

# The Relationship between Compensation and Benefits Management on Employee Well-being: A Study of Malaysian SMEs in Johor

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.30880/rmtb.2025.06.02.019>

## Article Info

Received: 31 September 2025  
Accepted: 01 November 2025  
Available online: 01 December 2025

## Keywords

Compensation, benefit management, employee well-being, SMEs, satisfaction

## Abstract

The objective of this study is to explore the relationship between satisfaction with compensation and benefits management and employees' well-being in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Johor, Malaysia. A quantitative methodology was employed, gathering data through structured surveys administered to employees across various SMEs. The data was analysed using descriptive and inferential statistical methods with tools such as the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The findings reveal a significant positive relationship between satisfaction with compensation and benefits management and employees' well-being. The study highlights that competitive compensation packages and effective benefits management can enhance employee well-being, reduce workplace stress, and improve job satisfaction. These insights offer valuable guidance for SME managers and policymakers in designing strategies to optimise compensation structures, implement comprehensive benefit schemes, and foster a supportive work environment. Practical implications include the development of fair compensation systems, employee wellness programs, and policies that align organisational goals with employee needs to ensure sustainable success.

## 1. Introduction

In this era of globalisation, increasingly SME have been born in Malaysia. Some of the employees are satisfied with their current job, but some employees are not because of the compensation and benefits of the job. This section of the research includes a concise overview of the research background, problem statement, significance of the study, research objective, research question and hypothesis. This research will be conducted in small and medium enterprises (SME) in Johor.

Compensation and benefits management play an important role in employees' well-being at work. Reward management, including compensation and benefits, links employee motivation to organisational performance. It involves financial and non-financial rewards to attract, retain, and motivate employees effectively (Conny *et al.*, 2017). Compensation and benefits are given because employees contribute to the organisation (Abdul Kadir, 2019). Employees' well-being at work can be categorised into 2 things, which are physical and mental well-being. The physical health of employees is important to maintain productivity. The methods to maintain physical health are food, a shirt and shelter. The mental health of employees is also crucial because employees will stay confident with the organisation and stay loyal to it. To maintain the mental health of the employees, the organisation must

provide benefits such as paid time off, insurance, and bonus compensation. Employee benefits, including compensation packages, impact productivity.

Employees' dissatisfaction with compensation and work benefits from the organisation leads to resignation (Bueno, 2019). Low compensation brings stress to employees, affecting their performance and overall productivity (Akter and Husain, 2016). According to a report by *Agensi Kaunseling dan Pengurusan Kredit (AKPK)*, 26% of working adults in Malaysia experience financial stress, with 65% of them reporting a negative impact on their job performance. Even more concerning is the finding that 65% of those experiencing financial stress report a negative impact on their job performance. Additionally, poor benefits management can decrease employee performance due to potential job-related injuries and associated costs. Sometimes, compensation is unfairly distributed due to biased managers (Suyanto *et al.*, 2021). Furthermore, employees, particularly recent graduates, are often unaware of their entitled compensation and benefits. These factors can lead to high employee turnover.

Compensation and benefits management is crucial for a company's success; if not handled properly, it can result in significant losses. Beyond turnover, inadequate compensation and benefits directly impact employee well-being, leading to increased stress, decreased job satisfaction, and poor mental health. Employees who feel undervalued or unsupported in terms of benefits are more likely to experience burnout and disengagement. Therefore, ensuring fair and adequate compensation and benefits is essential for maintaining employee well-being and fostering a productive and positive work environment.

## 2. Literature Review

To further illustrate this section, researchers refer to the previous study of compensation and benefits management on employees' well-being. These studies are discussed in more detail in the independent variables and dependent variables of the topic. Besides that, conceptual frameworks, theory and definition will also be applied in this chapter due to previous studies that the researcher found.

### 2.1 Underpinning Theories: Expectancy Theory

Expectancy theory means individuals will be motivated to perform better if they know their extra performance will be rewarded. (Vroom, 1964) This theory was first proposed by Victor Vroom, who used it to motivate employees. This theory is mostly used in studying employees' behaviour. In the previous research, "Work Motivation", this theory states that expending effort will lead to goal attainment.

