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Work-Life Balance and Its Impact on Turnover Intention of Married Female Academics in Malaysia: The Mediating Role of Job Satisfaction

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Abstract: The COVID-19 pandemic that led to a nationwide lockdown in most countries and the subsequent implementation of work from home was a challenge for many married female academics. They spent less hours on research and more time juggling their family responsibilities, including household chores, childcare, and taking care of the elderly, all on top of conducting and managing their lectures online via video conferences. The poor work-life balance of married female academics may have affected their job satisfaction and turnover intention. Hence, the goal of this study was to examine the possible relationships that may exist between work-life balance, job satisfaction, and turnover intention and the possible mediating effect of job satisfaction in the relationship between work-life balance and turnover intention of married female academics in Malaysia. The aim of the study was to contribute to existing knowledge on work-life balance, job satisfaction, and turnover intention among women in academia, especially considering the limited studies available in Malaysia. Another aim was to propose policies that should be implemented to support and prevent females from leaving the workforce. The research methodology employed in this study was a deductive approach. The design of the study was an explanatory design, a mono-method quantitative design, using questionnaires distributed online. The research strategy applied was the survey method using cross-sectional study. The online questionnaire was answered by 150 respondents. Data analysis was done using SPSS software to test the reliability of the data; to conduct linearity, correlation, and multiple regression tests; and to examine the relationships between the independent and dependent variables. A mediation test was conducted using the Sobel test. The results of the study revealed that work-life balance had a significant positive relationship with job satisfaction and a negative relationship with turnover intention, while job satisfaction had an inverse relationship with turnover intention. Lastly, job satisfaction fully mediated the relationship between work-life balance and turnover intention. The scientific novelty of the study was the test results, which indicate that married female academics in Malaysia do have the intention to leave their university because of poor work-life balance and job satisfaction. The study provides implications of the research findings.

Keywords: turnover intention, job satisfaction, work-life balance.

工作与生活的平衡及其对马来西亚已婚女学者离职意愿的影响：工作满意度的中介作用

摘要：新冠肺炎大流行导致大多数国家在全国范围内封锁，随后在家工作，这对许多已婚女性学者来说是一个挑战。除了通过视频会议在线进行和管理讲座之外，他们花在研究上的时间减少了，而将更多的时间花在了家庭责任上，包括家务、育儿和照顾老人。已婚女性学者的工作与生活平衡不佳可能影响了她们的工作满意度和离职意愿。因此，本研究目的是检验工作与生活平衡、工作满意度和离职意愿之间可能存在的关系，以及工作满意度在已婚女性工作与生活平衡与离职意愿之间可能存在的中介作用。马来西亚的学者。该研究的目的是为学术界女性提供关于工作与生活平衡、工作满意度和离职意愿的现有知识，特别是考

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虑到马来西亚现有的有限研究。另一个目的是提出应实施的政策，以支持和防止女性离开劳动力市场。本研究采用的研究方法是演绎法。该研究的设计是解释性设计，单方法定量设计，使用在线分发的问卷。所采用的研究策略是采用横断面研究的调查方法。在线问卷由 150 名受访者回答。采用 SPSS 软件进行数据分析，检验数据的可靠性；进行线性、相关和多元回归测试；并检查自变量和因变量之间的关系。使用索贝尔测试进行中介测试。研究结果表明，工作与生活平衡与工作满意度呈显著正相关，与离职意向呈显著负相关，而工作满意度与离职意向呈负相关。最后，工作满意度在工作与生活平衡与离职意愿之间完全中介。该研究的科学新颖之处在于测试结果，这表明马来西亚已婚女学者确实有意离开大学，因为工作与生活平衡和工作满意度不佳。该研究提供了研究结果的含义。

关键词：离职意向、工作满意度、工作与生活平衡。

1. Introduction

Female participation in the workforce is an economic indicator of a country because it reduces the unemployment rate and poverty, increases the standard of living, builds good governance, and promotes sustainable development. The participation of women in the workforce is also crucial as it increases household income, consumption, and purchasing power, leading to a stronger national and global economy while at the same time promoting gender equality and diversity [1]. We must also remember that women who work are financially independent, can support their family financially, and serve as role models to their children [2]. The participation of women in the workforce is considered a boon for organizations as, according to the survey conducted by the International Labour Organization (ILO) in 2019, about two-thirds of companies stated that a gender-balanced organization has benefited them tremendously [3]. These companies saw improvements in their business outcomes, increased profitability, and increased productivity. They were able to attract and retain talent, saw an increase in creativity and openness, benefitted from an improved reputation, and were better able to gauge consumer interest and demand [3].

