

MULTIPLE REGRESSION ANALYSIS REVEALS LOW LIFE SATISFACTION AMONG UNMARRIED FEMALE WORKERS IN SABAH

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Abstract. This study investigates the persistent issue of work-life conflict among female government workers in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, Malaysia. While prior research largely focuses on married women, this paper highlights that unmarried female government servants (single) also face significant work-life conflict. This quantitative study employed convenience sampling to gather data from 348 female government servants across three government institutions. Data were collected using a self-administered questionnaire, with multi-regression analysis used to examine the relationship between work-life conflict and life satisfaction. The findings challenge the traditional belief that unmarried women encounter less stress outside of work and that government jobs ensure emotional stability. The results revealed a statistically significant negative relationship between work-life conflict and life satisfaction for both married and single women. Notably, single female government servants were observed to be more affected by work-life conflict than their married counterparts, particularly in the strain-based dimension. The study concludes that work-life conflict is a prevalent issue for all female employees and calls for more inclusive support. Recommendations include revising job guidelines to prevent discrimination, offering stress and time management workshops, and providing counseling services. Additionally, providing unmarried women with opportunities in decision-making roles is suggested to boost their self-esteem and help close the gender gap.

Keywords: *unmarried, marital status, life satisfaction, work, multi-regression analysis, women*

Introduction

In many societies, marriage is traditionally seen as a major achievement (Wadsworth, 2016; Opler, 1943). However, in the 21st century, marriage often brings significant challenges and responsibilities, particularly for women (Juli et al., 2025). In Malaysia, women are encouraged to join the labour force to support national growth (Juli et al., 2024b). Despite equal educational opportunities for both genders (DOSM, 2024b; 2023c), unmarried women are sometimes viewed as having fewer responsibilities. Globally and in Malaysia, unmarried women often face societal and cultural expectations (Kislev, 2024a), leading many to seek independence elsewhere (Kislev, 2024a). To support the patterns of unmarried, employed Malaysian women that exhibited unconventional and radical thinking, Department of Statistics Malaysia, abbreviated as DOSM, has reported divorce rates in Malaysia has increased from the year 2021 until year 2022 which was 43.1%, (*Figure 1*) (DOSM, 2023b), this recent published report by Department of Statistics Malaysia (DOSM) on the year 2024, DOSM (2024a) reported where marriage rates have decreased (contribute to the decrease of divorce rates) where unmarried status is a better option for women in this 21st century (Parker and Priest, 2022; Guirkingner and Platteau, 2021). According to DOSM (2024a), statistics of marriage rates from year 2022 until year 2023 decreased to 12.5%, which also influenced the divorce rates to decrease as well which decreased to 8.7% (*Figure 2*).

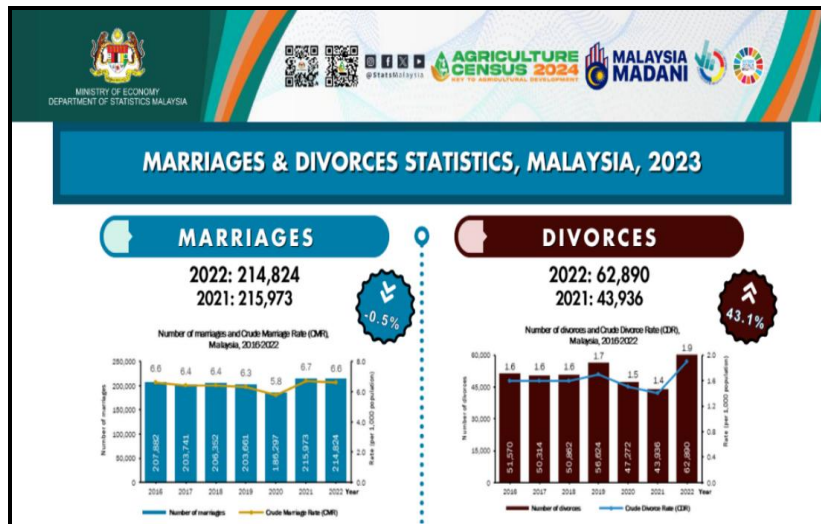


Figure 1. Marriage and divorce statistics report.
Source: DOSM (2023b).

