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Striking the Right Balance: Expert review of work-life engagement for secondary teachers in Malaysia

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Abstract

A teacher's work-life equilibrium is a crucial aspect of daily life. Consequently, this research was carried out to analyze expert assessments of the components of engagement equilibrium for secondary school teachers. Semi quantitative research is used through the Nominal Group Technique (NGT). The study reveals that all items meet the minimum threshold for model usability. Therefore, all experts agree that the engagement balance item is used in the construction of a management model professional and personal life stability of secondary school educators.

Keywords: work-life balance; secondary school teachers; Nominal Group Technique; engagement balance

1.0 Introduction

Work-life balance is the subjective view that professional and personal pursuits align harmoniously and foster development based on an individual's present priorities and goals (Gragnano, 2020). Therefore, based on this opinion, it proves that the Work-life balance management can be effectively achieved when individuals perform and fulfill their roles both within the organization and in their personal lives as outlined and expected.

This article aims to evaluate the appropriateness of engagement balance items in the work life balance model of secondary school teachers in Malaysia. The balance of engagement is an important element that shapes the quality of employees (Koon et al., 2020). Therefore, it is the responsibility of all parties to balance psychological demands at work or outside of work hours. Despite this, the imbalance between work and social engagement is seen as significant when negative personal and professional effects result including increased anxiety, depression, fatigue and decreased productivity (Mind Share Partners, 2022) and increased intentions to leave the job (Diego-Medrano & Salazar, 2021). A scoping review published in 2021 revealed that burnout negatively impacts teachers' health and serves as a risk factor for deteriorating physical and mental well-being (Agyapong et al., 2022). Additionally, a 2022 study suggested that elevated stress among teachers is linked to physical and mental health issues and can lead to adverse work-related outcomes, such as burnout and the departure of qualified educators (Wang et al., 2022). All these studies reinforce the argument that teachers

require a balance of engagement in their professional and personal lives. In a nutshell, the balance of engagement improves the quality of work and makes the quality of life of the individual well maintained.

The objective of this study is to obtain the collective view of experts on the items of managing the work-life balance of secondary school teachers based on priorities. The position in this priority list is important because of the consensus evaluation results of the model by all experts. The results of this decision can give significant results in the construction of a work-life balance model for secondary school teachers in Malaysia.

2.0 Literature Review

Greenhouse et al. (2003) defined work-life balance as 'the amount of time and level of satisfaction with work and family roles'. In essence, work-life balance can be described as the optimal satisfaction individuals attain in aligning their work and personal lives. Work-life balance evolved significantly due to the pandemic's influence on remote and hybrid work arrangements. It prioritized adaptability, emotional well-being, and maintaining clear boundaries in an always-on digital environment. (Berry & Hughes, 2020).

The balance between work and family domains involves the variables of time, engagement and satisfaction balance (Wayne et al., 2020). Dodanwala and Shrestha (2021) explained that family and career domains are the most important elements in everyone's life. They believe that work life balance is achieved when individuals are satisfied with their work and family roles (Hjálmsdóttir & Bjarnadóttir, 2021). This definition is most relevant to the study because the work-life balance model of secondary school teachers is measured and designed based on specific measurements. The issue of managing the balance of involvement in work and life among secondary school teachers needs to be addressed to achieve work life balance. Likewise, organizations need to play a role in moving work life balance programs (Aruldoss et al., 2021). All matters related to employees are important and should be taken seriously by employers because they bear the workload every day.

Van de Ven and Delbecq are the individuals responsible for developing the Nominal Technique Group (NGT) as a study involving experts (Thao, 2023). The ultimate goal of this technique is to get a consensus among members in the group on the topic being discussed (Cook et al., 2023). Among the advantages of NGT is providing a common view of members, producing results at the end of the session and saving costs (Gusmão et al., 2024). As a result, agreement and consensus on various issues can be obtained from this technique. The number of groups and participants in the NGT technique varies according to the needs of the study. Research participants can also be formed in a group if the selected group members are actually suitable to answer the research questions.