In the past, women have fought for equal rights, which included the right to vote, to an education, and to work. It was not until World War I that women began joining the workforce and taking on jobs as drivers, postal workers, and factory workers while men fought in the war [4]. However, women slowly started taking on positions of power, which were previously only held by men, and from there we saw Sirimavo Bandaranaike elected as the world's first female prime minister on July 21, 1960 (as the prime minister of Sri Lanka) [5]. We also saw, in 1972, the appointment of Katharine Graham [67] as the first female CEO of the *Washington Post* [6]. The first

female cosmonaut, Valentina Tereshkova, made history as the first woman in space aboard the then-Soviet Union's Vostok 6 spacecraft in 1963. In 1948, Helen Maud Cam became the first woman tenured at Harvard University [7], [8]. These women slowly paved the way for more women to join the workforce and break the glass ceiling that was imposed on them [7], [8].

In the year 1920, 20% of women in the United States (US) were in the labor force. By the year 2019, about 76,852,000 women aged 16 years and over were in the labor force, representing close to half (47%) of the total labor force. Furthermore, only 57.4% of women participated in the labor force, compared to 69.2% of men [9], [10], [11]. However, the COVID-19 pandemic became a challenge to working married women as they juggled work and family responsibilities during the lockdown [68]. This may have led to more than 2.2 million fewer women in the labor force by October 2020, compared to October 2019 in the US [12]. In the United Kingdom (UK), 15.49 million women aged 16–64 were employed from October 2020 to December 2020, a decrease of 117,000 from a year ago. The female employment rate was 71.8%, down from a record high of 72.4% a year previously [13], [14]. Furthermore, a report by PricewaterhouseCoopers (PWC) revealed that 17 out of the 24 countries from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) reported an overall increase in unemployment of women as the COVID-19 pandemic increased the unequal burden of care carried by women, causing more women than men to leave the labor market during the pandemic [15]. According to the Deloitte Global Report, which surveyed 5,000 women across ten countries, nearly 80% of women said that their workloads had increased because of the pandemic, while 66% of women reported having more responsibilities at home. Furthermore, the report found that the top reason

women are considering leaving their current employers is due to lack of work-life balance (WLB) [16]. [17] stated that care work is, in fact, unbalanced — even among highly educated couples. Women devote significantly more time to household work than men do. When married mothers and fathers in the USA are compared, the former spend almost twice as much time on housework and childcare. In the gender-egalitarian countries of northern Europe, women still do almost two-thirds of the unpaid work. Even among heterosexual couples with female breadwinners, women do most care work.

Malaysia ranks the third-lowest in the ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) region for female labor participation, lower than Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam. The Department of Statistics Malaysia (DOSM) revealed that in the second quarter of 2020, the Malaysian labor force comprised 61.1 percent of males (9.58 million persons) and 38.9 percent of females (6.09 million persons) [18]. However, compared to the second quarter of 2021, there were 9.29 million employed males, which also comprised 61.1 percent, whereas females accounted for 38.9 percent, which is 5.92 million persons. There is a drop in the number of females in the labor force, from 6.09 million in 2020 to 5.92 million in 2021 [19]. Furthermore, the highest female labor participation in the Malaysian labor market was from the age group of 25 to 34 years (72.6%) followed by 35 to 44 years (67.3%), next was the age group of 45 to 54 years (58.8%) [19]. According to [20], the female labor force participation peaks between the age of 25 and 29, coinciding with the age around which women usually bear children; after this age, labor force participation declines and does not rise again. The reason for the decline in female labor participation as mentioned by [20] could be due to a married woman's domestic responsibilities.