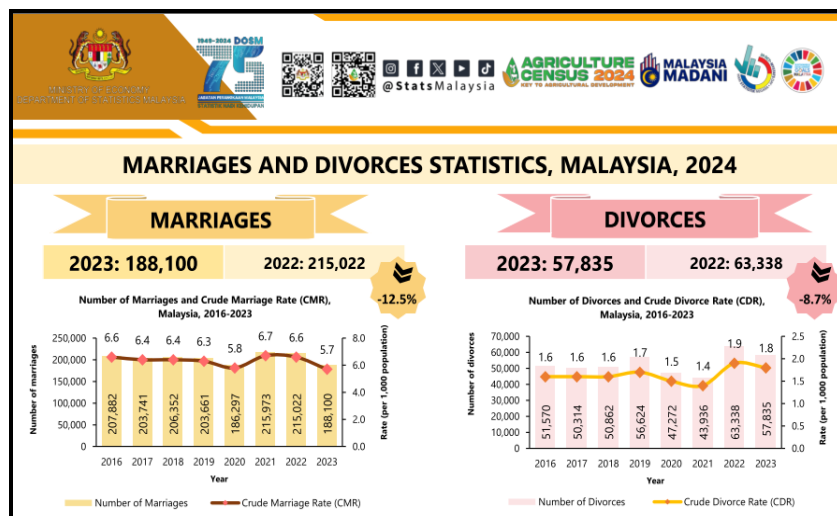


Figure 2. Marriage and divorce statistics report.
Source: DOSM (2024a).

There are studies focused on unmarried women associated with female empowerment (Costa et al., 2023). Female empowerment (Moubarak and Al-Qarni, 2022) or women empowerment are defined based on individuals' socio-demographics and social upbringing, so the definition itself is varies (Ewerling et al., 2017). In Malaysia, working women struggling to grasp empowerment within themselves because of social norms and cultural norms. According to the statistics by DOSM (2023c) and DOSM (2022), focused on towards women empowerment, women's LFPR (Labour Force Participation Rates) is 55.8% compared to men's LFPR (Labour Force Participation Rates) which is 81.9%, with an overall Malaysia Gender Gap Index (MGGI) equivalent to 0.694 (Figure 3). In the year 2024 (Figure 4), in relation to Malaysia Gender Gap Index (MGGI), women's LFPR (Labour Force Participation Rates) is 56.2%, still lower compared to men's LFPR (Labour Force Participation Rates) which is 82.3%. There is only little improvement in terms of MGGI which is 0.705, however the imbalance gap between women involvement in labour force still

extremely wide when it compares to the other gender. Several factors that contributed to low level of participation among Malaysian women in labour force again, due to social norms and cultural norms. Panatik and Badri (2016) stated that, women were observed to be underrepresented by society to hold professions that are gender-based; where women are expected to hold feminine jobs rather than masculine jobs (such as engineering professions (Panatik and Badri, 2016), decision maker roles and management level (Hussin et al., 2021; Sharma and Taneja, 2019). In addition, there is a gap in terms of moderating effect in between unmarried group and married group of female workers (small difference) as what stated by Juli et al. (2024b). Juli et al. (2024b) stated that unmarried group are consisted of widowed, single and divorced where their marital status created a moderating effect in relation with their work engagement and life satisfaction, and also in mediation role aspects (Juli et al., 2024c). In addition to this, when focused on unemployment rates in Malaysia, Sabah (*Figure 5*) has been consistently has the highest unemployment rate compared to other states from the year 2022 which was 7.7% unemployment rate and increased to 8.5% on the year 2023 (DOSM, 2023a). As summarized from above, marital status (unmarried individuals) has influenced women (Juli et al., 2024a), Malaysian women in relation with their level of empowerment to cope with social norms and cultural norms in Malaysia (which contributed to work-life conflict, perhaps societies found it unusual because unmarried status viewed as not having “double burden syndrome” (Salleh and Ismail, 2022), as well as their participation in labour force, how long they will be willing to stay in workforce and etc. In addition, crucial insights regarding the highest unemployment rate in the state of Sabah, Malaysia also important to discuss at the end of this study.



Figure 3. Women empowerment in selected domains report.
Source: DOSM (2023c).

