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FACTORS DETERMINING WORK-LIFE BALANCE AMONG UNIVERSITY LECTURERS IN SHANXI PROVINCE, CHINA

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SCHOOL OF BUSINESS AND ECONOMICS
UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SABAH
2012



DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the material in this thesis is my own except for quotations, excerpts, equations, summaries and references, which have been duly acknowledged.

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ABSTRACT

FACTORS DETERMINING WORK-LIFE BALANCE AMONG UNIVERSITY LECTURERS IN SHANXI PROVINCE, CHINA

Nowadays, many people focus too much on their work and neglect their personal life. Work-life balance is a widely discussed topic. Based on literature review this paper aims to examine relationship between factors (work, family and individual) and work-life balance. These respondents are aimed to universities' lectures in Shan Xi province, China. Data were obtained through University of Shanxi, Taiyuan University of Technology, North University of China and Shanxi University of Finance & Economics, Quantitative method questionnaire is used in this study, 505 questionnaires were distributed in four universities, a total of 337 questionnaires were usable in this research. The analysis uses an original questionnaire to measure the relationship between work-life balance and factors (work, family and individual). The study found that universities' lecturers mean work hour is 36 hours and mean currency yearly income is 55088 RMB. The result shows significant relationship between factors (work and family factors) and work-life balance. But individual factor did not existing expectations for relationship with work-life balance. This study also found out that there are no moderating effect work-life balance and factors (family and individual factors). Only the age indicates moderate effect worklife balance and work factors.



ABSTRAK

Kini, ramai orang terlalu menitik beratkan soal pekerjaan sehingga leka dengan kehidupan peribadi mereka. Keseimbangan di antara pekerjaan dan kehidupan telah menjadi isu semasa yang sering diperkatakan. Berdasarkan kajian yang telah dijalankan sebelum ini, kertas kerja ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji perhubungan di antara faktor-faktor (kerja, keluarga dan individu) dan keseimbangan pekerjaan dan kehidupan. Responden bagi kajian ini adalah di kalangan pensyarah Universiti Shanxi, Universiti Teknologi Taiyuan, Universiti Utara China dan Universiti Ekonomi dan Kewangan Shanxi. Kaji selidik secara kuantitatif telah digunakan di dalam kajian ini. 505 borang kaji selidik telah diedarkan di empat buah universiti, dan sebanyak 337 borang kaji selidik yang boleh diguna pakai di dalam kajian ini. Analisa di dalam kajian ini menggunakan ukuran asal kaji selidik untuk menunjukkan hubungan di antara keseimbangan pekerjaan dan kehidupan dan faktor (kerja, keluarga dan individu). Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahawa pensyarah universiti bekerja secara purata 36 jam dan purata gaji sebanyak 55088RMB. Hasil kajian menunjukkan perhubungan yang signifikan di antara faktor (kerja dan keluarga) dan keseimbangan pekerjaan dan kehidupan. Walaubagaimanapun, faktor individu tidak menunjukkan sebarang perhubungan dengan keseimbangan pekerjaan dan kehidupan. Kajian ini juga mendapati tiada pembolehubah yang boleh memberi kesan ke atas perhubungan di antara keseimbangan pekerjaan dan kehidupan dan faktor (faktor keluarga dan individu). Hanya pembolehubah umur yang memberi kesan ke atas perhubungan di antara keseimbangan pekerjaan dan kehidupan dan faktor pekerjaan.



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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

As time changes, more employees are aiming for higher salary level and also focus on achieving work and life time balance. Job stress, burnout fatigue, depression, anxiety, sub-health, and happiness and so on, are not uncommon in this modern society. At the same time work-life balance is a widely discussed topic. People nowadays focus too much on their work which then neglects their personal life. Lots of people perceive that hard work can bring happiness to their family. However, the values of this working life are being challenged. Perhaps, true and eternal happiness only comes when they gain equilibrium between work and personal life.

Darcy, McCarthy, Hill and Grady (2012) described that work-life balance is getting more and more important. Work-life balance becomes an important element in human resource management which involves the policy makers, organization, management, employees and other stakeholders. Supported by Bird (2006) in his previous study, in the future decade, executive and human resource professionals will be expected to manage as most important issues in human resource management. Work-life balance programs is named as "any employer sponsored benefits or working conditions that help employees balance work and non-work demands" by Cascio (2000). Therefore, both employers and employees concern more about work and non-work time where they try to achieve work-life balance.

