

The Impact of Work-Life Benefit, Career Growth Opportunities and Job Security on the Job Attractiveness of Women in Joining the Malaysian Armed Forces

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Abstract

In this rapidly evolving period, it is observed that many of these military positions are held by women, despite the fact that this profession is thought to be best suited for males due to the demanding employment and requirement for a strong mental and physical condition in order to thrive in this field. For that, this research was conducted to investigate the impact of work-life benefit, career growth opportunities and job security on the job attractiveness of women in joining the Malaysian Armed Forces. A total of 127 female respondents from the Malaysian Armed Forces participated in this research, and questionnaires were used to collect their responses. Descriptive and inferential analysis such as Pearson's Correlation analysis and Multiple Linear Regression were utilized as a quantitative method in this research. Data was analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) Version 24.0. These study findings show that work-life benefit has a significant relationship with job attractiveness among women in the Malaysian Armed Forces. This conclusion is supported by the multiple regression analysis, which reveals that work-life benefit has the highest beta coefficient ($\beta = 0.544$) and is statistically significant ($p < 0.01$). These results highlight how important it is to promote attractive rules and regulations in order to improve the recruitment and retention of women in the armed forces.

Keywords: Work-Life Benefit, Career Growth Opportunities, Job Security, Job Attractiveness; Women Military

Introduction

Organisations and industries promote themselves as appealing in order to retain and motivate workers over time. Individuals, on the other hand, recognise the key components of

an appealing employer (Callaghan, 2023). Companies strive to retain current staff for the long term in order to prevent losing their wealth of experience. They may do this primarily through a strong relationship with one another and a positive working environment (Milana, 2022).

Women in the military endure very difficult circumstances (Morris, 1996; Turchik and Wilson, 2010). Women's performances are generally thought to be less valuable, meaningful, and efficient than men. Men and women are assigned various characteristics, which determine how their potential and competence are evaluated (Sasson-Levy, 2003). The overall issue is that women face professional challenges in male-dominated industries in achieving success in their careers, such as a stable economy, distribution of work, positions of leadership, strengthened job opportunities, and limited flexibility at work (Raghuvanshi et al., 2017).

The military has been seen as a competitive or even "greedy" institution that takes a significant amount of time, energy, focus, and commitment from its members (Segal, 1986). Individuals in military groups must strike a reasonable balance between work and other elements of their lives in order to be successful and remain in the organisation.

As a result, the study will look into the impact of work-life benefits, career growth opportunities, and job security on the job attractiveness of women in joining the Malaysian Armed Forces. In order to conduct the study, researchers want to discover the factors that impact job attractiveness among women military personnel interested in joining the Malaysian Armed Forces.

Literature Review

Job Attractiveness

Berthon et. al (2005) define job attractiveness as "the perceived benefits that a potential worker sees when they work for a particular company." Job attractiveness refers to the extent to which an organization's competitive advantages are seen favourably by both future and present employees, hence making it the greatest place to work. It will provide organisations with a competitive edge that lasts for years (Jiang & Le, 2011). Job attractiveness rises according to how well employees' desired traits match the value ideas provided by a company (Backhaus and Tikoo, 2004).

According to Bachman et al. (2000), little is known in the military context about which specific factors influence employee attractiveness to the armed forces as an employment. Previous research on military attractiveness and enlistment has mostly focused on the population, biographic, academic and family-related background factors, as well as attitudes towards military service (Bachman et al., 2000; Martin, 1995). Furthermore, the military may promote physical and collaborative pursuits inside the Armed Forces while emphasising compensation, benefits, and job security (Bachman et al., 2000; Martin, 1995).

Furthermore, women are drawn to military duty because gender equality is the psychological and ideological goal of giving men and women equal authority to shape society and their own lives (Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, 2016). This entails ensuring that men and women have equal opportunities in all military professions, including combat (Moore, 2020; Segal, 1995). Furthermore, according to Sundevall (2011), around the turn of the

twentieth century, women's involvement in military became controversial and they were accused of only wanting to be in the armed forces to meet an attractive guy in uniform.

