

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WORK-LIFE BALANCE AND STRESS AMONG NURSES IN KOTA KINABALU HOSPITALS

WINNIE MALUN



UMS

PERPUSTAKAAN MALAYSIA SABAH
UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SABAH

**SCHOOL OF BUSINESS AND ECONOMICS
UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SABAH
2011**

**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WORK-LIFE
BALANCE AND STRESS AMONG NURSES IN
KOTA KINABALU HOSPITALS**

WINNIE MALUN



UMS

**DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL
FULFILLMENT FOR DEGREE OF MASTER OF
HUMAN CAPITAL MANAGEMENT (MHCM)**

**SCHOOL OF BUSINESS AND ECONOMICS
UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SABAH
2011**

UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SABAH

BORANG PENGESAHAN STATUS DISERTASI

**JUDUL : THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WORK-LIFE BALANCE AND STRESS
AMONG NURSES IN KOTA KINABALU HOSPITALS.**


IJAZAH : SARJANA PENGURUSAN MODAL INSAN

SESI PENGAJIAN: 2009-2011

Saya, WINNIE BINTI MALUN mengaku membenarkan disertasi sarjana ini disimpan di Perpustakaan Universiti Malaysia Sabah dengan syarat-syarat kegunaan berikut:

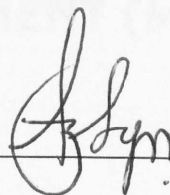
1. Disertasi adalah hak milik Universiti Malaysia Sabah
2. Perpustakaan Universiti Malaysia Sabah dibenarkan membuat salinan untuk Tujuan pengajian sahaja.
3. Perpustakaan dibenarkan membuat salinan disertasi ini sebagai bahan Pertukaran Institusi Pengajian Tinggi
4. TIDAK TERHAD

Disahkan Oleh;

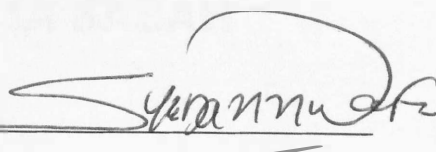


Penulis: WINNIE BINTI

MALUN Alamat:



TANDATANGAN PUSTAKAWAN



Penyelia: Prof. Dr. Syed Azizi Wafa
Syed Khalid Wafa

Tarikh: 17 Ogos 2011

DECLARATION

All materials in this research are original except for quotations, excerpts and references, which have been duly acknowledged.

17 August 2011

Winnie

WINNIE MALUN

PE20098628C



UMS
UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SABAH

CERTIFICATION

NAME : WINNIE BINTI MALUN

MATRIC NO : PE 20098628C

**TITLE : THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WORK-LIFE BALANCE
AND STRESS AMONG NURSES IN KOTA KINABALU
HOSPITALS**

DEGREE : MASTER OF HUMAN CAPITAL MANAGEMENT

VIVA DATE : 11 JULY 2011



UMS
UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SABAH

DECLARED BY:

SUPERVISOR:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Syed Azizi Wafa", is written over a horizontal line.

PROF. DR. SYED AZIZI Wafa SYED KHALID Wafa

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere and heartiest gratitude to the following individuals and parties:

To my dear supervisor, Professor Dr. Syed Azizi Wafa Syed Khalid Wafa of the School of Business and Economics, Universiti Malaysia Sabah for his unlimited guidance and supports. Your advice, motivation, profound and respected knowledge has helped me a lot. You have truly been a "light" throughout my journey to complete this research.

Special thanks are also addressed to all the course lecturers of MHCM programs especially Dr Hasanah and Dr Amran Harun for the generous knowledge and advices on this study.

To all staffs of laboratory department in Sabah Medical Centre especially my superior, Mr Spencer Kan, thank you very much for giving me a chance to do my master degree while working and being so understanding and tolerance. To Miss Ernie and all my working colleagues, thank you for sticking with me through thick and thin and friends who has helped me a lot. To you all I owe everything. To my teammates, studying along with you guys has been great.