3.0 Methodology

Since the objective of this study is to obtain the collective view of experts on the items of managing the work-life balance of secondary school teachers based on priorities, the method carried out for this study is semi-quantitative. The method for this phase uses purposeful sampling techniques. The study participants consisted of ten secondary school teachers from the states of Selangor and Kuala Lumpur. The instrument used in this research is the expert evaluation instrument of the NGT process. The selection of ten study participants in this evaluation phase is supported by a previous study which states that the appropriate sample size of experts in the NGT is between eight to 25 people (Shang, 2023).

The NGT technique is implemented through several phases. The first phase is the Explanation Phase. In this phase, the facilitator explains the role of each group member, the implementation procedure and how the results of the discussion will be used. Each participant was then given a piece of paper containing questions to be used in the discussion (Mullen et al., 2021). The question should be easy to understand, clear and related to the topic discussed. This initial stage usually takes about 15 minutes.

The second phase is the Quiet Phase or also known as the Idea Generation Phase. In this level, each member is asked to come up with an idea individually about solving the given problem and write it down. All panels are not allowed to interact to avoid the effect of reaching consensus among group members. This stage usually takes about 10 minutes

The third phase is the Robin Circle Phase or Idea Display Phase. At this stage, sharing of ideas between group members is done. Each idea generated by the members in the group is recorded on a Flipchart or white board and displayed to all members of the group. Suggestions and ideas are presented in simple, non-explanatory sentences. There is no discussion at this stage to ensure that each group member has an equal opportunity to add ideas without being influenced by others. Each member writes one idea at a time according to a set turn. This process is repeated until all ideas suggested by group members have been recorded. As a result, every idea and suggestion presented is considered a group result (Vahedian-Shahroodi et al., 2023).

The fourth phase is also known as the Explanation Phase. In this step, the facilitator will read all the items obtained in the previous step and each item will be briefly explained within five to ten minutes. Next, group members can give comments or explanations about something, but the facilitator needs to ensure that every criticism or comment given is non-judgmental. If there are overlapping ideas between group members, the ideas can be combined according to consensus because overlapping items can only be removed after the agreement of group members (Fisher et al., 2021).

The final phase of the NGT is the voting phase. For this phase, each group member will be asked to rate all the items and vote or choose the idea they like best individually. Each group member will be given a blank card to write down five ideas that are considered the most important. The best idea is given five marks, followed by four marks for the next idea. Then, the cards are collected again and

the total score for each item is calculated based on the order of preference given by the group members. The percentage of each item's score must exceed 70 percent to confirm the acceptance of its applicability and appropriateness (Anis et al., 2022).

4.0 Findings

Based on expert voting, the acceptance of ease of use and the appropriateness of engagement balance elements are determined by score percentage values. Table 1 presents the analysis of the data assessed for its relevance to the Items of Engagement Balance Element.

Table 1. Evaluation of Item Usability Assessment Results for Engagement Balance Elements

