

The Role of Hindrance Stressor and Distress in Teachers' Work-Life Balance

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ABSTRACT

Excessive workload is appraised as hindrance stressor because it obstructs teachers' achievement in the workplace and then to a negative response like distress, the response would harm the work-life balance. Hence, this study aims to examine the relationship between hindrance stressor and work-life balance through the mediation role of distress. Through a survey, 491 valid questionnaires were collected from public secondary school teachers in Sabah. Challenge-hindrance Appraisal Scale was used to analyse hindrance stressor, Stress Professional Positive and Negative Questionnaire measured distress, and Survey Work-home Interaction-Nijmegen scaled work-life balance. Partial Least Square-Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was used to test hypotheses. The result showed the indirect effect of hindrance stressor on work-life balance through the mediation role of distress was significant. A high level of hindrance stressor increases distress, in turn, lead to negative interaction, decrease positive interaction between work and life. These findings could empower education stakeholders to acknowledge excessive workload obstruct positive interaction between work and life. This study implies control workload proportion is essential that may ultimately improve work-life balance.

Keywords: *Distress, work-life balance, workload.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Psychology is spread to the field of work because the response towards job demands (e.g. workload) could affect organisations performance. The response that trigger harmful stress (distress) lead to negative organisational impact like demotivate, while beneficial stress (eustress) increase positive outcome like engagement towards work [1]. Bakker's [2] research show the negative psychology effect from excessive workload at work intrude employees' personal life. Past studies suggested imbalance work and life affect job satisfaction and performance [3]. McKenna [4] claimed corporate in Western compensated about \$10 billion for poor economic due to the work-life balance issue.

Work-life balance is a twenty-first-century working style among employees [5]. Greenhaus [6] explained the concept of work and life domain is a level of satisfaction to invest time and perform desire behaviour in both domains. Failure to reach satisfaction affect the psychological state in two

levels, individual and management [7]. Work-life balance has become a human resources strategy to hire and retain potential employees especially in the Western side [8]. Unfortunately, the majority of employers in Malaysia view the interface between work and life are distinct, the two domains shall not be seen as one issue. Perhaps the awareness about work-life balance framework is not refined, actively disseminate to the right channel could hit the right authority. The common practice that view as part of the work-life balance plan is maternity leave, even so, the practice cover partly of demographics [9]. This is against Greenhaus and Allen [10] notion because they opined exploration shall include other demographics like parents, individuals with or without children or family commitment, these people increase the workforce diversity.

Studies found a high volume of workload has a significant link with work-life balance [11]. Spector [12] theorised quantitative workload is referred to as the number of tasks that need to be completed.

Bakker and Demerouti [1] claimed workload is harmful and predicted to influence employees' wellbeing in the workplace. Nevertheless, this is a contrast to Merelman [3] notion that individuals require accepting level of stress to function effectively in the workplace through the assigned workload. This is suggesting that individuals could not perform and produce desired outcome if experience overwhelms stress. Lazarus and Folkman [14] describe distress stimulated when encounter tasks are appraised as harmful and a loss rather than gain. Through the lens of distress scope, hindrance stressor is to be negatively related to the interaction between work and life. Studies capture that teachers' current workload is appraised as a hindrance due to high volume workload, feel stress in the workplace cause personal life activities disturbed [15].

In addition, extant studies show the current workload undertaken by teachers associate negatively to teaching quality, stress, and experience exhaustion [15][16]. Studies found imbalance work and life among teachers lead to turnover intention due to stress at work [17]. This is further supported when the Malaysia Ministry of Education found out factors like high workload, focus family needs, and lose interests cause early retirement among the teachers [18]. The finding translates that overwhelm workload is a threat towards career and personal wellbeing. Teachers' pattern of work and life would determine the job quality [15], hence, their work-life balance play an important role to sustain education development.

This study aims to explore whether distress mediates the relationship between hindrance stressor and work-life balance among secondary school teachers in Sabah, Malaysia.

