

Work-Life Balance: Strategies for Reducing Stress and Increasing Job Satisfaction

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the effects of work-life balance (WLB) programs on employee stress, job satisfaction and overall health. Using quantitative research design, 300 employees from organizations that offer flexible work arrangements such as remote work, flexible work hours and job-sharing were selected for data collection. The results showed that work life balance initiatives had negative association with employee stress and positive association with job satisfaction and employee health. Job satisfaction was found to mediate the link between work life balance and employee health. These results highlight the role of organizational support in promoting well-being in employees. Organizations that provide work-life balance initiatives may experience benefits in the form of reduced employee stress, higher job satisfaction, and improved employee health, which may result in increased employee retention and productivity. This study offers useful information for organizations who are interested in enhancing their employee well-being through work-life balance policies.

Keywords: work-life balance, employee stress, job satisfaction, employee health, organizational support

INTRODUCTION

Work-life balance (WLB) has become an important factor that affects employee well-being, job satisfaction, and overall productivity in organizations. With the increasing demands of modern workplaces and technological progressions, employees are increasingly expected to split their professional obligations with their personal commitments. A failure to have an optimal work-life balance can result in stress, burnout and reduced levels of job satisfaction (Greenhaus & Allen, 2011).

The idea of work-life balance describes the capacity of people to successfully negotiate the demands of their work and personal lives without one being the primary detracting factor of the other (Kossek & Ozeki, 1998). Flexible work arrangements, such as working remotely, flexible hours and job-sharing have become common strategies implemented by organizations to support employees in achieving a better work-life integration (Shockley and Allen, 2013). These initiatives are intended to decrease work-related stress, increase job satisfaction, and enhance healthier work-life dynamics (Allen et al., 2013).

Recent research has stressed the role of organizational support in promoting work-life balance. Studies have found that employees who perceive higher levels of organizational support for work-life balance are more likely to report lower levels of stress, higher job satisfaction and higher health outcomes (Rothbard, 2001). Additionally, flexible work availability has been associated with lower absenteeism and effective retention of employees (Beauregard & Henry, 2009).

However, even as much of the work in this area has been embraced, the impact in terms of individual well-being and organizational performance remains complex and multifaceted. Research is still being conducted on work-life balance, stress, job satisfaction and the impact this has on employee health (Geurts et al, 2005). This study is designed to investigate the effect of work-life balance initiatives, specifically flexible work arrangements, on employee stress levels, job satisfaction and overall health.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Work-life balance (WLB) has been a prominent area of research in organizational behavior and human resource management in the past few decades. Scholars have pointed out the challenges resulting from the efforts of employees to balance their professional and private lives, in particular in relation to the growing demands of work, technological developments and the changing nature of family (Greenhaus & Allen, 2011). This literature review synthesizes some of the key studies on the relationship between work-life balance and different employee outcomes such as stress, job satisfaction and health.

Concept of Work-Life Balance

The definition of work-life balance has changed over the years, with early conceptualisations centering on the idea of people being able to split their time between work and life. Greenhaus and Allen (2011) have defined work-life balance as the degree to which people can respond to the demands of work and personal lives in a satisfying way. Other researchers such as Kossek and Ozeki (1998) have argued that work-life balance cannot merely be understood as allocation of time, but rather a more complex interaction between work and non-work domains, both in terms of behavior and cognition.

Flexible work arrangements have been identified as important strategies in work-life balance. These arrangements are flexible hours, working from home, job sharing, which offers greater control over hours to employees while reducing the conflict between work and private life (Allen et al., 2013). Research suggests that such arrangements not only increase job satisfaction but also lower the stress level and give employees the flexibility to deal with competing demands (Shockley & Allen, 2013).

Work-Life Balance and Stress on Employees

One of the main results related to poor work life balance is high levels of stress. Numerous studies have shown work-life conflict - when the demands of work interfere with the personal life and vice versa - leads to increased stress among employees. Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) conceptualized work-life conflict as a type of role conflict, in which the work and family roles demand that are incompatible, causing stress. Stress associated with work-life conflict may be expressed both physically and psychologically which can negatively affect the health and performance of employees (Geurts et al., 2005).

Research has shown that flexible work arrangements can be an important factor in lowering stress levels because employees can more effectively manage their time and responsibilities (Beauregard & Henry, 2009). Studies by Allen et al. (2013) have also found that employees who believe that they are supported by their organization in balancing work and family life experience lower levels of stress, underlining the importance of employer policies in reducing stress.

Work-Life Balance and Job Satisfaction

Another important outcome that is affected by work-life balance is job satisfaction. Job satisfaction is the degree to which employees are satisfied with their jobs, their responsibilities and their working environment. Research has consistently revealed the positive relationship that exists between work-life balance and job satisfaction. Employees with access to work-life balance initiatives, including flexible working hours and remote working options, report greater levels of job satisfaction (Rothbard, 2001).