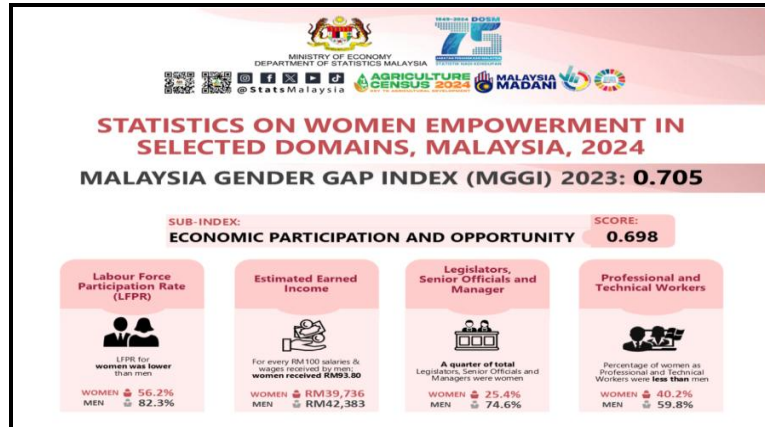


Figure 4. Women empowerment in selected domains report.
Source: DOSM (2024b).

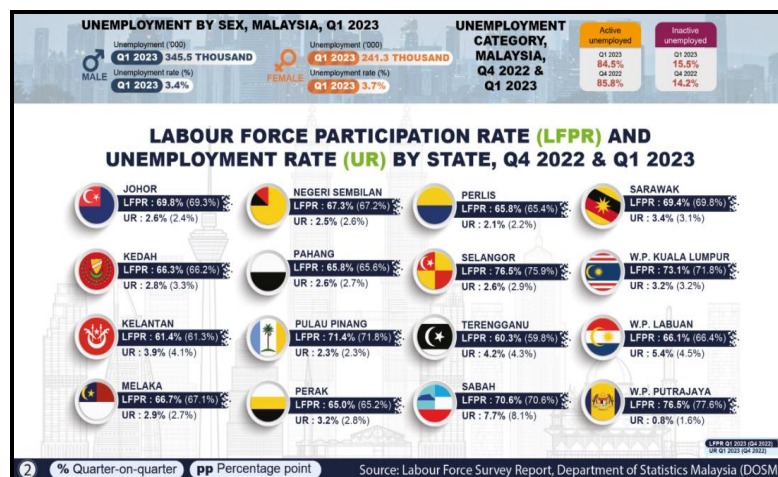


Figure 5. Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR).
Source: DOSM (2023a).

Literature review

Insights on literature for unmarried women

When focused among unmarried Malaysian women, there are few studies focused on Malaysian women that are unmarried, in terms of factors of staying unmarried, implications of being unmarried and side effects of being unmarried. Previous qualitative study by Ibrahim (2015) focused among never-married Malay Muslim in Malaysia regarding of their perceptions of marriage. There are several factors that contributed for women oppose and accept to marriage, or women that stay unmarried or unwilling to get married. Ibrahim and Hassan (2015) stated that women that stay unmarried due to career opportunities. This was also supported a study by Shahrak and Zarei (2021) on where women that stay unmarried, due to because personal independence and their financial securities. Back to Ibrahim and Hassan (2015) study, their findings were supported on latest study by Juli et al. (2025) and Juli et al. (2024b) where Malaysian women in 21st century prioritize their career, finances and stability to be satisfied in life, but faced life challenges due to marital status. Later study by Maeda (2008) was also supported by Ibrahim and Hassan (2015), as single or never-married or unmarried women value very much living a single life without establishing any intimate