1.1. Literature Review

Literature implies teachers undertake excessive quantitative workload (amount of tasks) that obstruct their achievement in the workplace, work interfere with their life duties [15]. Hence, the current number of workload is appraised as hindrance stressor among teachers [19]. Individuals experience distress like mental exhaustion when encountering hindrance stressor. For being tired at work, they are more likely to refrain from social activities and choose to rest at home. Erdamar and Demirel [20] reported distress that formed in the workplace could obstruct personal activities.

Overwhelm quantitative workload is a source of stress in the workplace. Bley [19] found high workload is appraised as a hindrance and has a positive link to job stress among teachers. Barbier, Peters, and Hansez [21] added an excessive number of workloads is a negative experience that affects psychology and mental. Nevertheless, Merelman [13] shared individuals require a good balance of workload to function in the workplace. That means, exceed individual's capacity lead to a negative interaction between work and life domain [15]. Scholars claimed to lessen harmful interaction in work and life chain is promising if individuals have low negative stress levels [22].

In Siti Nurmayanti, Armanu, Noermijati, and Dodi [23] literature, past studies argued that work-life balance shall be the least focus in teaching professions because their duties have a similar concept like managing a household, hence they face minor work and life issues. But, Luk-Fong [24] managed to pinpoint conflict do exist in the teaching profession when he found that public secondary school teachers have the intention to quit when they experience difficulty to juggling between work and life duties. The high volume of workload lead time constraint and affects psychological wellbeing [25]. Therefore, Siti Nurmayanti and others [23] disagree with past scholars that against exploration in work-life balance among teachers but urge for needs especially in the Asia region. Consequently, this study makes the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1a: Distress mediates the relationship between hindrance stressor and negative work-home interaction.

Hypothesis 1b: Distress mediates the relationship between hindrance stressor and negative home-work interaction.

Hypothesis 1c: Distress mediates the relationship between hindrance stressor and positive work-home interaction.

Hypothesis 1d: Distress mediates the relationship between hindrance stressor and positive home-work interaction.

1.2. Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 shows the conceptual framework whereby hindrance stressor influences work-life balance through the mediation of distress.

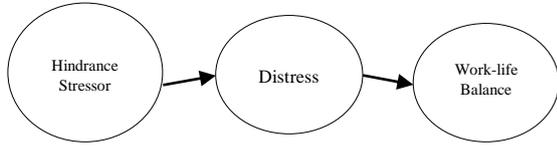


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

2. METHOD

2.1 Participants

Presented in Table 1, the survey had 92.30% of response rate with 491 valid questionnaires. The sample consisted of 358 (73.50%) women, 130 (26.50%) men with 219 (44.60%) of the age between 29 and 43. Men were underrepresented but tolerate because male teachers cover less than 30% of the public secondary school teacher’s population [18]. Concerning marital status, 396 (80.70%) respondents were married, 361 (73.50%) of them have their spouse working. Respondents with child commitment have at least two children (SD = 1.93). The majority of the samples, in specific 410 (83.50%) respondents graduated with bachelor’s degree had working experience from four to eighteen years.

2.2 Measures

Hindrance stressor. Searle and Auton [26] developed the Challenge and Hindrance Appraisal Scale (CHAS) with four items to measure the consequence on individual growth, with stressors that appraised obstruction. The Cronbach’s Alpha score was .95, while validity scored .84.

Distress. Barbier and team [21] developed the Stress Professional Positive and Negative Questionnaire (SPPNQ) with eleven items to assess distress response based on emotions, cognition, behaviour, and somatic reflex. The Cronbach’s Alpha score and validity for distress were .88 and .55 respectively.

Work-life balance. Geurts and others [27] formed the Survey Work-home Interaction - NijmeGen (SWING) with twenty-two item to scale work-life

balance. This construct consists of four dimensions, negative work-home interaction, negative home-work interaction, positive work-home interaction, and positive home-work interaction. The Cronbach’s Alpha scores were between .84 and .93, meanwhile, validity scored between .51 and .62.

2.3 Procedure

The unit analyses were current serving teachers in various public secondary schools located in Sabah. Selected schools received a cover letter that explained the purpose of the study, data usage was protected. Senior school assistants were appointed to select participants randomly. Distribution and collection questionnaires were executed by hand and mail which completed after two-month. The adopted instrument was back-translated and formed bilingual because Bahasa Malaysia is the official language used in public correspondence, while English is the second language. After the pilot test was performed, several items were reworded when respondents claimed an unclear statement.