Work-Life Benefit

Work-life benefits is a key factor in increasing the appeal of jobs, especially in the military. According to Wadsworth and Southwell (2011), military work-life benefits including child care, housing allowances, health insurance, and family support services have a beneficial impact on job attraction. The difficulties women encounter in balancing work and family obligations were also highlighted by Linehagen (2023), who discovered that work-life benefits have a big influence on women's decision to join the military. Furthermore, Southwell and Wadsworth (2016) showed that, in despite barriers like managing family responsibilities with civilian spouses, focused work-life support aids women in striking a balance between their military commitments and personal duties.

In the military, work-life benefit is an innovative means of defining pleasure and well-being amid uncertainties, obstacles, and conflict. According to Bowling et al., (2015), this might serve to promote the link with the larger social economic field, resulting in soldiers' pleasure and achievement in their family, workplace, and society at broad (Bono, Davies, & Rasch, 2012). In the military, work-life benefits are critical in supporting soldiers amidst challenges, uncertainties, and conflicts, promoting psychological, emotional, and social well-being (Rautenbach, 2015; Rothman, 2013). Flexible working hours, mental health support, and wellness initiatives are particularly valuable in helping military personnel, especially women, manage dual roles effectively. These benefits enhance job satisfaction, commitment, and overall job attractiveness.

Career Growth Opportunities

Glass and Cook's (2016) article analysed elements that have contributed to the experience and achievement of women who, "against significant odds, rise above the glass ceiling" (Cook, 2016). Wilson (2014) defines the glass ceiling as an "invisible, artificial barrier that prevents qualified individuals from advancing beyond a certain point within their employing organisation." However, a few women have broken through the glass ceiling in terms of promotions and development (Sankey, 2018). Through career planning, organisations may enhance employees' occupations as well as the entire process, attitude, conduct, and state of affairs in their work life. Career planning assists companies in the planning, coordination, standardisation, management, and oversight of career planning (Sinha, 2020).

Women's positions, duties, and chances for advancement in the military have grown significantly, according to Carney et al. (2003), Katz et al. (2007), and La Bash et al. (2009). The majority of military members believe that the military helped them "get forward in life" by teaching them character, how to deal with others as well, confidence in oneself, and personal improvement. The military's benefits and organisation appealed to employees since they offered better jobs (Mankowski et al., 2015).

Job Security

According to Pearce (1998), job security is a psychological situation in which individuals' desires for future job continuity within an organisation change. Individual differences in viewed job security may be caused by organisational procedures that affect the current

relationship between workers and their employers (Davy et al., 1991; Geary, 1992; Roskies & Louis-Guerin, 1990; Tsui et al., 1997), components of significant employment circumstances (Ashford et al., 1989; Greenhalgh & Rosenblatt, 1984), or the characteristics of the psychological connection itself (Rousseau, 1989). Job security is significant in this context because it reflects the level of trust and mutual attachment in employees' psychological agreements (Cavanaugh & Noe, 1999; Robinson et al., 1994; Rousseau, 1990; Shore & Tetrick, 1994; Smithson & Lewis, 2000).

Particularly in the military, job security has a significant impact on how attractive a career appears. Salisbury (2023) illustrated how financial support adds to perceived stability and highlighted the significance of pensions for military widows. Similar to this, Martell et al. (2023) emphasized the critical role that compensation claims and service recognition have in building veterans' trust and loyalty over the long run.

Methodology

This study applies quantitative research using a survey method. Survey research aims to describe trends in a large population of people by gathering information from groups of people using techniques such as questionnaires and interviews (Haslinda, 2019). Therefore, in this study, the researcher uses research questions and instrument questionnaires to collect data from sample respondents. As a result, this study included respondents from the population of women serving in the Malaysian Armed Forces, which included 9,567 members, distributed across the following services which 6,594 in the Army (Bahagian Sumber Manusia, Markas Tentera Darat, 2023), 960 in the Air Force (Bahagian Sumber Manusia, Markas Tentera Udara, 2023), and 2,013 in the Navy (Bahagian Sumber Manusia, Markas Tentera Laut, 2023). The sampling size is determined by the researcher using Krejcie and Morgan (1970) as a tool to identify the quantity of sample size by the table where it is established on total population. The selected sample size for the respondents in this study consists of 370 respondents.