relationships with another individuals. In Maeda (2008)'s study (findings focused on the timeframe of the study itself), based in Japan, focused on Japanese women that are in group of "will never-married" women expressed that several significant factors that attract them to remain single until their late 30's or will never married. One of the factors which is family dependence and responsibilities. Family dependence and responsibilities viewed as common factors as well according to Costa et al. (2023) and Mohd Isa and Ahmad (2020), where unmarried women are empowered to be more financially independent and reliable taking care of the households and support themselves. Back again to Maeda (2008)'s study, other factor that contributes for unmarried women to stay unmarried for very long time, which is have no suitable or ideal mate which similar to explanation by Mohd Isa and Ahmad (2020). Maeda (2008) stated that women in their study (unmarried women: single), had difficulties to find the ideal partner that they are looking for, which that meet up their personal standards or personal expectations (similar to justification by Kislev (2024b) and Mohd Isa and Ahmad (2020)), however, Maeda (2008) also stated that unmarried (single) women in their study might justified "not able to meet the right partner" as an excuse, by not actually wanting to get married at the first place which this similar to study by Ibrahim (2015), where Malaysian women that are unmarried, rejecting marriage although the societies around them forced them to because of cultural norms and social norms. According to Lunsing (2003), in Japan, women that are single (not married or not wanting to get married), are perceived as parasites, since women that remained single until in their 30's, and have career, choose to stay with their parents. Never-married Japanese women in their 30's and reaching towards their late 30's, although have career, they are still viewed as parasites since they lived under their parents' roof; not doing the household chores and etc (Maeda, 2008).

There are other international studies that focused on unmarried women. According to Juli et al. (2024c) and Juli et al. (2024b), there are three types of marital status that are classified as unmarried: single, widowed and divorced. Focused on international studies among divorced women, Parker and Priest (2022)'s study based in USA (United States of America), there are several reasons women from 21st century in the study initiated divorce first; rather than men (female empowerment effect referred to Guirkingner and Platteau (2021)'s study), which is seeking for better financial resources for long-term from another potential counterpart, if their current partner does not meet up the expectations; financially. Another reason that drove women in Parker and Priest (2022)' study to initiate divorce which was the increase level of independence of self (especially when women outearned their current partners, in terms of income and other financial sources). Lastly, women in Parker and Priest (2022)'s study felt injustice in relation to delegating responsibilities in households, such as taking care of children's needs in the households and etc, especially if they outearned (earned more income) than their spouses/husbands, which drive women to initiate divorce. Interesting add-ons by Parker and Priest (2022)'s study on where women initiated divorce first, was because to fight gender norms especially women traditionally viewed as women who should stay at home (doing housework and taking care of children), and disagree not only men can become breadwinners, women also can. Divorce trends also quite popular in Malaysia but due to different reasons (not mainly because of female empowerment). Jones (2021) stated that several reasons divorce trends increased in Malaysia because of limited tolerance in unsatisfactory marriages (Jones, 2021; Rokach and Chan, 2023), marital conflicts (Yusof and Ismail, 2024; Rokach and Chan, 2023), social acceptance (Yusof

and Ismail, 2024). In Malaysia, cultural norms and social norms that quite often faced by women that are divorced are individuals that are not capable to compromise in marriage well (fail in marriage) (Juli et al., 2025), sometimes women that are divorced with children (with full custody), are preferred to be classified as single mothers (society perceived this as women who are widowed) as stated by Kadir (2012) and other study such as Biblarz and Gottainer (2000) study, single mother applied towards divorced women with children and widowed women with children. In short, women that are unmarried which are women that single, widowed and divorced, have their reasons to be in that marital status instead of getting married or re-married, based on their other socio-demographics such as their career, income and geographical locations.

Insights on literature for women and work-life conflict

Juli et al. (2025) stated that work-life conflict consisted of three dimensions which are Time-Based dimension, Behavior-Based dimension and Strain-Based dimension. Juli et al. (2025) stated that as well Time-Based associated with workers faced conflict with time, while Behavior-Based associated with workers faced conflict with behavior, and Strain-Based dimension associated with workers faced with strain or pressure. Based on Juli et al. (2025)'s findings, work-life conflict has a negative relationship with life satisfaction among working women in Malaysia. Juli et al. (2025) supported previous studies by Arham et al. (2019) – a preliminary Malaysian study, on where work-life conflict associated more with women that have multiple roles and responsibilities (mother, wife and a worker); with an additional role as a daughter (if parents still alive) according to Maeda (2008), and a study by Ahmad et al. (2011) – study based in Islamabad, Pakistan on where gendered expectations, or gender roles influenced women with careers that are married or have family responsibilities, faced work-life conflicts (Aziz and Yasin, 2013). Hartman (2016) justified the differences between work-life conflict and work-family conflict. Work-family conflict, more focused on family-wise related domain and work-domain (family domain to work domain, work domain to family domain), whereby work-life conflict is focused on family domain and life domain. Life domain associated with the individuals' personal lives (not necessarily focused on family) as what stated by Huo and Jiang (2023) and Hartman (2016). Thus, work-life conflict has a good possibility to investigate with life satisfaction since life satisfaction defined as overall assessment of one's life (Veenhoven, 2012; Diener, 1984) and justified according to study by Juli et al. (2025) and Juli et al. (2024a), based on the relationship does exist between work-life conflict and life satisfaction.