Sincere thanks also to all the respondents for their time in completing the questionnaires.

Last but not least, I am forever grateful to my family especially my parents for the amazing love and supports they have showered upon me. I am truly blessed. You both are my inspiration and strength.

Once again, thank you all.

Winnie Malun

20 July 2011

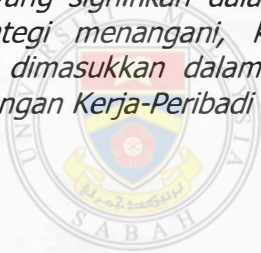
ABSTRACT

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WORK-LIFE BALANCE AND STRESS AMONG NURSES IN KOTA KINABALU HOSPITALS

This study undertakes to understand the relationship between work-life balance and stress among nurses in Kota Kinabalu hospitals. The objectives of this study are to determine the relationship between work-life balance and stress; between work interference with personal life and stress; and between personal life interference with work and stress. The study also determines the correlations between the sub-components of work-life balance and sub-components of stress. Also, the effect of the moderating factors of demography on the relationship between work-life balance and stress is also determined. The research is based on survey method using self-administered questionnaire. A total of 165 respondents were gathered from two government hospitals in Kota Kinabalu. It was found that there is a significant positive but weak relationship between work-life balance and stress; between work interference with personal life and stress; and between personal life interference with work and stress. It was also found that there are significant but weak correlations of sub-components of work-life balance and six sub-components of stress except for uncertainty concerning treatment. Further to that, years of service is a significant but weak moderator of the relationship between work-life balance and stress. Other demographic factors i.e. age, highest education level, number of children and age of children are not significant moderators. It is recommended that mediators such as coping strategies, lack of training, job design and management support are included in future research to explore the relationship between work-life balance and stress.

ABSTRAK

Kajian ini bertujuan untuk memahami hubungan di antara Imbangan kerja-peribadi dengan stres dalam kalangan jururawat di hospital-hospital di Kota Kinabalu. Objektif kajian ini adalah untuk menentukan hubungan antara Imbangan kerja-peribadi dengan stres; Gangguan Kerja terhadap Hidup Peribadi dengan Stres; dan Gangguan Hidup Peribadi dengan Kerja dengan Stres. Kajian juga menentukan korelasi antara sub-komponen Imbangan kerja-peribadi dengan sub-komponen Stres. Selain itu, kesan faktor moderator demografi ke atas hubungan Imbangan Kerja-Peribadi dengan Stres juga ditentukan. Kajian ini berdasarkan kaedah tinjauan menggunakan soal-selidik yang ditadbir sendiri. Sebanyak 165 responden daripada dua hospital kerajaan di Kota Kinabalu terlibat dalam kajian ini. Kajian mendapati hubungan yang positif signifikan tetapi lemah antara Imbangan Kerja-Peribadi dengan Stres; Gangguan Kerja terhadap Hidup Peribadi dengan Stres; dan Gangguan Hidup Peribadi dengan Kerja dengan Stres. Kajian juga mendapati terdapat korelasi yang signifikan tetapi lemah antara sub-komponen Imbangan Kerja-Peribadi dengan sub-komponen Stres kecuali untuk Ketidaktentuan berkaitan Rawatan. Tambahan pula, tempoh perkhidmatan responden adalah moderator yang signifikan tetapi lemah dalam hubungan dengan Imbangan Kerja-peribadi dengan stres. Faktor demografik yang lain iaitu umur, tahap pendidikan, bilangan anak dan umur anak bukanlah moderator yang signifikan dalam kajian ini. Kajian mencadangkan agar mediator seperti strategi menangani, kekurangan latihan, desain kerja dan sokongan pengurusan dimasukkan dalam kajian masa depan bagi meninjau perhubungan antara Imbangan Kerja-Peribadi dengan Stres.



UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SABAH

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Declaration	ii
Certification	iii
Acknowledgment	iv
Abstract	v
Abstrak	vi
List of Tables	xi
List of Figures	xii
List of Abbreviations	xiii
List of Appendices	xiv
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Preface	1
1.2 Overview	1
1.3 Problem Statement	2
1.4 Research Questions	5
1.5 Research Objectives	5
1.6 Scope of the Study	6
1.7 Significance of the Study	7
1.8 Definition of Key Items in the Study	8
1.8.1 Stress	8
1.8.2 Work-life Balance	9
1.8.3 Work family conflict studies in Malaysia	10
CHAPTER 2	12
LITERATURE REVIEW	12
2.1 Introduction	12
2.2 Stress	12
2.3 Stress Theory	12
2.3.1 Primary Appraisals	14
2.3.2 Secondary Appraisals	15

2.4	Stress in Nursing	16
2.5	Work-Life Balance	16
2.5.1	Definition of Work-Life Balance	16
2.5.2	Dimension of Work-life Balance	18
2.5.3	Personal Life Interference with Work (PLIW)	19
2.5.4	Work Interference with Personal Life (WIPL)	20
2.6	Theories Related to Work-Life Balance	21
2.7	Relationship between Work-life Balance and Stress	22
2.8	Conceptual models of the relationship between work and non-work	24
2.9	Demographic Variables and Stress	24

CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY **26**

3.1	Introduction	26
3.2	Research Framework	26
3.3	Definition of Variables	28
3.3.1	Independent Variable	28
3.3.2	Dependent Variable	28
3.3.3	Moderator Variable	28
3.4	Research Hypothesis	29
3.4.1	Hypothesis 1	29
3.4.2	Hypothesis 2	30
3.4.3	Hypothesis 3	31
3.4.4	Hypothesis 4	33
3.4.5	Hypothesis 5	33
3.5	Research Design	35
3.6	Sampling Design	36
3.7	Sampling Population and Size	36
3.7.1	Population	37
3.7.2	Sample Size	37
3.8	Instrument	37
3.8.1	Work-life Balance Scale	37
3.8.2	Stress Scale	38
3.8.3	Questionnaire Design	38
3.9	Data Collection Method	40
3.9.1	Primary Data	40
3.10	Data Analysis Method	40
3.10.1	Hypothesis Analysis Method	41
3.11	Summary	42

CHAPTER 4 RESEARCH FINDINGS	43
4.1 Introduction	43
4.2 Test of Reliability and Validity of Actual Research	43
4.2.1 Reliability and Validity Analysis for WBL Scale	43
4.2.2 Reliability and Validity Analysis for Stress Scale	45
4.3 Demographic Data of Respondents	47
4.3.1 Age Range	48
4.3.2 Race	48
4.3.3 Highest Education Level	49
4.3.4 Marital Status	50
4.3.5 Number and Age Group of Dependence (Children)	51
4.3.6 Services Background	53
4.4 Descriptive Statistics	55
4.5 Hypotheses Testing	56
4.5.1 Relationship between Work-life Balance and Stress	57
4.5.2 Relationship between Work Interference on Personal Life with Stress	57
4.5.3 Relationship between Personal Life Interference on Work with Stress	58
4.5.4 Correlation between Sub-Components of Work-Life Balance (PILW and WIPL) with Sub-Components of Stress (DD, CWDP, IPE, LOS, CWNS, WS and UCT)	59
4.5.5 The Moderating Effect of Demographic Background on the Relationship between WLB and Stress	62
4.6 Summary	66

CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS	67
5.1 Introduction	67
5.2 Summary of Research Findings	67
5.2.1 Description of Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents	67
5.2.2 Descriptive Data of the Research Variables	68
5.2.3 Relationship of Work-Life Balance and Stress	68
5.2.4 Relationship of WIPL and Stress	69
5.2.5 Relationship of PLIW and Stress	69
5.2.6 Correlations of Work-Life Balance Sub-Components (WIPL and PLIW) with Stress Sub-Components (DD, CWDP, IPE, LOS, CWNS, WS and UCT)	69
5.2.7 Moderating Effects of Demography on the Relationship between WLB and Stress	69
5.3 Discussion of Research Findings	70

