

# The Determinants of Job Satisfaction among Academicians in Malaysia Public University

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## Abstract

The roles and responsibilities of academicians are becoming more challenging and closely tied to the central functions of higher education; not only to teach, but also involve in doing research, publication, consultation, as well as administrative work for their respective higher education institutions. As academicians are the major human capital resources of a university, thus, their satisfaction or dissatisfaction is important for the improvement and effectiveness of the higher education system. When academicians are highly satisfied, they are less likely to leave the organization and tend to become more innovative and motivated to maintain a conducive learning environment. Guided by Frederick Herzberg Two Factor Theory (1959), this correlational study attempted to examine the relationship between job stress, work-life balance, quality of work life, and job satisfaction among the academicians in one public university in Malaysia. Questionnaire was used as the main instrument. A total of 200 questionnaires were distributed online to the academicians through convenience sampling technique. Multiple regression analysis was used to investigate the relationship between factors of job satisfaction (job stress, work-life balance, and quality of work life) and job satisfaction. This study found that there was no significant relationship between job stress and job satisfaction. It also found that there was no significant relationship between work-life balance and job satisfaction. However, the researcher found that there was a strong significant relationship between quality of work life and job satisfaction. In conclusion, the management needs to provide a high quality of work life to its employees for it to become an employer of choice as well as a great organization to work for.

**Keywords:** Job Satisfaction, Job Stress, Work-life Balance, Quality of Work Life

## Introduction

Malaysia, as one of the United Nations Member States, is adopting the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which were set in 2015. The fourth SDG, which is Quality Education, sets out that, by 2030, where all learners are to be ensured of acquiring the knowledge and skills needed to encourage sustainable development through education for sustainable development and lifestyles, gender equality, human rights, promotion of the culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and the appreciation of cultural diversity and culture's contribution to sustainable development (UNDP, 2021). In aligning this goal, as stated in the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2015 – 2025, the Ministry of Education Malaysia (MoE) aspires to the quality of

graduates, quality of institutions, and quality of the overall system. The Ministry also aspiring to increase the current 75% of graduate employability rate to more than 80% in 2025 (MoE, 2015). Towards achieving these, Malaysia needs an education system with a quality workforce as this would produce quality graduates (Hee et al., 2019). Thus, the roles and responsibilities of academicians are becoming more challenging and closely tied to the central functions of higher education; not only to teach but also involved in doing research, publications, consultation as well as administrative work for their respective higher education institutions (HEIs). Furthermore, the competitions among existing HEIs and the newly established ones are indeed tough as they need to be superior in teaching and learning, research, publications as well as in the global world ranking and status.

Over these past few decades, the transformation of the higher education system in Malaysia has directly led to the increasing number of student enrolment, rise in global recognition as well as becoming a central destination for international students (Ganapathy, 2015). The key resources within these efforts are the academicians as they play an extremely important role in determining the success of the vision and mission of the HEIs (Isa & Palpanadan, 2020). Their performance as teachers and researchers determines much on the success and quality of students' learning (Szromek & Wolniak, 2020) and students' satisfaction which consequently contributes to the HEIs' and economic workforce's productivity (Kuwaiti et al., 2020).

Therefore, the willingness of the academicians to exert extra effort in their job is vital. Hence, it shall be the priority of their employer to keep them highly satisfied in their careers (Stankovska et al., 2017; Thiagaraj & Thangaswamy, 2017) as the overall organizational performance is highly dependent on the workforce's effectiveness and efficiency (Hee et al., 2019).

Job satisfaction has been confirmed by numerous researchers as one of the factors that contributed to an organization's efficiency and effectiveness (Hee et al., 2019; Thiagaraj & Thangaswamy, 2017; Sidik et al., 2017). Not only job satisfaction is important to the employees, but also to the employers as it certainly impacts the motivation to boost productivity and lessen staff turnover (Hee et al., 2019). In any higher education institution, academicians are the keystone of the development and growth of any society and hence their well-being is important (Agha et al., 2017). As they are the major human capital resources of a university; thus, their satisfaction or dissatisfaction is important for the improvement and effectiveness of the higher education system. Higher education institutions are all facing a common challenging issue; in which to retain their faculty members (Pham, 2017). Referring to the Malaysia Educational Statistics, there has been a decrease in the numbers of academic staff in public higher education institutions within the recent five years' time, from 2015 to 2019. In 2015, there was 33,288 academic staff and this figure had decreased to 31,626 in 2019 (MoE, 2020). One of the contributing reasons has been highlighted by Basaruddin et al. (2016), who asserted that the differences between public HEIs academicians' workload and the remuneration received had raised the issue of injustice. Consequently, due to the inequalities in the service schemes among public HEIs, more academicians will move to other HEI with the lesser workload for the same salary (Yaacob et al., 2018).