Insights on literature for women and life satisfaction

According to Kainulainen et al. (2018), life satisfaction should also be considered as a matter of feeling, apart from understanding or investigating what individuals want in their lives to be able to be satisfied, where this statement proved by Veenhoven (2012), a Dutch sociologist, where he stated that 5th item ("If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing") in SWLS (Satisfaction With Life Scale)-created by a psychologist which is Diener et al. (1985), that is associated with happiness. Life satisfaction is more associated with women compared to men, because of women's complex personalities, perspectives due to the influence of gender norms, social norms and cultural norms that have existed for decades globally (Gruneau, 2021; Coontz,

2004; Sousa and Lyubomirsky, 2001; Haller, 2016/1981; Jones, 1980; Wright, 1978; Opler, 1943). Marital status changes women's lives drastically (Juli et al., 2024c; Juli et al., 2024b). A later study by Greenstein (2016) has already studied how marital status affected individuals (both genders) in a global scale. Greenstein (2016) justified that divorced women have higher level of life satisfaction compared to divorced men. Thus, this concluded that marital status has an impact on towards women in relation with their life satisfaction.

When associated women and life satisfaction, women are perceived by societies, again as complex individuals (Sousa and Lyubomirsky, 2001) because women faced lots of challenges especially in this 21st century, in terms of all kinds of norms (Juli et al., 2024b). In cultural norms, women are viewed as women that are supposed to hold maternal roles such as being a mother and a wife (Juli et al., 2024a). A quantitative study by Juli et al. (2025) focused on working women in association with their work-life conflict and life satisfaction, there exist negative relationship between them. Malaysian working women in Juli et al. (2025)'s study expressed that they felt more strain and stress, focused towards job responsibilities in their workplace compared to responsibilities at their homes. This led for working women in their study have very high risk to leave labour force earlier than their retirement age as what justified by Salleh and Ismail (2022), because they did not feel highly satisfied working in their current work environment. According to Juli et al. (2025), low level of life satisfaction existed among working women in their study in relation with their work-life conflict, gave insights that they are not stress having roles as a mother and a wife, but actually their main stressors are in their workplace. There are possible stressors that commonly occur in the workplaces such as inconducive work environment (Panatik and Badri, 2016), lack of job resources and guidelines, discrimination in terms of job promotion and increment of salaries, lack of emotional and mental support among work colleagues, lack of awareness in terms of time and stress management, and last but not least, lack of work engagement (Juli et al., 2024b).

In Sousa and Lyubomirsky (2001) study focused on women and life satisfaction, it was complicated for women to achieve their desired level of life satisfaction, because their desired level of life satisfaction are assessed by themselves based in their current stage of life. Their life satisfaction is mainly influenced by their socio-demographics (Juli et al., 2025; Juli et al., 2024b; Juli et al., 2024a) throughout every stage of their lives, such as getting married, getting divorced, loss of their husband/spouse, remained single for a long time, having a children, securing a job, facing declining of fertility (menopause)-which contributed to fluctuation of emotions (Sousa and Lyubomirsky, 2001). Sousa and Lyubomirsky (2001) also stated that women can be highly satisfied in life (but in a hostile way) when they able to compete with other individuals, who are also women. Again, women have the tendency to always compare with their competitors (other women) regarding lifestyle, accomplishments, physical looks, material wealth, marriages and so on. When discussed about marriage, women look for equality in marriage (Sousa and Lyubomirsky, 2001) rather than traditional norms in marriage, which always ends up divorces (Parker and Priest, 2022), and this divorce trends already visible since the 1980's in Malaysia (Jones, 1980) and accepted in this 21st century (Yusof and Ismail, 2024) because traditional norms force women to be a mother and a wife in the households and the husband will be the main provider – breadwinner (Parker and Priest, 2022).

