

Relationship of Work-life Balance and Job Satisfaction among Nurses at A Private Hospital in Southern Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

The relationship between work-life balance and job satisfaction remains a critical area of inquiry in organizational research. This study aims to identify the relationship between work-life balance and job satisfaction among Malaysian nurses. In order to achieve the objectives of this research, a study was conducted in a private hospital in southern Malaysia with a total of 56 respondents. This study used a quantitative research design, a questionnaire to collect data, and a non-probability sampling technique. To measure the level of work-life balance, a questionnaire of 10 items was conducted, while, for the level of job satisfaction, the Individual Job Satisfaction Questionnaire was used. The data was then analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 27. The findings revealed a high level of work-life balance and a moderate level of job satisfaction among the respondents. In addition, a weak positive correlation exists between work-life balance and job satisfaction. This study's limitation, such as the relationship between work-life balance and job satisfaction, urges for a recommendation for future research that it should be interpreted cautiously due to methodological constraints including its cross-sectional design, reliance on self-reported measures, limited sample size (N=56), questionable representativeness, and analytical approach that did not control for potential confounding variables or explore subgroup differences.

Keywords: work-life balance, job satisfaction, Malaysia, nurses

INTRODUCTION

Work-life balance (WLB) is defined as a state of equilibrium where individuals manage professional responsibilities and personal pursuits without overpowering the other (Dhas, 2015). According to Maharani and Haeha (2024), WLB refers to being aware of the different demands on time and energy, having the ability to allocate time and energy, and knowing what values need to be translated in making choices. WLB is a broad concept, including the right priority between work, ambitions, life, health, fun, leisure time, family development, and spirituality.

At the individual level, WLB means combining work with other aspects of human life such as home, family, health, social activities and personal interests. From this perspective, WLB provides psychological well-being, self-worth, satisfaction levels, and overall harmony in an individual's life. Individuals who balance work and personal life are happier, healthier, and more creative. They also fulfil their desire for achievement and satisfaction in life. Arnott (2019) adds that an individual will only successfully deal with three areas of life simultaneously, namely in the family, at work, and in the local community, if he/she is provided with the appropriate psychological development and balance. However, the balance point is not the same for all individuals. The coordination of professional and non-professional life is possible if family and colleagues support the individual.

At the organizational level, WLB means a suitable and conducive management system and personnel policy to

maintain a WLB for employees. It is also a source of solutions for organizations aiming to improve work-life quality. It means more development opportunities and increases in productivity and employee innovation. The most common instruments employers offer to help employees maintain a WLB are flexible working time, leave and allowances, and bonuses.

Meanwhile, job satisfaction refers to the extent to which an employee is self-motivated and satisfied in his/her job. It occurs when employees feel they have a stable job, room to develop their career, and a good mix between work and personal life. That means they feel pleasant at work because the work meets their standards.

Based on previous studies (Butler et al., 2009; Duffield et al., 2010), it is important to address how nurses' work environment, particularly scheduling flexibility and WLB, will affect job satisfaction. There is limited research in understanding and documenting nurses' job satisfaction and what can help improve it. It is vital to explore the potential impact of WLB on nurses' job satisfaction because there is a possible decline in the number of people joining such a profession. As employers and organizations understand what impacts job satisfaction, they may better understand if specific changes are needed to be implemented to retain their staff and improve the quality of their service.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The study aims to achieve the following objectives:

1. To identify the level of WLB among nurses at a private hospital in Southern Malaysia.
2. To examine the level of job satisfaction among nurses at a private hospital in Southern Malaysia.
3. To identify the relationship between WLB and job satisfaction among nurses at a private hospital in Southern Malaysia.

LITERATURE REVIEW

WLB has emerged as a critical determinant of employee well-being, organizational performance, and societal health, with research indicating an effective equilibrium between professional responsibilities and personal pursuits. At the individual employee level, it leads to improved physical and mental health (Aliasah et al., 2020; Chakrabarty et al., 2020), enhanced job productivity and performance (Dousin et al., 2019; Krishnan & Loon, 2018), increased job satisfaction (Fidhdho & Larrasaty, 2024; Abdirahman et al., 2018), and developed spirituality and religiosity (Hashim & Fakhruddin, 2025; Aziz et al., 2021). On the other hand, at the organizational level, it increases employee retention (Sindhuja & Subramanian, 2020; Ambrose et al., 2020), reduces cost (Aziz et al., 2023; Rodríguez-Sánchez et al., 2020), and elevates organizational growth (Tkalych et al., 2020).

