

Work Status Congruence, Work-Related Attitudes, and Satisfaction Towards Work-Life Balance

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The development of non standard employment has been rigorous in current employment scenario with the reasons of employer willing to reduce cost, meet the various customers demand and to provide flexibility as part of work-life balance initiative. However non-standard workers have been regarded as less committed and less satisfied and the true effect in providing work-life balance is still less clear. To overcome the limitation and incoherent results of prior studies in these areas, works status congruence is proposed using congruency theory while satisfaction towards work-life balance is proposed as the unifying construct in determining the effect of different work status which is matched with what the workers want and what the employer is offering. Using this congruency perspective, it is assumed that an employee will be more satisfied with his or her work-life balance if he or she is working in a work status as well as work schedule, shift and hours that he or she prefer. This will later affects the worker's positive work related attitudes, in term of affective and continuance commitment as well as job satisfaction.

1.0 Introduction

Management of employment relationship changed markedly due to the globalization. Employees' work status nowadays developed into two types; which are standard (full-time, permanent) and non standard (part-time, temporary, contractual basis, contingent, peripheral, irregular, occasional). This development maybe due to align labour supply and working hours with variations in customer demand, to provide greater scheduling flexibility, reduce wage and benefit costs, screen potential permanent employees and as part of initiative for work-life balance. Furthermore this non- standard worker represent a major proportion of the workforce for entire industries, i.e. service and retail (Conway & Briner, 2002). There has been a long debate over the long term consequences of non standard work status for human resource practices and labour market outcomes. Some may suggest that through this development, economy will be divided into core and periphery workers who are differentiated by income, job security, and access to human resource development opportunities. While for others, it promotes greater flexibility for firms as well as employees while lowers wage and benefit costs and creates new job opportunities (Rebitzer & Taylor, 1991). Although the non-standard workforce is essential, organizational researchers is still lagged behind in their full understanding of this scenario.

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2.0 Problem Statements

Non standard workers are acknowledged to differ demographically but work attitudes differ is less clear and as non-standard employment is characterised by unstable work hours, relative job insecurity and lack of promotion and training opportunities, non-standard employees may experience lower levels of organizational commitments and less satisfied than their permanent counterpart. Furthermore the usage of non-standard employment, which to offer flexibility and as work-life balance initiatives is also still unsure as not yet empirically proven and some may refer it as more towards employees' exploitation instead.

3.0 Objectives Of Research

Hence this study is vital in bridging the gaps of prior studies by proposing and testifying a developed framework besides extending and further validating work status congruence studies towards attitudes and work-life balance satisfaction of all types of standard and non-standard workers. This study is also developed to substantiate the adjusted construct of work-life balance and further amalgamate the construct as an outcome of work status congruence and antecedent of work-related attitudes. In addition this study will answer past scholars' calls (e.g., Kossek & Ozemi, 1998) in exploring the mediating role of work-life balance while providing evidence for full understanding of congruency perspective.

4.0 Literature Review

Prior studies in the area of non-standard employment and work-life balance are still underdeveloped, showing discrepant findings, where no conclusive criterion in explaining the relationships and with incoherent theoretical background and operationalisation. Only recently, researchers began to realise that it is not the status or the benefits itself which determined an employee's attitudes, but to what extent the status/benefits met the employee's preferences. Although non-standard employment is presumed to provide work and life balance, the relationship is still less clear and former studies of work-life balance have yet to be fully progressed to include other non-work activities. Moreover measurements that were used in past studies were indecisive with more concentration on negative interaction of work and family roles.

4.1 Non-Standard Employment

Non-standard employees were defined by Polivka and Nardone (1989: 11) as "any job in which individual does not have an explicit or implicit contract for long-term employment or one in which the minimum hours worked can vary in a non-systematic

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way". Hence the operational definition of a non-standard work status has become any flexible work arrangements that do not involve full-time or permanent employment. The growth of non-standard work was coincided with the increased participation of women in the labour force and an important employment opportunity for certain groups, such as younger and older workers (Feldman, 1990; Nardone, 1995). There are many reasons that accelerated the change of employment status such as due to economic downturns, increased international competition, the introduction and effect of new technology and changes in employment legislation (Steffy & Jones, 1990). Besides there are other factors such as age, lack of skills and limited employment prospects, meant that employee had little choice but to become one of a non-standard worker. In addition flexibility is another vital factors of contingent workers emergence since organizations nowadays strive to be more flexible to adapt to continuously intermittent market conditions brought on by global competition

