

Precarious Work Among Generation Y in Malaysia: A Model Using Flexible Working Time and Employee Well-Being

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Abstract

Precarious employment in recent years has become a prominent social and economic issue because of many negative consequences associated with it such as health issues, job insecurity, low pay, no social or health benefits and work-life conflict for employees. The motivation of this study is to examine factors that influenced the rise of precarious work among Generation Y in Malaysia. This generation was selected for the study because they form a major allotment of the Malaysian workforce and succumb towards flexible working time for work-life balance. A quantitative study using 120 primary data gathered from a self-administered survey questionnaire was adopted in this study. Data were inspected through correlation and multiple regression analysis and interestingly, the analysis discovered that flexible working time did not have a

significant contribution towards precarious work among Generation Y in Malaysia despite the high concern towards work-life balance among them.

Keywords: *Precarious Work, Flexible Working Time, Employee Well-being, Gen Y*

1.0 An Arbitrage of Precarious Work among Generation Y

Employment is called precarious work when it is short-term or on fixed-term contracts (Serrano, 2014). Deloitte survey company conducted a study in 2017 and found that Generation Y, seeking stability and opportunities in an uncertain world with frequent changes in jobs are also influenced highly by flexible working practices as they are taking up precarious jobs on the pretext of flexible work arrangements to achieve work-life balance. Arnold and Bongiovi (2013) also found that precarious work also increased because of a decline in the attachment of Generation Y employees to employers and perceived job insecurity growth. The deleterious effects of precarious work on prospects also reinforce a vicious cycle of precarious work with few chances of training or enhancing skills for better employment (Crofts & Wynn, 2013; Kalleberg, 2009).

Kalleberg (2014) and Kumar et. al (2013) argued that it is difficult to operationalise the concept of precarious work and what drives it because it is not counted in current statistics, and existing statistical categories such as temporary work, part-time work, self-employment is related to precarious work but are not always precarious. Therefore Kalleberg (2014) suggested a comprehensive study on precarious work to be developed to ascertain the causes and consequences of measuring precarious work.

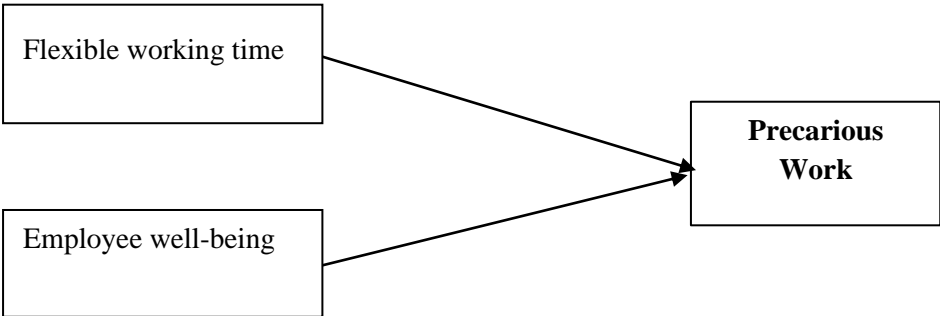
1.1 Flexible Working Time and Generation Y

Flexible working time is popular among Generation Y because it allows them to achieve a work-life balance which they highly value (Deloitte, 2017). Hewison (2015) studied precarious work in Asian and Asian Pacific countries and found employers have flexibility in hiring and firing employees who are using precarious forms of employment. Hayman (2009) and Razak et al (2014) stated that flexible working time helps in retaining employees, improves job satisfaction, reduces costs and permanent workforce and attracts underrepresented groups in the labour force who are staying out because of familial responsibilities. In addition, Lambert, Marler and Gueutal (2007) and Hayman (2009) found that people who value work-life balance prefer flexible working time. On the contrary, Sharafizad, Paull, and Omari (2011) argued that just offering, and availability of flexible working time does not ensure employees will avail it because of their increasing workload. As a result, seek precarious work that gives them more flexibility and work-life balance. Kalleberg & Hewison (2011) concluded that both employees' and employer's pursuit of flexibility is giving rise to precarious employment. Other interesting findings from Hewison (2015) and Hinterseer (2013) observed that all flexible working time cannot be called precarious because it has risks as the income is not certain. Nienhueser (2005) argued that flexible working time can turn precarious in the medium or long term if they go with precarious working conditions.