Academician as a profession is considered a high-pressured profession because of the challenges to manage workloads and the struggle to deal with work life and personal life effectively (Sari & Seniati, 2020). An academician's yearly key performance indicator (KPI) will be measured against teaching and learning, research, publication, supervision, consultation, as well as community services to determine their yearly salary increment and career development (Isa & Palpanadan, 2020). Adding up to the list, academicians will also need to compete with the increasing numbers

of other educational institutions to get research grants from local and overseas stakeholders. Multitasking and job switching between academic and non-academic duties also need to be effectively performed to ensure the faculty operations run smoothly (Omar et al., 2020). As the roles and workloads increase, their level of stress is elevating, and work-life balance will also be affected. In 2016, a Malaysian public university academician was found dead due to a heart attack while working in the office (Isa & Palpanadan, 2020). Consequently, academicians would somehow feel that it is impossible to maintain the teaching and learning quality if they have to juggle between other work-related responsibilities at one time (Basarudin et al., 2016).

Doing multiple job roles combined with the organization and community pressures are significantly influencing the academicians' perception of satisfaction on work-life balance. Issues relating to work-life balance are important to the workforce nowadays because it is becoming more diverse, standard working hours are no longer suitable for the employees, and technology has distorted the time boundaries between work and personal time (Khairunneezam et al., 2017). This now has become more evident during the COVID-19 outbreak, when lockdowns were imposed and academic responsibilities are shifted to online mode (Ilic-Kosanovic, 2021), and so the boundaries between work life and other personal aspects in everyday life are harder to be separated (Rapanta et al., 2020). Moreover, to be aligned with the Fourth Industrial Revolution (IR 4.0), teaching and learning, conferences, and workshops will finally be done virtually most of the time. This, for sure will affect the confidence of lecturers in delivering lectures due to the aspect of proficiency in the information technology system, the capacity, and accessibility of internet networking (Isa & Palpanadan, 2020). The practice of work-life balance is where employees are equitably committed to both their job and private life with equal importance. However, long working hours, intense workloads, highly challenging jobs, and application of the latest technology have placed more worries in employment which can direct all employees to dissatisfaction as a result of imbalances in work and personal lives (Hafeez & Akbar, 2015). Moreover, due to the current COVID-19 pandemic outbreak, the new norms of conducting teaching and learning virtually had further led the academicians to disappointment, stress, and anxiety (Isa & Palpanadan, 2020). Confirming this, the study done by Randstad Workmonitor in 2018 revealed that 63% of Malaysians think that working with an outrageous technology will cause workers to be easily disappointed with the work done. According to Aliasah et al. (2020), work-life balance can only take place when the employee can effectively manage their career and all other important activities in life which include personal wellbeing, family development, community activities as well as time for leisure and recreation.

Bora (2017) explained that whether employees are satisfied or dissatisfied with their job are depending upon the employees' negative or positive perceptions towards the quality of work life dimensions. Bora (2017) further highlighted major issues related to the quality of work life in an academic setting which are unsatisfactory growth and development opportunities, unsatisfactory promotion, less participation in decision making, job security, and lack of job involvement. In addition to these, nowadays most employees are facing greater pressure due to spending more time at work as the current demands are in line with technological advancements (Aliasah et al., 2020). Moreover, due to the outbreak of COVID-19, in the effort to slow the spread and reduce the burden of the Malaysian health system, starting in the middle of March 2020, all HEIs had to fully switch to online learning during the MCO implementation. As stated by Sia & Adamu (2021) in their study, psychological stress among academicians is worsening due to a few unprecedented challenges such as; the need to quickly learn how to use a learning management system (Bernama,

2020), disrupted and weak Internet services at home affecting the effectiveness and efficiency of the learning process, assessments need to be modified to suit online learning environment (Albukhary International University, 2020), and the academicians are now more exposed to computer vision syndrome during marking online assessments. Therefore, these rising concerns also do require the immediate attention of employers to implement effective improvement measures to avoid further job dissatisfaction.

