

INTI INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

MASTER OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

The Influence of Mobile Technologies on Employee's Work-Life Balance in Malaysia

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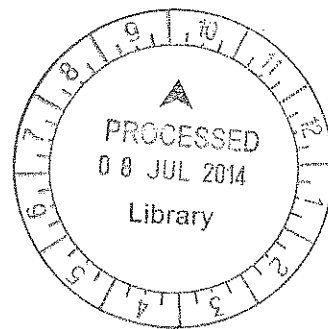
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Abstract

The influx of technological advancement have somehow changed the way we work and lives. Mobile technology, or so-called mobile device, is one of the greatest inventions that commonly used to perform a wide range of online activities and work tasks. Again, powerful functions embedded in these devices allow people to connect faster despite of geographical location and time period. In that case, work-life balance becomes a major challenge because different people may have different perception towards the impacts of using mobile technology. Certain part of people believed mobile technology usage brings flexibility, convenience and efficiency in balancing their work and life but some people argued there is an inverse relation to work-life balance. To answer this question, this research aims to assess the four factors (flexibility, addiction, time pressure and technostress) influencing work-life balance in Malaysia context.

Structured questionnaire survey was conducted to 384 working adults at public places, such as train station, park and bus station within Klang Valley region (Kuala Lumpur, Shah Alam, Petaling Jaya and Subang Jaya) in Malaysia. Data were analyzed by using "Statistical Package for Social Science" (SPSS) and "Partial Least Square" (PLS) techniques. This research findings provide empirical evidence to managers, industries and government in managing work-life issues for creating a better life to employees.

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April 21st, 2014

Yie Hann, Tan

Declaration

This declaration is made on the 5th day of March 2014.

I hereby declare that this thesis is my own effort and original research work. It has not been submitted anywhere for any reward. Where other information, ideas, or materials from external sources or from previously written or published by another person have been used, they are cited ethically and duly acknowledged in the text.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This research aims to examine how the fast-moving mobile technologies impact on employees' work-life balance in Malaysia. The first chapter commences with an overview of work-life balance together with emergence of work-life balance in Malaysia which are separately covered in section 1.2 and 1.3, followed by problem statement that covered in section 1.4. Research questions, objectives, significance and limitations of the study are further highlighted from section 1.5 to 1.7. In section 1.8, the scope of study is explained. This chapter ends up with the outline of current research in section 1.9.

1.2 Overview of Work-Life Balance

The term "work-life balance" was coined when intense workload, unpaid overtime and long work-hour culture tend to exacerbate work-family conflict in the mid 20th century. Its origin can be traced back to late 1920s where people were convinced to buy things rather than spent their leisure time in pursuit of happiness (Addis, 2008). They were thereupon began to have different views on work and life aspects, shifting from scarcity to abundance by working hard for long hours to earn more money. This situation had led the companies to double their profits and enjoyed steady growth in the marketplace. In those days, the average weekly working hours for workers were 50 hours plus full Saturday workday (Lee, McCann and Messenger, 2007). Until the Great Depression of 1930s, many workers were laid off or had their working hours cut which alerted the employers to tackle the issues.

Literally, work-life program existed as early as 1930s when W.K. Kellogg company had initiated four six-hour shifts to replace regular three eight-hour

shifts to combat depression (Chavda and Gaur, 2013). The six-hour shifts strategy has successfully resulted in stimulating job creation and work-life balance. Many employees fond of this new shifts because it gave them more free time to spend with their families, encouraged personal freedom and helped the unemployed to get work. Moreover, shorter working hours proved that employees' efficiency, productivity and morale were enhanced (Naithani, 2010).

The advances in technologies, growing importance of service industries and increased global competition have caused the reduced work shift to be short-lived. During that time, average weekly working hours have risen and employees complained about work-life balance pressure (Harris and Foster, 2008). In 1977, Rosabeth Moss Kanter was one of the first and major scholars who brought the work-life balance issues to the forefront of companies and research concern (Lockwood, 2003). Since then, organizations started to offer work-life balance initiative to support employees and their families for superior life quality, while the research of influencing factors to work and personal life became apparent and was being noticed by other scholars or researchers. For example, latest technology, working hours, e-working or other factors that can affect work-life balance are extensively researched and tested (Wajcman, et al., 2008; Sabil and Marican, 2011; Grant, Wallace and Spurgeon, 2013).

