

THE IMPACT OF FLEXIBLE WORK HOURS ON THE WORK-LIFE BALANCE: A GENDER PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

Work-family balance is the proper prioritizing between work (career and ambition) on one hand and life (pleasure, leisure, family and spiritual development) on the other. It does not imply equal balance in units of time between work and family but includes each individual's needs, experiences, and goals, and there is not a one size fits all solution. Work-family balance involves suitable functioning at work and at home and to achieve it, workers have to create support systems at home, at work, and in the community. It is a satisfactory level of involvement or fit between the multiple roles in a person's life.

In the current scenario, there are many challenges that people have to deal such as running a home, doing daily routine works like cooking/cleaning, bringing up children and handle the tight work schedules. Work-Life Balance is the burning issue today because it affects the productivity of the organizations. Organizational success depends on people. As a result, every organization is taking a keen interest in improving the work life of their employees by using various work-life methods and strategies so that they can improve the performance of the employees as well as profitability. It is generally found that married people have multiple responsibilities as compare to unmarried people so that it is quite difficult for them to manage their work-life properly. This paper will try to analyze the work-life balance of employees both married and unmarried, a comparative analysis of balance among men and women in the corporate sector. After the analysis suitable recommendations and suggestions regarding managing work life is given.

Keywords: work-life balance, Job satisfaction, flexible working hours

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INTRODUCTION

Work Life Balance is the core of a happy and successful life. It plays a vital role within the lifetime of enterpriser, student, housewives, and corporate employees. To lead the successful life one needs to balance his/her personal, professional, social & family life. Individuals extremely have lost balance in their lives thanks to working hours and work deadlines. Also due to technology advancement & use of mobile phones employees are working around the clock. There is a spillover in both professional & personal life. If we tend to imagine in terms of a chart, various factorsakin to Career, Relationships (spouse, family and friends community, colleagues / networking), Spirit (religious development), Body (health and fitness), Mind (personal development), Physical atmosphere (home, office, or car), Finances & Fun and Leisure etc lie a grip in terms of sure proportion within the pie.

The main purpose of doing this research is to understand the work-life balance of employees in the corporate sector and how it affects the organization. It speaks about how an organization should keep their employees happy by providing them with quality work life. This research does an analysis of how flexible work hourshas an impact on the work-lifebalance of employees.

Work-life Balance of women employees has become an important subject since the time has changed from men earning the family living in today's world where both men and women equally share the responsibility of earning for the betterment of their family life. Hence it is for the betterment of their family life.

This paper addresses work-life balance across genders. Both men and women reported experiencing work-life imbalance. Organizational efforts at providing a supportive work environment are appreciated as they go a long way towards enhancing work-life balance.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

To do a comparative study of the work-life balance of employees among men and women.

To understand the impact of flexible working hours on the work-life balance of the employee.

HYPOTHESIS

H1: There is a significant difference between the work-life balance of the men & women.

H2: There is a significant difference between the work-life balance of the married & single employee.

H3: There is a significant impact of flexible working hours on work-life balance.

H4: flexible working hours have a higher impact on the work-life balance of women than men.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Although the term work-family balance has been widely adopted, still there is no formal definition of this term that remains subtle. It is also acknowledged that there is a recent shift in terminology used to refer to this phenomenon, with numerous associations utilizing the term WLB to incorporate representatives who are not guardians, but rather who want to adjust for non-work exercises, for example, games, study, and travel (Kalliath and Brough, 2008). Work-life balance mirrors a person's introduction crosswise over various life parts. (Greenhaus et al., 2003).

Greenhaus et al. (2003) have dug into the various parts meaning of WLB with an emphasis on time balance and fulfillment over a person's different life parts. WLB was along these lines characterized as the degree to which an individual is occupied with a similarly happy with his or her work part and family part comprising three segments of work-family balance, time balance, satisfaction balance (Greenhaus et al., 2003). Kirchmeyer (2000) defined "WLB 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." To sum it all, Kalliath and Brough (2008) have put forward their own definition of WLB and defined it: "WLB is the individual perception that work and non-work activities are compatible and promote growth in accordance with an individual's current life priorities."

Women in the workforce have multiplied significantly; however, women face plenty of problems and challenges. Despite everything they're viewed as the essential overseers of the house and family, however, they work same as particularly like men. The work part is regularly observed as optional to family parts. Not just men anyway women furthermore hold themselves and other women to the homemaker standard. They invest more energy in housework, youngster care, and family obligations. "Greenhaus and Beutell

characterized work-family conflict as 'a type of between part struggle in which the part weights from the two spaces, that is, work and family, are commonly non-good so taking care of requests in a single area makes it hard to meet requests in the other.' That is, support in the work part is made more troublesome by the prudence of cooperation in the family and the other way around. The significant worry in this most generally utilized meaning of work-family struggle is that part clashes cause because of issues of part cooperation and passionate insight. Subsequently, the distinction in values, social connections, and necessities amongst work and family don't constitute conflict in essence.