When academicians are highly satisfied, they are less likely to leave the organization and tend to become more innovated and motivated to maintain a conducive learning environment (Pham, 2017) and to increase the productivity in their workplace (Stankovska et al., 2017). Lack of concern for employees' job satisfaction will make employees tend to find problems in everything that is small and being too rigid (Arifin et al., 2019) even more so in times of COVID-19 pandemic outbreak. Increased job stress levels, reduced work-life balance, and reduced quality of work life due to the adaptation of online learning systems were proved to be affecting the academicians' job satisfaction level (Susilaningsih et al., 2021). Thus, this study was conducted to examine the relationship between job stress, work-life balance, quality of work life, and job satisfaction among academicians.

### **Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework of this study is adapted from the model of Frederick Herzberg Two Factor Theory (1959). Herzberg et al. (1959) stated that this motivator-hygiene theory explains the satisfier (positive feelings) and dissatisfier factor (negative feelings) that leads to job satisfaction. The independent variables for this study are job stress, work-life balance, and quality of work life meanwhile the dependent variable is job satisfaction. Based on previous empirical research, job stress and work-life balance are hygiene (dissatisfier) factors in which removing them does not necessarily make the job satisfying, however, nonresponse to it may lead to dissatisfaction (Thiagaraj & Thangaswamy, 2017). Meanwhile, quality of work life as a motivator (satisfier) factor which can motivate the employees to perform better, and increasing them will boost job satisfaction (Kumar, 2016). These elements of independent variable are used in determining the relationship between the influencing factors of job satisfaction and the job satisfaction among the academicians. Figure I below show the development of the conceptual framework for this study. Based on the conceptual framework, the following hypotheses were developed.

H1: Job stress has a significant negative relationship with the job satisfaction

H2: Work-life balance has a significant positive relationship with the job satisfaction

H3: Quality of work life has a significant positive relationship with the job satisfaction

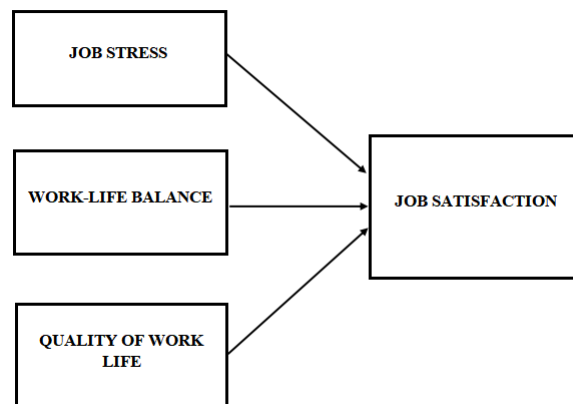


Figure I: Conceptual Framework

## Methodology

### *Design, Sample and Setting*

A positivist approach was used to explore the relationship between variables. The study was primarily conducted via a survey among academicians in one public university in Selangor. The G\*Power software was used to calculate the sample size for this study. The effect size was set at 0.15 (medium effect),  $\alpha$  at 0.05, and power at 0.80, thus the sample size is 77. However, the researcher distributed the questionnaire to 200 academicians to obtain an excellent response rate (Willott, 2019). Convenience sampling was used in selecting the respondents. This process is based on the availability and agreement of respondents to participate in the survey without the need to choose the respondents systematically.

### Instrument Development

The development of the research instrument for this study was based on the extensive review of literature by combining the existing validated measurement. The questionnaire, which consisted of three sections measuring demographic data, job stress, work life balance, quality of work life and job satisfaction was used to collect the data.