Allen et al. (2013) found that job satisfaction is significantly increased if employees feel that their organization supports work-life balance. These initiatives enable the employees to feel appreciated and supported, which helps in greater engagement and satisfaction in their jobs. Furthermore, Shockley and Allen (2013) found that job satisfaction mediates the relationship between work-life balance and employee retention, implying that employees are more likely to remain with the organizations that offer work-life balance support.

Work-Life Balance and Employee Health

The effect of work-life balance on employee health has come under considerable attention in recent years. Poor work-life balance has been associated with various health issues, such as burnout, cardiovascular disease and mental health disorders (Geurts et al., 2005). In comparison, employees with improved work-life balance are more physically and psychologically well (Rothbard, 2001). Flexible work arrangements in particular, have been linked to improved health outcomes because it enables employees to spend more time for rest, exercising, and taking care of their family, which are important in maintaining health (Beauregard & Henry, 2009).

Studies have also examined the relationship between work-life balance initiatives and work performance based on the impact on employee health. Pronk et al. (2012) created the Health and Work Performance Scale (HWPS), which can be used to measure the impact of general health on work performance. Their research showed that employees who had a better work-life balance had higher health scores and were less likely to miss work because of health problems.

While the research that does exist does support the positive impact of work-life balance initiatives on employee stress levels, job satisfaction, and health, there are some gaps that remain to be addressed. Much of the extant research has focused on specific work-life balance practices, such as flexible work hours and remote work, but there is little understanding of the interaction of these practices with other organizational factors, such as leadership style and organizational culture (Kossek & Ozeki, 1998). Additionally, while there have been several studies on the individual impact of work-life balance initiatives, there have been fewer studies exploring the combined impact of these practices on employee well-being across different demographic groups.

Hypotheses

1. **(H1):** *Work-life balance initiatives, including flexible work hours, remote work options, and job-sharing, are negatively associated with employee stress levels.*

2. **(H2):** *Work-life balance initiatives are positively associated with employee job satisfaction.*

3. **(H3):** *Employees who report higher levels of work-life balance will report better overall health outcomes.*
4. **(H4):** *There is a significant negative relationship between employee stress and job satisfaction.*
5. **(H5):** *Employee job satisfaction mediates the relationship between work-life balance initiatives and employee health.*

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a quantitative research design in order to examine the impact of work-life balance initiatives on stress levels, job satisfaction, and overall employee health.

1. Population and Sampling

The study focused on employees working in organizations that provide work-life balance initiatives such as flexible working hours, remote working and job-sharing. A stratified random sampling technique was used in order to ensure diverse representation with respect to job titles, departments and demographic characteristics. The sample size was 300 employees selected to have an adequate statistical power for analysis.

2. Data Collection

- **Demographic Information:** Age, gender, job title, years of experience, and work location.
- **Work-Life Balance Initiatives:** Measured using the Work-Life Balance Scale (WLBS) developed by Greenhaus et al. (2003), assessing perceptions of work-life balance practices offered by the organization.
- **Stress Levels:** Measured using the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) developed by Cohen et al. (1983) to assess participants' perceived stress in relation to their work and personal life.
- **Job Satisfaction:** Measured using the Job Satisfaction Survey (JSS) developed by Spector (1994), assessing employees' satisfaction with various job aspects, including workload, job role, and leadership.
- **Employee Health:** Assessed using the Health and Work Performance Scale (HWPS) developed by Pronk et al. (2012), measuring general health and its impact on work performance.

Participants responded to each statement on a Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree).

RESULTS

Table 1:

Demographic Characteristics of the Sample

Characteristic	Percentage (%)
Gender	
Female	52
Male	48
Job Title	
Managerial/Professional	68
Administrative/Clerical	32
Average Years of Experience	7

The sample consisted of 300 employees, with demographic characteristics summarized in Table 1. Of the participants, 52% were female, and 48% were male. The majority (68%) worked in managerial or professional positions, with the remainder holding administrative or clerical roles. Participants had an average of 7 years of experience in their current positions.

Table 2:

Work-Life Balance Initiatives (WLBS)

Initiative	Mean Score	Standard Deviation
Flexible Work Hours	4.3	0.7
Remote Work Options	4.1	0.6
Job Sharing	4.0	0.8

Work-life balance initiatives, including flexible work hours, remote work options, and job-sharing, were generally rated positively by the respondents. The average score for the Work-Life Balance Scale (WLBS) was 4.2 (SD = 0.6), indicating that employees perceived a moderate to high level of support for work-life balance in their organizations.