Thompson (2002) has arranged the work-life activities as time, information and money-based strategies, direct and culture change administrations. Time-based incorporate strategies like flexi-time, compressed weeks, compulsory power-offs, job sharing, part-time work, leave for new parents, phased return to work following childbirth, working from home, compulsory vacations and breaks and so on. Information-based strategies refer to the policies on sharing online articles on work-life balance, resource and referral service, transfer assistance, dependent care resources, work-life brochure and so on. Wood et al (2003) found that reception of family-accommodating practices was best clarified by organizational adaptation, a mix of institutional pressures likewise as competitive forces, technological factors, situational conditions, and management values, knowledge, and attitude towards work and family programs. The benefits of work-life balance activities, for businesses, are better employee attraction, expanded profitability, better commitment, lessened work pressure, decreased absenteeism, reduce costs, higher motivation, better talent retention & best place to work. (Department of Labor, Newzealand, 2003, Byrne, 2005; Pocock, 2005; and McPherson, 2007).

The relationship between Flexibility & Job satisfaction:

According to the study, the study also found that long working hours have a strong negative relationship with teacher's job satisfaction. As long working hours impact staff job satisfaction to a greater extent because teachers of Karachi schools have to go to work for long hours and give much more priority to their job than their personal life activities(Hafeez & Akbar, 2015). It is supported by a study of Chahal et al. (2013) conducted in Delhi Canara bank NCR, in which they found that 62.5% of their workforce were not satisfied with their job due to the reason of

working for long hours. Though, it is also supported by another study conducted by Purohit, (2013) in India, which demonstrate that 80% of the IT companies practiced flexi-time in employees in IT companies have to do work in the day and night shifts.

Finally, the flexible working condition/environment has a strong +ve relationship with job-satisfaction of teachers. Many studies show that the flexible Working condition has an additional impact on the satisfaction level of an employee. It is also supported performed by Valerie J. Morganton et.al, (2010) in which they evaluate the effects (positive and negative) of the flexible working environment on the physical, mental and wellbeing of **employees**.

The relationship between Flexibility & work life balance

There is a relationship between flexible work arrangements &work-life balance, they are significantly correlated with each other. Flexi work arrangements help employees to balance their work & personal life, which enhances the motivation & productivity at work. (N. Mohan, N. Prabha, & P. Mohanraj, 2010)

Though there is a relationship between Flexitime &work-family conflict the significant effects were small in magnitude. It is been found that those with greater family and work responsibility would benefit more from FWA as a resource than would those with less family and work responsibility (Tammy Allen et al. 2013)

It could be argued that the use of Flexibility should be more strongly associated with less work-family conflict than should the availability of Flexible work policy. The mere availability of Flexible work policy has been found to be associated with more positive job attitudes (Grover & Crooker, 1995). Flexible work availability is thought to influence positive attitudes because it symbolizes concern for employees by the organization (Batt&Valcour, 2003). Based on social-exchange theory, employees appreciate having flexibility available as a resource and respond with more favorable job attitudes toward the organization. The availability of Flexibility may also increase perceptions of psychological control, which can help alleviate work-family conflict (Kossek et al., 2006). Based on resource allocation theory, use of flexibility should enable employees to more readily and proactively plan and manage work and family responsibilities.

Flexible Work policy may be a greater resource for women than for men because women generally bear greater responsibility for domestic tasks than do men (Davis, Greenstein, & Marks, 2007). Similarly, individuals with greater family responsibility, such as those who are married and/or who are parents, also stand to benefit more from Flexible work than those with less family responsibility (Shockley & Allen, 2007).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study is based on both primary data and secondary data. The primary source includes the data that is collected from different employees working in different corporate offices across India. The required information is collected by the self-administered tools with items of the closed or fixed alternative type & by interacting with the concerned employees.

A secondary source is that information that is obtained from those sources other than direct sources and the information is collected through the mentioned ways such as periodicals, publications, newspaper, survey reports, journals, online resources.

The questionnaire was sent to 270 employees out of which 150 employees responded to the survey employees working in different corporate sectors. Convenient Sampling method has been chosen for the research work.

The reliability of the questionnaire was tested using Cronbach's Alpha which measures the internal consistency. The coefficient of 0.7 is commonly used as the cut of point of acceptable reliability Nunnally (1978). The Cronbach alpha for this measurement instrument was 0.78, which is acceptable.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATIONS

The data was collected from 154 working professionals out of which 57% of the respondents were male & 43% were female respondents. 66% of the respondents are married that means having family responsibilities to handle & 34% were single. Also, 70% of the respondents were below 30 years. The major objective of this study to understand the impact of flexible work hours on the work-life balance of the young working professionals.

H1: There is a significant difference between the work-life balance of the men & women.

