

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This introductory chapter aims to provide an overview of this study. The chapter presents the background, research rationale, problems, objectives, scope, and the theoretical and managerial significance of this study. It concludes with the organisation of the chapters in this research report.

1.2 Background of the Study

Management of employment relationship has changed tremendously throughout the world in response to demographic variations, technological advancements, and intensified degree of competition, shaped by the processes of globalisation. Today, flexibility is the hallmark of management practices to fulfil the changing needs of consumer and the volatility of the business environments (Felfe, Schmook, Schyns, & Six, 2008). Hence, workforce staffing and scheduling arrangements have evolved into two main types, namely standard and non-standard, in order to match the flexibility and economical needs of organisations as well as employees (Carr, Gregory, & Harris, 2010).

Standard staffing and scheduling arrangements involve full-time and permanent employees who work normal schedules and these traditional forms of employment are considered non-flexible due to their inability to align the labour supply and working hours with fluctuations in customer demands (especially in services industries) (Wittmer & Martin, 2011). Consequently, many firms have moved towards utilising non-standard or flexible staffing and scheduling practices such as employing part-time, contractual, or temporary workers or making use of flexible work schedules such as day or night shifts, flexi-time, split hours and compressed work week (Zeytinoglu, Denton, & Plenderleith, 2011; McNall, Masuda, & Nicklin, 2010).

These non-traditional working arrangements comprising non-standard work status and schedules are believed to be more beneficial to both organisations and employees. While enabling organisations to flexibly arrange their workforce according to diverse work hours and conditions, non-standard employment is favoured by managers to reduce compensation and benefit costs (Liu, Wang, Keesler, & Schneider, 2011; McKeown & Hanley, 2009). For employees, non-standard work arrangements could provide them with the opportunity to gain extra income or remain employed through shorter work hours or flexible work schedules and shifts hence enabling them to balance their attentions between their work and their families or other out-of-work interests (Martin & Sinclair, 2007; Felfe et al., 2008). This is important with the increased participation of women, young, and senior citizens in the labour force (Leschke, 2009).

However, there are arguments that non-standard employment are substandard and would cause negative effects towards organisations and employees (Walker, 2011). For example, Stavrou, Spiliotis, and Charalambous (2010) suggested that non-standard employees have lower satisfaction and commitment, and higher turnover that could hurt

productivity and quality. The negative organisational implications might be snowballed from the disadvantages of non-standard work arrangements towards individual employees such as lower wages and benefits, and poorer job security and lack of advancements (Giannikis & Mihail, 2011; Green & Heywood, 2011). Additionally, some of the employees become non-standard due to high unemployment rate (Martin & Sinclair, 2007).

Various advantages and disadvantages of non-standard employment may lead to inconsistencies in terms of work attitudes of non-standard employees in past studies. For example, there were studies which found that non-standard employees were more satisfied and more committed than standard workers (Maynard, Thorsteinson, & Parfyonova, 2006; Martin & Sinclair 2007). However, there were also researchers who discovered non-standard employees were less satisfied and less committed than standard workers (Han, Moon, & Yun, 2009; Boo, Madrigal, & Pages, 2010), and there were some that discovered no difference at all in terms of job satisfaction or commitment between the two groups of employees (Giannikis & Mihail, 2011; Thorsteinson, 2003).

Thus, studies were conducted to resolve the inconsistent results of standard and non-standard employees' work attitudes by proposing that employees' congruent preferences, for any type of staffing and scheduling arrangements, shall determine their work-related attitudes (Holtom, Lee, & Tidd, 2002; Carr et al., 2010; Wittmer & Martin, 2011). By drawing on the discrepancy theory by Lawler (1973) and Locke (1969), which assumed that a match or congruence between workers' preferences for organisational staffing and scheduling arrangements will enhance positive employees' work-related attitudes such as job satisfaction and affective commitments, Holtom et al. (2002) proved the concept of work status congruence in predicting employees' attitudes;

i.e. when employees' preferences for work status, schedule, shift, and hours are met or congruent, both standard and non-standard employees are likely to be more satisfied with their jobs and more affectively committed to their organisations.

Although the studies of non-standard employment has shown a great progress especially in terms of overcoming discrepancies in work-related attitude effects, the empirical evidence of non-standard employment towards work-life balance has been rare (Higgins, Duxbury, & Johnson, 2000). Furthermore, the studies of work-life balance are still underdeveloped with inconsistent operation and lack theoretical conceptualisation (Chang, McDonald, & Burton, 2010). The studies of work-life balance are the extensions of work-family balance studies with incorporation of other non-work demands other than family, such as leisure, study, recreation, travel, social, community and hobbies (Waumsley, Houston, & Marks, 2010). However, the majority of the studies on work-life balance are qualitative with insufficient measurement since the originating studies of work-family balance were also incoherent in terms of the effects of organisational family-friendly policies and work-family balance (Baral & Bhargava, 2010; Wayne, Randel, & Stevens, 2006).

