

**LIFE SATISFACTION OF MIDDLE-AGED CAREER WOMEN IN KELANTAN:
THE MEDIATING ROLE OF JOB SATISFACTION
KEPUASAN HIDUP WANITA PERTENGAHAN USIA BEKERJAYA DI KELANTAN:
PERANAN PENGANTARAAN KEPUASAN KERJAYA**

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ABSTRACT

Job satisfaction is significantly related to overall attitudes towards life or life satisfaction. For most people, work is a central life activity. Full time employees spent substantial amount of time at work. Middle-aged women are working longer hours and spending less time with their families, which has led to family crisis, burn out, and depression. Thus, this study helps to determine the relationship between social support and family attachment on life satisfaction among middle-aged career women in Kelantan. It will also analyse the mediating role of job satisfaction. This study is a quantitative study, which was conducted in Kelantan. It involves 438 middle-aged career women in Kelantan. Social support, family attachment and job satisfaction were found to positively relate to life satisfaction. Moreover, job satisfaction was proven as the mediator in the relationship between social support and life satisfaction. This result indicates that life satisfaction of middle-aged career women rely significantly on job satisfaction. Job satisfaction can intervene the direction and the level of life satisfaction of middle-aged career women. This finding could be used as an input for any intervention programs and policies to uplift the well-being and quality of life of middle-aged women.

Keywords: *job satisfaction; life satisfaction; middle-aged; career women*

INTRODUCTION

Life satisfaction is the way a person perceives how her life has been and how she feels about her future (Raina & Balodi, 2013). In the life of middle-aged career women, life satisfaction has acquired supreme significance as they are undergoing multiple life changes, loses, health issues, role conflicts and so on. Thus, life satisfaction is manifested through health, economic, marital satisfaction, family attachment, and job satisfaction. Lack of satisfaction may be reflected in physical and mental health complaints. Middle-aged women who are still working in any sectors are at high risk to have lack of life satisfaction

because of burn out, stress at workplace, financial constraints and so forth (Jennings, 2008).

According to Diener (1984) satisfaction with specific aspects of life are regularly used in subjective well-being literature. The strongest indicators of life satisfaction are identified based on how close that aspects to the individuals' personal lives. There have been various attempts to study job satisfaction and its relationship with other aspects such as job performance (Ostroff, 1992), employee turnover (Koch & Steers, 1978) and work-family relationship (Bruck, Allen & Spector,

2002). Job satisfaction was also found to contribute to overall life satisfaction (Iverson, 1999). It also mediated the impact of promotional opportunity, work overload, family isolation and community participation on life satisfaction (Iverson, 1999). The impact of job satisfaction on life satisfaction is stronger than vice versa. Thus, the present study attempts to analyse the predictive power of job satisfaction to life satisfaction of middle-aged career women. Job satisfaction is predicted to mediate the impact of social support on perceived life satisfaction.

Several studies have been conducted to investigate the relationship between various types of social support and health. Researcher revealed that quality of life and sense of quality of life have increased among patients with oncological diseases (Sek, 2003) and multiple sclerosis (Motl & McAuley, 2009) in relation to social support that they received. It also helps in reducing tension caused by stress (Knoll & Schwarzer, 2004) and allows them to play their paternal roles in the family (Isacco, Garfield, Rogers, 2010). Buffer hypothesis suggests that social support helps to reinterpret our life situation, for example from threat to challenge (Sek, 2004). Thus, it enables us to cope with difficult life situations in positive ways and enhance life satisfaction. Such assumption has also been made by the researchers of this study to support this stand.

Relationship closeness, relationship satisfaction and extent of the relationship can also influence life satisfaction (Kasprzak, 2010). Life satisfaction is correlated with positive social relation, especially with one's spouse and one's family. The closest bond is usually formed in the marriage and family. This current study has selected family attachment as one of the predictors of life satisfaction. The feeling of emotional closeness would stimulate happiness and raise life satisfaction. The theory of attachment shows that it is not the amount of social contact, but it is their quality that accounts (Kasprzak, 2010). Nevertheless, family relationships have shrunken in this modern age, but social relationship and friendship grow, especially when they do not have families living nearby.