Most women begin to start families while they are working and these women find that it is extremely demanding having to balance work and family responsibilities, which includes caring for a child. According to [21], [22], the COVID-19 pandemic that resulted in a nationwide lockdown on 18th March 2020 in Malaysia had a negative effect on married women, as the existing inequalities women experienced in the labor market began to worsen. As families started to work from home and children continued their education online, women had to shoulder the responsibilities of taking care of the family and managing their work. Some women were forced to quit the labor market altogether to take on the family responsibilities. In fact, this can be seen in the [19] labor force survey which revealed that the number of prime-aged workers who had given up employment had spiked with a total of 183,960 prime-aged workers leaving the workforce between January 2020 and April 2020; the majority of whom were women. The

COVID-19 pandemic has also severely affected married female academics as they struggle to be the primary caregiver of stay-at-home children while continuing to be hold classes online and to work on their academic research [69].

1.1. Married Women in Higher Education

The role of an academic is not only to teach and equip students with the necessary skills needed to enter the job market, but academics are also involved in motivating and challenging students to exercise their critical thinking [23], [24], [25]. On top of that, academics are involved in research, publication, and academic administration, they are mentors to their students, they are academic supervisors, they provide academic consultation, must constantly keep up with new knowledge and technology, and they also contribute to the curriculum development [23], [24], [25]. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic has caused many married women to leave academia in the UK simply because there was lack of work-life balance (WLB) and they were dissatisfied with their jobs [26]. In the USA, the pandemic pressure left many married female scientists to consider leaving academia due to the lack of WLB, which affected their job satisfaction. [27] stated that a survey conducted in two periods of time—one before the pandemic, from March 2019 to March 2020, and one more recent, from March 2020 to September 2020—found emerging evidence about how the pandemic had affected the careers of researchers with children, especially women. Furthermore, a similar survey of around 5,000 members of staff in the University of Utah's academic health-care system—including researchers, medics, and support staff—found that the stress of caring for children during the pandemic lead many women to consider leaving their jobs or reducing their hours [27]. Furthermore, [17] stated that female academics found it difficult to record or conduct lectures while having toddlers around in the house.

In Malaysia, there are 20 public universities and 57 private universities catering to both local and international students [23], [28]. Malaysia had 130,000 international students from Asia, Africa, and the Middle East enrolled in its higher education institutions in 2017; however, it is projected to reach 250,000 by 2025 [23], [28]. In Malaysia, the Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) in 2019 reported a total of 31,843 female academics working in Malaysian public and private universities compared to 25,744 male academics [29]. However, by 2020, the number of female academics in Malaysian public and private universities decreased to 31,298 while the number of male academics decreased to 24,937 [28]. While it is not certain why the number of academics decreased between 2019 and 2020, female academics may be leaving as Malaysia is a patriarchal country. The domestic role of women will inevitably spill into the

workplace [30]. Women have dual duties as housewives at home (taking care of their children, elderly parents, and handling household chores) while managing their work, which is more stressful during the lockdown; hence, the job dissatisfaction and intention to leave academia may occur [30].

The lack of WLB has been a serious cause of concern in Malaysia, especially among married female academics, as the various roles held by academics working from home (WFH) during the COVID-19 pandemic may have taken a toll on their job satisfaction and turnover intention. In Malaysia, the lack of WLB has affected married female academics, as they have to manage their children and their academic work [31]. As schools, kindergartens, and childcare centers remain closed during the lockdown, women have to take care of their children, including monitoring and guiding them during their online classes while managing their own workload, which may have led to job dissatisfaction and intention to quit. Job dissatisfaction may also arise as academics record their lectures for the upcoming weeks and report to the university using various platforms while also working on research and publication [32]. Furthermore, [33] further mentioned that academics also faced job dissatisfaction. They have to supervise, mentor, and respond to students' queries online beyond the normal working hours, which may have led to intention to quit. Hence, this research aims to study the possible relationships between WLB, job satisfaction, and turnover intention, along with the possibility that job satisfaction may mediate the relationship between WLB and turnover intention among married female academics in Malaysia. The results of this research would contribute to existing knowledge, especially since there is scarce research available in this area [34]. In addition, this study would create awareness and promote the creation of appropriate policies necessary to support and retain married female academics in Malaysia.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Relationship between Work-Life Balance and Turnover Intention