Table 1: work-life balance of the men & women

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
WLB	Equal variances assumed	2.714	.102	-2.534	152	.012	-.30808	.12156	-.54825	.06791
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.574	147.178	.011	-.30808	.11967	-.54458	.07158

“An independent-samples t-test was conducted to find out whether there is a significant difference between the work-life balance of the men & women. There was a significant difference in the scores for Male (M=3.2, SD=0.78) and Female (M=3.5, SD=0.70); $t(152) = -2.53$, $p = 0.12$. These results suggest that work-life balance has a significant impact on both men & women.

H2: There is a significant difference between the work-life balance of the married & single employee.

Table 2: work-life balance of the married & single employee

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
WLB	Equal variances assumed	.532	.467	-4.790	152	.000	-.57988	.12105	-.81904	-.34071
	Equal variances not assumed			-4.631	93.848	.000	-.57988	.12523	-.82852	-.33123

An independent-samples t-test was conducted to find out whether there is a significant difference between the work-life balance of the single & married employees. There was a significant difference in the scores for Single (M=3.0, SD=0.76) and Married (M=3.6, SD=0.68); $t(152) = -4.79$, $p < 0.05$. These results suggest that there is a difference between the work-life balance of single & married employees. Married employees have more responsibilities at home & it's very important for them to balance work & personal life than single status employees who do not have more responsibilities at home front to manage.

H3: There is a significant impact of flexible working hours on work-life balance.

Table 3: Relationship between flexible working hours on work-life balance.

		Flexibility	WLB
Flexibility	Pearson Correlation	1	.390**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	154	154
WLB	Pearson Correlation	.390**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	154	154

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

There was a positive correlation between the two variables, $r = 0.390$, $n = 154$, $p < 0.05$. The results show that there is a positive relationship between Work-LifeBalance & Flexibility. So we can interpret that if organizations have flexible work hour policies then employees will be able to balance their personal & professional life.

H4: flexible working hours have a higher impact on the work-life balance of women than men.

Table 4: Impact of Flexible work hours on Work Life Balance

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
WLB	Equal variances assumed	2.714	.102	-2.534	152	.012	-.30808	.12156	-.54825	-.06791

	Equal variances not assumed			-2.574	147.178	.011	-.30808	.11967	-.54458	-.07158
Flexibility	Equal variances assumed	4.559	.034	-.799	152	.425	-.07008	.08767	-.24328	.10313
	Equal variances not assumed			-.820	150.304	.413	-.07008	.08541	-.23884	-.09868

An independent-samples t-test was conducted to find out whether there is a significant difference between the impact of flexibility on the work-life balance of the men & women. There was a significant difference in the scores for Male (M=3.2, SD=0.78) and Female (M=3.5, SD=0.70); $t(152) = -2.53$, $p = 0.12$. These results suggest that work-life balance has a significant impact on both men & women.

The present study sought to expand the understanding of work-life balance & flexible work hour's policy. The flexibility allows the employees to manage their personal activities time & work commitments. This balance has mutual benefit & synergies for employees & organization. The analysis confirms previous literature on the relationship between flexibility & work-life balance.

The findings suggest work and family are both equally important and both are the sources of employee's satisfaction. For women family is more important. There is a strong belief by both men and women that flexible working hours will enhance the work-life balance. Both men and women felt that there should be an option to take care of emergencies at home as they believed that these will improve the work-life balance. More than men women feel that they are not able to spend enough time with their families due to work-related activities, the obvious reason could be the biological nature of the women as well the society demand that women need to spend more time at home & manage all children, elder & other household responsibilities. Both genders feel that a supportive work environment is helpful in achieving work-life balance.

Managerial implications:

Flexible work hour policies will increase the work-life balance of the employees in the organization. This study has proved that work-life balance policy is equally important to both men & women. However different policies & strategies are needed for employees of different job types, age & years of experience. According to the study of Nadeem & Abbas (2009), the

Manager's role is also equally important, as they can increase flexibility with respect to reduce the conflict between work & life. So employees can work fewer hours by prioritizing their efforts and manage their other responsibilities. If managers will enhance the employee's work-life balance, it will also enhance the job satisfaction.

Limitations & Future research:

The study presents a few limitations suggesting new research areas. First, this study is more focused on gender sampling & not a specific industry. Hence future study can be conducted focusing on a specific industry. Hence future study can be conducted focusing on a specific industry. The study relies on the responses of the sample employees. Though the scale is validated, the flexible work hours construct can be further enhanced by adding more items. Only one construct of the work-life balance policy is explored in the study; however Future study can focus on other variables of work-life policies & its impact on the job satisfaction. Finally, future studies may consider conduction the longitudinal analysis, in order to see whether the implementation of flexible work hour policies improves the work-life balance.

To conclude this study supports the relationship between Flexible work hour policy & work-life balance. Organizations should pay more attention to the work-life balance of the employees. This research tries to help organizations more effectively to use their Human Capital Resources.

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