

# WORK-LIFE BALANCE AS A DETERMINANT OF LIFE SATISFACTION AND FAMILY SATISFACTION – A STUDY AMONG WOMEN IN BPO

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## ABSTRACT

In the past employees were able to develop distinct boundaries between paid work and private life. But in the modern world of work, the two spheres of life are becoming more entangled. The boundary between work-life and non-work life is blurring, resulting in work-life imbalance. This imbalance is viewed seriously as it may have several unfavourable consequences for organizations, individual workers and their family. This study examines the relationship between work-life balance and life satisfaction and family satisfaction. Data was collected from 280 women employees working in BPOs at Chennai. The relationship between the variables was analyzed using correlation. The results show that there is a positive relationship between work-life balance and life satisfaction and work-life balance and family satisfaction.

**Key Words:** work-life balance, life satisfaction, family satisfaction

## I. INTRODUCTION

Work-life balance has evolved as a topic of concern in recent years due to significant increase in the proportion of women in work force, dual income families and workers with elder care responsibility (Kosseck, 2005; Bianchi & Raley, 2003; Bond, Thompson, Galinsky, & Protas, 2002; Carnoy, 2001; Friedman & Greenhaus, 2000; Jacobs & Gerson, 2001; Merrill, 1997; Vannoy & Dubeck, 1998). These contemporary demographic developments have made work-life balance an important work place issue in India, particularly after globalization. Today's work environment is characterized by long working hours, advanced technology, and improved communication systems.

Researches reveal that work-life imbalance is negatively related to family satisfaction, job satisfaction, well-being, life satisfaction and organizational commitment and positively related to stress related outcomes like anxiety, depression, exhaustion and burnout and other outcomes like absenteeism, intention to quit and turnover. (Frone et al, 1992; Frone et al, 1997; Adams & King, 1996; Xinyuan et al, 2011)

## II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Though work-life balance is a hot and current topic, it has no concrete definition. Let us see some of the frequently used definitions, given by different authors. Fisher-McAuley, Stanton, Jolton and Gavin(2003) describe work-life balance as a competition for both time and energy between the

different roles filled by an individual. According to Greenhaus et.al.(2003) "work-life balance is the extent to which an individual is equally engaged in and equally satisfied with his or her work role and family role". Work-life balance can also be defined as "satisfaction and good functioning at work and at home, with a minimum of role conflict" (Clark, 2000) and "a perceived balance between work and the rest of life" (Guest, 2002). Kirchmeyer views living a balanced life as "achieving satisfying experiences in all life domains, and to do so requires personal resources such as energy, time, and commitment to be well distributed across domains"(Kirchmeyer, 2000)

Women participation in the workforce is increasing in India, especially in IT, ITES and BPO Industry in the last decade. In a country like India, where the women plays the role of home maker and care taker, work-life balance has become a challenge to women employees. Unlike the women in western countries, Indian women, particularly those from joint families are under obligation to care for elderly relatives in addition to family responsibilities (Reimara Valk et.al, 2011)

Life satisfaction is the way a person perceives how his or her life has been and how they feel about where it is going in the future. It is a measure of well being. E.D.Diener et.al (1985) defines Life satisfaction as a conscious, cognitive, global judgment of one's own life The Satisfaction with Life Scale was created to assess a person's global judgment of life satisfaction

(Diener et al. 1985). Shin and Johnson (1978) define life satisfaction as "a global assessment of a person's quality of life according to his chosen criteria". Judgments of satisfaction are dependent upon a comparison of one's circumstances with what is thought to be an appropriate standard. Life satisfaction is a broader term as it means a feeling of contentment with one's life as a whole. Life -domain satisfaction means satisfaction with particular spheres of life, such as work, marriage and so on. (Sousa, L., & Lyubomirsky, S. (2001))

An individual cannot derive full satisfaction in life from a single domain, as different life domains satisfy different needs. Involvement in multiple domains is necessary to satisfy the full range of human needs. Individuals, who derive satisfaction from their involvement in multiple domains in life, tend to have balance in their life and are likely to experience higher levels of subjective well being. On the contrary, individuals who derive satisfaction from a single domain experience imbalance and lower levels of subjective well being.

Several studies have proved the association between work-life imbalance and life satisfaction. Precisely, those studies highlighted the positive relationship between work-life balance and Life satisfaction (Bedeian et al. 1988; Collins and Killough 1989; Edwards and Rothbard 2000; French and Caplan 1973; Fu and Shaffer 2001; Holahan and Gilbert 1979; Lewis and Cooper 1987; Parasuraman et al. 1992; Sekaran 1986; Sturges and Guest 2004; Wiley 1987). Similarly many studies discussed the negative relationship between work-life balance and marital satisfaction, family satisfaction e.g., Bedeian et al. 1988; Buell and Breslow 1960; Caplan et al. 1975; French and Caplan 1973; Parasuraman et al. 1992; Sekaran 1986; Steffy and Ashbaugh 1986; Wiley 1987; Zohman 1973).