While non-standard staffing and scheduling are promoted as part of flexible work arrangements to provide flexibility for employees to balance their attentions to work and non-work demands (Maynard et al., 2006), past studies of the effects of non-standard employments towards work-life balance have been inconclusive. For example, there were studies which found non-standard employment to be positively related to work-family/life balance (Russell, O'Connell, & McGinnity, 2009; Hayman, 2009), but there were also studies which found otherwise; due to the negative aspects of non-standard employment such as low pay and inferior job security making it difficult to balance

other family needs or life's needs (Carnicer, Sanchez, Perez, & Jimenez, 2004; Buehler & O'Brien, 2011). Further, there are studies which found no difference in work-family/life balance for neither standard nor non-standard employees (Batt & Valcour, 2003).

Thus, to close the gaps of inconsistent results of non-standard employment towards employees' work-life balance, and to further enhance the underdeveloped studies of work-life balance, this study extends the boundaries of Holtom et al.'s (2002) work status congruence by measuring the effects of congruent or matched preferences for standard or non-standard staffing and scheduling arrangements towards employees' work-life balance. Therefore, this study also extends the applicability of the discrepancy theory (Lawler, 1973) that was proven in predicting positive work-related attitudes; hence similar positive relationships were anticipated to better understand the employees' work-life balance.

Additionally, since the studies of work-life balance are still underdeveloped, there were few earlier studies of work-family balance (i.e. the originating studies of work-life balance) which warranted the application of the conceptualisation of congruent preferences for flexible work arrangements (i.e. non-standard work status and schedule). For example, Van Rijswijk, Bekker, Rutte, and Croon (2004) and Moore (2007) discovered that the motivations and individual circumstances, i.e. the reasons and voluntariness for working standard or non-standard work status and schedule may influence study results; thus explaining the conflicting results of prior studies concerning the effects of flexible or non-standard work arrangements towards employees' work-life balance.

On the other hand, past studies of work-family balance affirmed that the state of balance between work and non-work domains might be a better concept than directly examining the effects of work-family policies or practices towards employees' attitudes (Baral & Bhargava, 2010; Deery, 2008). Drawing on the social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), which predicted that positive feelings experienced by employees in their employment relationship should be reciprocated with positive attitudes, many studies proved that the positive experience in managing both work and out-of-work needs increased with job satisfaction (Aryee, Srinivas, & Tan, 2005; Kanwar, Singh, & Kodwani, 2009), and affective commitment (Sturges & Guest, 2004; Baral & Bhargava, 2010).

Hence, this study recognises the significant impact of both work status congruence and work-life balance towards employees' work-related attitudes, i.e. job satisfaction and affective commitment. Thorsteinson's (2003) meta-analytic review has recommended researchers to examine the joint assessment of employers' practices of staffing and scheduling as well as support for work-life balance in a single study because employees are likely to react positively or negatively based on the implementation of those practices. Following the suggestions by Holtom et al. (2002), Van Rijswijk et al. (2004) and Chang et al. (2010), this study explores the boundaries of work status congruence in terms of meeting employees' preferences for standard or non-standard work status, schedule, shifts, and hours, towards employees' favourable feelings of work-life balance, and in turn towards their job satisfaction and ultimately their affective commitment. In addition, based on the results of this study, the relative differences in terms of work status congruence, satisfaction with work-life balance, and work-related attitudes among gender, work status and work schedule were determined.

1.3 Research Rationale and Problem

Researches in standard and non-standard work arrangements show a growing interest in understanding the importance of motivations, voluntariness, and congruent preferences for such work arrangements and practices (Wittmer & Martin, 2011; Giannikis & Mihail, 2011). This is because there are possibilities that employees will be asked to work schedules or statuses that they dislike (Carr et al., 2010). Although there are some researchers who suggested that employees could have chosen flexible or non-standard work arrangements to meet out-of-work needs (Van Rijswijk et al., 2004), there are also researchers who claimed that the employees were pushed to work in such arrangements due to unavailability of alternatives (Walker, 2011). The employees who were forced to do so might not have work-life balance or favourable work attitudes due to inferior pay, benefits and advancement of non-standard work arrangements (Boo et al., 2010; Fleetwood, 2007).

