

AN OVERVIEW OF THE STATE INFLUENCES ON WORKERS' WORK-LIFE INTEGRATION IN MALAYSIA

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Abstract

This paper focuses on the role of the state as a policy maker in the emergence and development of work/non-work policies in the Malaysian public sector organisations. State policies on work/non-work provisions can play an important role in determining the way workers manage their work/non-work lives (Den Dulk et al., 1999; Poelmans et al., 2003). Poelmans and Sahibzada (2004) and Korabik et al. (2003) suggest that people in collectivistic countries do not expect support from their organisations and instead expect support from their family. Hence, this study examines to what extent people in collectivistic country like Malaysia expect support from their organisations for their work-life integration as compared to their family members. Adopting qualitative case study in three public sector organisations in Sabah, Malaysia, findings show that the State, as a policy maker, is the main provider of work/non-work arrangements for public sector workers. It is evident that the role of the State is not just important in terms of providing work/non-work provisions such as maternity / paternity / parental leaves but also in implementing and supporting beneficial work practices and arrangements e.g. flexitime and crèche. Although these arrangements were found to be beneficial, particularly for workers with young children in integrating their work-life responsibilities, this study also found that the needs of single workers with parental/siblings commitment were not met by the State. Additionally, familial and communal supports are also expected to be available outside the work environment.

Keywords: Work-life integration; The State; public sector policy; workers; Malaysia.

* Collectivistic indicates the degree of social/community integration and indigenous nations tend to be collective where the original culture has not become fractured (Hofstede, 1994). In collectivist cultures, the family is viewed as the most important in-group.