### 2.2 Dependent Variables

#### 2.2.1 Employees' Physical Well-being

Physical well-being, encompassing sleep, diet, and exercise habits, is vital for employee productivity and organisational success. Employers can enhance employees' physical well-being by fostering a healthy eating environment, such as providing two daily meals to meet their nutritional needs and preventing illnesses like diabetes and high cholesterol. Additionally, implementing physical wellness programs, such as gym facilities, sports courts, and weekend activities like yoga and team-building trips, can boost motivation and reduce job-related fatigue. To support mental wellness, organisations should offer education and programs to raise mental health awareness, reduce stress, and promote personal development, ultimately creating a healthier and more skilled workforce.

#### 2.2.2 Employees' Mental Well-being

The World Health Organisation describes mental health as 'a state of well-being in which every individual realises his or her own potential, can cope with the normal anxiety of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a dedication to her or his organisation'. Moreover, the World Health Organisation also mentions some risks that can affect mental health at work, such as harassment, unclear job roles, excessive workload and poor physical working conditions (World Health Organisation 2022). In addition, employers must be concerned about these issues to improve employees' mental well-being. Organisation can provide a relaxation area for teatime and sufficient time for a break. Besides that, employers also need to maintain interpersonal relationships with employees for a harmonious working environment. Employers also need to care about employees' conditions and need to let employees maintain their mental health and stay loyal to the organisation. Organisations should train an experienced manager in mental health. So, managers can recognise and help those employees who are facing mental health issues.

## 2.3 Independent Variables

### 2.3.1 Compensation

Compensation is a monetary payment given to each person in exchange for their services. In other words, compensation is also known as salary and wages. In 2022, Malaysia's minimum salary is RM 1500. Malaysia's full-time workers' average monthly salary is around RM6,610. Compensation is an important element for job satisfaction, job loyalty from employees, and job performance. This is due to the reason that most of the items or materials can be exchanged monetarily. There are some factors that can affect compensation in Malaysia, such as industry, job roles and responsibilities, education levels, work experience, location and global influence (Pranit, 2024). If employees are not satisfied with their compensation, they may consider these factors to increase their wages. Moreover, employers must be concerned about overtime pay for employees who work overtime. In addition, employers also need to regard unpaid time off, during which employees can take leave, but there is no compensation during the leave. Some unpaid time off (UTO) examples such as family emergency, education and training, extended leave and childcare.

### 2.3.2 Benefits Management

Benefits management is essential for fostering employee loyalty and includes the design, implementation, and administration of benefits packages such as health insurance, retirement plans, and paid time off. Health insurance reduces financial stress by covering medical expenses, improving job motivation and mental well-being. Retirement plans, like Malaysia's Employee Provident Fund (EPF), ensure financial stability, enabling employees to maintain their lifestyle and achieve long-term goals, with both employers and employees contributing to the fund. Paid time off, including annual leave, sick leave, public holidays, and maternity leave, supports employee wellbeing by allowing rest and recovery, with entitlements based on service length and specific legal provisions in Malaysia.