Hence, the concept of work status congruence by Holtom et al. (2002) verified the positive significant effects of staffing and scheduling arrangements that met employees' preferences towards their work-related attitudes, and thus overcoming inconsistent findings of the past. Nevertheless, the concept of work status congruence was tested among full-time and part-time employees in retail and healthcare sectors in the United States (Holtom et al., 2002) and further validated by Carr et al. (2010) among a sample of full-time United States retail workers only. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, there is no prior study yet to validate this work status congruence concept in a developing country like Malaysia especially among services organisations such as banks, hotels, telecommunications, and restaurants.

Hence, the effects of the matched or congruence state between what the employer is offering in terms of work status and scheduling arrangements, and what the employees prefer were examined in this study and the results are important particularly in Malaysia as one of the developing nations in Asia. Nonetheless, at the time this study was conducted there were no available statistics in terms of the number of employees working non-standard work status (e.g. part-time, contract, temporary) or non-standard work schedule (e.g. flexitime, shifts, reduced hours, etc.) provided by a Malaysian authority such as the Department of Statistics. Moreover, according to Saad (2011) there are inadequate figures accessible on the number of non-standard employees in the workforce market of Malaysia.

However, there are available statistics on the population of Malaysian employees in the various sectors. Out of 11.5 million workforces in Malaysia in 2010, the majority of the workers (59.2 per cent or 6.8 million) were in the services sector, followed by manufacturing (27.6 per cent) and agriculture at 9.6 per cent (Key Indicator of the Labour Market Malaysia 2001-2010, 1/2011, Table 4.1). Statistics also recorded that the services sector contributed 58 per cent of Malaysia's gross domestic product in 2010 (Statistics Handbook Malaysia, 2011, Table 4.2). Ismail and Abidin (2010) also supported that the services sector was the main contributor towards economic development, employing 51.5 per cent of the total workforce. The number of persons employed in this industry increased from 1.16 million in 2006 to 1.2 million in 2007.

Few recent studies in Malaysia have highlighted the non-standard employment particularly in services sector hence suggesting inferences to be made. For instance, Che Rose, Kumar, and Gani (2008) reported that the growth of non-standard employment in Malaysia is consistent with other nations around the world. Additionally, past studies in

developed countries found that the majority of non-standard staffing and scheduling arrangements were mostly practiced in the services sector (Giannikis & Mihail, 2011; Conway & Briner, 2002). Debroux (2010) added that even though there has been a noteworthy increase in the number of women partaking in the labour market, the majority are in the non-standard element, making women the highest representative of this category of work status. Conversely, Goy and Johnes (2011) explained that the dearth of company policies on non-standard or flexible working arrangements to some degree is accountable for the observed departure of employees especially women from the employment arena.

Therefore, a study of non-standard employment and its effect towards employees' work-life balance is imperative in Malaysia as the number of female workers has been increasing. In 2010, 44.5 per cent of the total of Malaysian employee population of 11.5 million was made up of female workers, and the majority of them (70.6 per cent) are in the services sector (Key Indicator of the Labour Market Malaysia 2001-2010, 1/2011, Tables 2.1 & 4.4). Further, the majority of the Malaysian workers are married, approximating 7.1 million or 62 per cent of the total workforce (Labour Force Statistics Malaysia, 2010, Table 6). Additionally, almost 35 per cent of total employee population are within the age group of 15 to 24 years, and 5 per cent of the overall workers are working less than 29 hours per week (Key Indicator of the Labour Market Malaysia 2001-2010, 1/2011, Table 2.2 & 6.1).

Subramaniam, Iyer, and Maniam's (2009) study among 177 women in Malaysia found that 80 per cent of the respondents claimed that their job had no form of non-standard work arrangements although women workers between ages of 30 to 49 years old would appreciate such arrangement to enable them to raise their children. In another study,

Subramaniam and Selvaratnam (2010) confirmed that most of their 175 respondents among Malaysian workers of public sector, private sector and university academics did not have the desired working arrangements. They also concluded that there still exists a fissure between workers' practical desires and the availability of family or life friendly policies such as non-standard or flexible working arrangements. Whereas, Subramaniam, Maniam and Ali's (2011) study among 359 services employees in Malaysia established that almost 86 per cent of the respondents were attracted to non-standard or flexible working arrangements and more than 70 per cent of them had not worked in those arrangements.