The respondents were requested to complete the questions relating to their demographic backgrounds, such as gender, age, education level, length of services, marital status and position. A total of 12 items adapted from the Inventory Revised Scale (OSI-R) developed by Rajabi and Ghezelsefloo (2020) was adapted to measure job stress. For work-life balance, there were 10 items adapted from the study of Husin et al. (2018). Meanwhile, in measuring the quality of work life, 19 items assessing the elements of job stress, job security, fair compensation, career development, physical work environment, work-life balance, and perceived organizational support, was adapted from the questionnaire developed by Ehido et al. (2020). A total of 24 items developed by Almalki (2016) was adapted to measure the job satisfaction. The 24 items were assessing the level of satisfaction towards the elements of salary, growth promotional activities, meaningful of work, recognition, sense of achievement, pay and fringe benefits, physical working condition, supervision, university policy as well as interpersonal relations. A five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree was employed by the researchers.



A pre-testing was conducted to verify that the questions to be used as the questionnaire are free from vagueness, bias, and the respondents can understand the questions. Pre-testing is also essential to avoid poor data quality and prevent or reduce items' deletion during the measurement model evaluation (Memon, Ting, Ramayah, Chuah, & Hwa, 2017). For this study, two (2) experts were invited for the pre-testing phase to provide feedback regarding the questionnaire items. A modification based on the pre-testing was used to generate the final version of the instrument for this study.

### **Data collection procedures**

A survey method was used to gather data from the respondents. The researcher approached the respondents via email and briefed them about the inclusion criteria. The respondents have been given written explanations and instructions as a guideline for a better understanding of the questionnaires. The respondents that fulfilled the requirements were given the questionnaire to answer. The respondents needed around 5 to 10 minutes to complete answering the questionnaires. A total of 200 sets of questionnaires were distributed via Google forms to the respondents, and there were only 79 questionnaires that were returned.

### **Findings**

Data were analyzed using SPSS version 26.0. A multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between variables. Table 1 presents the demographic profile of the respondents. Majority of the respondents were female, age between 35 to 44 years old, married, senior lecturer and served with the university for more than 10 years.

In this study, normality analysis was conducted before continuing with the correlation analysis. The purpose of running the normality test was to know the shape of the distribution. The assumptions were tested by running the descriptive statistics, and the Skewness and Kurtosis results were presented. The normality test shows that the data was generally distributed since the value of the skewness and kurtosis was  $\pm 3$  for each variable (Coakes, 2013).

Multiple regressions analysis was used to measure the relationship between the variables. This multiple regression addressed which variable in a set of the independent variables can be considered the best predictor or most significant factors that influence the dependent variable. Table 2 shows the results of the multiple regression analysis conducted in this study. The result shows no collinearity problem as the value of the VIF was less than ten and, the tolerance value was below 1.0, given from the three independent variables. The  $R^2$  of 0.564 implies that taken as a set, all the independent variables (job stress, work-life balance, and quality of work life). The other 43.6% of the variance in the job satisfaction was explained by other factors. F-test is significant at the p-value  $< 0.05$  (0.000), and therefore, the linear model is overall valid.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of the Respondents

DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLE	CATEGORY	FREQUENCY (N)	PERCENT (%)
Gender	Male	23	29.1
	Female	56	70.9
Age	25 – 34 years old	4	5.1
	35 – 44 years old	47	59.5
	45 – 54 years old	21	26.6
	More than 54 years old	7	8.9
Marital Status	Single	16	20.3
	Married	61	77.2
	Divorced	1	1.3
	Widowed	1	1.3
Position Title	Lecturer	6	7.6
	Senior Lecturer	67	84.8
	Associate Professor	6	7.6
	Professor	0	0.0
Length of Services	Less than 5 years	10	12.7
	More than 5 years	7	8.9
	More than 10 years	46	58.2
	More than 20 years	15	19
	More than 30 years	1	1.3

As specified in Table 2, the result from multiple regression analysis revealed was no significant relationship between job stress and job satisfaction ( $\beta=.119$ ,  $p>0.05$ ) and work-life balance and job satisfaction ( $\beta=.013$ ,  $p>0.05$ ). However, this study indicated that there was a significant relationship between work environment and transfer of training ( $\beta=.701$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). Table 3 showed the results of the summarized hypotheses of this study.