Number	Items	Experts Score										Total Score	% Agreement	Rank	Consensus
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10				
1	Teachers participate in entering exam scores for analysis and record-keeping	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	5	49	98	1	Approve
2	Teachers participate in religious worship activities based on their personal beliefs	4	3	5	4	5	5	4	5	4	5	44	88	6	Approve
3	Teachers participate in creating a set of test/exam questions based on the current exam schedule	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	5	49	98	1	Approve
4	Teachers participate in creating test/exam plans based on the current exam schedule and the specified level.	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	3	47	94	3	Approve
5	Teachers take part in ongoing professional development programs to boost their work performance	4	4	5	5	5	5	4	5	4	5	46	92	4	Approve
6	Teachers participate in organizing test/exam sessions based on the exam schedule and current guidelines	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	3	47	94	3	Approve
7	Teachers get involved in mark the exam answers according to the scheme provided	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	5	49	98	1	Approve
8	Teachers get involved in managing the household with their partner at home	4	4	5	4	4	5	4	4	4	5	43	86	7	Approve
9	Teachers get involved in managing children's education with spouse at home	4	5	4	4	4	5	4	4	4	5	43	86	7	Approve
10	Teachers participate in overseeing teaching and learning based on the established timetable	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	5	4	5	48	96	2	Approve
11	Teachers participate in enhancing problem-solving abilities through school-related tasks	5	5	5	5	4	5	4	5	4	5	47	94	3	Approve
12	Teachers participate in mastering the use of the latest digital teaching tools	5	3	5	5	5	5	3	5	4	5	45	90	5	Approve
13	Teachers participate in enhancing decision-making abilities through school-related tasks	5	3	5	5	5	5	4	5	4	5	46	92	4	Approve
14	Teachers participate in offering reflections on their teaching after the session concludes	5	5	5	4	5	4	4	5	4	5	46	92	4	Approve
15	Teachers are responsible for organizing co-curricular activities according to the school timetable	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	5	4	5	48	96	2	Approve
16	Teachers engage in learning the most up-to-date digital literacy skills for education	4	4	4	4	5	5	4	5	4	5	44	88	6	Approve
17	Teachers take part in physical activities to stay fit	5	3	4	4	4	4	3	3	5	5	40	80	10	Approve

Number	Items	Experts Score										Total Score	% Agreement	Rank	Consensus
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10				
18	Teachers participate in designing lesson plans tailored to the student's current level before the session begins.	5	4	5	5	5	4	4	5	4	5	46	92	4	Approve
19	Teachers participate in preparing teaching aids based on the students' current level before the session begins	5	4	5	5	5	4	4	5	4	5	46	92	4	Approve
20	Teachers participate in documenting the attendance of co-curricular professional development programs in the SPLKPM system	5	4	4	4	5	5	4	5	4	4	44	88	6	Approve
21	Teachers participate in developing expertise in using the latest educational technology and innovations	5	3	4	4	5	5	3	4	4	5	42	84	8	Approve
22	Teachers participate in enhancing critical thinking skills to foster self-development at school	5	3	5	4	5	5	4	4	4	5	44	88	6	Approve
23	Teachers participate in taking a break after managing school-related tasks	5	3	5	3	5	4	4	3	5	5	42	84	8	Approve
24	Teachers participate in engaging with the communities where they reside	5	3	4	3	4	5	3	3	4	4	38	76	11	Approve
25	Teachers participate in overseeing the student affairs rooms in the school as per the designated portfolio	5	4	4	4	5	5	3	4	3	5	42	84	8	Approve
26	Teachers participate in organizing activities aimed at improving the school's performance in cheerfulness, hygiene, health, and safety as outlined in the designated portfolio	5	4	5	4	5	5	4	4	4	4	44	88	6	Approve
27	Teachers participate in recording student affairs activities at school as outlined in the designated portfolio	5	4	5	4	5	5	4	5	4	4	45	90	5	Approve
28	Teachers participate in organizing activities aimed at improving the school's achievements in extracurricular areas.	5	3	5	4	5	5	3	5	3	4	42	84	8	Approve
29	Teachers participate in developing expertise in creating the newest educational technologies and innovations	5	4	4	4	4	5	3	4	4	3	40	80	10	Approve
30	Teachers participate in gaining expertise in developing the latest educational technologies and innovations	5	4	4	4	5	5	4	4	4	3	42	84	8	Approve
31	Teachers participate in enhancing collaboration skills within the school	5	3	5	4	5	5	4	4	4	4	43	86	7	Approve
34	Teachers participate in adapting to the culture of online work	5	4	5	5	5	5	4	4	4	4	45	82	9	Approve