Insights on literature for women and hierarchy of needs theory by Abraham Maslow

Hierarchy of Needs theory by Abraham Maslow consisted of five stages which are physiological needs (1st stage), safety needs (2nd stage), love and belonging needs (3rd stage), self-esteem needs (4th stage) and self-actualization needs (5th stage). This refers to the earliest paper written by Abraham Maslow himself in the year 1943 (Maslow, 1943). There are explanations on each stage of needs and applied to working women (female workers in this study), as women again, already perceived with complex individuals (Juli et al., 2025; Sousa and Lyubomirsky, 2001) because of challenges faced cultural norms, social norms and gender norms. The very first stage, which was physiological needs, Maslow (1943) stated this was the core and essential needs that every human should have, which was food, water, shelter, clothes for survival. If there are no food, water, shelter and clothes, there will be no chance for any individual on this earth able to move to the next stage which was safety needs (2nd stage of need). Interesting paper written by Maslow (1943) where, individuals also need physical intimacy to continue offspring, as this statement is considerable because Maslow (1943) wrote that paper on the year 1943. If physiological needs applied among female workers in this 21st century, female workers need essentials such as food, water, shelter and clothes to survive. Having these needs substantially, they will be able to move to the next stage which is safety needs. Maslow (1943) wrote in his paper that food and water are very crucial because these two contribute to human's physical growth development that help individuals to remain sane.

The second stage which was safety needs, that promise securities; mainly physical, for individuals. Maslow (1943) explained safety needs are where individuals need to escape from dangerous activities or environments, situations that made them feel unsafe. In 1943, individuals were very aware of concurrent natural disasters such as earthquakes, tornados, floods etc. In addition, Maslow (1943) stated that during the time he wrote his paper, individuals seek comfort from surroundings that they feel safe and familiar with such as family securities (being included in a group). This perspective was aligned with several studies that associated women with marriage, where women seek marriage as stability and security (Juli et al., 2025; Opler, 1943). When related safety needs with female workers or working women, women in 21st century that are working, want their safety needs to be met such as securing financial stability, buying assets such as house and lands, securing insurances to ensure their lives are secured in the long-term. However, as according to Juli et al. (2024a), marriage also viewed as security for women especially women that come from underprivileged family, getting married is an escape from poverty.

The third stage, which was love and belonging needs, Maslow (1943) stated this as where individuals seek emotional intimacy from other suitors, or other people that able to satisfy them in every way; either emotional, physical, and also psychologically. Maslow (1943) argued this need, love and belonging need was where all individuals that have very lack of love in their lives, eventually become abnormal individual, developed some sorts of obsessions towards things that are impossible to attain, such as gaining affection from someone they have affection towards, if they did not feel loved or affection from previous people or situation(s). This argument very much aligned with studies by Yusof and Ismail (2024) and Malek (2016) where people seek affection from other people (being romantically involved with other people), with married status, that led to divorce. For working women or female workers in this study, love and belonging needs are where women can be emotionally connected with their loved ones or people

they trust. In addition, marriage also viewed as the evidence where working women chose to get married, because they viewed marriage is an act of commitment and also symbol of love between two people who loved each other dearly (Sousa and Lyubomirsky, 2001). However, marriage in this 21st century is difficult to handle especially married working women, which was then the concept of work-life conflict introduced (Juli et al., 2024a; Aziz and Yasin, 2013; Ahmad et al., 2011).

The fourth stage, which was self-esteem needs, Maslow (1943) stated that self-esteem was associated with satisfaction, where individuals need self-esteem to be recognized by their societies. Better self-esteem, better satisfaction. Types of self-esteem according to Maslow (1943), such as receiving praise from other people and gaining respect from people. Female workers really need to achieve on this stage and struggling to maintain this stage because women still faced inequalities (gender norms, cultural norms and social norms) etc in this world today (Juli et al., 2025; Kuppusamy and Shanmugam, 2023; Panatik and Badri, 2016). Last stage, which was self-actualization needs, Maslow (1943) stated this need where individuals has the capabilities to unlock their true potential, by being more creative and feeling empowered. This need usually embodied by leaders or independent scholars that able to make changes in their communities for better living etc. When associated with female workers in this study, female workers in Malaysia might be considered as still behind and very few women in Malaysia to be political leaders because of gender norms based on statistics by Department of Statistics Malaysia (DOSM, 2024b, 2023c, 2022).