Consequently from some workers' standpoint, non-standard employment was not an option but fairly a taunt by the employer of the 'take it or leave it' manner especially in employers' market (Saad, 2011). Saad's (2011) study among twelve services companies in Malaysia found that even with some negative perception by workers in the use of non-standard employment, this type of work arrangement has turned out to be the major staffing strategies for most businesses. Nonetheless, Saad (2011) also confirmed that at present, non-standard employment is still lacking in terms of legislation since only part-time employees are partially protected under the Employment (Part-Time Employees) Regulations 2010 which was enacted under the Employment Act 1955. While for other types of non-standard workers such as temporary, contract, casual, or home working employees, laws have yet to be promulgated by the government, hence allowing differential treatment by their employers (Saad, 2011).

In sum, most of the recent studies in Malaysia supported the importance of non-standard work arrangements as major staffing strategies (Saad, 2011) which needed by employers as well as workers to balance their work and non-work lives especially

among women (Subramaniam et al., 2011). Hence, non-standard work arrangements appear to be the situation in Malaysia. Furthermore, past studies also demonstrated that flexibility in staffing and scheduling arrangements are essentials for employees with out-of-work needs, who are mostly women, young, and having spouse or family (Leschke, 2009; Felfe et al., 2008; Feldman, 2006).

Additionally, the available statistics in Malaysia exhibited that most of the workers employed in the services sector are women, married, and young people. Therefore, non-standard work arrangements such as part-time, temporary, and non-standard schedule are vital to both employees and employers to satisfy the needs of flexibility, thus requiring a careful understanding of their effects. However, although work-life practices such as non-standard or flexible work arrangements which matched employees' preferences and circumstances are assumed to positively affect their work-life balance, there was scarce empirical evidence to prove the notion (Higgins et al., 2000; Van Rijswijk et al., 2004; Moore, 2007).

Therefore, this study is critical to address these gaps while validating the discrepancy theory and extending the boundaries of work status congruence concepts in developing recent knowledge of work-life interactions. At the same time, this study adds to the body of work status congruence studies by examining the concept and combining standard and all non-standard services employees, i.e. full-time/permanent, part-time, contract, and temporary workers. In addition, achieving the congruence of any working arrangements, either standard or non-standard is crucial given that such state would determine the employees' retention and work attitudes especially in developing countries like Malaysia (Subramaniam et al., 2011). Past studies prove that congruent preferences for staffing and scheduling arrangements influenced higher job satisfaction

and affective commitment (Holtom et al., 2002; Carr et al., 2010). Similarly there were also studies that suggested a positive interaction between work and non-work domains would induce a greater job satisfaction and affective commitment (Kanwar et al., 2009; Baral & Bhargava, 2010).

However, although past studies in both areas of non-standard work arrangements and work-life balance were conducted to identify their effects towards employees' work-related attitudes (e.g. Carr et al., 2010; Kanwar et al., 2009), an attempt to integrate both studies in a single framework has yet to be made. A few studies in the area of work-family balance (i.e. the originating studies of work-life balance), proposed the mediating role of work-family interaction in the relationship between perceptions of work arrangements and work attitudes (Dixon & Sagas, 2007). For example, McNall et al. (2010) found that work-family enrichment mediated the relationship between perceived organisational support and job satisfaction, while Baral and Bhargava (2010) affirmed that work-family facilitation mediated the relationship between job characteristics and affective commitment.

Therefore, this study adds to the body of underdeveloped knowledge of work-life balance by extending previous research of work-family balance in exploring the mediating role of work-life balance in the relationships between work status congruence and job satisfaction as well as between work status congruence and affective commitment. However, the operationalisation of work-life balance concept in past studies is not conclusive since most previous researchers have focused primarily on the interactions between work and family domains (Chang et al., 2010). The studies investigating balance between work and life (i.e. inclusive all non-work's interests apart from family only such as leisure, study, hobbies, travel, and many more) were published

only from the mid-2000s, as an extension of work-family balance studies (Chang et al., 2010).

Moreover, past studies since the work-family balance era have different definitions for balance or positive interactions between work and non-work domains. Some researchers have labelled this as enrichment (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006; McNall et al., 2010), facilitation (Aryee et al., 2005; Voydanoff, 2004; Grzywacz & Butler, 2005), enhancement (Hayman, 2009), or positive spill-over (Hammer, Neal, Newsom, Brockwood, & Colton, 2005), while some other studies inferred balance as fit (Hill, 2005; Grzywacz & Bass, 2003; Voydanoff, 2005), or synergy (Beutell & Wittig-Berman, 2008). Consequently, the studies of work-life balance were insufficient in terms of valid and consistent definitions and measurements that actually assessed both work and non-work interfaces (Chang et al., 2010).