Work-life balance (WLB) is the degree to which an individual can instantaneously balance the emotional, behavioral, and time demands of paid work, family, and personal duties [35]. The turnover intention is defined by [36] as "an employee's conscious and deliberate willfulness to leave the organization within a certain time interval". [37] stated that WLB has a significant influence on turnover intention. The author's study using self-administered questionnaires on 250 faculty members from the public sector colleges in Baluchistan, Pakistan, revealed that WLB had a direct negative relationship with academics' intention to leave. From a national survey on the WLB and

intention to stay in the USA's pharmacy faculty, [38] found that faculty with higher WLB was more likely to report an intention to stay in academia. A similar result was obtained by [39], where WLB had a significant relationship with the intention to stay among high school teachers in Tangerang, Indonesia. However, among female academics, [40] found that WLB had a significant negative relationship with turnover intention. Study [40] on 424 women from the faculty teaching science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) disciplines at a USA college or university found that married female academics found managing their family and work roles difficult. Study [41] on women engineers found that WLB plays a significant role in female turnover intention. Hence, from this literature review, we proposed that:

H1: There is a significant negative relationship between work-life balance and turnover intention of married female academics in Malaysia.

2.2. Relationship between Work-Life Balance and Job Satisfaction

[42] defined job satisfaction as "a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job or job experience". Studies have shown that WLB affects job satisfaction [43]. Study [44] on the WLB of 369 academics from public and private universities in the Kurdistan Region found that WLB had a strong positive relationship with job satisfaction. In Jakarta, Indonesia, study [45] obtained a similar finding with academics from maritime higher education. The authors found that WLB led to personal satisfaction in their job or role as educators. Concerning female academics, study [46] found that WLB, through flexible working hours, work shifts, and study leave, significantly influenced job satisfaction of female academic staff in Lagos state, Nigeria. Study [47] on 103 female academics in Pakistan found that WLB significantly influenced job satisfaction through flexible working hours and organizational facilities. Finally, the study by [43] on 105 women from the different professions (Teaching, Banking, Healthcare, Ready Made Garments Industries, Public and Private Corporations, Government Service and Entrepreneur) during the COVID-19 pandemic found that WLB had the greatest impact on job satisfaction, job stress and productivity. The author stated that management must provide the necessary support to improve WLB, which will affect job satisfaction. Hence, from this literature review, we proposed that:

H2: There is a significant positive relationship between work-life balance and job satisfaction of married female academics in Malaysia.

2.3. Relationship between Job Satisfaction and Turnover Intention

There is a vast amount of studies on job satisfaction and turnover intention, yet still limited in Asian

countries; however, the increasing amount of educational institutions in Asia led to many authors, including [48], to study job satisfaction and employee turnover among 350 academics in Pakistani Universities. The authors found that job satisfaction had a significant negative relationship with the turnover intention of academics. Furthermore, study [49] on 206 academic staff in Ethiopia showed that academics' job satisfaction had a statistically negative correlation with the turnover intention [49]. Study [50] on 323 females working in 12 major public sector organizations, including the educational sector, revealed that job satisfaction had an inverse relationship with turnover intention. Finally, study [51] on 210 female academics at one of the biggest universities in North-East Iran also revealed that job satisfaction of female academics was inversely related to their turnover intention during the COVID-19 pandemic. Hence, from this literature review, we proposed that:

H3: There is a significant negative relationship between job satisfaction and turnover intention of married female academics in Malaysia.