Recent literature highlights the importance of WLB among nurses, a profession characterized by high stress and demanding responsibilities. Initially, WLB was a significant challenge for nurses, and various factors influenced it. Job demands, including high workloads, long hours, and psychological pressures, contribute to work-life imbalance (Ng et al., 2017; Son & Jung, 2019). In contrast, a study in Padang, Indonesia reported high levels of WLB among female nurses, indicating their ability to effectively manage time between work and personal life (Luthfia et al., 2021).

Additionally, studies on understanding and improving job satisfaction among nurses are vital to enhancing organizational performance and patient care. Research on job satisfaction among nurses has shown varying levels, from low to moderate (Khunou & Davhana-Maselesele, 2016; Haile et al., 2017). Work environment, spiritual factors, and motivation significantly impact nurses' job satisfaction, with high satisfaction leading to improved patient care quality and reduced burnout (Yanriatuti et al., 2019). In critical care settings, factors such as shift patterns, autonomy, staffing resources, and teamwork positively affect job satisfaction, while job stress and emotional exhaustion negatively impact it (Dilig-Ruiz et al., 2018).

Further, recent studies have explored the relationship between WLB and nurse job satisfaction. Although not

always significantly positive, WLB has been found to influence job satisfaction. A positive correlation between quality of work-life and job satisfaction has been observed, with factors such as professional status and work context playing important roles (Dargahpour et al., 2022; Morsy & Sabra, 2015). WLB has also been linked to nurse retention, with job satisfaction partially mediating this relationship (Aamir et al., 2016). However, studies indicate that only a small percentage of nurses report high levels of WLB and person-job fit (Badran & Khalaaf, 2022). These findings suggest that healthcare organizations should consider implementing policies to improve WLB and job satisfaction to enhance nurse retention and overall job performance.

METHODOLOGY

Research Approach

This study uses a quantitative approach. Allison (2002) states that the quantitative approach is the best way to avoid error. Furthermore, the quantitative approach is more widely accepted, making it easier for respondents to make assessments to establish reliability and validity. In addition, the quantitative approach is appropriate for measuring the relationship between WLB and job satisfaction among nurses (McBurney, 1994).

Sample and Sampling Techniques

Sampling is a crucial process in research that involves selecting a subset of units from a larger population to conclude the whole group (Van Haute, 2021). There are two primary sampling methods: probability sampling, which uses random selection, and non-probability sampling, based on convenience or other criteria. The choice of sampling technique and sample size determination are critical decisions that affect the accuracy and generalizability of research results (Singh & Masuku, 2014). This study's target population consists of nurses at a private hospital in Southern Malaysia. In order to determine the sample size, the researchers used Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) table. As a result, the sample in this study involved 56 nurses in the said hospital. The sample was determined using a non-probability sampling technique with saturated sampling. This technique involves all population members are used as a sample. A saturated sample can also be referred to as a census because all members of the nursing population involved are sampled.

The Questionnaire

This study uses primary data. Primary data is obtained through surveys using questionnaires. Nurses from a private hospital in Southern Malaysia were approached to complete the survey through a Google Form. The questionnaire used Google Forms because it is practical, convenient, and transparent. Respondents are required to answer all questions. The questionnaire has 31 questions. Part A covers the respondents' demographic information, including their gender, age, job experience, and level of education. Part B covers 10 questions related to WLB regarding their ability to manage time and energy to meet personal and professional responsibilities. There are three factors included in the question which are the balance factor, the life factor, and the environment factor at the workplace. Finally, Part C covers a total of 14 questions that are related to job satisfaction, which measures job contentment and associated elements. All questions are closed-ended. The responses were measured using the 5-point Likert scale, which ranges from strongly unlikely to strongly likely.