Job satisfaction otherwise, is expected to influence middle-aged career women's perception towards life satisfaction, and affect the direction of it. It can also intervene the influence of social support on life satisfaction. In cases when job satisfaction is low, life satisfaction will tend to be low, even though the perception towards social support is high. Hussain (2006) proposed that intrinsic factors like the work itself, recognition, responsibilities and achievement influence job satisfaction. Job satisfaction is a self-reported positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job or from job experience (Locke, 1976). Thus, research on the impact of job satisfaction on life satisfaction, and the mediating role of job satisfaction among middle-aged women is fundamental. The findings will guide the researcher and other parties to plan the programs and strategies to enhance middle-aged women's life satisfaction, and subsequently their emotional well-being.

Therefore, this study aimed to fulfil the following objectives:

1. To determine the relationship between social support, family attachment and job satisfaction on life satisfaction among middle-aged career women in Kelantan.
2. To analyse the mediating role of job satisfaction.

METHODOLOGY

Research design

This research has utilized the quantitative research method in the process of data collection. The technique that has been used is survey based on the validated instruments. The instruments are Life Satisfaction Index-Short Form (Barrett & Murk, 2006), Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (Zimet et al., 1988), Adult Attachment Scale (Collins & Read, 1990), and The Generic Job Satisfaction Scale (MacDonald & MacIntyre, 1997). These instruments measure life satisfaction, social support, family attachment, and job satisfaction. Researches done in the past have proven the reliability and validity of those instruments.

Research locations

The location of this research is Kelantan. Kelantan is positioned in the north-east of Peninsular Malaysia. It is bordered by Narathiwat Province of Thailand to the north, Terengganu to the south-east, Perak to the west, and Pahang to the south. To the north-east of Kelantan is the South China Sea. Kelantan is perceived as maintaining the lifestyle and culture of the traditional rural-based residents. People in Kelantan have a good deal of unique culture and heritage. They are generally characterized as united, ambitious and diligent. In most areas of Kelantan, agriculture is still their main economic activities. For the purpose of this study, we have randomly selected 5 districts, out of 10 districts in Kelantan, which are Kota Bharu, Bachok, Pasir Mas, Machang and Tumpat. Kota Bharu is the capital city of Kelantan which has the highest population, which is 491,237, as reported in 2010 (Department of Statistics, 2010). Middle-aged women who work at government and private sectors as well as self-employed become the sample for this study.

Sampling method

The samples that were selected in this research are career women. The sampling method used was purposive sampling method. This method

was selected due to a few criteria that need to be fulfilled which are women with career, age between 40-59 years old, residing in Kelantan and possessing Malaysian Citizenship. The selection of respondents who have these criteria will fulfil the objectives of the study. There were 438 respondents participated in this study which was enough to represent the population of middle-aged career women in Kelantan. The overall population in Kelantan is 1.8 million in 2016. A total 632 000 residents of Kelantan are employed, and 24 000 are unemployed from the total number of labour force. Remarkably, 45.8% of female in Kelantan are employed, based on Labour Force Participation Rates (LFPR). This shows that women in Kelantan are very active and vibrant. They participated in government and private sectors, and in fact, many of them are entrepreneurs.

Data analysis

The data obtained from this study was analysed using the SPSS software. Pearson correlation and Hayes and Preacher mediation analysis were applied to answer research questions. The reliability and validity of the data were also tested before descriptive statistical analysis and inferential analysis were conducted. Reliability analysis showed that Cronbach alpha for all scales are more than 0.7 (**Table 1**).

Table 1: Reliability analysis

Scales	No. of items	α
Life Satisfaction Index-Short Form	9	0.793
Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support	10	0.904
Adult Attachment Scale	16	0.774
The Generic Job Satisfaction Scale	10	0.889

Table 2: Analysis of correlation

Variables	M	SD	r
Social support (IV)	32.1009	4.47613	.440**
Family attachment (IV)	43.8000	6.65122	.306**
Job satisfaction (M)	31.7193	4.07061	.613**

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Table 3: Mediation analysis

Steps of analysis	b	LLCI	ULCI
Social support → Job satisfaction (a)	0.458***	0.382	0.533
Job satisfaction → Life satisfaction (b)	0.424***	0.354	0.493
Social support → Life satisfaction (c)	0.194***	0.147	0.248
Social support (Job satisfaction) → Life satisfaction (c')	0.129***	0.066	0.192