2.4. Job Satisfaction as a Mediator between Work-Life Balance and Turnover Intention

The literature review has indicated that job satisfaction is a possible mediator between WLB and turnover intention [52]. Previous literature has found a significant positive relationship between WLB and job satisfaction [43], [46] and a significant negative relationship between job satisfaction and turnover intention [49], [40], [53]. [53] found that job satisfaction can significantly mediate the influence of WLB on turnover intention in Bandung, Indonesia. Study [54] on 67 academics at a university in South Sumatra, Indonesia, indicated that job satisfaction significantly mediates the relationship between WLB and turnover intention. Lastly, [50] study tested the mediating effect of job satisfaction between WLB and turnover intention. The authors tested both the direct and indirect effect of WLB and turnover intention and the Sobel test in testing the mediation effect. The authors found that job satisfaction partially mediates WLB and turnover intention of female professionals, including females from the educational sector. Hence, from this literature review, we proposed that:

H4: Job satisfaction mediates the relationship between work-life balance and turnover intention of married female academics in Malaysia.

Fig. 1 shows the conceptual framework based on the literature review.

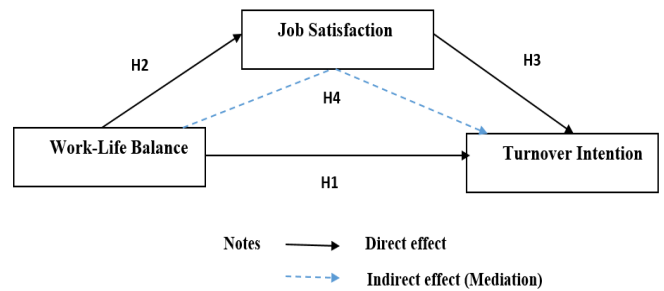


Fig. 1 The conceptual framework

3. Research Method

3.1. Sample

This research employed a deductive approach using a quantitative method. Questionnaires were distributed online to respondents due to the ongoing lockdown in Malaysia between April 2021 to August 2021. One hundred fifty married female academics from public and private universities, with children, WFH, participated in the study. The sample was collected using the non-probability sampling method, the purposive sampling technique.

3.2. Questionnaire Design

The questionnaire required respondents to provide their demographic profile consisting of race, age, highest education level, current university sector (public or private), academic rank, gross income per month, current employment status, number of years of teaching at their current university, and number of children at home. The second part of the questionnaire comprised questions related to the study's variables. There were several measures used in this study. A five-item scale for WLB was taken from [55], which, according to the authors, was from [56], [57]. A five-item scale for job satisfaction was taken from [58], refined from an 18-item job satisfaction scale from [59]. Lastly, a three-item scale for the turnover intention was adapted from [60]. Each survey was based on a 6-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree).

3.3. Data Analysis

Data analysis was done using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software. The result of the overall reliability test of the study was 0.791, which is above 0.70. The reliability test for each variable was above 0.70 (0.747 for WLB, 0.701 for job satisfaction, and 0.954 for turnover intention). In addition, the normality test was done through the Z-score calculation in which the Z-score value of 0.6060 was within $-3.29 < Z < 3.29$ [66]. The curve graph from the histogram of this study based on the data collected was normal. Moreover, a linearity test was conducted to determine the linearity of the relationships between the independent and dependent variables using a scatter

plot graph. The randomized pattern of the scatter plot indicated that the linearity assumption was met [61].

3.4. Demographics of Respondents

The respondents' race comprised 39% of Malays, 25% of Chinese, and 24% of Indians. The majority of the respondents (43%) were 30-39 years old, while 23% were 40-49 years old. As for the highest qualification, 60% of the respondents had a Master's degree, while 40% had a doctoral degree. About 63% of the respondents worked at private universities, while 37% worked at public universities. The senior lecturer position was held by 52% of the respondents, while only 37% held the position of lecturer. The largest gross income group (37%) was within the range of RM5,001 – RM7,000, followed by RM9,001-RM11,000 (29%). The majority (89%) of the respondents were permanent employees. Also, most of the respondents have worked at their current university for 6-10 years (46%), followed by 37% having worked for 1-5 years. Lastly, most of the respondents (73%) have 3-4 children at home, followed by 17% with 1-2 children at home. Table 1 shows the respondents' demographic profiles.