Data Analysis

The researchers used Statistical Software Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 27 to analyze data entry and statistical analysis. Descriptive analysis of frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation is used to compare demographic information with job satisfaction. The relationship between quantitative variables was evaluated using the Pearson correlation coefficient. A value of $P \leq 0.05$ was used to determine statistical significance.

Class	Range – absolute value
Not correlated/Very weak	< 0.1
Weak	0.1 to 0.2
Moderate	0.2 to 0.5
Strong	> 0.5
Very strong	> 0.5

Fig. 1 Value of Pearson's correlation

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Level of Work-Life Balance

TABLE I FINDINGS ON THE DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS FOR LEVEL OF WORK-LIFE BALANCE

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation
Mean B	56	1.40	4.80	3.7054	.54687
Valid N (listwise)	56				

Table I shows the findings on the level of WLB among the respondents. The data reveals that the mean score of WLB as high, at 3.70, and the standard deviation at .546. The high score means the respondents could effectively divide work time and rest time, particularly regarding physical, mental, personal life, and work environment.

Level of Job Satisfaction

TABLE II FINDINGS ON THE DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS FOR LEVEL OF JOB SATISFACTION

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation
Mean C	56	1.71	5.00	3.4401	.62860
Valid N (listwise)	56				

Table II shows the findings on the respondents' job satisfaction levels. The data reveals a mean score of 3.44 on a 5-point scale, indicating a moderate level of job satisfaction. The standard deviation is .628, suggesting relatively consistent responses among participants with limited variability in job satisfaction levels.

Relationship between Work-Life Balance and Job Satisfaction

TABLE III COEFFICIENT CORRELATION BETWEEN WORK-LIFE BALANCE AND JOB SATISFACTION

Work-Life Balance and Job Satisfaction	r	Sig	N
	0.132**	.332	56

**Correlation is significant are over 0.01 level

Table III shows the relationship between WLB and job satisfaction among respondents. The statistical analysis revealed a weak positive correlation between WLB and job satisfaction ($r = 0.132$, $p < .01$, $N = 56$). This correlation coefficient indicates that while there is a statistically significant relationship between these two

variables, the strength of this association is relatively modest. The significance level ($p < .01$) confirms that this weak relationship is unlikely to have occurred by chance.

RESEARCH DISCUSSION

Level of Work-Life Balance

The findings of this study show that although the respondents have too much work to do, they do not consider that their work puts pressure on their personal lives. This shows that they have a balanced WLB and stay healthy. Even though they are bound by daily and overtime works, that does not prevent them from doing the things they like after the end of working hours. They were able to spend time on personal matters without being tied to matters at work. This finding however, differ from those reported by Ng et al. (2017) and Son and Jung (2019). Nonetheless, it parallels with the study found by Luthfia et al. (2021).

Level of Job Satisfaction

The research findings ($M = 3.44$, $SD = 0.628$) indicate a moderate level of job satisfaction among the respondents studied. This finding provides valuable insight into the workplace climate, suggesting neither widespread dissatisfaction nor exceptional enthusiasm but a generally positive outlook. There are two types of job satisfaction found in the dimension, i.e., affective and cognitive. Affective job satisfaction refers to the individual's emotional reaction to their job while cognitive focuses on the level of the respondents' satisfaction in certain aspects of their job such as overtime, personal matters, or family matters. These findings correspond to those observed in previous studies such as Haile et al. (2017) due to various factors such as work environment, spiritual factors, motivation (Yanriatuti et al., 2019), shift patterns, autonomy, staffing resources, and teamwork (Dilig-Ruiz et al., 2018).

Relationship between Work-life Balance and Job Satisfaction

The weak positive correlation ($r = 0.132$) suggests that WLB is associated with job satisfaction, but the relationship is not as strong as expected. The low r -value (0.132) indicates that WLB, while significant, explains approximately 1.74% ($r^2 = 0.0174$) of the variance in job satisfaction among respondents. This finding corroborates with previous studies by Dargahpour et al. (2022) and Morsy and Sabra (2015). The finding further suggests that job satisfaction is a complex construct influenced by multiple factors beyond WLB alone. Context factors such as the industry-specific dynamics might influence the modest correlation. The sample ($N = 56$) may represent a specific sector, i.e., a private hospital in Southern Malaysia where WLB affects job satisfaction differently than in other industries. Besides, cultural or organizational norms, such as prevailing attitudes toward work in the said organization, moderate how WLB translates to satisfaction. Finally, differences in personal values and career priorities among respondents could affect how strongly WLB influences their job satisfaction.