*** p < 0.001

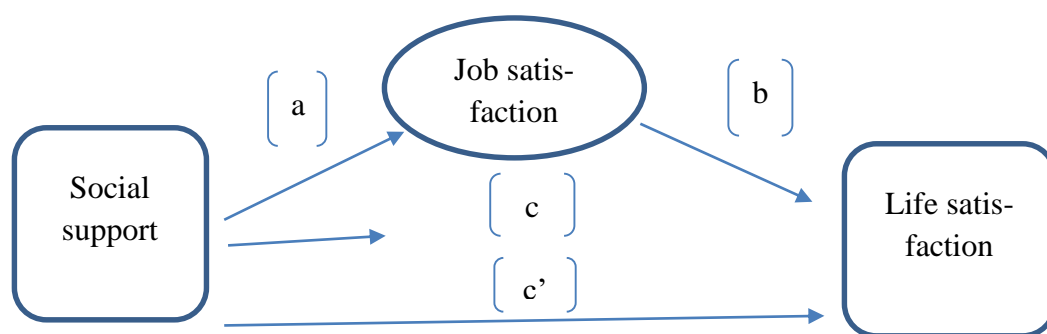


Figure 1: The interaction between all variables.

RESULTS

Socio-demographic analysis

Descriptive analysis on socio-demographic background has been conducted to observe the distribution of the respondents. A total of 273 respondents (62.8%) are from Kota Bharu, 11.7% are from Bachok and 11.5% are from Pasir Mas. Other districts, which are Machang and Tumpat have less respondents.

In term of marital status, most of the respondents (81.8%) are married, while 18% are single mothers and unmarried women. Majority of them work in government sectors (59%), 14.4% work in private sectors, whereas a considerable number of them (26.7%) are self-employed. Most of them (38%) reported to earn between RM2900- RM5500 monthly, 30.6% earn between RM1001-RM2800. Surprisingly, a substantial number (27.6%) also reported to have a very low monthly income, which is a maximum RM1000 per month. Only 4% reported an income level of at least RM5600 monthly.

Correlation analysis of social support, family attachment and job satisfaction on life satisfaction

Analysis of correlation indicates that social support, family attachment and job satisfaction are positively and significantly correlated with life satisfaction. Standard deviation for all three variables is in normal range. Analysis of Pearson Correlation shows that job satisfaction is the most highly related to life satisfaction (r = 0.613, p < 0.01). This is followed by social support (r = 0.440) and family attachment (r = 0.306). All correlations are significant at p < 0.01 (Table 2).

Mediation analysis

Overall, the model explained about 40% of the variance in life satisfaction (R² = 0.39, p < 0.001). Both social support and job satisfaction substantially contributed to the variance of life satisfaction. Based on the theories and past

researches, job satisfaction has been assigned and tested as the mediator of life satisfaction. As seen in table 3, the analysis of mediation by using Hayes and Preacher's macro shows that path c (relationship between social support and life satisfaction) is significant ($b = 0.1954$, $p < 0.001$). This finding indicates that high level of social support contributes to high level of life satisfaction.

However, the result also demonstrated that the direct effect (path c') of social support on life satisfaction was reduced to 0.129 ($p < 0.001$). The effect of social support on life satisfaction, when controlled for the effect of the mediator (job satisfaction) was noticeably reduced, yet still significant. Thus, this shows that the mediator has partially mediated the effect of social support on life satisfaction. Job satisfaction did intervene the relationship between social support and life satisfaction, but not eradicate the impact. Perhaps, middle-aged career women rely more on their perception towards job satisfaction in determining their sense of life satisfaction. Dissatisfaction with job might weaken the relationship between social support and life satisfaction.

Table 3 also shows that social support was significantly related to job satisfaction (path a). Social support has a positive and significant influence on job satisfaction ($b = 0.458$, $p < 0.001$). It denotes that middle-aged women who have adequate and high social support will tend to have great job satisfaction as well. Life satisfaction was also substantially influenced by job satisfaction (path b). Middle-aged women derived their sense of life satisfaction from their perception towards job satisfaction. If they were happy with their job, they were more likely to perceive their life as satisfactory. Figure 1 illustrates the interaction between all variables.

Bootstrap analysis

Table 4 displays the parameter estimate and the bias-corrected and accelerated confidence intervals (BCa CIs) for the indirect effect obtained from the bootstrap analysis. The indirect effect of the mediator was statistically significant, with the parameter estimate of 0.194 and 95% BCa CI of 0.147 to 0.248. Thus, the parameter estimate fall within lower and upper level of confidence interval. This shows that

the confidence interval did not contain zero. In other words, the direct effect (path c') verified that the mediator (job satisfaction) mediated the effect of social support on life satisfaction.