According to Fereday and Oster (2010), employees' work hours and load have increased in the past few decades; people care more about the work hours as workload will affect individuals in the workplace. It then causes imbalance between employees' work and people's life time. Work-life balance helps the company by



improving employee's experience of work and non-work domains. Thus, it enables employee's work and non-work domains to attain equilibrium (Darcy *et.al.* 2012).

According to Lockwood (2003), research has been conducted on three factors that are important to keep the work-life balance. These three factors are respectively global competition, renewed interest in personal lives or family values and an aging workforce. Jennifer and Dianne (2007) found that the factors affecting employees' work-life balance initiatives focus on demographic while organization and impact of the use of work-life balance initiatives focus on outcomes. Research on work-life balance involved three variable areas: work area, family area and demographic or individual area (Li and Zhao, 2009). According to Rittippant, Tongkong, Thamman-Apiroam and Mingariyamark (2011), family and individual have influence in work-family conflict in Thailand. Consequently, this research will revolve around work, family and individual factors.

1.2 Research Background

Bird (2006) discovered in the last century during 1960s and 1970s, women were expected to find work and look after the children. It reflects the inexistence issue between work and life. During 1980s, more and more men began to concern about their work and life problem. Based on Lockwood (2003), the term; work-life balance was created in the years 1986. According to Loscocco (1997), it began to appear work laggard and family problem in the different gender. More and more wives and husbands in the family chose to go out and find work; it is called as dual-earner families (Noor, 1997; Jessica, Susank, Philip, Jane and Charles 2001). When the family income decrease, it leads to their increasing work hours and workplace demand.

Based on Greenhaus, Collins, Singh and Parasuraman, (1997), family factor influenced women to leave their workplace while work factors influenced men to leave their workplace. As traditional way of working and family structure is varying, work and family life started to appear conflict. Based on (Ruth, Janet and Kathryn, 1999), there is a significant relationship between work-home conflict and work-



related stress. Following family and social trends, employees wanted to obtain life balance. Basically, they wanted to obtain less stressing workforce and commitment towards their work (Lewis and Cooper, 1995). Nowadays, issue of work-life balance not only affect individual's work and family life but can also affect the competitive advantage of the company in the market. Work-life balance becomes more and more important as it helps the organization to attract a large number of talented people to increase the competitive advantage of the company (Greenblatt, 2002).

1.3 Problem Statement

Work is a part in life of employees. Admittedly, people's lives are splendid when they are loaded with work, family, health, leisure, social, personal development and so on. People usually play around with variety of roles, at the same time there is some conflict occurred between these roles, which lead to people work-life conflict and imbalance. Many empirical studies showed that work and family conflict, as well as work and personal life conflict has brought a lot of negative effect such as physical and psychological sub-health. Jessica et.al. (2001) discussed a variety of psychological disorders because of high levels of stress and inadequate thinking including "burnout", as well as physical illnesses. Another negative effects from work and family conflict, work and personal life conflict includes low marital satisfaction, low family satisfaction and low life satisfaction. Some work-life imbalance comes from work pressure such as employees' long working hours will lead to tension feeling. Usually, this tension will be brought back home by the employees, which then continues to lead to many problems in term of physiological (such as fatigue, headaches and tension) or psychological (such as depression, easy to anger, depression and anxiety). Thereby, it seriously affects the communication among employees and their families. They will be reckless in the two way communication. In short, the work-life imbalance will decrease people's health level, life satisfaction and job satisfaction.

The problem of work-life imbalance occurs when employees care more about their work and life conflicts. In China, with an increasing population size,



many Chinese reflect the huge pressure of their employment and work. Work and family are two main concerns in people's life, both work and family has a close relation. For example, "one child policy" imparted by China government had become a societal problem in China. Some people need to spend more time for their child. Every employee has to follow the law and they might feel uncomfortable with this. Regardless people can realize the work-life imbalance or not, it has influenced people's happiness, life and harmony.

The matters selected in this study are lecturers working in the University. In recent years, lecturers' work role has undergone a drastic change especially in all the institutions of higher learning after the reform a few decades ago. Compared to other occupations, lecturers' working hours are relatively flexible; this shows that teaching profession has different characteristics comparatively to other occupational characteristics. Therefore, to discuss the factors that can impact lecturers' work-life balance will have a theoretical and practical significance.