Research Limitation

The present research provides valuable insights into the relationship between WLB and job satisfaction. However, several important limitations must be acknowledged to contextualize the findings appropriately. First, in terms of methodological limitation, the correlational nature of this cross-sectional study represents a significant limitation as it captures only a snapshot of the WLB and job satisfaction relationship at a single point in time. This design prevents the establishment of causal relationships and temporal ordering between variables. WLB may influence job satisfaction, but job satisfaction could also affect perceptions of WLB, and unmeasured third variables could influence both. The temporal dynamics between these constructs remain unexplored, limiting our ability to understand how the relationship evolves or responds to changing life and career circumstances. The study relied heavily on self-reported WLB and job satisfaction measures, introducing potential response biases, including social desirability and common method variance. Respondents may have consciously or unconsciously responded in ways they perceived as socially acceptable or desirable rather than reflecting their true experiences.

Additionally, the specific instruments used to measure these constructs may capture only certain dimensions while potentially overlooking others, leading to an incomplete assessment of these multifaceted concepts. WLB, in particular, is a complex construct encompassing objective conditions and subjective perceptions, and our measurement approach may not have adequately captured this complexity. With a relatively small sample size ($N = 56$), the statistical power of the analysis may be insufficient to detect more minor effects or more complex relationships between variables. This limitation is particularly relevant when considering potential moderating or mediating factors influencing the primary relationship under investigation. The modest sample size increases the risk of missing meaningful relationships that exist in the population but were not detected in this study's analysis. The sample size also limited the ability to conduct more sophisticated analyses that might have revealed subtle patterns in the data.

Second, the sample size of 56 respondents raises substantial questions about how representative the findings are of the broader working population. The demographic composition of the sample may not adequately reflect the diversity of workforce characteristics across different sectors, regions, or cultural contexts. This limitation to representativeness affects the external validity of the study's findings and constrains the ability to generalize beyond the specific characteristics of the sample. Without a diverse and representative sample, important variations in how different demographic groups experience the relationship between WLB and job satisfaction remain unexplored. The sample may be drawn from similar organizational contexts or industries, limiting the generalizability of findings across diverse workplace settings with varying norms, expectations, and structures related to work-life policies. Organizational culture and industry-specific practices can significantly influence WLB and job satisfaction, yet this study may not have adequately captured this contextual diversity. Without representation from various workplace environments, understanding how organizational factors influence the relationship between WLB and job satisfaction remains incomplete.

Finally, in terms of analytical limitations, the study's analysis did not control for potentially confounding variables such as demographic factors (age, gender, family status), career-related variables (job tenure, hierarchical position, career stage), organizational factors (company size, industry, organizational culture), or individual difference variables (personality traits, coping mechanisms, resilience). These omissions may result in an incomplete understanding of the relationship between WLB and job satisfaction. These unmeasured variables may influence the observed correlation coefficient, potentially masking more complex relationships or even spurious associations. Without controlling for these factors, the study cannot isolate the unique contribution of WLB to job satisfaction. The study did not investigate whether the relationship between WLB and job satisfaction differs across subgroups based on demographic or professional characteristics, potentially masking important variations within the sample. Different demographic groups or professional cohorts may experience the relationship between WLB and job satisfaction differently, but this study's analysis treated the sample as homogeneous. This approach may obscure meaningful differences between subgroups and limit understanding of how personal and professional characteristics moderate the relationship between our variables of interest.

Moreover, the analytical approach assumed a linear relationship between variables, potentially overlooking more complex nonlinear patterns or threshold effects in how WLB relates to job satisfaction. There may be critical thresholds or inflexion points in the relationship that this study's correlation analysis could not detect. For instance, WLB may have diminishing returns or even curvilinear effects on job satisfaction that would require more sophisticated analytical techniques to identify. While appropriate for an initial investigation, the simplicity of this study's analytical approach limits the ability to uncover more refined relationships between the variables.

