.7 Significance of study

Theoretically, the study was significant to Spillover Theory. This is because the result examined will show whether the relationship between work-life fusion and burnout as mediated by satisfaction with work-family balance can be explained or supported by that theory.

Empirically, the study significantly contributed to the body of literature on work-life fusion and burnout among employees of public service sector in Sarawak. It provides the material that is beneficial to the future research. As this research will be done in Sarawak context specifically in Sibul, therefore this will see the Sarawakian's perspective towards employee's burnout in Sarawak.

Practically, the finding from this study also significant to the Human Resource (HR) practitioners to rethink and design the policy or method that will assist employee in fulfilling

both work and family demands simultaneously by using technology. For instances, implement the flexible working hours so that the employee still can do their work by using technology even though they are at home. Hence, this will help the employee to get better work-life balance. Moreover, this also will give advantages for the employees to increase their understanding on managing work and non-work concurrently with the help from technology such as social media like Facebook and WhatsApp.

1.8 Limitations of study

There are several limitations on this study. First, the design of the cross-sectional study only allowed the data to be collected once from the sample. Therefore, the future study was recommending replicating the study by using the longitudinal study to get more accurate data and findings for this study. Besides that, there is a limited period allocated for the data collection. This has made the researcher to catch up with the time to get the approval from the organization in order to conduct the survey. In the other hand, the sample for the measurement is insufficient where it may not enough to represent the whole population.

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter will discuss on the concept of work-life fusion, satisfaction with work-family balance and burnout. Moreover, this chapter also explain on the related theory and past similar findings that are related to this study in order to support the research.

2.1 Concept of Burnout

There are numerous researches have investigated on the concept of burnout nowadays. The first research on burnout was conducted by Herbert Freudenberg in 1974. He defined burnout as a condition of physical and mental that related to job which included physical fatigue, emotional exhaustion, and loss of motivation (Hakanen & Schaufeli, 2012).

This research has been further by Cristina Maslach in 1976. She defined burnout as a multi-level stress syndrome that comprising of mental fatigue that is emotional exhaustion, negative perceptions and feelings about clients or patients which is depersonalization and the crisis in professional competencies (reduced personal accomplishment) as the third elements of burnout (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). The proposed definition by Maslach was mostly accepted by many of the researcher and caused her attributed as being the pioneer for research in burnout nowadays. Besides that, the questionnaire, Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) also has largely been used for accessing burnout. Large number of the burnout studies have focused on the existence of high levels of emotional exhaustion or depersonalization as the core element of burnout meanwhile low levels of personal accomplishment may be less likely to determine burnout (West et al., 2012). Then, Maslach and Leiter (1997) further to study on the concept of burnout. They defined it as the situation that showed itself with the changes in attitude and behaviour which associated to work, by expressing it as physical, mental and emotional exhaustion which resulted to low personal accomplishment (Kanwar,

Singh & Kodwani, 2009). Thus, burnout can be summarized as the syndrome of feeling high levels of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization with low levels of personal accomplishment towards one's work. We can expect that work-life fusion can increase the emotional exhaustion and depersonalization and reduce the levels of personal accomplishment.

2.1.1 Elements of Burnout

Emotional Exhaustion

The first element in burnout is emotional exhaustion. Maslach and Jackson (1981) has defined emotional exhaustion as the feelings of being "emotionally spent" and over expanded by one's job (Shyman, 2010). Emotional exhaustion also refers to one or more kind of job burnout that reflects oneself as a worker in decreasing of mental resources due to the psychological and emotional demands. Cordes and Dougherty (1993) characterized emotional exhaustion by the feelings of helplessness, lack of accomplishment, decrease in self-esteem and the development of negative attitudes towards customers, organization, their jobs and themselves (Rutherford et al, 2011).

Depersonalization

The next element is depersonalization. Maslach and Jackson (1981) describe it as an impersonal response toward recipients of one's care or service such as customers. Cañadas-De la Fuente et al. (2015) described depersonalization as the development of cynical attitudes and responses towards people or colleagues in the organization and the beneficiaries of the services from the provider. Depersonalization also called as cynicism that is highly related to the negative attitudes such as frustration, disillusion and mistrust towards colleagues in the organization as well as feelings of helplessness and lack of control (Lewin and Sager, 2007).

Personal Accomplishment

Personal accomplishment as the third element in burnout. Maslach and Jackson (1981, p.101) described personal accomplishment as “feelings of competence and successful achievement in one’s work with people.” This feeling commonly originates from the factors that caused one is ineffective and not being appreciated (Rutherford et al., 2011). Maslach and Jackson (1981) note that personal accomplishment is independent of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization in that emotional exhaustion and depersonalization are negative and personal accomplishment is not. They further note that personal accomplishment is not the opposite of the other two facets and a low correlation between personal accomplishment and both depersonalization and emotional exhaustion exists (Rutherford et al., 2011).

2.2 Concept of Satisfaction with Work-Family Balance

Satisfaction with work-family balance (SWFB) was introduced by Valcour in 2007. Valcour (2007, p.19) defined SWFB as an individual’s assessments when they have enough resources to respond effectively towards the demands of their work and family roles. When the demands of work and family responsibilities can be fulfilled, therefore ones will feel satisfied due to enough resources such as mobile technology. Besides that, SWFB also defined as the cognitive appraisal of one’s degree of success in meeting the demands of work and family roles and the positive feelings or emotional states that coming from that appraisal (Valcour, 2007, p.1513). McNamara et. al. (2013) also defined SWFB as the overall level of contentment resulting from an assessment of one’s degree of success at meeting work and family role demands which involves a cognitive component (perceptions of work-family balance) and an affective component (emotional reaction to those perceptions).