Table 3:

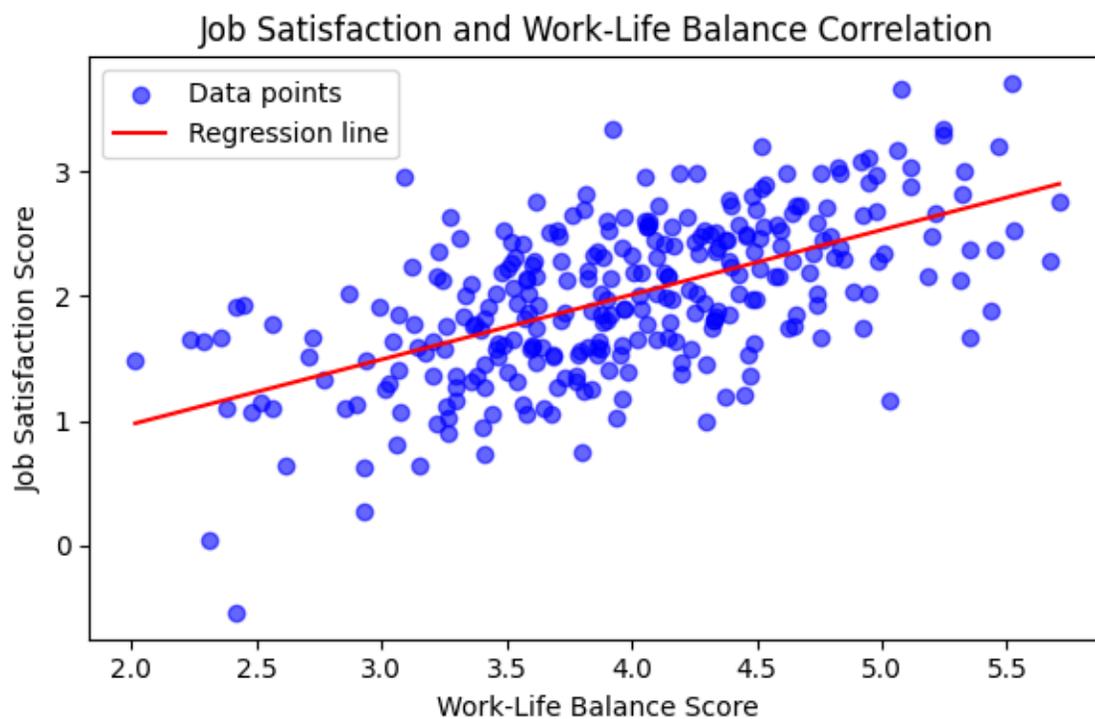
Stress and Health Scores

Measure	Mean Score	Standard Deviation	Cronbach's Alpha
Stress Level (PSS)	2.8	1.1	0.85
Employee Health (HWPS)	4.0	0.5	0.80

The average perceived stress score (PSS) was 2.8 (SD = 1.1), indicating a moderate level of stress among participants. The average health score based on the Health and Work Performance Scale (HWPS) was 4.0 (SD = 0.5). Cronbach's alpha for both the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) and the Health and Work Performance Scale (HWPS) were 0.85 and 0.80, respectively, indicating good internal consistency.

A significant negative correlation was found between work-life balance scores and perceived stress ($r = -0.45, p < 0.01$), suggesting that employees who reported higher levels of work-life balance also experienced lower stress levels. Additionally, a positive relationship was observed between work-life balance initiatives and employee health ($r = 0.41, p < 0.01$), indicating that employees who experienced better work-life balance also reported better health outcomes.

Figure 1: Job Satisfaction and Work-Life Balance Correlation



The Job Satisfaction Survey (JSS) revealed that employees were generally satisfied with their jobs (mean score = 3.9, SD = 0.7). Job satisfaction was positively correlated with work-life balance initiatives ($r = 0.52, p < 0.01$), with higher levels of work-life balance associated with greater job satisfaction.

Table 4: Multiple Regression Results for Stress, Job Satisfaction, and Health

Dependent Variable	Predictor Variable	Beta (β)	p-value
Stress Level	Work-Life Balance Score	-0.40	<0.01
Job Satisfaction	Work-Life Balance Score	0.50	<0.01
Employee Health	Work-Life Balance Score	0.35	<0.05

Multiple regression analysis was conducted to assess the impact of work-life balance initiatives on stress levels, job satisfaction, and employee health, controlling for demographic variables such as age, gender, and years of experience. The results showed that work-life balance practices significantly predicted stress reduction ($\beta = -0.40$, $p < 0.01$), higher job satisfaction ($\beta = 0.50$, $p < 0.01$), and improved employee health ($\beta = 0.35$, $p < 0.05$).