Table 1 Respondents' demographic profiles

Demographic features	Frequency	Percentage
Race	Malay	59
	Chinese	37
	Indian	36
	Others	18
Age	20 - 29 years old	15
	30 - 39 years old	65
	40 - 49 years old	34
	50-59 years old	26
	Above 60 years old	10
Highest Education level	Master's Degree	90
	Doctoral Degree	60
University	Public University	55
Sector	Private University	95
Academic Rank	Lecturer	55
	Senior Lecturer	78
	Assistant Professor	5
	Associate Professor	10
	Professor	2
Gross Income Per Month	RM3,001 – RM5,000	39
	RM5,001 - RM7,000	56
	RM7,001 – RM9,000	43
	RM9,001 – RM11,000	4
	RM11,001- RM13,000	4
	RM13,001- RM15,000	2
	More than RM15,000	2
Current Employment Status	Probation	6
	Permanent	134
	Contractual	10
Number of Years teaching	Less than one year	5
	1-5 years	56
	6-10 years	69
	11-15 years	10
	Above 15 years	10
Number of Children at Home	1-2	25
	3-4	110
	5-6	10
	Above 6	5

4. Result and Discussion

4.1. Descriptive Analysis

The descriptive analysis shows that the mean value of WLB was 3.0387 with a standard deviation of 0.81815. This means that employees slightly disagree that WLB exists in their job. However, the mean value for job satisfaction was 2.3533, with a standard deviation of 0.61630. This means that employees moderately disagree that they are satisfied with their job. The mean value for the turnover intention was 4.1332, with a standard deviation of 0.93012, indicating an agreement that the intention to quit exists.

4.2. Regression and Mediation Analysis

Four recommended criteria were applied to test the linear regression and mediation [62]. The first step or condition is to test the total effect of the independent variable (WLB) on the outcome variable (turnover intention) (Fig. 2).

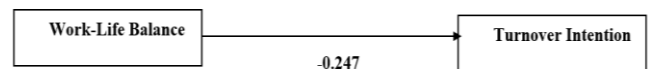


Fig. 2 The total effect of work-life balance on the turnover intention

It is observed that there is a significant negative linear relationship between WLB and turnover intention of married female academics in Malaysia ($\beta = -0.247$, $p = 0.000$). As such, H1 is accepted. Hence, the first condition has been met. Next, according to [62], the second and third conditions are testing relationships between WLB and job satisfaction, job satisfaction and turnover intention. WLB is the independent variable, the turnover intention is the outcome variable or dependent variable, and job satisfaction is the mediating variable. It is observed that WLB has a positive relationship with job satisfaction among married female academics in Malaysia ($\beta = 0.393$, $p = 0.000$). As such, H2 is accepted. Also, job satisfaction has a significant negative relationship with the turnover intention of married female academics in Malaysia ($\beta = -0.552$, $p = 0.000$). As such, H3 is accepted. According to this, the second and third conditions of [62] have been met. Table 2 shows the summary of the correlation analysis.

Table 2 Summary of the correlation analysis

	Gradient (Standardized Beta, β)	Significance
WLB and turnover intention	-0.247	.000
Job satisfaction and turnover intention	0.393	.000
Job satisfaction and turnover intention	-0.552	.000

In addition to all these, by including job satisfaction in the model, the effect of WLB ($\beta = -0.054$; $p > 0.05$) on turnover intention of married female academics in

Malaysia has become meaningless. Thus, the fourth condition of [62] has been met. According to this, the job satisfaction of married female academics in Malaysia has a full mediator role within the relationship between WLB and turnover intention. As such, H4 is accepted. The Sobel test was conducted to test for mediation using the Sobel calculator [63]. The statistics for the Sobel test is -6.96 with an associated p-value of 0.000. The results confirmed that job satisfaction significantly mediates the relationship between WLB and turnover intention ($Z = -6.96$, $p = 0.000$). Fig. 3 shows the paths for regression analysis, while Table 3 shows the summary of the paths of the regression analysis.