1.2 Employee Well-Being and Generation Y

Price WaterhouseCoopers conducted a survey in 2012 and discovered that Generation Y in Malaysia put a high priority towards work-life balance upon employment. In addition, a survey by Deloitte in 2016 found that they value flexible working hours more than cash bonuses because it allows them to achieve work-life balance as they believe it can be achieved as the employer is emphasizing employee well-being. Working Life Research Institute (2012) report states that the acceptance of employee well-being and its effectiveness in reducing work-life conflict and turnover intentions depends on the cultural factors of the country as employee well-being does not always lead to work-life balance in all cultures or countries, in some countries like Latin America it leads to negative outcomes while in Anglo and Asian countries it leads to positive outcomes related to work-life balance. Haskova & Dudova (2017) found that women in Vise grad countries are taking up part-time or flexible or contractual work which are often insecure to cope with care responsibilities and achieve work-life balance as a temporary strategy. However, a European Commission report (2016) indicated that this temporary strategy is turning into a trap and excluding women from a stable or standard and secure job. However, Hewison (2016) argued that as the length of time spent in precarious work becomes longer and when women's efforts to obtain a stable source of income fails repeatedly, they are trapped in precarious employment and begin to view such type of work negatively. Figure 1,0 below illustrates the framework to conceptualize the study.

Figure 1.0: Conceptual Framework



2.0 Methodology

The quantitative research method was adopted in this study where primary data were used and gathered through a self-administered survey questionnaire, distributed online. The method of distribution was believed to reach Generation Y as they are very digital-oriented. A correlation study was conducted to examine the relationship between flexible working time and employee well-being towards precarious work among Generation Y employees in Malaysia. There were 120 respondents participated in the survey and data were collected in approximately 5 weeks. All of the participants were employees who have full-time employment and at the same time doing precarious work. The measurement for items in the survey questionnaire was adopted from Bernston & Marklund (2014), Lewchuk, Clarke and de Wolff (2008), Altindag & Siller (2014), Al Rajudi (2012), Hayman (2009), Kellman (2015), Wadsworth & Facer (2016), Mukururi & Ngari (2014) Kellman (2015), Razak et al (2014) and Bijsterveldt, (2015) and measured using a

five-point Likert scale with responses ranging from 1 to 5. 1 denoted strongly disagree, 2 denoted disagree, 3 denoted indifferent, 4 denoted agree, and 5 denoted strongly agree.

3.0 Results

From descriptive analysis, out of the 120 respondents, the study found that 96 respondents were between the ages of 20-25 years of age, 99 respondents were male, 104 respondents acquired bachelor's degrees and 82 respondents were newly joined employees of the organisation.

3.1 Correlation Analysis

Prior to the correlation and multiple regression analysis, data were inspected for any missing values and also underwent outliers inspection and normality test to check for common method variances. All measurement items were inspected for validity and reliability. Correlation analysis was performed to identify the linear relationship between variables used in the study. It was found that flexible working time demonstrated ($r=.185$, $p=.044$) which is very low with a significant relationship. On the contrary, employee well-being was found to have a positive but low relationship against precarious work depicted by ($r=.369$, $p=.000$) illustrated in Table 1.0 below.