In this study, the questionnaires are distributed online. The questionnaire is available through Google Forms, and responders will only need around 10 minutes to complete all of the questions. Next, the researcher needs to analyse the pilot study which are 30 respondents and it should get Cronbach's alpha of 0.7 and above to be considered reliable. If above 0.7, it means the questionnaire is good to go and set to be analysed. In contrary, if below 0.7, some questions in the questionnaire need to be deleted or modified (Taber, 2017). As a result, all the variables have passed the reliability test since all the values are above 0.7 (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016) and that's confirms that all of the variables fulfilled the acceptable standards of the reliability analysis which is allowed to conduct for further research.

Findings

Frequency Analysis

Based on the demographic profile analysis (see Table 1), the majority of women military personnel who participated in the research were aged 18 to 30, accounting for 50.4% of respondents. Most participants, 92.9%, were Malay, while 7.1% were non-Malay. Regarding educational background, 62.2% held a Bachelor's Degree. Additionally, 47.2% of respondents were from Navy services, with the majority, 80.3%, serving as officers, and the remaining 19.7% in other ranks.

Table 1

Respondent's Demographic Profile

| Characteristics | Frequency | Percentage |
|--------------------------|------------|--------------|
| Age | | |
| 18-30 years old | 64 | 50.4 |
| 31-40 years old | 35 | 27.6 |
| 41-50 years old | 25 | 19.7 |
| 51-60 years old | 3 | 2.4 |
| Total | 127 | 100.0 |
| Race | | |
| Malay | 118 | 92.9 |
| Chinese | 1 | 0.8 |
| Indian | 7 | 5.5 |
| Others | 1 | 0.8 |
| Total | 127 | 100.0 |
| Educational Level | | |
| SPM | 20 | 15.7 |
| Diploma | 5 | 3.9 |
| Bachelor's Degree | 79 | 62.2 |
| Master's Degree | 22 | 17.3 |
| PhD | 1 | 0.8 |
| Total | 127 | 100.0 |
| Services | | |
| Army | 55 | 43.3 |
| Airforce | 12 | 9.4 |
| Navy | 60 | 47.2 |
| Total | 127 | 100.0 |
| Rank | | |
| Other Ranks | 25 | 19.7 |
| Officer | 102 | 80.3 |
| Total | 127 | 100.0 |

Reliability Analysis

The Cronbach's Alpha results of actual data are displayed in Table 2. All the variables have passed the reliability test since all the values are above 0.7 (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016).

Table 2

Actual Data Reliability Analyses

| | Cronbach's Alpha |
|---|------------------|
| Job Attractiveness (Y) | 0.908 |
| Work-Life Benefit (X ₁) | 0.821 |
| Career Growth Opportunities (X ₂) | 0.914 |
| Job Security (X ₃) | 0.905 |

According to the above table, the Cronbach's Alpha value for job attractiveness (Y) was 0.908, work-life benefit (X₁) was 0.821, career growth opportunities (X₂) was 0.914, and job security (X₃) was 0.905. It indicates that all of the values above meet the 0.7 standard for reliability analysis. This confirms that all of the variables fulfilled the acceptable standards of the reliability analysis.

Pearson Correlation Analysis

Pearson Product-Moment correlation measures the linear relationship between two quantitative variables (Graba et al., 2016). According to Sekaran and Bougie (2016), the Pearson correlation matrix indicates the direction, strength, and significance of the bivariate connections between all variables.

As the Table 3 below, it can confirm that all independent variable is correlated and has relationship with dependent variables such as work-life benefit ($r = .746$, $p < 0.001$), career growth opportunities ($r = .668$, $p < 0.001$) and job security ($r = .632$, $p < 0.001$) are positively correlated with job attractiveness.