Hence, this study contributed to the scarcity of empirically proven conceptualisation and operationalisation of work-life knowledge by extending the newly introduced concept of satisfaction with work-family balance by Valcour (2007). The concept is adapted in this study as satisfaction with work-life balance and is operationalised with the consideration of other life's interests apart from family only. Valcour's concept is most unique and holistic because it applies both cognitive and affective components of one's overall assessment in the degree of success at meeting work and non-work demands, without implying directionality or transfer processes between work and non-work domains such as spill-over, enrichment, or facilitation.

All in all, to the best of this researcher's knowledge, this study was the first to affirm the concept of satisfaction with work-life balance as a mediator in the relationship between work status congruence and work-related attitudes hence extending the past studies of work-family balance which initiated the mediating role of work-family balance. Furthermore, this study also verified the predicting role of job satisfaction over affective commitment, as well as the mediating role of job satisfaction in the relationships between work status congruence and affective commitment, and between satisfaction with work-life balance and affective commitments.

In doing so, this study further contributed to the verification of construct validity of both work status congruence and satisfaction with work-life balance by utilising samples of standard and all types of non-standard services workers (i.e. part-time, contract, or temporary), who work in standard or non-standard work schedule (i.e. flexitime, evening shift, reduced hours, or others). Hence, the relative differences in terms of work status congruence, satisfaction with work-life balance, and work-related attitudes among both standard and non-standard work status and work schedule could be assessed. Moreover, the consideration of the broader kind of non-standard employees in studies examining work status congruence and work-life balance towards employees' job satisfaction and affective commitment were yet to be empirically established by earlier studies (Zeytinoglu et al., 2011).

Taken together, the confirmation of the effects of flexible or non-standard work arrangements towards work-life balance of all standard and non-standard employees as designed in this study is very important because there were conflicting arguments in the past (Carr et al., 2010). Additionally, the study on the relationship between preferences for staffing and scheduling arrangements and work-life balance is limited in Malaysia.

Empirical studies on work status congruence and work-life balance have been conducted mainly in developed countries such as the United States, Canada, Europe, Japan and Korea (Walker, 2011; Chang et al., 2010). This study therefore adds to the body of knowledge of work status congruence and work-life balance by exhibiting empirical evidence representing developing countries like Malaysia which were deficient in the past (Chang et al., 2010). Besides, this study provides comparable findings and support for work of past researchers examining services employees.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

Work status congruence has been developed by past studies to overcome the inconsistent findings of non-standard work arrangements towards employees' work-related attitudes such as job satisfaction and affective commitment. By drawing on the discrepancy theory (Lawler, 1973; Locke, 1969), work status congruence which was conceptualised as employees' congruent preferences for work status, schedule, shift, and hours, was found to positively predict employees' job satisfaction and affective commitment (Holtom et al., 2002; Carr et al., 2010). However, although non-standard or flexible work arrangements have been promoted as part of organisational work-life balance policies (Baral & Bhargava, 2010), past studies have found conflicting results in terms of effects of flexible work arrangements towards improving employees' ability to balance between their work and non-work demands (Buehler & O'Brien, 2011; McNall et al., 2010; Wayne et al., 2006).

Furthermore, the studies of work-life balance are still underdeveloped since they were recently extended from studies of work-family balance, by incorporating other non-work's interest (apart from family) such as hobbies, travel, study and leisure (Chang et

al., 2010). Hence, the studies of work-life balance which were newly developed since the mid-2000s have been insufficient and inconsistent in terms of theoretical conceptualisation and operationalisation, and similar situations also occurred among the founding studies of work-family balance (Chang et al., 2010). Further, most of the past studies on work-life balance continued to measure interactions between work and family domains, without including other life's interests (Chang et al., 2010). The operationalisation of positive interactions between both domains were varied with some researchers referring to it as enrichment (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006), facilitation (Aryee et al., 2005), enhancement (Hayman, 2009), or positive spill-over (Hammer et al., 2005), instead of balance itself.

Therefore, this study aimed to close the gaps in studies of work status congruence and work-life balance by proposing a positive relationship between work status congruence (i.e. employees' congruent preferences for standard or non-standard/flexible staffing and scheduling arrangements) and satisfaction with work-life balance (i.e. employees' overall contentment in meeting work and life demands). By applying the theoretical underpinning of the discrepancy model conceptualised as work status congruence, this study intends to surmount the deficient theoretical-driven studies of work-life balance. Furthermore, to the best of this researcher's knowledge, no study to date has systematically examined the relationship between work status congruence and satisfaction with work-life balance. Consequently, work status congruence is anticipated to resolve contradictory results of the past in terms of the effects of flexible work arrangements towards employees' work-life balance, since past studies of work status congruence have shown consistent effects of non-standard work arrangements toward employees' work-related attitudes (Holtom et al., 2002; Carr et al., 2010). This shall also be affirmed in this study.