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Number	Items	Experts Score										Total Score	% Agreement	Rank	Consensus
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10				
35	Teachers participate in organizing activities related to the management of student affairs at school	5	3	5	4	5	5	4	5	3	4	43	86	7	Approve
36	Teachers participate in overseeing the management of student affairs at the school	5	3	5	5	5	5	4	4	3	4	43	86	7	Approve
37	Teachers participate in recognizing and addressing student welfare concerns at school	5	3	5	5	5	5	4	4	4	4	44	88	6	Approve
38	Teachers participate in a professional development program focused on co-curricular activities	5	3	5	5	5	5	4	5	3	4	44	88	6	Approve
39	Teachers participate in overseeing the specialized classrooms within the school curriculum	5	3	5	4	5	4	3	5	3	4	41	82	9	Approve

∗ The applicability rating of the NGT technique must be above 70 percent

Based on the data analysis, all study participants unanimously agreed above 70 percent. Through the evaluation of the usability of the elements of engagement balance, the items with the highest agreement rate among the study participants is 1st, 3rd and 7th item. The three items reached 98 percent agreement. While the item with the lowest agreement is 11th item as much as 76 percent.

5.0 Discussion

Overall, the expert assessment of all items in the engagement balance element has achieved a status suitable for use, with a usability evaluation score exceeding 70 percent. The first item (*Teachers participate in entering exam scores for analysis and record-keeping*), the 3rd item (*Teachers participate in creating a set of test/exam questions based on the current exam schedule*) and the 7th item (*Teachers get involved in mark the exam answers according to the scheme provided*) reaching 98 percent agreement is an item synonymous with the teacher's duties and competencies. The findings of this study are consistent with previous researchers such as Romaniuk and Łukasiewicz-Wieleba (2021) who stated that teachers involve themselves in conducting examination management. Apart from that, a study by Webber and Nickle (2020) has stated that teachers are not only experienced in teaching but some of them are also appointed as exam questions drafter for certain subject. This shows that the engagement of teachers in their field of work is high compared to other items. Therefore, the work-life balance management model that is produced needs to balance the demands of work and life so that teachers' well-being is maintained.

The findings of this study have also shown expert consensus with the agreement of accepting all items in the elements. Therefore, the list of items underlying the element of engagement balance is arranged according to the expert's priority ranking. Based on the analysis of the findings, the final list of items in the relevant element was arranged according to expert consensus in order of priority. The position in this priority list is important because the evaluation of the model depends on the evaluation of its usability.

6.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

The researchers concluded all items in the engagement balance element received positive feedback from the expert panel and were suitable for implementation. The usability findings give positive feedback in strengthening the regulation of work-life equilibrium for secondary educators in Malaysia. In addition, there is expert consensus on the applicability of each item and element contained in the construction of this model.

To attain harmony between a teacher's work and life engagement, as guided by expert consensus on key factors, they should seek emotional support and assistance from family, friends or community groups to help manage both personal and professional responsibilities. Digital tools in educational technology can be harnessed to streamline lesson planning, evaluations, and administrative tasks. They can utilize teamwork by sharing responsibilities and collaborating with peers to lighten individual workloads and cultivate a supportive workplace environment. In addition, teachers can engage in workshops or training programs focused on time management and strategies for work-life integration. The final step in achieving balanced engagement in a teacher's work-life harmony is embracing mindful practices. This includes integrating mindfulness techniques such as meditation or journaling to remain present and alleviate the mental strain of balancing work and personal life.

Overall, the researcher concluded that the items in the element of engagement balance were accepted as a whole by all experts. Nevertheless, this research is merely semi-quantitative. Therefore, the researcher thinks that future studies can be carried out by using a qualitative approach. The researcher proposes that upcoming studies might concentrate on exploring the consensus among experts concerning the balance of engagement factors in creating a work-life balance model for non-academic personnel or educational leaders like principals, head teachers, senior assistants, or department heads.

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Paper Contribution to Related Field of Study

Evaluation of the model for the oversight of work-life equilibrium for educators for this study using the NGT method. Therefore, this study has diversified the evaluation method of the teacher's work life management model in determining the correct element items. Through the evaluation of the elements of this model, the researcher has seen its compatibility with the work-life equilibrium framework for educators.

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