1.4 Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to determine the work-life balance which is caused by several factors. Therefore, the research questions are:

- 1. Is there a significant relationship between work factors (work hours, support at work and work overload) and the work-life balance?
- 2. Is there a significant relationship between family factors (working status of spouse, number of dependent children, family and spouse support, family responsibilities) and the work-life balance?
- 3. Is there a significant relationship between individual factor (individual income) and the work-life balance?
- 4. To what extent does age and gender moderate the relationship between work, family and individual factors and the work-life balance?



1.5 Research Objectives

In this research, there are few key objectives. The study is conducted based on these objectives:

- 1. To study the relationship between work factors (work hours, support at work and work overload) and the work-life balance.
- To study the relationship between family factors (working status of spouse, number of dependent children, family and spouse support, family responsibilities) and the work-life balance.
- 3. To study the relationship between individual factor (individual income) and worklife balance.
- 4. To investigate the moderating effect of age and gender on the relationship between work, family and individual factors and the work-life balance.

1.6 Scope of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to explore the factors of work-life balance from the perspective of lecturers in Shanxi Province, China as well as to determine the relationship between these factors and the work-life balance. Moreover, this study will also investigate on whether work, family and individual factors can affect lecturers' work-life balance.

Since this study is a cross-sectional study, the data will only be gathered once during the regulated period. Primary data in this study will be derived from the collected data from the questionnaire. In this study, a sample size of 368 has been chosen and it focused on four major universities. It focuses on lecturers who work in the University of Shanxi, Taiyuan University of Technology, North University of China and ShanXi University of Finance & Economics.



1.7 Significance of the research

Work and family are the two essences of people's lives. These are the two areas that are very closely related depending on whether a person can achieve a sense of balance between work and family which will affect their happiness and harmony (Li, Wang, Zhen and Jiang, 2008). This study will contribute to the main of knowledge through its finding and will provide more understanding on the work, family and individual factors and the demographic variable observed through lecturers towards work-life balance.

Even though there are studies that had been conducted to identify the employee work-life balance, but there are still insufficient researches have been done to study factors determining work-life balance. Hence, this study will be conducted to identify the lecturers' work-life balance in Shanxi Province, China. Apart from that, this study will also help to determine the moderating effects of demographic variables on the relationship between the three factors and the lecturers' work-life balance. Thus, the result through the three factors determining lecturers' work-life balance may bring improvement to the University.

The main purpose of studying the factors influencing lecturers' work-life balance is to improve lecturers' motivation in the workplace and provide a guideline for lecturers' management policies in the future. Work-life balance will influence employee' commitment, increase their productivity, reduce organization turnover and so on (Lockwood, 2003).

1.8 Key Variable Definitions

For the purpose of this study, the definitions of three factors key variable used in this research are explained briefly as below:



1.8.1 Work Factor

Based on Li and Zhao (2009), work factor includes work hours, support at work and work overload.

a) Work Hours

The number of hours an employee works constitutes a primary demand of any job, but long work hours is a reality in many contemporary workplaces. (Valcour, Ollier-Malaterre, Matz-Costa, Pitt-Catsouphes and Brown, 2011).

b) Support at Work

Organization support was defined as the degree to which employees perceived that their organization was concerned with their health and well-being as well as with the reduction of conflict between employees' personal and professional life. (Grant-Vallone and Ensher, 2001)

c) Work Overload

Ruth, Janet and Kathryn, (1999) define two types of role overload. The first is quantitative overload, which results from having too many things to do or too little time in which to do them. The second type, qualitative role overload, results when the quality of work demanded, not the quantity, is greater than the ability or resources of the employee

1.8.2 Family Factor

Based on research of Li and Zhao (2009), it indicated family factor includes working status of spouse, number of dependent children, Family and Spouse Support, Family Responsibilities.

a) Working Status of Spouse

Individual spouses or partners were employed full time, part time or not working (Jessica *et.al.*, 2001).



b) Number of Dependent Children

The number of minor children (under 18 years of age) living with the parents. (Marchand, Demers and Durand, 2005)

c) Family and Spouse Support

Spousal support may serve within the work environment and family environment (Tatman, 2001).

d) Family Responsibilities

Family Responsibilities including family involvement and time spent on household activities and care of their family number (Greenhaus, Collins and Parasuraman, 1997).