Table 2: Results of Multiple Regression Analysis

Independent Variables	Standard Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
Job Stress	.119	1.396	.167	.797	1.254
Work-life Balance	.013	.146	.885	.733	1.363
Quality of Work Life	.701	8.346	.000	.824	1.214
<b>R Square</b>	.564				
<b>Adjusted R Square</b>	.546				
<b>F</b>	32.299				
<b>Sig. of F Value</b>	.000				

Dependent Variable = Job Satisfaction \*p value < .05, \*\*p value < .01

Table 3: Summary of Hypotheses

HYPOTHESES	RELATIONSHIP	RESULT
<b>H<sub>1</sub></b>	Job stress has a significant negative relationship with the job satisfaction	<b>Not Supported</b>
<b>H<sub>2</sub></b>	Work-life balance has a significant positive relationship with the job satisfaction	<b>Not Supported</b>
<b>H<sub>3</sub></b>	Quality of work life has a significant positive relationship with the job satisfaction	<b>Supported</b>

### Discussion and Conclusion

The primary aim of this exploratory study was to identify the relationship between job stress, work-life balance, quality of work life with job satisfaction among academicians in one of the public universities in Selangor. The findings revealed that only quality of work life has a significant positive relationship with job satisfaction.

Surprisingly, the first findings revealed that there was no significant relationship between job stress and job satisfaction. The researcher assumes that even though the academicians multitasked by having numerous tasks and responsibilities, they are still happy with what they are doing. This may be due as these tasks are still beyond their abilities and expertise. Furthermore, the academicians may also be good at time management and task prioritizing hence, findings showed that it does not affect their job satisfaction. These results reflect those of Hargadon (2018), Saeed and Farooqi (2014) and Kok (2015) who also found that job stress was not significant determinants of job satisfaction.

The result of the second findings did not show any significant relationship between work-life balance and job satisfaction among academicians. A possible explanation for this might be that the academicians are comfortable with the working time and flexibility provided by the university as findings showed that it does not really affect their job satisfaction. This study supports evidence from previous observations (Farah Mukhtar, 2012; Hafeez & Akbar, 2015)

In this study, the researcher attempts to investigate the influence of quality of work life on the job satisfaction of academicians. Based on the findings, the researcher found that there was a strong



significant relationship between quality of work life and job satisfaction among the respondents. Data interpretation also shows that quality of work life has the highest Beta value among the other variables (job stress and work-life balance). Hence, it can be assumed that the academicians are very critical with the employment security, benefits, physical facilities, and supervisory support from university. This finding was also reported by Arief et. al. (2021); Bora (2017) and Syed (2015).

### **Limitations of Study**

This study has limitations in several aspects. The sample was limited to academicians in one of the public universities in Selangor only. Therefore, the generalizability of these results is subject to certain limitations, whereby it did not consider the target group's situation in other states and universities. Therefore, future studies should bridge the gap of this limitation. This study was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic, where the researchers need to take high precautions as social distancing is a must in this situation during data collection. The researchers had revised the data collection methods from physical questionnaires to online surveys via Google Form. Using an online survey method helps the researcher get the minimum number needed, leading to biased data and low response rates.

There are two recommendations that the researcher would like to give to improve the respondents' job satisfaction level as a guideline for the top management of the university to ensure the effectiveness of their employee retention efforts. Firstly, as quality of work life was discovered to be an important determinant to the job satisfaction of academicians, the university must always strive to provide a high and healthy quality of work life to their employees to become employer of choice as well as a great organization to work for. Next, the researcher would also recommend the management to continuously identify possible strategic human resource management gaps in the organization and may take action to further enhance the quality of work life of the employees. By effectively doing so, they can increase the employees' job satisfaction, job performance, and organizational commitment which subsequently will reduce future turnovers.

The findings of this study would be beneficial for the policymakers and administrators in HEIs to develop more effective human resources development programs in their organizations. Essential measures to improve the retention of highly skilled academicians should also take place to lessen the turnover of public HEIs academicians in Malaysia.

### **Acknowledgement**

The authors would like to acknowledge Faculty of Business and Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA Puncak Alam for the financial support and supporting the research work.

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