RECOMMENDATION

Future studies should employ robust longitudinal research designs with multiple measurement points to better understand the directionality of the relationship between WLB and job satisfaction. Longitudinal approaches allow researchers to examine how this relationship evolves over time and across career stages, whether interventions to improve WLB yield subsequent changes in job satisfaction and the stability or volatility of both constructs over extended periods. By collecting data at multiple time points, researchers could establish temporal precedence and provide more substantial evidence for causal relationships, addressing a fundamental

limitation of the current cross-sectional design.

In addition, researchers should develop more comprehensive measurement approaches that capture the full complexity of WLB and job satisfaction. This would involve utilizing multi-dimensional measures that acknowledge the various facets of these constructs and incorporating both subjective and objective indicators where possible. Experience sampling methods could capture real-time experiences rather than relying solely on retrospective assessments, which are subject to recall biases. Additionally, measurement instruments should be validated across diverse populations and contexts to ensure they function equivalently across different demographic groups and cultural settings, enhancing the generalizability of findings.

Future studies would also benefit from applying more sophisticated analytical techniques to account for the complex relationship between WLB and job satisfaction. Structural equation modelling could simultaneously test complex relationships among multiple variables, including potential mediators and moderators. Hierarchical linear modelling would be valuable for accounting for nested data structures, such as employees within teams and teams within organizations. Latent profile analysis could identify distinct patterns in how individuals experience and manage work-life boundaries, moving beyond simple linear relationships to recognize different typologies of WLB experiences and their differential effects on job satisfaction.

Additionally, future research should investigate the mediating mechanisms through which WLB influences job satisfaction. Potential exploration pathways include reduced role conflict and stress, enhanced recovery experiences, improved psychological detachment from work, greater control and autonomy, and better physical and mental health outcomes. Understanding these mediating processes would provide valuable insights into why and how WLB affects job satisfaction, moving beyond simple bivariate relationships to a more process-oriented understanding. This knowledge would be particularly valuable for designing targeted interventions focusing on the most influential pathways. Also, studies should explore moderating factors that may strengthen or weaken the relationship between WLB and job satisfaction. These moderators could include individual difference variables (such as work centrality, family involvement, and boundary management preferences), organizational factors (including supportive supervision, organizational culture, and formal policies), occupational characteristics (job demands, job resources, schedule flexibility), and life stage and family structure variables. Identifying these moderating influences would help explain the heterogeneity in how individuals experience the connection between WLB and job satisfaction, potentially accounting for the relatively modest correlation observed in the current study.

Furthermore, future research should investigate industry-specific dynamics to understand how WLB and job satisfaction vary across different industries and sectors, various occupational groups with different work demands and structures, and organizations with different sizes, structures, and resource constraints. Different professional contexts may create unique challenges and opportunities for achieving WLB, and understanding these contextual factors would enhance the practical relevance of research findings. Industry-specific studies allow for more tailored recommendations that account for the particular characteristics of different work environments.

Future studies should adopt mixed-methods approaches to complement quantitative findings with qualitative insights. This methodological integration would provide a richer contextual understanding of how individuals experience work-life balance, capture the complexity and subjectivity of work-life balance and job satisfaction constructs, identify novel factors and relationships not captured by existing quantitative measures, and generate new theories and hypotheses for further testing. Qualitative approaches, such as in-depth interviews and focus groups, could uncover detailed aspects of the WLB experience that may be missed by standardized questionnaires, offering a more holistic understanding of these phenomena.

By addressing these recommendations, future research can develop a more comprehensive understanding of the complex relationship between WLB and job satisfaction. This enhanced knowledge would inform more effective organizational policies and individual strategies for enhancing both domains, benefiting employees, organizations, and societies more broadly. The modest correlation observed in the current study suggests there is much more to learn about this relationship, and these recommended research directions provide a roadmap for advancing our understanding in meaningful ways.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the data obtained from this study will help the organization and the respondents measure their WLB and job satisfaction. Even so, for the next generation of researchers, a suggestion that can be added is to consider the intricacies of a multiracial work environment. The ability of these results to provide constructive feedback on the relationship between the two dimensions, as found in the research conducted, in addition to fostering higher work performance in the organization, highlighting the need and balance between work and life.

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