Table 3

Correlations between Work-Life Benefit, Career Growth Opportunities, And Job Security on The Job Attractiveness of Women in Joining the Malaysian Armed Forces

| Y | Job Attractiveness | Pearson Correlation | 1 | | | |
|----------------|-----------------------------|---------------------|--------|--------|--------|---|
| | | Sig.(2-tailed) | | | | |
| X ₁ | Work-Life Benefit | Pearson Correlation | .746** | | | 1 |
| | | Sig.(2-tailed) | | .000 | | |
| X ₂ | Career Growth Opportunities | Pearson Correlation | .668** | .756** | | 1 |
| | | Sig.(2-tailed) | .000 | .000 | | |
| X ₃ | Job Security | Pearson Correlation | .632** | .692** | .851** | 1 |
| | | Sig.(2-tailed) | .000 | .000 | .000 | |

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

Multiple Regression Analysis of Variables

Table 4 indicates significant work-life benefit (p -values < 0.01 and < 0.05). Work-life benefits are positively correlated and explain job attractiveness ($\beta = .544$). The following two factors are not significant since the p value is greater than 0.05, career growth opportunities ($p = 0.253$) and job security ($p = 0.231$), implying that career growth opportunities and job security are not significantly related to job attractiveness. The results also show that work-life benefits contribute to 58.7% of the variation in job attractiveness. As a result, the model does not account for 41.3% of the variability in job attractiveness, implying that additional unexplained factors or variables may play an essential part in its variation.

Table 4

The Finding of the Extent of Work-Life Benefit, Career Growth Opportunities and Job Security Explaining the Variance of the Job Attractiveness of Women in Joining the Malaysian Armed Forces

| Variables | Beta Coefficient | tatistics | Extent in explaining the Job Attractiveness |
|------------------------------------|------------------|-----------|---|
| Work-Life Benefit | .544 | 0 | Contribute and significant |
| Career Growth Opportunities | .131 | 3 | Contribute and not significant |
| Job Security | .120 | 1 | Contribute and not significant |

$R^2 = 0.587$

Hypothesis Test

Multiple Regression Analysis was utilised to examine the hypotheses in this study. The results of hypotheses test were explained as followed:

H1: There is a positive and significant impact of work-life benefit and job attractiveness of women in joining the Malaysian Armed Forces – Supported

H2: There is a positive and significant impact of career growth opportunities and job attractiveness of women in joining the Malaysian Armed Forces – Rejected

H3: Job security has a positive and significant effect on job attractiveness of women in joining the Malaysian Armed Forces – Rejected

Discussion

This study discovered that women who join the Malaysian Armed Forces value the work-life benefit. Demographic analysis shows that the majority of respondents are aged 18–30, a stage where many are starting families and caring for young children. As a result, these women prioritize work-life benefits that enable them to align their careers with family commitments. This finding is supported by Linehagen (2023), who highlighted the significant influence of work-life benefits on women's decisions to join the military. Similarly, Southwell and Wadsworth (2016) emphasized the importance of balancing family responsibilities with military commitments and personal duties to prevent women from feeling overwhelmed and leaving their military careers.

The armed forces may develop a more inclusive and supportive culture by assisting women in effectively managing their time for self-care and family obligations. Military jobs sometimes require long hours, inconsistent schedules, and long absences from home, which can affect personal relationships and family life. Furthermore, women in the military may have extra responsibilities such as caring for children or managing housework. Work-life benefits such as flexible working hours and telecommuting choices might help them manage tasks more efficiently. The military, including women, demands strong physical ability, so balancing work and personal life may provide a challenge to both physical and mental health. Maternity leave, mental health assistance, and wellness initiatives are all crucial benefits. Encouraging a healthy work-life balance helps to avoid overwork, which can lead to physical health issues and lower productivity.