4.2 Non-Standard Employment and Work-Related Attitudes

Many studies comparing job satisfaction across part-time and full-time employees show contradictory findings, e.g. part-time employees more satisfied than full-time (e.g., Eberhardt & Shani, 1984; Fenton O'Creevy, 1995; Fields & Thacker, 1991; Jackofsky & Peters, 1987; Sinclair, Martin & Michel, 1999; Wotruba, 1990), less satisfied than full-time (e.g., Hall & Gordon, 1973; Miller & Terborg, 1979; Shockey & Mueller, 1994; Vecchio, 1984) and no difference in job satisfaction (e.g., Krausz, Sagie & Bldermann, 2000; Steffy & Jones, 1990; Thorsteinson, 2003). Incoherent results also instigated in studies comparing relationship between workers' desire to pursue temporary or contractual work and their job satisfaction (e.g., Ellingson, Gruys, & Sackett, 1998). In the meantime there were also inconsistent findings in comparisons between the commitment levels of part-time and full-time employees; e.g. part-time workers more committed than full-timers (e.g., Martin & Peterson, 1987; Sinclair et al., 1999; Wetzel, Soloshy & Gallagher, 1990), less committed (e.g., Lee & Johnson, 1991; Martin & Hafer, 1995; Hall & Gordon, 1973) and equally committed (e.g., Krausz, et al., 2000; Still, 1983; Thorsteinson, 2003). Meanwhile permanent workers are found to be more committed than temporary workers (Coyle-Shapiro, 2002), but as according to Van Dyne & Ang, (1998) contingent workers would have more positive views of their psychological contracts and high levels of affective commitment whilst no significant differences were found in commitment between permanent and non-permanent employees (Pearce, 1993). In addition, previous studies assessing organizational commitment of non-standard worker tend to only focus on the affective side of it (e.g. Holtom, Lee & Tidd, 2002; Sinclair et al., 1999; Lee & Johnson, 1991). Hence this study will answer scholar's call by also measuring organizational commitment of both affective and continuance commitment (Van Emmerik, 2005). This is because employees with high continuance commitment will experience few opportunities to leave the organization, hence will predict turnover intention and voluntary withdrawal. However this study excludes normative commitment as non-standard employees are less internalized in an organization (Felfe, Schmook, Schyn & Six, 2008). Besides, there were no differences in performance and turnover of workers based on work status (Jackofsky & Peters, 1987).

4.3 Theoretical Background of Non-Standard Employment Studies

Mixed results of past studies of non-standard employment indicate the importance of theoretically based research. Prior researchers have attempted to explain differences across work status and they have most commonly, although not widely, used the theories of partial inclusion and frame of reference. Nevertheless the concept of partial inclusion which suggests that full-time workers may feel more involved with their jobs than part-timers does not offer a clear prediction regarding the effect on job satisfaction since part-time workers may feel less satisfaction because they feel less a part of the organization (Miller & Terborg, 1979), or they may be exposed to fewer organizational problems and politics, which may prevent the development of negative attitudes (Eberhardt & Shani, 1984). On the other hand as per frame of reference theory, part-time employees are believed to have a different frame of reference from that of full-timers (Feldman, 1990; Miller & Terborg, 1979) and failure to find significant differences in job satisfaction between part-time and full-time employees might have been the result of different referents used by them (Feldman, 1990). Hence some researchers have speculated that part-time employees may be more dissatisfied because they compare their situation with full-time employees (Thorsteinson, 2003) while other part-time workers may have reported similar levels of job satisfaction to full-time workers because they compared their situation to other part-timers, while full-timers employees used other full-time workers as a comparison. Thus each of these partial inclusion and frame of reference theories has been used in somewhat contradictory ways to explain differences across work status. For instance, feeling less included in the workplace has been used to explain both higher (Eberhardt & Shani, 1984) and lower (Miller & Terborg, 1979) levels of job satisfaction. It is perhaps because frames of reference and partial inclusion theory can be manipulated in explaining any empirical finding thus they have been used to post rationalize findings (Barling & Gallagher, 1996). Furthermore neither of these theories has ever been tested empirically, and because the theories are so poorly elaborated, it is not clear how they may be operationalised.