## 2.4 Previous Study on The Effects of Compensation and Benefits Management on Employees' Well-being

The researcher identified several related studies that provide valuable insights into the relationship between compensation, benefits, and employee well-being, although none addressed the exact research topic. The first study, conducted at XYZ College in Malaysia, examined the correlation between compensation, benefits, and employee performance. It found that adequate and structured compensation plans significantly enhance employee performance while improving satisfaction and overall well-being. Using surveys and statistical analysis (SPSS), the study highlighted the importance of well-designed compensation strategies in achieving high performance and reducing turnover rates. The findings suggest that organisations with effective compensation systems are more likely to cultivate a motivated and satisfied workforce, which positively impacts organisational success (Kadir *et al.*, 2019). The second study, published in the European Union Digital Library, focused on how compensation and benefits influence employee performance. It confirmed the positive impact of comprehensive compensation packages on employee motivation and productivity, which ultimately contributes to their well-being at work. This research employed various metrics and statistical tools to analyse the data, providing strong evidence of the benefits of a well-structured compensation system. The study reiterated that organisations prioritising compensation strategies can enhance their employees' overall satisfaction and performance (Adibah *et al.*, 2019). The third study explored the influence of compensation, benefits, employee recognition, and training on performance in Malaysian banks, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. It emphasised that compensation and benefits are crucial not only for sustaining high employee performance but also for ensuring their well-being in challenging times. The study provided a broader perspective on how human resource management practices, such as recognition and training, can collectively support employees' productivity and well-being during periods of uncertainty. The findings highlighted the critical role of holistic HR strategies in maintaining workforce stability and motivation (Sija *et al.*, 2020). Together, these studies underline the significant impact of compensation and benefits on employee performance, motivation, and well-being, offering a solid foundation for understanding the topic within different organisational contexts.

## 2.5 Conceptual Framework

Fig. 1 shows the study's proposed conceptual framework. Within the conceptual framework, we can see the relationship between independent and dependent variables. The research objective is to investigate the relationship between compensation and benefits on employees' well-being. The study's dependent variable is employees' well-being, whereas compensation and benefits management are the independent variables.



**Fig. 1** Conceptual framework

### 3. Research Methodology

This research investigates the relationship between satisfaction with compensation and benefits management and employees' wellbeing at work in SMEs in Johor, Malaysia. Focusing on the diverse economic landscape of Johor, it examines how cultural, socioeconomic, and organizational factors influence employee wellbeing across industries such as manufacturing, services, retail, and technology. The study adopts a person-centred, quantitative approach, using surveys and statistical analysis to explore perceptions and identify patterns among employees at various hierarchical levels. While acknowledging limitations like sample size and reliance on self-reported data, it aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the interplay between compensation satisfaction and employee wellbeing, offering insights tailored to the unique context of SMEs in Johor.

#### 3.1 Research Design

This study adopts a quantitative research design guided by a conceptual framework that integrates concepts, assumptions, and existing theories to structure the research process (Maxwell & Kerja, 2012). The quantitative approach is chosen for its emphasis on measuring and analysing social phenomena using statistical and numerical data, as described by Annisa (2015). Unlike qualitative methods, this study excludes interviews, observations, and conversations, focusing instead on testing hypotheses and analysing data collected through questionnaires. Quantitative research assumes that phenomena can be measured and employs mathematically based methods, particularly statistics, for data analysis, providing objective and generalisable insights into social realities (Sukamolson, 2007).

#### 3.2 Sampling Technique

This study employs the convenience sampling method, a non-probability approach where participants are selected based on availability and proximity to the researcher. Chosen for its cost-effectiveness and time efficiency, this method simplifies data collection by targeting readily accessible individuals. While convenience sampling is practical and suitable for exploratory research or pilot studies, it may introduce biases due to the sample's lack of representativeness, limiting the generalizability of findings. Despite these limitations, it allows for valuable data collection within resource constraints, making it an effective choice for this study's objectives (Saunders *et al.*, 2012).

#### 3.3 Target Population

The target population for this study includes employees working in Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) in Johor, Malaysia, as defined by SME Corporation Malaysia. It encompasses employees across various roles, such as managerial, administrative, operational and industries such as manufacturing, services, retail, IT, and hospitality. Both full-time and part-time employees are included, ensuring diversity in age, gender, education, and experience to capture a comprehensive view of how compensation and benefits impact job satisfaction, work-life balance, and wellbeing. SMEs, a critical part of Malaysia's economy, employed 7.59 million workers (48.2% of total employment) in 2022, with Johor accounting for 10.8% of these SMEs. This study will focus on 384 respondents from Johor SMEs, estimated to employ around 820,000 individuals, aligning with Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) sample size recommendations as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1** Determining sample size method Krejcie and Morgan (1970)

