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Non Standard Work Arrangements and Affective Commitment: the Mediating Role of Work-Life Balance

Muhamad Khalil Omar*

Universiti Teknologi MARA, Faculty of Business Management, Kuala Selangor 43200, Malaysia

Abstract

This paper aims to determine the relationship of non-standard work arrangements such as non-standard work status, schedule, shift and hours towards work-life balance and affective commitment of services employees in Malaysia. Its secondary aim is to contribute to the literature by determining the mediating role of work-life balance in the relationship between non-standard work arrangements and affective commitment using analysis of Structural Equation Modelling. The results suggest that the preferences for standard or non-standard work arrangements are the elements which affect the employees' satisfaction with work-life balance and affective commitment. The hypothesised model indicates the best fit for the mediating role of satisfaction with work-life balance.

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1. Introduction

Current human resource practices have developed tremendously in last few decades due to the process of globalisation, technological advancement and social improvements. Work arrangements nowadays have been developed into two types, which are standard and non-standard. Standard work arrangement is traditional staffing practices involving the employment of permanent and full-time workers who are working in normal work schedules, shifts and hours (Walker, 2011). Whereas non-standard work arrangements are for modern staffing practices with the employment of non-permanent workers (i.e., part-time, contractual, temporary and etc) and flexible work schedules, shifts and hours (McNall, Masuda, & Nicklin, 2010). Polivka and Nardone (1989, p.11) defined non-standard employment as "...any job in which individual does not have an explicit or implicit contract for long-term employment or one in which

* Muhamad Khalil Omar. Tel.: +6-012-308-9147; fax: +6-035-544-4693.
E-mail address: khalil.omar@salam.uitm.edu.my.

the minimum hours worked can vary in a non-systematic way." Therefore, this study defines non-standard employment as any flexible work arrangements that do not include permanent full-time status and normal working schedule, shift and hours.

1.1 Non-standard work arrangements and affective commitment

The studies of non-standard work arrangements have evolved since early 90's as accordance with the advancement of human resource practices. Non-standard workers are acknowledged to differ demographically from standard employees, but the extent to which their work attitudes differ is less clear (Holtom, Lee, & Tidd, 2002). Hence the early studies of non-standard work arrangements were mostly concentrated in identifying the effect of non-standard employments towards work-related attitudes such as job satisfaction, commitment and turnover intention, and comparison with standard employees (Thorsteinson, 2003). However, past research findings comparing the job attitudes of standard and non-standard workers have been conflicting and inconclusive (Conelly, Gallagher, & Giley, 2007). In terms of commitment levels of part-time and full-time employees, inconsistent findings have emerged as well. Studies have found part-time workers to be more affectively committed than full-timers (e.g. Martin & Sinclair, 2007). However there were studies that have revealed that part-timers to be less committed (e.g., Han, Moon, & Yun, 2009). Conversely, there were also studies that revealed part-timers as equally committed to their jobs as compared to full-time workers (e.g., Hill, Martinson, Ferris, & Baker, 2004). Studies comparing commitment levels between permanent and temporary workers also illustrated contradictory outcomes. Van Dyne and Ang (1998) found that temporary workers have more positive views of their psychological contracts and high affective commitment, as they view the flexibility of contingent work and their consequent ability to balance a professional career and their other life interests as important inducements by their organizations. In contrary, Coyle-Shapiro and Morrow (2006) concurred that permanent workers are more committed than temporary workers. In addition, Pearce (1993) did not find any significant difference in terms of commitment level between permanent and temporary or contract employees.

To deal with all the discrepancies in prior research of non-standard work arrangements and its relationship with work-related attitudes, a new concept of work-status congruence based on discrepancy theory was used in this study. This new construct was developed by Holtom et al. (2002), and in their study, work status congruence is defined as the degree to which employers match employee preference for standard or non-standard work arrangements (i.e. work status, schedule, shift, and hours). Their studies had indicated that work status congruence was positively related with affective commitment and job satisfaction. Carr, Gregory and Harris (2010) validated Holtom et al.'s (2002) study and there were significant relationship between work status congruence and affective commitment as well as organisational citizenship behaviour. The work status congruence is theorised as a unifying concept to the inconsistent empirical findings regarding the attitudes of employees in standard and non-standard work arrangements. Besides, the results of prior studies also suggested that work status congruence is broader than a simple match between desired and actual staffing arrangements (e.g. full-time or part-time) and should include congruent preferences for scheduling arrangements (i.e. work schedule, shift and hours). However, in Holtom et al.'s (2002) study, work-status congruence using its new comprehensive measure was operationalised as full-time and part-time only without inclusion of temporary and permanent dimensions and its effect towards the work-life balance study was untested. The construct was also not being assessed as in hypothesized framework using structural equation modelling. Hence, this study beside to cope with the limitation of tested outcome variables, sample and analysis technique of work status congruence, it will further extend it towards work-life balance studies which has not been empirically examined before.

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