2.4 Data Analysis

Confirmatory factor analysis was performed, hence Hair with others [28] suggested reliability and validity of the items and constructs are critical. Reliability with values greater than .70 are accepted [29]. Average variance extracted (AVE) values that greater than .50 established convergent validity [30]. Discriminant validity refers to cross-loading values [28] and the square root of AVE [31].

Second, goodness fit model was assessed using the commonly used fit indices: chi-square value that divided by degree of freedoms (χ^2/df), normed fit indexed (NFI), comparative fit index (CFI), root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) and standardized root mean square residual fitness (SRMR). Following values indicators of goodness fit: $\chi^2(df)$ lower than 5.0 [32], NFI and CFI above .90 [33], RMSEA and SRMR above .08 [32]. The mediation effect analysis used Partial Least Square-Structural Equation Modeling [28].

3. RESULT

3.1. Measurement Model Results

The confirmatory factor analysis results show the model fit statistic. Composite reliability exceeded .70, between .83 and .95. AVE scored above .50 after five items with the lowest loading were removed

from distress variable at one-time basis. The cross-loading values and AVE fulfilled criteria; hence discriminant validity was established. The results are illustrated in Table 2. The goodness fit model achieved suggested fit indices: ($\chi^2(df) = 1.95$, NFI = .86, CFI = .92, RMSEA = .04 and SRMR = .03) (refer to Table 1).

3.2. Structural Model Results

Table 2 showed total variance scores for the following variables: 16% ($R^2 = .16$) on distress, 57% ($R^2 = .57$) on negative work-home interaction, 22% ($R^2 = .22$) on negative home-work interaction, 19% ($R^2 = .19$) on positive work-home interaction, and

9% ($R^2 = .09$) on positive home-work interaction.

Hindrance stressor had a significant influence on distress ($\beta = .36, p < .01$), negative work-home interaction ($\beta = .15, p < .01$), negative home-work interaction ($\beta = .13, p < .01$), positive work-home interaction ($\beta = -.10, p < .05$), but not on positive home-work interaction ($\beta = .03, p > .05$). While distress had a significant influence on negative work-home interaction ($\beta = .68, p < .01$), negative home-work interaction ($\beta = .42, p < .01$), positive work-home interaction ($\beta = -.28, p < .01$), and positive home-work interaction ($\beta = -.23, p < .01$).

Mediation analysis results show indirect effect of hindrance stressor on negative work-home interaction

Table 1. Reliability Validity, Discriminant Validity, Means, Standard Deviations and Correlations

Variables	CR	AVE	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1 Hindrance stressor	.95	.84	3.26	.91	.91					
2 Distress	.88	.55	2.04	.47	.40**	.74				
3 Negative work-home interaction	.93	.62	1.23	.62	.40**	.72**	.79			
4 Negative home-work interaction	.84	.57	.61	.50	.27**	.47**	.48**	.76		
5 Positive work-home interaction	.84	.52	1.61	.56	-.20**	-.36**	-.25**	-.21**	.72	
6 Positive home-work interaction	.83	.51	1.63	.59	-.04	-.18**	-.05	.02	.57**	.71

Note. CR = composite reliability; AVE = average variance extracted; M = mean; SD = standard deviation. The bolded values are square root AVE. M and SD average scores were computed based on following variables range: hindrance stressor (1 to 5); distress (1 to 4); work-home interaction (negative and positive) (0 to 3). * $p < .5$, ** $p < .01$.