Table 4: Indirect effect of x on y

Mediator	Parameter estimate	95% BCa CI		
		SE	LLCI	ULCI
Job satisfaction	0.194	0.026	0.147	0.248

DISCUSSION

Job satisfaction has been defined as the amount of overall positive effect that individuals have toward their jobs in relation to a series of aspects such as pay, promotion opportunities, the job itself, management style, working conditions and the work group (Arnold & Feldman, 1986). The present finding showed a strong association and a predictive value of job satisfaction on life satisfaction. Middle-aged women may derive a sense of life purpose and meaning from their job. The job itself may give them a sense of identity, especially if they hold important position in the organization. Thus, work has become the end in itself and the centre of many people's life.

Researchers suggested three theoretical models, to explain the linkage between job satisfaction and life satisfaction. The models are spillover, compensation and segmentation perspectives (Loscocco & Roschelle, 1991). The spillover model proposed that satisfaction with one domain of individuals' life might spread to other domains of life. In the case of present study, satisfaction with career has led to satisfaction with life. Middle-aged women who are happy with their job would also be happy with their life. Sense of autonomy, supervisory support, job security, pay and promotional opportunity are the important elements in job satisfaction.

The second correlate of life satisfaction in this study is social support. Social support can be defined as available networks of contacts providing a sense of interpersonal relationship, acceptance, security, and the possibility of ob-

taining various types of help in difficult situations (Sek, 2003). Researchers have found that various types of social support are good for health. Social support increases well-being, quality of life, happiness and life satisfaction (Sek, 2004). Social support lowers the tension caused by stress, life changes, illness and so forth. Middle-aged women rely on social support to face life difficulties. Their major sources of support are spouses, family, friends and colleagues. Thus, high social support enhances middle-aged women sense of life satisfaction as it produces positive feelings and mood. Kasprzak (2010) argued that having friends and colleagues itself allows one to feel socially acceptable and attractive, and subsequently uplift self-esteem.

Job satisfaction has been proved to be the mediator in the analysis. The independent variable in the analysis was social support as it was significant in predicting life satisfaction. Analysis showed that job satisfaction fully mediates the influence of social support on life satisfaction. It signifies that, life satisfaction will tend to be low, if the job satisfaction is low, even the social support is good, and vice versa. The domain of job satisfaction can remove or deteriorate the impact of social support on life satisfaction. This finding strengthens the findings of other researchers such as Ostroff (1992) and Bruck, Allen & Spector (2002).

Job satisfaction mediates life satisfaction as middle-aged career women spend a substantial amount of time at work, normally 8 to 10 hours per day. For most people, including middle-aged career women, work is a central life activity. Bottom-up perspective proposed that job satisfaction has a causal influence on life satisfaction because it is a part of life satisfaction (Loewe et al., 2014). Meanwhile, top-down perspective argues that life satisfaction is the one which influence job satisfaction. The positive effect associated with life satisfaction results in the positive perception and interpretation about job events, job conditions and job characteristics. This in turn, leads to a higher score in job satisfaction (Heller, Watson & Hies, 2004).

This finding indicates that social support and job satisfaction are two main areas which need to be focused to enhance middle-aged women's well-being and life satisfaction.

Policies involved middle-aged women should be sensitive to these two elements. Programs which relate to the development of career and social support should be established. Group counselling, support group and social skills workshop might help women to strengthen their circle of social support. Furthermore, to help them with their career development, middle-aged women may need talent management programs, related job skills training and positive working environment. As middle-aged women are vulnerable to health constraints and physical limitation, the management should be more sensitive to their welfare. Some flexibility may be needed in term of working hours, leave and so on.

CONCLUSION

Middle age is a critical stage to be highlighted as successful and happy middle age will lead to healthy aging. Psychological and emotional well-being of middle-aged women determines the well-being of the whole family. For career women, they are assets to the organization. Their skills, talents and experience must be utilized and valued to benefit the company and the nation as a whole. Future researches may need to be extended by looking into other factors of life satisfaction which may also contribute to well-being of middle-aged women. Qualitative study can also be conducted to explore their needs and concerns in depth.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This article is based on the findings from RAGS (Research Acculturation Grant Scheme) funded by The Ministry of Higher Education. Research code is R/RAGS/A04.00/01107A/001/2015/000297.

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