Table 1.0 Correlation Analysis

Correlations Analysis	
	PW
PW	1
FWT	.185*
EWB	.369*

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

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

Regression Analysis

Data obtained were further investigated using multiple regression analysis. The analysis was conducted to investigate the relationship of one continuous dependent variable against a few predictors. Results from the multiple regression analysis are tabulated in Table 2.0 below. From the analysis, it was found that flexible working time has no unique significant relationship with precarious work ($\beta= .041$, $p=.595$). This demonstrated that flexible working time is not significantly related and does not have a statistical effect on precarious work. Another predictor, employee wellbeing was found to have a unique significant relationship with precarious work ($\beta = .285$, $p=.003$). This demonstrated that employee well-being is significantly related and does have a statistical effect on precarious work.

Table 2.0 Multiple Regression Analysis

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
	(Constant)	1.317	.518		2.542	.012
	Flexible work arrangement	.041	.076	.047	.533	.595
	Employee well being	.285	.094	.274	3.033	.003

4.0 Discussion and Conclusion

The objective of this study is to examine the relationship between flexible working time and employee well-being towards precarious work among Generation Y employees in Malaysia. The result from the analysis section demonstrated that there is a statistically significant relationship between employee well-being with precarious work in Malaysia. However, flexible working time does not have any statistically significant relationship with precarious work.

4.1 Flexible Work Arrangement

Based on the analysis conducted, findings in flexible working time correspond to several previous studies. Amongst the studies are Sharafizad, Paull, & Omari (2011) who found that employee demographics such as age play a key role in seeking flexible working time as most young employees belonging to Generation Y make use of flexible work arrangements to achieve work-life balance. In addition, the study also found that most staff were not able to take up flexible work arrangements because of their work type. Another study by Curtine & Sanson (2016) showed that flexible working time was mostly practised by permanent employees to attain work-life balance and gain flexibility thus permanent employees are seeking part-time or short-term jobs which leads to precarious employment. On the contrary, the findings are the opposite with Hall (2015) who discovered that flexible working time improves work-life balance and wellbeing which helps in reducing precarious work. Multiple regression analysis conducted in this study found that the flexible working time of Generation Y employees in Kuala Lumpur has a very minimum unique contribution to precarious work, denoted by $\beta = .041$. It is the opposite of findings on regression analysis by Hewison & Kalleberg (2012), Sharma (2016), and Curtine & Sanson (2016), who found that flexible working time contributed towards precarious jobs. The result of multiple regression is only in line with the study by Razak et al. (2014) who found that precarious employment practices are not being used for reducing costs or permanent workforce but just to provide employees flexibility thus it does not have any effect on precarious work in Malaysia.

4.2 Employee Well-Being

This study proposed that employee well-being decreases the negative consequences of precarious work among Generation Y in Malaysia. Analysis conducted in the study found a small significant relationship between employee wellbeing and precarious work ($r=.369$, $p=.000$) means employee wellbeing contributed small significant relationship against precarious work. These findings correspond to the previous studies, United Way (2013) and Forbes Coaches Council (2017). These studies found that employers providing precarious employment need to focus on employee well-being programs so that employees can achieve work-life balance improve their mental and physical well-being because of employee's well-being initiatives and reduce the negative consequences of precarious work. On the other hand, Noor and Mahudin (2016) studied family and women's well-being in Malaysia and concluded that there is a gap between work-life balance policies and practices and employee well-being policies reality and available policies and practices with regard to employee well-being in Malaysian organisations. Many employers do not implement such policies due to cost concerns and most precarious employees are not provided with such initiatives.

Overall, this study among Generation Y in Malaysia revealed that 1 unit increase in employee well-being resulted in .285 decrease in intention to perform precarious work and 1 unit increase in flexible working time resulted in .041 decrease in intention to perform precarious work.

5.0 Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

This study focused on Generation Y as the sampling group. Therefore, the findings may not be appropriate to generalize to another cohort. In terms of geography, the study was conducted in Malaysia and concluded that the findings may not be able to generalize other geographical areas. For future research, it is good to have a comparison of cohort i.e., Generation Y and another generation in terms of factors influencing precarious work.

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