4.4 Congruency Theory and Work-Related Attitudes

Drawing on discrepancy theory (Lawler, 1973) or also known as congruency or *person-job fit* theory, it is best assumed that a match or congruence between what worker prefer and what organization offer will enhance positive employee attitudes. Feldman (1990) proposed that part-time workers who voluntarily chose to work part-time would have greater job satisfaction than workers who are working full-time involuntarily. Meanwhile temporary workers who are not in their contract of choice show less commitment than permanent workers (Krausz, Brandwein & Fox, 1995). It could be assumed that individual worker would prefer any work status based on his or her own personal reason yet presently most of the workers have been forced into contingent jobs involuntarily. Nonetheless besides concentrating on congruence of work status only, recent research begin to realise on the congruence of work schedule, shifts and

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hours of work as well. This is because part-time workers who are given flexibility in scheduling their work will have more positive job attitudes and will be less likely to change jobs (Levine, 1987). Additionally, the consistency between preferred and actual work schedule is a source of difference in job satisfaction and commitment, whether the contract is full-time or part-time or temporary (Barling & Gallagher, 1996) and working a preferred work schedule was positively associated with job satisfaction and organizational commitment whereas no association was found between work status and job attitudes (Lee & Johnson, 1991).

4.5 Construct of Work Status Congruence

A newly developed construct of work-status congruence by Holtom, et al. (2002), will be used in this study to deal with all the discrepancies in prior research. This construct is theorised as a unifying concept which is broader than a simple match between desired and actual employment (full-time or part-time/contract) since it includes preferences for work schedule, shift and number of hours. In Holtom, et al.'s (2002) study, this measure was operationalised as full-time and part-time only without inclusion of temporary and permanent dimensions and effect on continuance commitment was untested. Hence this study will also integrate and validate this construct with other areas of study of work-life balance which lack of empirical evidence presently.

4.6 Work- Life Balance

Work-life balance is fast becoming one of the defining issues of the current employment scene. Currently there is a shift from "work-family balance" to "work-life balance" to reflect the fact that non-work demands in people's lives are not necessarily limited to family only. A good work-life balance is when employees have the ability to fulfil both work and other commitments (family, hobbies, art, travelling, studies and so forth) (Moore, 2007) and nowadays there are three major types of work-life policies to assist employees in balancing their work and non-work lives (McDonald, Brown & Bradley, 2005):

- Flexible work options (e.g. non-standard work, flexible hours)
- Specialized leave policies (e.g. parental leave, career break schemes)
- Dependent care benefits (e.g. subsidized childcare, child care referral)

4.7 Flexible Work Options and Work-Life Balance

Although the use of work-life programs has been claimed to reduce work-family conflict (Allen, Herst, Bruck & Sutton, 2000; Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985), the studies of work-life balance effect in using flexible work options have been incoherent in its results and consequences, e.g. Fast and Frederick (1996) found that, compared to full-time counterparts, part-time workers had lower levels of work-to-family interference. On the contrary, it has been argued that the low pay, routine tasks and limited advancement opportunities that characterize part-time jobs make it more difficult to balance family demands (Higgins, Duxbury & Johnson, 2000). For Moore (2007), flexible working practices have a positive or negative influence on work-life balance depends on the

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circumstances of the individual. As for Van Rijswijk, Bekker, Rutte and Croon (2004), some employees deliberately work part time to facilitate their work–family balance, whereas others have alternative reasons (e.g., no full-time jobs available, more leisure time, and health problems). Whereas Tausig and Fenwick (2001) suggested that whether working alternate job options increases the balance of work and life or not depends to some extent on the voluntary or involuntary nature of such arrangements.

4.8 Work- Life Balance and Work-Related Attitudes

Prior studies have made to understanding on the relationships of work-life balance as a concept towards employees attitudes due to the discrepant results in examining the direct effects of work-life policies alone towards work attitudes, e.g. Tompson and Werner (1997) reported work–family facilitation to be related to job satisfaction and affective organizational commitment. Consequently incompatible findings in the studies of work-life programs (i.e. flexible work options; part-time work and flexible hours arrangements) warrants the usage of work status congruence (person-job fit) construct which examine the match between preferred and actual status, schedule, shift and hours as the vital antecedents of work-life balance (job-life fit) and work-related attitudes.

4.9 Construct of Satisfaction Towards Work- Life Balance

In this study the newly developed construct of “Satisfaction With Work-Family Balance” by Valcour (2007), will be adapted with certain adjustment on the measure to include non-work activities instead of family, hence the construct will be renamed as “Satisfaction towards Work-Life Balance”. This construct defined as an overall level of contentment resulting from assessment of one’s degree of success at meeting work and non-work role demands and it is most suitable construct in evaluating an employee’s work-life balance and eliminating the inconsistent operationalisation of past studies. This construct is unique in the nomological network of work–life balance constructs for several reasons as follows:-

- there are both a cognitive and an affective component
- does not centre on conflict
- distinguished from constructs that describe cross-domain transfer processes, such as work–family spillover, enrichment, or facilitation
- differs from constructs that imply directionality from work to family or from family to work
- unitary and holistic construct
- directly measure individuals’ overall satisfaction