By examining the newly developed concept of satisfaction with work-life balance that was adapted from Valcour's (2007) study of satisfaction with work-family balance, this study is designed to extend work-family balance studies towards the underdeveloped studies of work-life balance by establishing comprehensive conceptualisation and operationalisation. This is because satisfaction with work-family balance was proven as a unique, unitary and holistic construct, and hence overcoming the inconsistent measurement of past studies that implied directionality or cross-domain transfer of processes between work and non-work interactions. Consequently, this study is expected to extend previous studies of work-family balance in attesting the effects of satisfaction with work-life balance toward employees' work-related attitudes of job satisfaction and affective commitment (Baral & Bhargava, 2010).

Furthermore, given that past studies investigated separately the relationships between work status congruence and work-related attitudes (Carr et al., 2010), and the relationships between work-life balance and work-related attitudes (Kanwar et al., 2009), this study tested the relationships between work status congruence, work-life balance, and work-related attitudes in a single study. Therefore, this study goes beyond previous research by proposing a research model linking work status congruence, satisfaction with work-life balance, job satisfaction, and affective commitment, plus operationalising it among standard and all dimensions of non-standard employees (i.e. part-time, contractual, and temporary) working in standard or non-standard work schedules.

Subsequently, by associating all insinuated relationships between work status congruence, satisfaction with work-life balance, job satisfaction, and affective commitment in a uniform research model, it was anticipated that the more employees perceived that their preferences for work status, schedule, shift, and hours are met, the more they are satisfied with their work-life balance, and in turn, the greater they would feel satisfied with their overall job and thus more affectively committed towards their organisations. Therefore, this study seeks to empirically explore the mediating role of satisfaction with work-life balance in the relationships between work status congruence and job satisfaction, and between work status congruence and affective commitment.

By confirming the proposed mediating model as the best among all competing models, this study is expected to extend previous studies of work-family balance that found a similar mediating role of work-family balance, such as in the relationships between flexible work arrangements and job satisfaction (McNall et al., 2010) and between job characteristics and affective commitment (Baral & Bhargava, 2010). Moreover, to the best of this researcher's knowledge, this is also the first empirical study to establish if satisfaction with work-life balance mediates the relationships between work status congruence and work-related attitudes, i.e. job satisfaction and affective commitment.

Since both job satisfaction and affective commitment are investigated as direct and indirect attitudinal outcomes of work status congruence through the mechanism of satisfaction with work-life balance, this study also foresees the determining role of job satisfaction as antecedent of affective commitment. Additionally, this study predicts job satisfaction as another mediating mechanism in the relationships between work status congruence and affective commitment, and between satisfaction with work-life balance

and affective commitment, as well as between whole work status congruence and satisfaction with work-life balance, and affective commitment.

These postulations coincided with past studies. For examples, there were studies which discovered job satisfaction as antecedent of affective commitment (e.g. Yang, 2010; Güleriyüz, Guney, Aydin, & Aşan, 2008) and few studies have proven the mediating role of job satisfaction, e.g. in a relationship between satisfaction with company and affective commitment (Testa, 2001), and in a relationship between leadership and affective commitment (Kim & Brymer, 2011).

The key objectives of this study are summarised as follows:-

- 1) To establish if work status congruence is related to satisfaction with work-life balance;
- 2) To examine whether work status congruence is related to work-related attitudes, i.e. job satisfaction and affective commitment;
- 3) To study whether satisfaction with work-life balance is related to work-related attitudes, i.e. job satisfaction and affective commitment;
- 4) To investigate whether satisfaction with work-life balance mediates the relationships between work status congruence and work-related attitudes, i.e. job satisfaction and affective commitment; and

- 5) To determine whether job satisfaction is related to affective commitment and at the same time mediates the relationships between work status congruence and affective commitment, between satisfaction with work-life balance and affective commitment, and between work status congruence, satisfaction with work-life balance and affective commitment.
- 6) To ascertain whether there is significant differences among services employees in terms of gender, marital status, age, job designation level, work status, and work schedule in relations with work status congruence, satisfaction with work-life balance, and work-related attitudes.