<i>N</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>S</i>
10	10	220	140	1200	291
15	14	230	144	1300	297
20	19	240	148	1400	302
25	24	250	152	1500	306
30	28	260	155	1600	310
35	32	270	159	1700	313
40	36	280	162	1800	317
45	40	290	165	1900	320
50	44	300	169	2000	322
55	48	320	175	2200	327
60	52	340	181	2400	331
65	56	360	186	2600	335
70	59	380	191	2800	338
75	63	400	196	3000	341
80	66	420	201	3500	346
85	70	440	205	4000	351
90	73	460	210	4500	354
95	76	480	214	5000	357
100	80	500	217	6000	361
110	86	550	226	7000	364
120	92	600	234	8000	367
130	97	650	242	9000	368
140	103	700	248	10000	370
150	108	750	254	15000	375
160	113	800	260	20000	377
170	118	850	265	30000	379
180	123	900	269	40000	380
190	127	950	274	50000	381
200	132	1000	278	75000	382
210	136	1100	285	1000000	384

Note.—*N* is population size. *S* is sample size.

Source: Krejcie & Morgan, 1970

### 3.4 Data Collection Method

This study adopts a quantitative research method to investigate the effects of compensation and benefits on employee wellbeing in SMEs in Johor, Malaysia. Data will be collected using a structured questionnaire featuring closed-ended questions and Likert scales to measure variables like job satisfaction, perceived fairness of compensation, benefits (e.g., health insurance, retirement plans), and overall wellbeing. The questionnaire will be distributed via simple random sampling to ensure unbiased participant selection and improve generalizability. Online survey platforms will facilitate data collection for higher response rates. Statistical techniques, including descriptive statistics, correlation, and regression analysis, will be used to analyse the data and identify trends and relationships. This approach aims to provide empirical evidence on the impact of compensation and benefits, offering actionable insights for HR practices in Johor's SMEs.

### 3.5 Research Instrument

#### 3.5.1 Questionnaire Survey

For the study focusing on the effects of compensation and benefits on employees' wellbeing in SMEs in Johor, Malaysia, questionnaires will serve as the primary research instrument. Questionnaires are structured sets of questions designed to gather specific information from respondents. In this context, questionnaires will be utilized to collect quantitative data from employees regarding various aspects related to compensation, benefits, and their perceived wellbeing at work. These questionnaires will encompass inquiries about salary, bonuses, health benefits, retirement plans, job satisfaction, work-life balance, stress levels, and overall happiness at work. By employing questionnaires, researchers can systematically gather data from a large sample of employees, allowing for quantitative analysis to identify patterns, correlations, and trends relevant to the research objectives.

### 3.5.2 Questionnaire Design

Designing a questionnaire involves several crucial steps to ensure the collection of accurate and meaningful data. First, it's essential to clearly define the research objectives and the specific information required to achieve them. Next, carefully select the appropriate question types, considering whether closed-ended or open-ended questions are most suitable for capturing the desired responses. Construct questions with clear and concise language to avoid ambiguity and ensure respondent understanding. Additionally, maintain a logical flow throughout the questionnaire to guide respondents through the survey smoothly. Pilot testing the questionnaire with a small sample helps identify any potential issues with question wording, response options, or survey structure before full deployment. Finally, consider the mode of administration, whether online, in-person, or via mail, and ensure the questionnaire's formatting is compatible with the chosen method. By following these steps, researchers can develop a well-designed questionnaire that effectively gathers the necessary data for their study.

### 3.5.3 Construct Measurement

The research questionnaire comprises 15 items centred on the independent variables of compensation and benefits management. These variables include minimum wage, health insurance, and paid time off. Table 2 shows that Section A includes demographic questions. Using nominal and ordinal scales in the demographic section helps gather essential respondent information, making data analysis more efficient. From Sections B to E, respondents will answer using a five-point Likert scale, which is an interval scale. The Likert scale levels are: Strongly Disagree (1), Disagree (2), Neutral (3), Agree (4), and Strongly Agree (5). These sections aim to explore the connections between employee well-being, work-life balance, job stress, and turnover intention.