Materials and Methods

This study is a quantitative study, that are focused based in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, Malaysia. Researcher used convenience sampling technique to collect data among 348 female government servants that work in three government institutions which are Sabah State Education Department (Kota Kinabalu branch), Sabah State Meteorological Office (Kota Kinabalu branch) and Sabah State Registration Department (Kota Kinabalu branch) as what employed by Juli et al. (2025)-focused on research methodology; on where researcher itself resided in Kota Kinabalu and the researcher has awareness and existence knowledge, on ways to collect data in a short period of time within the area. Other factor that convenience sampling is used due to the researcher's familiarity with established professional networks as, had an established professional networks with the female government servants. Convenience sampling used in a quantitative study also practised by several studies such as a study done by Yan and Zhang (2022), where the researchers justified convenience sampling used as they have good professional networks (good friendships) with the superiors that are in charge; their targeted research locations to collect data. In addition, a quantitative study by Arham et al. (2019) also used convenience sampling technique to collect data as, they justified that it is a preliminary study. Researcher used work-life conflict questionnaire based on Hartman (2016) study and has been stated in Juli et al. (2025)'s quantitative study, that consisted of overall 23 items. To be specific, there are six items under time-based dimension, five items under behavior-based dimension and 12 items under strain-based dimension. For life satisfaction, researcher used SWLS (Satisfaction With Life Scale) by Diener et al. (1985) as what stated in Juli et al. (2025)'s study where SWLS consisted of five items. Cronbach Alpha, which is tested for reliability analysis for SWLS is equivalent to 0.87 based on Diener et al. (1985)'s study. Cronbach Alpha for work-life conflict on the

other hand, is equivalent to 0.953 as stated by Omar and Davidson (2016). In terms of sample size of this study, according to Juli et al. (2025) and Juli et al. (2024b), minimum sample size that is recommended which is 200, that sufficient enough to perform good statistical analysis. Early study by Hoe (2008) stated as well that each item in the questionnaire should be observed minimum five observations for each parameter (item). This study used 6-Likert Scale which are 0 = strongly disagree, 1 = disagree, 2 = Not sure, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree and 5 = Strongly Agree. Lastly, the researcher distributed self-administered questionnaire to the respondents (female government servants) using two-ways: online google form and physical hand-in. In addition, Multi-Regression Analysis performed refer to study by Ndayambaje (2020), where marital status acts as the moderator variable.

Results and Discussion

Based on socio-demographics (primarily focused on marital status), there are total of 348 female government servants participated in this study. In relation to marital status, there are 68.7% married female government servants, 23.6% single female government servants, 3.2% widowed female government servants and 4.6% divorced female government servants. Based on *Table 1*, multi-regression analysis was performed to observe the relationship between work-life conflict (WLC) and life satisfaction (LS) with the influence of marital status which is married, single, widowed and divorced (female government servants). When observed towards the unstandardized coefficients (B) and compared with the standardized coefficients (Beta), as well as the significance level, only two types of marital status that is statistically significant between work-life conflict and life satisfaction which are married and single. In short, female government servants that are married, their work-life conflict is statistically significant towards their life satisfaction which is less than 0.001. In addition, same goes as well towards female government servants that are single, their work-life conflict is statistically significant towards their life satisfaction which is also less than 0.001. Divorced female government servants and widowed female government servants are not considered as this marital status, their work-life conflicts are not statistically significant towards their life satisfaction. Back to *Table 1*, focused on the unstandardized coefficients (B) and standardized coefficients (Beta), there is a decrease when focused on married female government servants, where the value of B is equivalent to -0.203 and the value of Beta is equivalent to -0.347. From here, this is to be said that the higher the level of work-life conflict, the lower the level of life satisfaction. For single female government servants, there is a decrease as well, where the value of B is equivalent to -0.257 and the value of Beta is equivalent to -0.417. From here, this is to be said that the higher level of work-life conflict, the lower the level of life satisfaction. When compared to the decrease differences between married female government servants and single female government servants, single female government servants were observed to be more affected with work-life conflict in relation with their life satisfaction compared to married female government servants.

Table 1. Relationship between work-life conflict and life satisfaction with the influence of marital status.