1.5 Scope of the Study

This study can be viewed as part of a larger effort by researchers to understand the antecedent and outcomes of employees' satisfaction with work-life balance within an organisational context. The focus of this study is on work status congruence, satisfaction with work-life balance, job satisfaction, and affective commitment. The data for this study were collected from seven private organisations located in the capital of Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur, and its closest neighbour, the state of Selangor. The location was selected solely for the reason that 2.9 million or 26 per cent of the total Malaysian employees population of 11.3 million in 2009 were concentrated in both Kuala Lumpur and the state of Selangor. Compared to other 12 states, they had the most number of employed people in Malaysia for year 2009. (Development of Human Capital Report by Malaysia's Department of Statistics, 2010, Chart 4.5).

The number of samples in this study was 893 and the participants were individual workers employed in seven organisations of services sector (e.g. two banks, one hotel, one hospital, two restaurants, and one hypermarket), working under standard or non-standard staffing (i.e. full-time, part-time, contract, or temporary) and scheduling (i.e. standard/normal or non-standard/non-normal) arrangements. Therefore, the results of this study could be generalised across standard and non-standard employees of services sector compared to past studies of work status congruence and work-life balance that were only limited to employees of a certain type of work status or schedule (Carr et al., 2010; Kanwar et al., 2009). Two standardised sets of questionnaires (i.e. according to Malay or English Language) were developed for the employees. In selecting the research sample, there were no restrictions on the participants' gender, race, age, and job designations. Participation in the survey was voluntary and all responses were confidential.

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study aims to contribute to literature by examining the relationships between work status congruence, satisfaction with work-life balance, job satisfaction, and affective commitment. The following sub-sections describe the theoretical and managerial significance of this study.

1.6.1 Theoretical Significance

Work status congruence which is defined as the degree of how an employee's actual standard or non-standard work status, schedule, shift, and hours fit or congruent with his or her preferences, has been identified as the key determinants of work-related attitudes,

i.e. job satisfaction and affective commitment (Holtom et al., 2002; Carr et al., 2010). Moore (2007) in addition, suggested that employee's preferences for flexible or non-standard work status or schedule might determine the employee's positive feelings about the balance between his or her work and life domains. However, to-date perhaps no study has yet to empirically prove the relationship between work status congruence and satisfaction with work-life balance (Chang et al., 2010).

This study has therefore fulfilled the gaps in the body of knowledge of work status congruence and work-life balance, by testing the positive effects of congruent preferences for staffing and scheduling arrangements drawing on the discrepancy theory (Lawler, 1973) to improve the predictions about employees' satisfaction with work-life balance. Additionally, this study contributed to the under-developed studies of work-life balance by incorporating theoretical-driven empirical evidence suggesting that employees' congruent preferences for flexible work arrangements could positively impact their favourable feelings about the balance between their work and life demands, besides improving their job satisfaction and affective commitment as proven before in past studies (Holtom et al., 2010).

Furthermore, the studies of work-life balance are under-developed (Chang et al., 2010), and this study has extended the notion of past work-family balance studies which established positive effects of voluntariness or perceived control over flexible work arrangements towards employees' work-family balance (Van Rijswijk et al., 2004; Tausig & Fenwick, 2001). Additionally, by proving a positive relationship between work status congruence and satisfaction with work-life balance, this study successfully enhanced the inconsistent conceptualisation and operationalisation of work-life balance studies through verification of comprehensive and holistic measurements. At the same

time, this study extended work-family balance studies in verifying Valcour's (2007) concept of satisfaction with work-family balance as an outcome of preferred life-friendly policies, and as antecedents of work-related attitudes of job satisfaction and affective commitment (Kanwar et al., 2009; Baral & Bhargava, 2010).

By authenticating the proposed research model consisting of work status congruence, satisfaction with work-life balance, job satisfaction and affective commitment, this study further verified all anticipated relationships through operationalisation among diverse samples of standard and all types of non-standard employees working in standard or non-standard work schedules in various organisations of the services sector.

Moreover, by attesting this study's complete partially-mediated model as the best among all alternative models, the mediating role of satisfaction with work-life balance is confirmed in the relationships between work status congruence and job satisfaction, and between work status congruence and affective commitment. Similarly, the mediating role of job satisfaction is also validated in the relationships between work status congruence and affective commitment, and between satisfaction with work-life balance and affective commitment, as well as between whole work status congruence and satisfaction with work-life balance, and affective commitment.

Although there has been past separate studies of work status congruence or work-family/life balance, which found their effects toward employees' work-related attitudes of job satisfaction and affective commitment (e.g. Holtom et al., 2002; Kanwar et al., 2009), such studies mostly utilised hierarchical regression analysis methods (Carr et al., 2010; Chang et al., 2010; Baral & Bhargava, 2010). In a different light, this study provides multiple elements that are examined in a single study by developing and

testing a comprehensive model simultaneously, incorporating and integrating an antecedent of work status congruence, two mediating roles of satisfaction with work-life balance and job satisfaction, and the ultimate outcome of affective commitment, and this was validated using structural equation modelling. In addition, this study also examined the significant differences among certain demographic characteristics with regard to the study variables in the setting of a developing country like Malaysia. As a result, this study has also contributed methodologically to the body of knowledge relevant to this area.