Joseph Sirgy et al (2009) define balance as a state reflecting satisfaction or fulfillment in several important domains with little or no negative affect in other domains. They believed that a balanced life will significantly contribute to happiness in life, subjective well-being and life satisfaction.

Family satisfaction is the degree to which a person and his family members feel happy and fulfilled with each other. Some of the studies have found that

work-life imbalance is negatively related to family satisfaction (Frone et al. 1997, Allen et al.2000,Ford et al. 2007, Kossek & Ozeki,1998). These studies which are carried out with the objective of determining the relationship between work-life balance and family satisfaction have confirmed that lower levels of work-life balance negatively influence the family satisfaction.

### III. METHODOLOGY

The objective of this research is to study the work-life balance and its relationship with life satisfaction and family satisfaction. The study is conducted among women employed in BPOs, where work-life balance is an important issue, as the industry is characterized by odd work timings. The impact of marital status and family structure on work-life balance, life satisfaction and family satisfaction also is studied.

#### 3.1 Sample

Women employees working in BPOs at Chennai were selected for the study. Primary data was collected from 280 respondents using a questionnaire specifically designed for the study.

#### 3.2 Profile of the Respondents

22.5% of the respondents were less than 25 years of age. Most (32.9%) of the respondents belong to 26-30 age group. 21.4% of the respondents were aged between 31 and 35, 13.2% of the respondents belong to 36-40 age group and only 10% of the respondents were above 40 years. 36.4% of the respondents were working in junior level, a majority 37.9 % of the respondents were working in middle level and 25.7% of the respondents belong to Senior level. Most (58.6%) of the respondents were married and 41.4% of the respondents were single. 37.5% of the respondents have up to 4 years of experience, 40.7% of the respondents have 5-8 years of experience and 21.8% of the respondents have more than 8 years of experience. Out of the 164 married respondents 22% of the respondents do not have children, 62.8% of the respondents have one child and 15.2% of the respondents have two children. 72.5% of the respondents were living in joint family and only 27.5% of the respondents belong to nuclear family.

#### 3.3 Measures

##### 3.3.1 Work-Life Balance scale

To measure the work -life balance, a four item scale developed by Brough, Timms and Bauld (2009)

was used. Respondents were asked to state the extent to which they agreed with the statements regarding work-life balance using a five-point Likert scale which ranged from 5 = 'strongly agree' to 1 = 'strongly disagree'. Sample items are, "I currently have a good balance between the time I spend at work and the time I have available for nonwork activity", "I have difficulty in balancing my work and non-work activity"

### 3.3.2 Satisfaction with Life Scale

Diener and his associates (1985) developed a 5-item Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS). This scale measures the overall life satisfaction of the respondents, subjectively. The items are broad and are not specific. The scale is constructed in such a way that it measures the life satisfaction as the cognitive component (not as affective component) of the subjective well-being. Life Satisfaction is measured using a 7-point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree, 4 = neither agree nor disagree, 7 = strongly agree). The statements are, "In most ways my life is close to my ideal", "The conditions of my life are excellent", "I am satisfied with my life", "So far I have got the important things I want in life", "If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing" (Sousa, L., & Lyubomirsky, S, 2001). The Cronbach alpha reliability of the scale is 0.91.

### 3.3.3 Family Satisfaction

This variable was measured by using three item scale developed by Kopelman, Greenhaus and Connolly (1983). This scale was originally developed to measure job satisfaction. Kopelman et.al modified it by substituting the word family for job and few minor changes. Sample items are "Generally speaking, I am satisfied with my family", "I am generally satisfied with the role I play in my family". The Cronbach alpha reliability of the scale is 0.83.

### 3.4 Hypotheses of the study

This study is carried out to test the following hypotheses:

H1: There is positive relationship between work-life balance and life satisfaction.

H2: There is positive relationship between work-life balance and family satisfaction.

H3: There is no significant difference between the work-life balance, life satisfaction, and family

satisfaction of employees belonging to different marital status, and family structure

## IV. RESULTS

The descriptive statistics in the Table - 1 reveals that the mean score of work-life balance is 3.2(5 point scale), which indicates that the respondents' level of work-life balance is fairly at moderate level. Similarly the mean score of life satisfaction is 5.1(7 point scale) and family satisfaction is 3.6 (5 point scale), indicating moderate levels.