5.4	Implications of Research Findings	72
5.5	Limitations of Research Findings	73
5.6	Recommendations	74
5.7	Conclusion	75
REFERENCES		76



LIST OF TABLES

<u>Table</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Page</u>
4.1	Rotated Component Matrix for 10-Item WBL Scale	44
4.2	KMO and Bartlett Test for 10-Item WBL Scale	44
4.3	Alpha Cronbach Test for 10-Item WBL Scale	45
4.4	Rotated Component Matrix for 18-Item Stress Scale	46
4.5	KMO and Bartlett Test for 10-Item WBL Scale	47
4.6	Alpha Cronbach Test for 18-Item Stress Scale	47
4.7	Result of Regression Analysis for Hypothesis H1	57
4.8	Result of Regression Analysis for Hypothesis H2	58
4.9	Result of Regression Analysis for Hypothesis H3	59
4.10	Result of Pearson Correlation for Hypothesis H4	61
4.11	Result of Hierarchical Regression Analysis (Moderating Effect of Age of Respondents)	62
4.12	Result of Hierarchical Regression Analysis (Moderating Effect of Highest Education Level)	63
4.13	Result of Hierarchical Regression Analysis (Moderating Effect of Number of Children)	64
4.14	Result of Hierarchical Regression Analysis (Moderating Effect of Age of Children)	65
4.15	Result of Hierarchical Regression Analysis (Moderating Effect of Years of Service)	65

LIST OF FIGURES

<u>Figure</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Page</u>
3.1	Theoretical Framework of the study	27
4.1	Respondents Categorized by Age Range	48
4.2	Respondents Categorized by Race	49
4.3	Respondents Categorized by Highest Education Level	50
4.4	Respondents Categorized by Marital Status	51
4.5	Respondents Categorized by Number of Children	52
4.6	Respondents Categorized by Age of their Children	53
4.7	Respondents Categorized by Length of Services (Year)	54
4.8	Respondents Categorized by Type of Position	55



UMS
UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SABAH

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

DD	<i>Death and Dying</i>
CWDP	<i>Conflict with Doctors and Physicians</i>
CWNS	<i>Conflict with Other Nurses and Supervisors</i>
IPE	<i>Inadequate Preparation to deal with the emotional needs of patients and their families</i>
LOS	<i>Lack of Support</i>
PLIW	<i>Personal Life Interference with Work</i>
SPSS	<i>Statistical Package for Social Science</i>
UCT	<i>Uncertainty Concerning Treatment</i>
WLB	<i>Work-Life Balance</i>
WIPL	<i>Work Interference with Personal Life</i>
WL	<i>Workload</i>



UMS
UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SABAH

LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix	Page
Appendix 1- Questionnaire	86
Appendix 2 – SPSS Output (Factor Analysis for Work-life Balance)	94
Appendix 3 – SPSS Output (Factor Analysis for Stress)	96
Appendix 4 – SPSS Output (Reliability Analysis)	98
Appendix 5 – SPSS Output (Linear Regression Analysis: WIPL and Stress)	99
Appendix 6 – SPSS Output (Linear Regression Analysis: PLIW and Stress))	101
Appendix 7 – SPSS Output (Pearson Correlations: WLB sub-components and Stress Subcomponents)	103
Appendix 8 – SPSS Output (Hierarchical Regression Analysis: Test of Moderating Factors – Age of Respondents)	105
Appendix 9 – SPSS Output (Hierarchical Regression Analysis: Test of Moderating Factors – Highest Education Level)	108
Appendix 10 – SPSS Output (Hierarchical Regression Analysis: Test of Moderating Factors – Number of Children)	111
Appendix 11 – SPSS Output (Hierarchical Regression Analysis: Test of Moderating Factors – Age of Children)	114
Appendix 12 – SPSS Output (Hierarchical Regression Analysis: Test of Moderating Factors – Years of Services)	117
Appendix 13 – SPSS Output (Cross tabulation of Data)	120

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Preface

Discussion on chapter one includes the overview of the research background, indication of the problem statement, objectives of the research, scope of the study, significance of the study and definition of major terms used in this research.