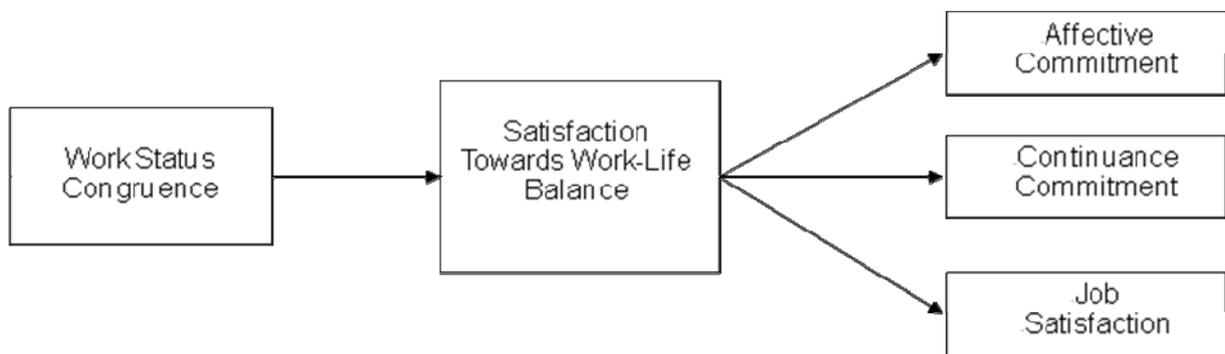
The original construct being operationalised in Valcour’s (2007) study towards sample of full-time service workers only and there’s a strong call from scholars in work-life balance area for a study of work-life balance construct as mediating role for work and attitudes relationship (Kossek and Ozeki,1998) since most prior research has overlooked joint assessment of employer work-family supports, work-family conflict and satisfaction. Hence this study further validate and extend Valcour’s (2007) work towards

sample of various standard and non-standard workers and as a mediator for relationship of work status congruence and work-related attitudes as recommended in earlier studies.

5.0 Research Framework

Based on the reviewed literatures of work-status congruence as well as work-life balance, a research framework is proposed summarizing all the hypothesized relationship to bridge the acknowledged gaps of earlier studies as follows :-

Figure 1: Work Status Congruence and Work-Related Attitudes: The Mediating Role of Satisfaction towards Work-Life Balance



5.1 Hypotheses

Based on Figure 1, the following hypotheses are derived to identify each of the variable's relationship in a framework integrating work-status studies and work-life balance:-

- Hypotheses 1: There is a positive relationship between work status congruence and satisfaction with work-life balance
- Hypotheses 2: There is a positive relationship between work status congruence and affective commitment
- Hypotheses 3: There is a positive relationship between work status congruence and continuance commitment
- Hypotheses 4: There is a positive relationship between work status congruence and job satisfaction
- Hypotheses 5: There is a positive relationship between satisfaction with work-life balance and affective commitment
- Hypotheses 6: There is a positive relationship between satisfaction with work-life balance and continuance commitment
- Hypotheses 7: There is a positive relationship between satisfaction with work-life balance and job satisfaction

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- Hypotheses 8: The relationship between work status congruence and affective commitment is mediated by satisfaction with work-life balance
- Hypotheses 9: The relationship between work status congruence and continuance commitment is mediated by satisfaction with work-life balance
- Hypotheses 10: The relationship between work status congruence and job satisfaction is mediated by satisfaction with work-life balance

6.0 Significance of Research

This study will address gaps in the literature by examining the relationship between work status congruence and work attitudes, on the one hand, and satisfaction towards work-life balance, on the other, and does so with a sample of both standard and non-standard workers. It will also answer scholars' calls for theoretical development and greater attention to positive aspects of work and non-work role combination (e.g., Aryee, Srinivas & Tan, 2005; Grzywacz & Butler, 2005). Furthermore it will testify the mediating role of work-life balance construct adapted from the newly developed measures of satisfaction with work-family balance (Valcour, 2007) in a relationship between work-status congruence and work-related attitudes. Using this study, the true benefits associated with matching preferences for flexible work arrangements mainly status, schedule, shifts and hours towards employee's work-life balance and work attitudes will be known. In addition by drawing on a sample of service employees of Malaysia, addresses the glaring under-representation of samples from developing economies in the research literature of work status congruence and work life balance. In view of the growing number of organizations that have implemented work-life policies and practices (Perry-Smith & Blum, 2000), a more complete understanding of work-life balance should provide organizations with the knowledge base to design more effective policies. Moreover this study will extends the works of discrepancy theorist in current practices of work-life balance initiatives enabling scholars to conceptualized a more comprehensive model of the work-life interface as well facilitating organizations to make reference in being an 'Employer-of-Choice'.

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