**Table 1. Mean, Standard Deviation and**

Variable	Mean	SD	Work-Life Balance	Life satisfaction	Family satisfaction
Work-life Balance	3.2	.84	1	.317** .000	.271** .000
Life satisfaction	5.1	1.37	.317** .000	1	.423** .000
Family satisfaction	3.6	1.19	.271** .000	.423** .000	1

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

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

Bivariate correlation technique was applied to find out the correlation between work-life balance, life satisfaction and family satisfaction (see Table 1). The results support the first and the second hypotheses as it reveals a positive relationship between work-life balance and life satisfaction( $r = .317$  at 0.01 level of significance) and a positive relationship between work-life balance and family satisfaction ( $r = .271$  at 0.01 level of significance). We can understand that individuals who are able to strike a balance between work life and nonwork life, experience higher levels of life satisfaction and family satisfaction. In other words, we can interpret that a balanced life significantly contributes to life satisfaction and family satisfaction.

An independent sample t-test (Table 2) was conducted to compare the work-life balance of respondents who are married and single. There was a significant difference in the scores of work-life balance of married (Mean = 2.83, SD =.71) and single (Mean = 3.71, SD =.73) respondents;  $t(278) = -10.060$ ,  $P$

value = .000. These results suggest that marital status do have an effect on work-life balance. The higher mean score of work-life balance of unmarried respondents indicate that their level of balance is comparatively higher than the married respondents. Absence of child care and other family responsibilities associated with married role might have contributed to the higher work-life balance. But the t-test results for

life satisfaction ( $t(278)=-1.526$ ,  $P$  value = .128 )and family satisfaction ( $t(278) = -1.566$ ,  $P$  value = .118) reveal that there is no significant difference between married respondents and unmarried respondents. We can interpret that being married or single do not influence the life satisfaction and family satisfaction of individuals.

**Table 2. Independent Sample t-Tests**

Variable	Marital status/ Family structure	N	Mean	SD	DF	t-value	Sig value
Work-life Balance	Married	164	2.83	.71	278	- 10.060	.000
	Single	116	3.71	.73			
	Joint Family	203	3.16	.89	175	- 1.142	.255
	Nuclear Family	77	3.28	.69			
Life Satisfaction	Married	164	5.01	1.30,	278	- 1.526	.128
	Single	116	5.27	1.47			
	Joint family	203	5.03	1.42	158	- 1.827	.070
	Nuclear family	77	5.35	1.22			
Family Satisfaction	Married	164	3.52	1.23	278	- 1.566	.118
	Single	116	3.74	1.12			
	Joint family	203	3.65	1.26	178	1.093	.276
	Nuclear family	77	3.50	.96			

An independent sample t-test was conducted to compare the work-life balance, life satisfaction and family satisfaction of respondents from joint family and nuclear family. There was no significant difference in the scores of work-life balance of respondents belonging to joint family (Mean=3.16, SD=.89) and nuclear family (Mean=3.28, SD=.69);  $t(175) = - 1.142$ ,  $P$  value = .255. There was no significant difference in the life satisfaction of respondents belonging to joint family (Mean=5.03, SD=1.4) and nuclear family (Mean=5.35, SD=1.22);  $t(158) = - 1.827$ ,  $P$  value = .070. There was no significant difference in the family satisfaction of respondents belonging to joint family (Mean=3.65, SD=1.3) and nuclear family (Mean=3.50, SD=.96);  $t(178) = - 1.093$ ,  $P$  value = .276. The t- test results suggest that family structure does not have an effect on work-life balance, life satisfaction and family satisfaction of the respondents. Specifically, according to this study, we can interpret that living in joint family or nuclear family does not alter the work-life balance, life satisfaction and family satisfaction of individuals.

## V. DISCUSSION

This study was conducted to study the relationship between work-life balance and life satisfaction, work-life balance and family satisfaction. The influence of variables like marital status and family structure of the respondents on the life satisfaction and family satisfaction is verified. The results suggest a moderate positive relationship between work-life balance and life satisfaction and a weak positive relationship between work-life balance and family satisfaction. According to this study marital status influences work-life balance, whereas it does not influence the life satisfaction and family satisfaction of the individuals. The unmarried respondents in this sample reported higher levels of work-life balance than married. It is also found that there is no significant difference in the work-life balance, life satisfaction, and family satisfaction of the individuals living in joint family when compared with individuals living in nuclear family.

## VI. CONCLUSION

Unlike many other studies which focuses on the relationship between work-life balance and organizational outcomes like increases productivity, reduced turn over, increased job satisfaction, this study focuses on the life satisfaction and family satisfaction. The positive relationship between work-life balance, life satisfaction and family satisfaction is established in this study. We must understand that women have the double burden of managing their career and family. They need organizational support to help them to have a proper balance between their work and life. Particularly in a country like India, where the women have primary care taker and other family responsibilities, the employers need to be more sensitive to work-life balance issues. They must be aware of the fact that work-life imbalance may result in negative life satisfaction and family satisfaction, which consequently may affect employee well-being.

It is suggested that the organizations may follow family-friendly policies and practices such as flexible work arrangements, child care and elder care arrangements, family leave policies and other employee assistant programmes. This would serve the organizations to improve their competitive advantage and to fulfill the broader objective of Corporate Social responsibility.

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