**Table 2** Example of questionnaire design

Section		Number of Questions	Type of Scales
Section A			
Q1	Gender	1	Nominal
Q2	Age	1	Ordinal
Q3	Education Level	1	Ordinal
Q4	Job Position	1	Ordinal
Q5	Years of Experience	1	Ordinal
Section B-D		Number of Questions	
Part 1	Compensation	5	Interval
Part 2	Benefits Management	5	Interval
Part 3	Employees' wellbeing	5	Interval

### 3.6 Data Analysis

Descriptive analysis is a key aspect of data analysis that summarizes and explains a dataset's main features. It organizes and displays data to reveal properties like central tendency, variability, and distribution, using measurements such as averages, percentages, and graphical representations. This analysis simplifies complex data for clarity and understanding, providing a comprehensive summary without making predictions or generalizations. It is crucial in statistical data analysis, offering insights into data distribution and identifying errors and outliers.

### 3.7 Descriptive Analysis

Descriptive analysis, also known as descriptive statistics, aims to summarize and explain the main features of a dataset. It involves organizing and displaying data to reveal its properties, such as central tendency, variability, and distribution. Descriptive analysis simplifies complex data by presenting it clearly and understandably, often using measures like averages, percentages, and graphical representations. This type of analysis does not make predictions or conclusions about a larger population but provides a comprehensive summary of the current data. It is crucial in statistical data analysis, helping to identify the distribution of data, errors, and outliers.

### 3.8 Reliability Analysis

Spearman Reliability analysis systematically evaluates the performance of a system or component regarding its ability to perform required functions under specified conditions for a specific time (Al-Kuwaiti *et al.*, 2009). According to Tavakol & Dennick (2011), Cronbach's alpha measures the internal consistency of a test or scale, expressed as a number between 0 and 1. The alpha value depends on the interrelatedness of test items, test length,

and dimensionality. A high alpha value indicates strong internal consistency, meaning all test items measure the same concept. However, a high alpha does not always imply high internal consistency, as it is also influenced by test length. An insufficient test length can reduce the alpha value. A low alpha may result from a limited number of questions, weak item interrelationships, or diverse constructs. Conversely, an excessively high alpha may indicate redundant items that essentially ask the same question differently. Table 3 shows the Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha values.

**Table 3** Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha

Alpha Coefficient Range	Value
0.00 - 0.50	Unacceptable
0.50 - 0.59	Poor
0.60 - 0.69	Acceptable
0.70 - 0.89	Good
0.90 - 1.00	Excellent

#### 4. Data Analysis and Findings

Researchers analyse the results and findings, utilising IBM SPSS Statistics 27 to interpret the data. After collecting and filtering the responses, the researcher obtained a total of 342 completed questionnaires, which will be used for further discussion and interpretation.

##### 4.1 Internal Reliability Testing

Based on Table 4, the reliability test assessed the internal consistency of survey items using Cronbach's Alpha, with three variables and a total of 342 respondents. Compensation achieved a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.834 across 5 items, indicating good consistency. Benefits Management followed closely with a value of 0.802 for 5 items, also reflecting good reliability. Lastly, Employee Well-being recorded a value of 0.818 for 5 items, demonstrating good internal consistency. These results indicate that all variables in the study are reliable, ensuring the credibility of the findings.

**Table 4** Reliability test

Variables	Number of Respondents	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha Value	Reliability Level
Compensation	342	5	0.834	Very Good
Benefits Management	342	5	0.802	Very Good
Employee Well-being	342	5	0.818	Very Good

##### 4.2 Descriptive Analysis

The information in Table 5, shown in this section, is the respondent's demographic profile, which consists of gender, age, education level, job position, and years of experience. Based on Table 5, the demographic breakdown of the 342 respondents in this study reveals a diverse sample in terms of gender, age, education, job position, and years of experience. Of the respondents, 55.6% were male and 44.4% were female. The majority of respondents (46.3%) were aged 22-30, followed by 31-39 years old (36.3%). In terms of education, most respondents had completed their SPM (43.6%), while 38.6% held a degree. Regarding job positions, 79.8% were workers, while 19.9% were managers. As for years of experience, 48% had between 6-10 years of experience, followed by 31.3% with 5 years or less, and 20.8% with over 10 years of experience. This diverse demographic allows for a comprehensive analysis of how compensation and benefits impact employee wellbeing across different groups within SMEs in Johor.