1.2 Overview

Stress is becoming an increasingly global phenomenon, affecting all categories of workers, all workplaces and all countries. This trend coupled with its rising cost to the individual, to industry and to society as a whole has greatly heightened awareness of the need for effective and innovative ways of tackling stress.

Presently people have become the primary source for a company's competitive advantage and organisational prosperity, thus survival depends on how employees are treated. Supported by Lawler (2005) in his previous study, society has entered a new era in the relationship between organisation and their employees. Furthermore, it is critical for companies to treat employees the ways that make them feel committed members. In any organizational setting, employee's work plays an important role for organizational achievements. Therefore, it is highly important for management to recognize employees' work and provide them with an opportunity to grow and to look after their well-being (Muhammad *et al.*, 2009).

Stress and work-life conflict are intertwined, and the latter has been documented as major cause of stress. Stress is one of the more commonly documented outcomes of demanding work and is increasingly recognized as a determinant of employee health and productivity.

Nursing by its nature is a stressful profession (Dewe, 1987) and work in high-stress environments since their main responsibility focuses upon providing help to patients who are usually encountering life crisis. Ongoing demands of work and family needs at the same time can create stress. As for example, married nurses with children, they have added responsibilities as the wife, mother, and homemaker. Concerns about combining full-time employment with adequate performance in the child-care and housekeeper roles seem to have been the major constraints faced by employed mothers. The role expectations of these two domains are not always compatible, creating conflicts between work and family life. Work family conflict as a source of stress had been linked to many undesirable effects.

It has been argued that organisations need to be aware of the changing needs of employees and provide flexible work-life balance strategies in order to retain their employees. Organisations that seek to increase employee morale, commitment and satisfaction, and reduce sources of stress and problem at work, will improve their ability to recruit and retain talented and valued employees (Cappelli, 2000). Moreover, work-life balance has emerged as a strategic issue for HRM and key element of an organisation's employee retention strategies (Cappelli, 2000; Lewis & Cooper, 1995).

1.3 Problem Statement

Stress is a well-known and identified problem within the nursing profession. According to Atkinson, stress occurs when one is faced with events or encounters that they perceive as an endangerment to their physical or psychological well being (McGowan, 2001). Additionally stress levels will increase when controllability and predictability in a situation decrease. There is an inverse relationship between stress and work-life balance. As a result this increased stress could commonly results in decreased job satisfaction and decreased quality of life.

The question of how to strike a balance between work and life is attracting increasing attention at both the national and international level (Crompton and

Lyonette, 2006). The mutual interference of the home and the work domain has been identified as one of the ten major stressors in the workplace. As a result, employees find themselves struggling to juggle the competing demands of work and family (Byron, 2005).

The cause of stress for nurses has found to be related to the nature of the profession. Included in these stressors are an intense work environment with extended work hours, weekends, night and holidays. According to Ruggiero (2003) stress could be related to variables of shift work, which is both physically and mentally taxing.

The problem of balancing work and family has been studied extensively in the literature, which is dominated by research conducted mainly on white-collar managerial and non-managerial employees working in private sector organizations (Eby *et al.*, 2002). However, there is paucity of research investigating the issue in the nursing context. Because nursing is a female-dominated profession practiced under demanding work conditions, examining work-family conflict in the nursing context is important for its theoretical and practical implications (Dilek *et al.*, 2007).

