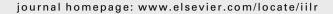# Quality of work life of librarians in government academic libraries in the Klang Valley, Malaysia

Rafidah Abdul Aziz [a],[*], Fuziah Mohd Nadzar [a], Haslinda Husaini [a], Asmah Maarof [b], Salleh Mohd Radzi [c], Izhairi Ismail [d]

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Abstract The success of any organization is highly dependent on how it attracts workers and motivates, and retains its workforce. Today's organizations need to be more flexible and understanding, so that they are well prepared to develop their employees and enjoy their commitment. The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between work and non-work variables and quality of work life. It is anticipated that the contribution from this study will provide useful information to the top management level in organizations for the purpose of planning appropriate policies that can enhance employees' overall life satisfaction. The research questions, which serve as a foundation of this study, focus on the relationship between work and non-work variables and quality of work life. This study applied a quantitative research design as well as descriptive and correlation approach. Respondents are all librarians working in government academic libraries in the Klang Valley, Malaysia. An online survey was used to gather data for each participating library. The questionnaire was divided into two sections: Section A, the socio-demographic information; and Section B, the seven questions related to the study. The data were analyzed using Pearson Correlation Analysis. Findings from this study indicated that both work variables and non-work variables do matter in determining the quality of work life. The findings of this research also can be beneficial in Human Resource Management issues and trends in libraries administration.
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Introduction

An academic library is recognized as an active institution of scholarly literature and holds numerous collections to meet its users' needs. For that reason, its strength is often measured by the range of its resources and quality workforce. Essentially, for an organization to be able to attract a high quality workforce, it needs to provide a high quality of work life. The following elements are relevant to an individual's quality of work life; the task, physical work

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environment; and social environment within the organization, administrative system, and relationship with peers or colleagues. Quality of work life can be defined as "The quality of relationship between employees and the total working environment". The phrase "quality of work life" has also been used to describe working conditions and expectations of most workers in their work life.

Libraries like any other organizations are not impervious to workplace stress and conflicts. It is estimated that 25% of workplace problems such as absenteeism, lower productivity, turnover and excessive use of medical benefits are due to family violence (ALA, 1999). Among the contributing factors that lead to the significance of this issue are the social and demographic changes that have added to the diversity in work and family structures. Many have to struggle with work and family demands simultaneously in order to balance work and life responsibilities.

In library and information science literature, the "greying of the profession" is a concept that elicits much attention, yet relatively little has been done to explore this phenomenon, particularly as it relates to the transformative change process in libraries. Karpiak's (2000) investigation of social work faculty at midlife transitions provides a view of this phenomenon that might relate to similar aspects of librarianship. Similar to Karpiak's (2000) findings on a call to stagnation and a call to consciousness, Smith (1995) notes for librarians "there is both a poignant awareness and a sense of frustration about the ways in which their career paths have been blocked or irrevocably altered, that they are faced with the loss of opportunities for advancement and achievement of goals". In many ways, Smith (1995) views that librarians desperately try to realign themselves within their profession while turbulence and uncertainty abound. At present, the theoretical relationships between work and non-work are complex and largely unknown. Though the work-non-work issues in relation to quality of work life have been discussed and argued extensively for the past thirty years, until now efforts to investigate work and family have been hampered by the absence of a strong theoretical framework. Therefore, this study has been carried out to examine the relationship between work variables, non-work variables and quality of work life, focusing on librarians working in public universities in Klang Valley, Malaysia.

Literature review

Work variables

Kanter (1977) defined work as activities for which one is paid; the definition can be extended to include nonmarket and volunteer work. Another definition states that work is a set of prescribed tasks that an individual performs while occupying a position in an organization (Kabanoff, 1980). One paradigm that studied the meaning of working indicated the following measures: work centrality, societal norms, valued outcomes and goals and the importance of goals and outcomes from each sphere (MOW International Research Team, 1987). Most recently, Ballout (2008) defined work domain as work-related variables that may be important to employee reactions to work-family conflict and success in careers including: job involvement, job stressors, and job social support. Parasuraman, Purohit, Godshalk, and Beutell (1996) have evaluated various combinations of work variables in their studies. In this context, the relevant variables identified are: 1) Job Involvement, 2) Work Role Conflict, 3) Work Time, and 4) Schedule Inflexibility.

Job involvement

Kanungo (1982) defined job involvement as a cognitive belief state reflecting the degree of psychological identification with one's job. Lawler and Hall (1970) argued that job involvement is a cognitive state of psychological identification with the job and depends on the degree to which the job is perceived to meet one's salient needs, be they intrinsic or extrinsic. Most literature discussing job involvement uses different terms to explain the same concept. Terms such as job involvement, work involvement and work centrality have been used interchangeably. Ballout (2008) noted that job involvement is one potential work-related variable that may cause work-family conflict. Moreover, individuals who are highly involved in their jobs or careers may devote more time and effort to the work role than to the family role.

Work role conflict

Work role conflict is defined as the extent to which a person experiences incompatible role pressures within the work domain (Kopelman, Greenhaus, & Connoly, 1983). Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn, Snoek, and Rosenthal (1964) first introduced the definition and meaning of work role conflict. Their classic research study views role conflict in general as a simultaneous occurrence of two (or more) sets of pressures such that compliance with one would make more difficult compliance with the other. Kahn et al. outlined three significant factors affecting work role conflict, namely: 1) organizational, 2) personal, and 3) interpersonal.

Work time

Work time is an important factor in the work domain based on the conception that personal resources are scarce, hence time involvement in the work domain will rob time available for non-work activities. The employment act and labor laws of Malaysia (Section 60A (9) Employment Act 1955) define number of hours worked as "the time during which an employee is at the disposal of the employer and is not free to dispose of his own time and movements" (Chuan, 2001, p).

Schedule inflexibility

As indicated in a number of studies (Frone et al., 1997; Gutek, Searle, & Klepa, 1991; O'Driscoll et. al., 1992; Parasuraman et al., 1996; and Wallace, 1997), the number of hours worked has been almost universally cited as the key source of inter-role conflict. This notion holds true in an objective sense; nonetheless many studies denoted that work time per se do not automatically lead to inter-role conflict. Under the condition that workers are able to control their work schedules, the potential inter-role conflict can be minimized (Seron & Ferris, 1995 and Wallace, 1997). In this context, the perceived work schedule inflexibility refers to an individual's subjective assessment that his or her work schedule does not provide the flexibility needed to handle family responsibilities, regardless of the type of schedule (Hammer et al., 1997).