**Table 5** Respondent demographic profile

Demographic	Details	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	190	55.6
	Female	152	44.4
	Total	342	100
Age	18-22	25	7.3
	22-30	133	46.3

	31-39	124	82.5
	41-49	55	16.1
	Above 50	5	1.4
	Total	342	100
Education Level	SPM	149	43.6
	STPM/Diploma/Matriculation	43	12.6
	Degree	132	38.6
	Master	18	5.3
	Total	342	100
Job Position	Workers	273	79.8
	Managers	68	19.9
	Total	342	100
Years of Experience	5 years and below	107	31.3
	6-10years	164	48.0
	Above 10 years	71	20.8
	Total	390	100

### 4.3 Normality Test

Based on Table 6, the normality test presents the results of two statistical tests, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test and the Shapiro-Wilk test, used to assess whether three variables (OM\_C, OM\_BM, and OM\_WB) follow a normal distribution. For all three variables, both tests yielded statistically significant results, indicating that the data significantly deviates from a normal distribution. This finding has implications for statistical analyses that assume normality. To ensure the validity of statistical inferences, non-parametric tests or data transformations might be necessary. It is also important to consider the sample size and visualise the data distribution to gain a better understanding of the extent of deviation from normality.

**Table 6** Normality testing

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov <sup>a</sup>			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
OM_C	.224	342	<0.001	.813	342	<0.001
OM_BM	.206	342	<0.001	.849	342	<0.001
OM_WB	.189	342	<0.001	.858	342	<0.001
OM_TI	.224	342	<0.001	.813	342	<0.001

### 4.4 Spearman Correlation Coefficient Analysis

Based on Table 7, the table presents Spearman's rho correlation results, showing moderate positive correlations between compensation (OM\_C), benefits management (OM\_BM), and employee wellbeing (OM\_WB), with all correlation coefficients ranging from 0.508 to 0.588. These coefficients indicate that higher satisfaction with compensation and benefits management is associated with better employee wellbeing. The relationships among the variables were analyzed using Spearman correlation coefficients. The results indicated that compensation was positively correlated with benefits management ( $r = 0.560, p < 0.001$ ), and compensation was also positively correlated with employee wellbeing ( $r = 0.508, p < 0.001$ ). Similarly, benefits management was moderately positively correlated with employee wellbeing ( $r = 0.588, p < 0.001$ ). These results suggest that higher satisfaction with compensation and benefits management is associated with improved employee wellbeing.

**Table 7** Spearman Correlation Coefficient Analysis

Variable	Compensation	Benefit Management
Employees' Wellbeing	0.508	0.588

## 5. Conclusion

The study successfully achieved its objectives, providing valuable insights into the factors influencing employee satisfaction and well-being. While the findings offer practical recommendations for SMEs, the study's limitations



highlight the need for further research. Future studies should expand the scope, include additional variables, and adopt mixed methodologies to provide a more comprehensive understanding of employee well-being in SMEs. By addressing these factors, SMEs can enhance employee retention, improve job satisfaction, and achieve sustainable organizational success.

## Acknowledgement

The authors would like to thank the Faculty of Technology Management and Business, Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia for its support.

## Conflict of Interest

Authors declare that there is no conflict of interests regarding the publication of the paper.

## Author Contribution

The authors confirm contribution to the paper as follows: **study conception and design:** Foo Shuan Yap, Shahrul Nizam Salahudin; **data collection:** Foo Shuan Yap; **analysis and interpretation of results:** Foo Shuan Yap; **draft manuscript preparation:** Foo Shuan Yap, Shahrul Nizam Salahudin. All authors reviewed the results and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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