Research Limitation

The results of this research might be used to provide policy recommendations targeted at increasing women recruitment and retention in the Malaysian Armed Forces. The study discovered multiple challenges when investigating the characteristics that influence the job attractiveness of women considering or presently serving in the Malaysian Armed Forces. Despite a desired sample size of 370, as determined by the well-known Krejcie and Morgan sampling approach, gathering enough responds from this specific population proved difficult. Only 127 persons were recruited, which is significantly smaller than the expected sample size, raising questions about the findings' increased adaptability.

Furthermore, the smaller than anticipated sample size of 127 respondents might be due in part to the difficult nature of the respondents' activities in the Armed Forces. Military personnel usually have challenging job schedules, training responsibilities, and mission requirements, which may have influenced their availability and willingness to participate in the research. The challenge of gathering a larger and more representative sample may have an impact on the generalisability of the findings.

For quantitative data, the focus is only on the questionnaire approach, which is only applicable to statistical data. In contrast, qualitative methods may give a more in-depth knowledge of the study issue. As a result, knowledge is limited in the absence of significant information depth. The sincerity of participants is also vital in data analysis, however there may be individuals who did not answer the surveys honestly or with much consideration. However, if a qualitative method, such as an interview, is employed, the respondent may offer an honest response that will help the research understand the situation.

Aside from that, this study focusses on the effects of work-life benefit, career growth opportunities and job security, despite the fact that other variables may influence women's attraction to joining the Malaysian Armed Forces.

Contributions and Recommendations

In terms of theoretical implications, this study can assist the military sector in enhancing the recruitment and retention of women in the military, particularly when considering work-life benefits. The recruitment policy needs to review the placement of women military, especially those aged 18-30 who need to be placed not far from their homes to facilitate their commuting from home to work. Furthermore, women are closely tied to family commitment

since they are both mothers and wives. They may experience stress when trying to balance their career and personal commitments. Thus, the military can provide counselling services to military families to help them manage stress, resolve difficulties, and deal with the unique demands of military life. Moreover, providing high-quality, easily accessible childcare facilities on military bases guarantees that children are cared for in a secure and supportive atmosphere. Additionally, the military can offer financial aid for childcare reduces the economic strain on military families, allowing both parents to pursue their jobs. Next, ensuring that military families have the opportunity to receive full health care, such as medical, dental, and vision care, benefits overall family health and well-being.

This research resulted in the development of future research investigations. To begin, more research is needed to understand the linkages between work-life benefit, career growth opportunities, and job security on job attractiveness. Many highly statistically proven results and conclusions have been unable to be reached due to the limits. Furthermore, the greater the number of respondents, the more effective the solution to the data constraint. As a consequence of this research's conclusion, the research area may be further investigated, with the following recommendations such as in-depth qualitative research, such as interviews or focus groups, can be employed to complement quantitative data. This can give a more complete understanding of women's specific experiences, motivations, and challenges in the military in terms of work-life benefit, career growth opportunities, and job security. Furthermore, examine the experiences of women transferring from military to civilian life. Investigate how perceived work-life benefit, career growth opportunities, and job security during military service affect post-military career choices and job attractiveness in civilian industries. Furthermore, perform studies comparing women's experiences in the military to those in the civilian sector. Identify differences and similarities in elements that influence job attractiveness, providing a more in-depth understanding of the unique challenges and benefits of military service. Future study should include other characteristics that influence women's job attractiveness in the military sector, such as leadership opportunities, a supportive work environment, and flexible deployment guidelines.

Conclusion

The findings of this study highlight that woman in the Malaysian Armed Forces, particularly those aged 18–30, prioritize work-life benefits as a key factor in their careers. This age group is often in the early stages of family life, balancing the demands of starting a family while pursuing a military career. Work-life benefits such as flexible working hours, telecommuting, maternity leave, and mental health support are essential to help them manage personal and professional responsibilities effectively. As a consequence, organisations should pay attention to this fact because it is the one thing that women need when serving in the military. The emphasis on work-life benefits as a critical component for increasing women's job attractiveness in the Malaysian Armed Forces is consistent with existing workforce goals, develops organisational culture, and promotes the military as a welcome and encouraging employer. This plan contributes to the development of a diverse, adaptable, and dedicated workforce in the armed forces.

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