1.8.3 Individual Factor

Based on research of Li and Zhao (2009), it indicated individual factor includes individual income.

a) Individual Income

Income define the payments that one receives for accomplishing a job's task, irrespective of how much time the job takes (Facci and Chartier, 2008).

1.8.4 Work-Life Balance

People expect to enjoy a career that can provide them sufficient time for their personal life, family and friends. (Wong and Ko, 2009)



1.9 Summary and Organization of Remaining Chapters

Chapter One

Introduce the research background for readers. This chapter includes problem statement, research questions, research objective and scope of the study. It also discusses the significance of this study and provides key definition of terms for an easy understanding of this study.

Chapter Two

Defining factors of individual, family and work, which are the three main independent variables and the moderating variables (age and gender), especially to define the dependant variable which is the work-life balance. Discovery and use of previous research results by scholars to find the research results that are associated with this study. Thus, the relationship between independent variables, moderating variables and dependant variable are to be discussed critically in this chapter.

Chapter Three

This chapter includes establishing theoretical framework, sample, research hypothesis, design of the questionnaire and data collection method. Research methodology that will be used in this study is explained. Besides, the statistical data and data analysis techniques will be discussed in this chapter.

Chapter Four

In this chapter, statistical analysis of data is run by SPSS. To find the study results that need to be interpreted and reported, review on statistical results of the study is required.



Chapter Five

This chapter is done according to the results from chapter four. It will mainly discuss on the findings of the analyses. It will then explain and analyze whether the results are in support of the hypotheses assumption or not. Next, the discussions during this research, limitation of the study and suggestions for the future will be discussed too. Lastly, this chapter will draw a conclusion for this whole research.



CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the main topic is to read, integrate and summarize published literature review by previous scholars. This literature review will discuss the relevant variables of this study. In this chapter, reviews on several components of the study including work factor, family factor, individual factor, work-life balance and demographic factor are presented. It also gives readers a basic understanding of the content about this study, the summaries of the previous research is presented.

2.2 Review of Key Studies

Before the discussion of work-life balance, readers should know what the balanced life means. First of all, people should understand their profession and personal life in defining a balanced life. When people want to create specific mission, they need to understand what they want out of their professions and personal life (Chick, 2004).

2.2.1 Definition of Work Factors

Poelmans and Caligiuri (2008) found work stress definition from other researchers; they are Kompier, Cooper and American Institute. Kompier and Cooper (1999) defined workplace stress as "the relationship between psychosocial work characteristics such as high demands, how control, and low support, and general health and safety in policy areas such as productivity, labour market forces, company image, and total quality management." American Institute of Stress defined work stress as when employees' talent cannot reach their work requirement; this will lead to destructive effects on health and emotional responses.



Work stress includes work load, time pressure and role conflict (Shi, Zhang and Hu, 2011). Workload (and work hours) defines employee finish a work task during a contract work hours (Facci and Chartier, 2007). Work overload is characterized by a chronic sense of pressure when one has too many things to do and not enough time to do them (Frone, Yardley and Markel, 1997). According to Phillips, Sen and McNamee, (2007) work load was main stressor, it is will lead to the work-life imbalance, such as employees working long hours and work-life was interfering.

2.2.2 Definition of Family Factors

Wong and Ko (2009) defined family matters as a collective term which it refers to childcare or family responsibilities as well as the non-conventional ones in a broader context. Family factor characteristics are those determining the individual planning to manage work hours and achieve benefits in life (Heiligers and Hingstman, 2000). Family factor characteristics often affect time-based conflict, for example, number of dependent children and family activities (Ruth *et.al.*, 1999). Family stress (as distinct from stressor) is defined as a state which arises from an actual or perceived demand-capability imbalance in the family and which is characterized by a multidimensional demand for adjustment or adaptive behaviour (McCubbin, Sussman and Patterson, 1983). Family statuses including single, to be married but no child and to be married have children (Noor, 1997). Human resource policy define family responsibility is people concern about their family member (Queensland Government, 2009).

2.2.3 Definition of Individual Factor

Salary (and income) defines when employee finish a work task employer should pay their employees, but employers did not consider how much time employee finish this work task (Facci and Chartier, 2007).



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