Nursing profession in Malaysia is a female-dominated job. As for example, married nurses work-life conflicts arise from multiple roles that they have to perform. The role expectations of work and family domains are not always compatible, creating conflicts between work and family life. The normative expectations of society which traditionally suggest that women should still maintain their roles as mother and homemaker to the fullest extent, while at the same time maintaining their roles as employees are very demanding. Many negative outcomes were related to these conflicts such as lower job satisfaction and family satisfaction which was in turn significantly related to life satisfaction (Aminah, 1996a; Higgins *et al.*, 1992), absenteeism at work (VandenHeuvel and Wooden, 1995) and health and well being (Adams *et al.*, 1996).

Recent literature has pointed out the need for research that examines the effect of organizational support on the work-family conflict. Eby *et al.* (2005) noted

that it is particularly surprising that so few studies have examined family-supportive organizational policies, given practitioners' interest in developing "family-friendly" work environments. Grzywacz *et al.*, (2006) recommended future research to examine the effectiveness of organizational interventions designed to help nurses balance the demands of work and family. Another neglected factor is organizational support for work issues. There is some evidence that employees of organizations that have programs designed to assist them in the workplace adjust better and experience fewer conflicts between work and family (Grant-Vallone and Ensher, 2001). In previous studies, stress has been paid attention in context with a social life, while the concept of work family balance has only appeared in recent years (Mizuno *et al.*, 2007).

Thus, effective management of work-life balance as a causal factor for stress is an issue increasingly recognized as of strategic importance to organizations, and of significance to employees (de Cieri, Holmes, Abbott & Pettit 2005). The important role of human capital in nation-building is highly acknowledged by the Malaysian government. The Ninth Malaysian Plan 2006-2010 clearly states that Malaysia must move out from its 'middle development' stage towards a human capital driven economy in order to be successful within the increasingly competitive global marketplace (Economic Planning Unit, 2006). In Malaysia's drive to become a developed nation, the ministry need to pay careful attention to the issue of work-life balance in their efforts to attract, retain, and leverage human capital. Such developments make the issue of work-life balance more relevant, and raise its significance as a research area to be explored within the Malaysian context. Nursing is acknowledged to be stressful work, and there is needs to understand the nature of that problem and to better manage it as clearly it influence job satisfaction, psychological well-being and physical health.

1.4 Research Questions

The research questions for this study are as follow:

- a) What is the relationship between work-life balance (WLB) and stress among nurses in Kota Kinabalu Hospitals?
- b) What is the relationship between personal life interference with work (PLIW) and stress among nurses in Kota Kinabalu Hospitals?
- c) What is the relationship between work interference with personal life (WIPL) and stress among nurses in Kota Kinabalu Hospitals?
- d) What are the correlations between sub-components of Work-Life Balance (WIPL and PLIW) with sub-components of Stress?
- e) What is the moderating effect of demographic backgrounds between work-life balance (WBL) and stress among nurses in Kota Kinabalu Hospitals?

1.5 Research Objectives

The purpose of this study is to gain better understanding between the relationship of worklife balance and stress among nurses. Thus the main objectives of the study are to investigate the followings:

- a) To investigate the relationship between Work-life Balance (WBL) and Stress among nurses in Kota Kinabalu Hospitals;
- b) To study the relationship between Personal Life Interference with Work (PLIW) and Stress among nurses in Kota Kinabalu Hospitals;
- c) To study the relationship between Work Interference with Personal Life (WIPL) and Stress among nurses in Kota Kinabalu Hospitals;
- d) To study the correlations between sub-components of Work-Life Balance (WIPL and PLIW) with sub-components of Stress;

- e) To examine the moderating effects of demographic backgrounds between Work-life Balance (WBL) and Stress among nurses in Kota Kinabalu Hospitals.

1.6 Scope of the Study

For the purpose of the study, correlation study was applied as this is to investigate the relationship between stress and work-life balance among female nurses, in regards to the demographic variables such as age, education level, age of children, number of children and years of service in the current organization. Respondent or target populations are both from government as well as private hospital in Kota Kinabalu area and randomly selected as such population will produce greater finding outputs thus prevent bias of focusing on only certain organization. Quantitative method study will be applied to deepen the findings of the questionnaire which involves the analysis of numerical data and provides precise results. In addition, the time horizon approaches will be one-shot (cross-sectional) and questionnaire survey will be adapted for the purpose of gathering data.