1.6.2 Managerial Significance

Past research has indicated that work status congruence i.e. the staffing and scheduling arrangements that met employees' preferences, often resulted in desired work-related attitudes (Holtom et al., 2002). Further, studies of voluntariness and perceived control of non-standard or flexible work arrangements have warranted that work status congruence might be related to employee work-life balance as well (Van Rijswijk et al., 2004). Therefore, a thorough understanding of the role of work status congruence is particularly crucial to employees, organisations, and human resource managers. This research should assist managers to better understand how meeting preferences for any staffing and scheduling arrangements is important to their employees as they may have an impact on employees' work-life balance, and in turn on their work-related attitudes such as job satisfaction and affective commitment.

Organisations could employ the results of this study to design appropriate staffing and scheduling practices and procedures that are aimed at fostering employees' positive feelings towards the balance between their work and out-of-work interests, towards their

overall jobs, as well as towards their attached organisations. Insight from the findings would allow managers to determine whether satisfaction with work-life balance is part of the mechanism that determines the total effects of employees' congruent preferences for work status, schedule, shift, and hours towards enhancing their overall job satisfaction and affective commitments.

In addition, this study has validated the adapted measurement of satisfaction with work-life balance from Valcour (2007) who suggested that to be more holistic and unitary, both work and non-work interfaces should be combined with cognitive and affective components of one's overall assessment of contentment. The managers could use this measure to complement their existing work-life balance evaluation methods. The findings would also help managers to determine potential work-life policies or benefits associated with work status congruence and work-related attitudes.

Fruitful insight from this study would encourage employers especially in a fast growing country like Malaysia to implement adequate and desired work-life policies, programmes, or practices as part of their corporate social responsibility and as a strategy in attracting and retaining human talents. Simultaneously, this research fits well with Malaysia's government vigorous cultivation of work-life balance issues with the recent initiation of Malaysian Well-being Index ("Budget 2014," 2013).

1.7 Organisation of the Chapters

This report is divided into seven chapters. Chapter 1 is the first of the seven chapters. It describes the background of the study, the research rationale and problems, the research

objectives, the scope of the study, as well as the theoretical and managerial significance of the study.

Chapter 2 presents a review of relevant past literature and empirical studies. The chapter begins with a review of standard and non-standard work arrangements, followed by subsections explaining non-standard work arrangements, in terms of development, advantages, disadvantages, typology and dimensions, voluntariness of preferences, congruent preferences and the concept of work status congruence. Further, the chapter reviews past literature on work-life balance, development of work-life balance studies, conceptualisation and operationalisation of work-life balance, successful and unsuccessful work-life balance, voluntariness of flexible work arrangements and work-life balance, and the concept of satisfaction with work-life balance. Lastly, the chapter also reviews the literature on work-related attitudes, i.e. job satisfaction and affective commitment.

Chapter 3 explains the development of the theoretical framework and hypotheses of this study. The chapter describes the rationale for the development of a research framework and the relationships among each research variables established in the research model.

Chapter 4 describes the research methods used in this study. The chapter discusses the research design, the research sample, data collection procedures, the development of the questionnaires, the selection of the research measures, as well as the results from the pilot study. It concludes with a brief introduction of the data analysis techniques that were used to analyse the data collected from the survey.

Chapter 5 presents the results or findings from this study. The chapter begins with the basic description of the demographic characteristics of the respondents. This was followed by the results of item-total correlations, exploratory factor analysis, correlation analysis, independent sample t-test, one-way analysis of variance, and structural equation modelling (SEM) analysis. The chapter concludes with a summary of hypothesis testing results.

Chapter 6 discusses the important findings of this study and explains the examined relationships among the research variables, the relevance of the research results as supported by literature, and the theoretical and managerial implications of this study.

Finally, Chapter 7 begins with an overview of the research comprising of the study, its findings, and its contributions. Then, the chapter highlights this study's limitations. The chapter ends with some recommendations for future research, as well as a brief conclusion.

1.8 Summary

Chapter 1 provided an overview of the study. This chapter discussed the issues and the rationale for this study. The chapter also outlined the objectives, the scope, and the significance of this study. The next chapter provides a detailed account of the relevant literature that supports this study.