Table 2. Path Coefficient

Variable	Distress		Negative work-home interaction		Negative home-work interaction		Positive work-home interaction		Positive home-work interaction	
	β	t-value	β	t-value	β	t-value	β	t-value	β	t-value
Hindrance stressor	.36	8.99**	.15	4.76**	.13	2.79**	-.10	2.28*	.03	.72
Distress	-	-	.68	23.20**	.42	8.39**	-.28	6.50**	-.23	4.68**
R^2	.16		.57		.22		.19		.09	

Note. β = standard beta; SE = standard error; $R^2 = R$ square. $N = 491$, one-tailed probability, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

Table 3. Mediation Effect

Hypotheses	β	t-value	LLCI	ULCI	Mediation
H1a Hindrance stressor → Distress → Negative work-home interaction	.25	19.10**	.22	.27	Yes
H1b Hindrance stressor → Distress → Negative home-work interaction	.15	8.81**	.12	.19	Yes
H1c Hindrance stressor → Distress → Positive work-home interaction	-.10	-5.77**	-.14	-.07	Yes
H1d Hindrance stressor → Distress → Positive home-work interaction	-.08	-5.08**	-.11	-.05	Yes

Note. β = standard beta; LLCI = lower limit confidence interval, ULCI = upper limit confidence interval. $N = 491$, two-tailed probability, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

($\beta = .25, p < .01$), negative home-work interaction ($\beta = .15, p < .01$), positive work-home interaction ($\beta = -.10, p < .01$), and positive home-work interaction ($\beta = -.08, p < .01$) were significant. Hence, H1a, H1b, H1c, and H1d were supported. The results presented in Table 3.

3.3. Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore the indirect effect of hindrance stressor on work-life balance through the mediation role of distress among public secondary schools' teachers in Sabah. This study echoed Siti Nurmayanti [23] suggestion that is to investigate the relationship between workload and work-life balance in teaching profession context. Exploration among female teachers regarding work-life balance outnumber other characteristics, this could relate to Asian tradition that female is central to manage household despite employed [34]. Nevertheless, individuals with fewer commitments unnecessary deal small concern to perform work and life duties. Public secondary school teachers in Malaysia with less commitments deal more conflict compare to those with commitments [17]. The current study includes various demographic include married, individuals with or without family commitments. Therefore, this study has contributed in exploring work-life balance among teachers with various background.

The indirect effect of hindrance stressor on negative work-home interaction and negative home-work interaction through distress as a mediator were significant and positive. While the indirect effect of hindrance stressor on positive work-home interaction and positive home-work interaction through distress mediation role were significant and negative. The findings confirmed that quantitative workload (amount of tasks) is a stressor of hindrance that against personal development (e.g. achievement, capabilities). This is in line with literature that cited teachers are burden with excessive tasks, eventually intrude their time [15][35].

Nonetheless, this study does not convey that teachers opposed for workload increment or changes in the education system. Bernie and Riel [15] claimed teachers are being open to adapt changes for collective interest, especially when the workload is related to teaching and students. It is noteworthy to acknowledge current teachers are managing to overwhelm workload portion in the workplace, that affect their work-life balance. Due to time constraint,

they are unable to enhance communication skills, that explain why they have less pleasant weekend and issue with colleagues.

This study has confirmed the quantitative workload (amount of tasks) is appraised as a hindrance. The hindrance stressor is a negative influencer towards individuals' work-life balance. The usage of distress as a mediator in this study echoed scholars' notion to discover potential mediator [36]. The contribution of this study shows the relationship between hindrance stressor and work-life balance was significantly mediated by distress.

The finding could provide a notion to education stakeholders that workload portions may need to be restructured. The findings show teachers were grieved over excessive workload, hinder their personal development in the workplace. And also, they encounter negative stress, experience mental exhaustion, eventually intrude their personal life. Appropriate workload portion that deems fit to an individual is essential to enhance positive interaction, curb negative interaction between work and life.

3.5. Conclusion and Limitations

This study has proven that the volume of workload is overwhelming and then become a hindrance stressor whereby obstruct teachers' achievement at work. From this point, they experience distress that later intrudes the interaction between work and life. Such a situation provides the least satisfaction to have a quality life, the concern issue was individuals are required to substitute personal life over work. This study implies it is not just work affected when managing excessive work proportion, but life activities are exposed to similar risk like in the workplace.

Survey study is capable to generate a report based on numerical data, but acquire data through interview could enrich the results of this study. The findings show the current undertake quantitative workload (amount of tasks) was against personal growth, hence, identify specific workload could curb specific workload. Teachers' workload portion varies throughout the year, the cross-sectional study only captures one time season that may influence teachers' respond, thus, the longitudinal study may capture different perspective.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

PLC, CBS, and RI contributed equally in this paper.

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