The high level of work stress in the nursing profession is one of the reasons why the present study focuses on this profession as the target population. In addition to the high work stress reported in nursing at hospital, the homogeneity of the group within the profession in terms of the involved variables was the second most important criterion behind selecting this profession as the target group in the present study. Selecting hospital nursing as the target group provides the study with two advantages. First, it gives the study more strength in order to control the effects of some complex demographic variables in the nursing job, such as working hours and shift work. This is due to the fact that working conditions in hospitals are organized according to the same standard in the entire country. Secondly, as job demands and work stressors are pervasive in the nursing profession (Rees & Cooper, 1992; Petterson *et al.*, 1995), gathering the information from this profession increases the reliability of the study as well as the probability of being able to explain the variance of the outcomes by work stressors.

1.7 Significance of the Study

This study will be a significant endeavour in promoting good work environment in the healthcare workplace and motivations of its employees. This study will also be beneficial to enrich conceptual of work-life issues that causes stress. Besides, to bring work back into the centre of the theoretical, research, and practical discussions on the interplay between employment and personal life among nurses, thus attending to the structure mismatch between job demands and nurses responsibilities.

In addition, clearer data on employees' perception can be obtained for the HR managers to play a strategic role in the adoption of strategies which deal with a variety of demands and have potential for significant positive outcomes for the organisation (Dowling & Fisher, 1997). Thus, in healthcare context will enable the hospital management to know whether or not emotional strain, coupled with other stress factors inherent in the healthcare work environment, renders healthcare professionals.

Moreover, this study will be helpful to bring an organisational perspective to work-life integration among healthcare workers especially nurses. According to Greenhaus and Parasuraman (1999) work-life integration as occurring "when attitudes in one role positively spill over into another role, or when experience in one role serves as resources that enrich another role in one's life." This definition is essentially grounded in a spill over perspective that views relationships between work and personal life in terms of attitudes that individuals carry from one sphere to another. Building on this good work, there may be times when segmentation between work and personal life is a conscious strategy actively pursued by nurses.

Theoretically, it is envisaged that the findings of this study will help to fill the gap concerning stress as a result of work-life conflict and balancing these two domain interferences. Empirically, it is hoped that information and results of this

study will shed light on the importance and relevance of work-life balance and stress among individuals as well as organizations especially in healthcare industry to improve the well-being of its workforce thus being able to deliver high quality of service in medical care.

Furthermore, there is a need to dwell into tackling stress by balancing employee's work and family life as supported by studies on work-life balance as it is often correlated very strongly with stress (Cooper, 2001; Grant, 2006). Ezzedeen & Swiercz (2002) also argued a greater incidence of work/life conflict was a factor which correlates with stress. Future research should begin focusing on what contributes to a supportive culture and what constrains an organisation's ability to create a work-family culture for its employees.

The issue of work-family balance is not just an issue of personal problem but it is also of corporate and government concerns because the impact of work-family conflict is far reaching, affecting not only the personal lives of the workers and their families but their work performances (Kinnunen *et al.*, 1996). If work-related problems and responsibilities interfere with family-related obligations, these unfulfilled obligations may begin to interfere with day-to-day functioning at work. The human resource personnel of organizations have to identify factors at the workplace that have the potential to increase work related stress that can impinge on family life. Therefore all the parties involved have to address this issue of the work-family conflict and find ways to overcome the problem.

1.8 Definition of Key Items in the Study

The meaning and definition of the following key items will be clarified in the context of this study for ease of understanding.

1.8.1 Stress

Stress is usually defined from a 'demand-perception response' perspective. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) integrated this view into a cognitive theory of stress that has