1.3 Emergence of Work-Life Balance in Malaysia

"Work-life balance" is one of the most debated topics among academics, practitioners and government in today's world, and Malaysia is no exception. Everyone desires to have a balance in life. Balance is a state of being, not an end-state. Some companies have realized the importance of work-life balance by organizing fun day or social activities to invite employee's families, providing a paid-day off for birthday, gym facilities and so on to nurture healthy lifestyle (Robson, 2011). IBM and Dell are elected as top ten best Malaysia companies, not only they have exceptional working condition but also they cater the needs for a woman who play the role of worker, mother and spouse (RHA Media Sdn.

Bhd., 2013). Employees are one of the important assets to an organization. Myriad benefits and opportunities may have brought to business if employers understand the people they hire well.

Recently, a few tragedies happened when workers were passed away caused by overworked (HRM Asia, 2010; The Tired Eye, 2014). Malaysia's national newspapers or articles often carries stories about how employees struggle with work-life balance, such as forego family time or social activities because of long work hours and work intensification (Editor, 2013; Sithravellu, 2014). One global survey found out quite number of Malaysian employees work above 11 hours daily although Malaysia Employment Act 1955 clearly specified the daily and weekly working hours should not exceed 10 hours and 48 hours respectively (The Tired Eye, 2014; MyLabourLaw, 2014).

Many employees claimed the proliferation of mobile technology in organizations has forced them to be reachable at 24 hours 7 days (24/7) and expected to respond calls at all times, including non-working hours, on leave and vacations, especially those using company-provided mobile devices or company-paid phone bills and data packages (Aruna, Spykerman and Kanyakumari, 2013; Chin, 2013). Personal digital assistants (PDAs), laptops, notebook computers, tablet computers and smartphones are a few examples of mobile devices that are ubiquitously used in work and non-work settings (Liang, et al., 2007). Employees are encouraged to use these devices because they are modified computer which enable multiple business functions to be done at anytime and anywhere at the press of a button (Tennakoon, 2007). As such, employees complained about burnout, high level of stress and suffer from health problem due to imbalance between employee's well-being and company's interest. This concern has led to the research in this area for examining how mobile technology influence to employee's work-life balance and provide profound knowledge for organizations or employers to promote better working condition

1.4 Problem Statement

People are in the midst of transforming the nature of work and family life once technological evolution begins. The invention of mobile technologies has changed everyone's lives and is prevalent throughout the world. Smartphones, laptops, tablets and PDAs are examples of mobile technologies with embedded software and applications that enable the users to make business transactions or globally connected with people instantly. Malaysia organizations or employers have encouraged their employees to actively use mobile technology for work-related purposes since its inception. Mobile technology is deemed to be useful as it can expedite communication and foster information transfer between business partners, suppliers, customers and employees (Karim, Darus and Hussin, 2006). It truly offers value-added services to a range of stakeholders combined with time and cost saving advantages.

In a latest press release, a survey report shows that above 50% of Malaysia enterprises are applying either company-provisioned mobile devices or "BYOD (bring your own device)" at work (Ting and Choong, 2014). Dell, one of the leading technological corporations, has embraced BYOD approach in its policy. Dell's employees, from interns to executives, fully support BYOD solutions to get their work done and in the meantime expand workplace productivity (Dell Inc., 2013). Daniel Pang, IDC Asean research manager of client devices, has projected about 2 million tablets and 7 million smartphones will be shipped into Malaysia in 2014 while many of these devices are mainly for work purpose (Kumar, 2014). Besides that, Ian Song, IDC Asia/Pacific research manager of enterprise mobility, stated without proper mobility strategies and use policies in place, users' work productivity can be negatively affected in any Malaysian organizations (Ting and Choong, 2014).

Randstad Workmonitor has announced its fourth quarter survey result in 2013. Half of the Malaysian employees (52%) think their employers are demanding and expecting them to be accessible 24/7 during their vacations as shown in figure 1.0 (Randstad Holding, 2013). Similar survey results were