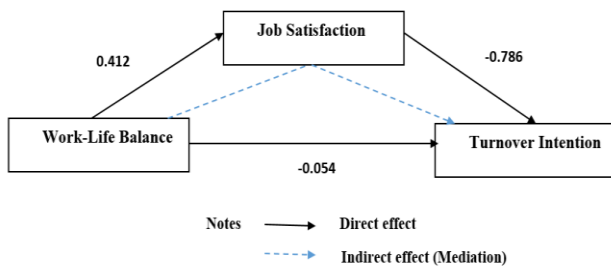


Fig. 3 Paths for regression analysis

Table 3 Summary of the paths of the regression analysis

Path	Unstandardized Beta, β	Standard Error (SE)	t	Significance
WLB and job satisfaction	0.412	0.048	8.545	0.000
Job satisfaction and turnover intention	-0.786	0.066	-11.852	0.000
WLB and Turnover intention	-0.054	0.069	-0.771	0.441

5. Conclusion

As shown in Table 2, the results of this study have revealed that WLB has a significant negative relationship with the turnover intention of married female academics in Malaysia, similar to past studies [37], [38], [39], [40], [41]. The study also found a significant positive relationship between WLB and job satisfaction among married female academics in Malaysia, which is similar to past studies [43], [44], [45], [46], [47]. Likewise, similar to past research, job satisfaction also has a significant negative association with the turnover intention of married female academics in Malaysia [48], [49], [50], [51]. Lastly, job satisfaction mediates the relationship between WLB and turnover intention as supported by past research [50], [52], [53], [54].

The findings of this study have theoretical implications in enriching empirical studies on the relationships between WLB, job satisfaction, and turnover intention of married female academics, especially in Malaysia, since studies in this area are limited [64]. Subsequently, the results of this study hold

practical implications as it will aid policymakers in setting policies that serve to enhance WLB and job satisfaction and prevent married female employees from leaving their jobs.

Married women who have family responsibilities such as taking care of their children or even the elderly should be given priority in choosing their working arrangements. Furthermore, university management and faculty must schedule classes and faculty meetings so that it does not clash with family-related responsibilities such as sending and picking up children from schools or daycare centers. Women should be allowed to WFH if their children are attending classes online from their homes due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development of Malaysia, the university management, and the policymakers must promote WLB by creating policies that improve WLB, as they will help female academics to maintain their status and not quit their jobs. University management must show support by striving to solve work-related issues and family-related conflicts and organize faculty work to ensure no conflict arises between work and family. Furthermore, it is essential that the university management work to ensure that supervisors/deans are supportive of the multiple roles that married female academics perform. On this note, the Malaysian government should encourage the university management to hire or train supervisors to manage faculty work in support of married female academics. Moreover, university management and policymakers must look into research methods that aid in fostering a supportive and inclusive working environment that allows academic mothers to continue to manage both family and professional responsibilities. Some of these methods can be WFH options, flexible working hours, family-friendly work policies, regulations governing minimum working hours, flexible schedules, supportive benefit packages, longer paid maternity leaves, or even childcare services within the university campus [65], [66].

The scientific novelty of this study is the findings of this research that reveal that married female academics in Malaysia will feel dissatisfied with their job and eventually leave if there is a lack of WLB. The COVID-19 pandemic was indeed a struggle for married female academics, and it was proven to be a major challenge in juggling work and family responsibilities. Without the proper support, we may see more women leaving the workforce.

6. Strengths, Limitation and Future Research

This research has provided empirical knowledge on the importance of WLB and job satisfaction for avoiding turnover intention among married female academics in Malaysia. This study will promote the creation of appropriate policies to enhance WLB

needed in universities to enhance employee performance. However, this cannot be achieved without the intervention of the Malaysian government, policymakers, and university management in creating awareness and assisting leaders in managing working academic mothers.

This study has a few limitations; nevertheless, future studies can overcome them. Firstly, it would be good to conduct a comparative study between public and private universities and observe any differences concerning WLB, job satisfaction, and turnover intention. In addition, it will also be important to conduct this study after the COVID-19 pandemic as a longitudinal study. Other variables, such as organizational support, organizational climate, may be included as variables that may affect WLB [65].

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