Category	Model	Unstandardized coefficient		Standardized coefficient	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
Married	Constant	4.134	.090		46.166	<.001

	WLC	-.203	.036	-.347	-5.690	<.001
Single	Constant	4.148	.160		25.950	<.001
	WLC	-.257	.063	-.417	-4.102	<.001
Widowed	Constant	4.502	.364		12.370	<.001
	WLC	-.479	.187	-.649	-2.563	.031
Diverced	Constant	4.211	.249		16.933	<.001
	WLC	-.202	.106	-.453	-1.901	.078

Note: a. There are no valid cases in one or more split files. Statistics cannot be computed. b. Dependent Variable: LS. $p < .001$ is statistically significant.

This study focuses on unmarried female government servants, categorized as single (never married), widowed, and divorced women. While prior research has mostly examined married female government servants, linking their work-life conflict to lower life satisfaction (Juli et al., 2025), this study shifts attention to the unmarried group. Regression analysis reveals that only single, never-married female government servants show a significant relationship between work-life conflict (strain and time dimensions) and life satisfaction. Therefore, the discussion will center on this specific group, as they are the most affected among unmarried women in terms of work-life conflict and its impact on well-being. Single female government servants are often perceived by society as having fewer responsibilities due to the absence of roles as wives or mothers. However, regression analysis shows that they still experience work-life conflict, contributing to lower life satisfaction, particularly in the strain-based dimension (Juli et al., 2024a). Many report feeling workplace stress that affects their ability to fulfill family roles after work. This highlights a lack of female empowerment among single women. Costa et al. (2023) explain that the concept of female empowerment varies across countries and is vital for promoting personal growth and helping women achieve their goals.

When focused on towards female empowerment among single female government servants, there are several underlying factors that high possibly that contribute female government servants to exhibit lack of female empowerment or women empowerment. One of the factors is there is lacking role model or someone that they can look up or feel inspired to be. According to Maeda (2008), which study conducted based in Japan, women that are never married, feel motivated to stay unmarried (remained single for a long time) when they have a very good role model in their lives. A role model that they looked up that fulfilled their expectations such as having a very good career, have good looks and personalities, secured a high position in the work organizations and etc (Maeda, 2008). In Malaysia, a study by Baqutayan (2020) stated that female empowerment is still a problem because of cultural norms and social norms. Thus, female government servants that are single in this study faced a struggle in terms of female empowerment especially in relation to income, leadership position and career type, and also underestimate single status to be able to do multi-tasking roles. Since the results shown that single female government servants observed to be affected more with work-life conflict in association with life satisfaction, compared to the married female government servants, it is important to take note that several actions must be taken to overcome work-life conflict that greatly affected single female government servants (never married).

The Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development should advocate for reducing societal expectations and discrimination against single female government employees, especially regarding promotion opportunities. Social support groups promoting women's empowerment should also be introduced in government institutions. Additionally, the Ministry of Human Resources should require all

government HR departments to revise job guidelines to prevent discrimination, bullying, or role confusion. The Ministry is also encouraged to allocate budgets for stress management, time management, and conflict resolution workshops targeting female employees. Finally, counselling services should be provided to all staff, focusing on career development, family relationships, and personal well-being. Lastly, single female government servants should be given more opportunities to hold decision-maker roles especially single female government servants that remained single for a very long time; specifically, those aged 40 years old and above. This is because, giving these decision-maker roles to never married female government servants will help to boost their self-esteem and self-confidence and their choices to remain single still accepted by the societies, and as a way to close gender gap as well. In associated with Hierarchy of Needs theory, female government servants in this study does not meet their self-esteem needs and self-actualization needs. Female government servants need to have high self-esteem so that they feel empowered and be confident in their marital status (unmarried) and actually have more opportunities to achieve their self-actualization needs.

Conclusion

Single, never-married female government servants also experience work-life conflict, with strain-based conflict showing a stronger impact than time-based conflict. This imbalance has been linked to a decline in their overall life satisfaction. The findings highlight that work-life conflict is not limited to married female employees, as unmarried women also face significant challenges in balancing work and personal well-being. Further research is needed to explore how widowed and divorced female government servants are affected. Additionally, future studies could investigate other work-related factors, such as employee motivation, engagement, and other possible contributors to life satisfaction among female government workers.

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Conflict of interest

The authors confirm that there is no conflict of interest involve with any parties in this research study.

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