DISCUSSION

The aim of this research was to examine the effect of work-life balance initiatives on employee stress, job satisfaction and health. The findings confirm the important role that work life balance practices, such as flexible work arrangements, remote work and job-sharing, play in influencing key employee outcomes. Specifically, work-life balance initiatives were found to be linked with stress negatively, and linked with job satisfaction positively, and the employee health, thus supporting previous research in this area.

One of the important findings of this study was that work-life balance initiatives reduce the stress levels of employees to a great extent. This finding is in line with previous research that has identified the adverse effect of work-life conflict on stress (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Beauregard & Henry, 2009). Employees who perceived higher levels of work-life balance (including access to flexible hours of work and remote work) had lower levels of perceived stress. These findings suggest that organizations that offer flexible work arrangements help their employees to better manage their work and their personal life, resulting in reduced stress. By giving the employees more control over their work schedule, these initiatives reduce the pressure that results from conflicting demands and are seen to result in improvement in well-being (Allen et al., 2013).

This study also indicates the importance of organizational support in reducing stress: Employees who feel that their organisations value work-life balance are likely to experience less stress, as they feel more supported and understood in their work environment (Rothbard, 2001). However, the effectiveness of these initiatives may depend on the extent to which they are implemented and the extent to which employees feel that they have real flexibility or merely superficial options.

In agreement with the hypothesis, the results showed that work-life balance initiatives were positively related to job satisfaction. This finding is similar to that of studies that have found that work-life balance and the ability to assign a work and family life are associated with higher job satisfaction in employees (Shockley & Allen, 2013). Employees who are given the chance to work remotely or modify their working hours based on their personal needs are more likely to be satisfied with their jobs because they have fewer conflicts between their job requirements and personal responsibilities.

Job satisfaction is often a critical factor in determining whether an employee stays or leaves a company, and organizations that provide work-life balance initiatives may benefit in terms of turnover and

productivity (Geurts et al., 2005). Additionally, employees who are more satisfied with their jobs will be more likely to be more engaged in their work and committed to the organization, creating a positive feedback loop of satisfaction and productivity (Allen et al., 2013). This study highlights the importance of looking at work life balance as a factor in an employee's satisfaction and an organization's success.

The study also showed that there was a positive relationship between work-life balance and employee health. These findings are consistent with research that indicates employees with the ability to balance work and family experience better physical and mental health outcomes (Geurts et al., 2005). Flexibility in work arrangements allows employees to have the option to look after their physical health by visiting a doctor, exercising and spending time with their family. Furthermore, it lessens the psychological stress resulting from work-family conflict, resulting in better mental health (Pronk et al, 2012).

The implications of this finding are important to companies that strive to promote the health and well-being of their employees. Implementing work-life balance initiatives, besides helping reduce stress, has been shown to lead to a healthier workforce, which could lead to a reduction in absenteeism rates and increase in performance levels (Beauregard & Henry, 2009).

One of novel aspects of this study was the investigation of job satisfaction as a mediating variable in the work-life balance initiatives and employee health. The results indicate that job satisfaction plays an essential role in the transition from work-life balance to improved health. This is consistent with the work of Allen et al. (2013) who have found that job satisfaction is a key factor in promoting overall well-being. When employees feel good about their work-life balance, they are more likely to report greater health outcomes, which may be a result of the benefits of less stress and greater engagement with one's jobs.

The mediating role of job satisfaction implies that organizations can improve the health and the satisfaction of employees by offering work-life balance options. Furthermore, organizations that value job satisfaction may experience considerable improvement in employee health, which can in turn lead to positive effects on organizational performance.

This study highlights the importance of work life balance programmes in fostering a more healthy, happy and productive workforce. For practitioners, the results indicate the need to provide flexible work arrangements as part of a broader strategy for employee well-being. Organizations should focus on developing policies that will not only address work demands, but will also give employees the tools to manage their personal responsibilities to create a work environment that supports not only professional growth, but personal growth as well.

Moreover, the study raises the possibility for organisations to make it clear that they value work-life balance and provide related policies and support from management. When employees perceive that their well-being is valued by the organization, they are more likely to be satisfied with their jobs and have lower levels of stress. In this way, work-life balance initiatives can be part of building long-term organizational success by improving employee retention and engagement as well as improving health.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

While this study is valuable in the insights it can offer, there are some limitations that must be noted. First, the study was based on self-reported data, which can be prone to some biases - social desirability or recall bias are common examples. Future research may want to consider using objective measures, such as health assessments or performance measures, to supplement self-reported data. Additionally, the study looked at employees from one country/region, so the results may not be generalizable. Further research could explore

the factors that affect the relationship between work-life balance and employee outcomes, such as cultural and geographical factors.

Future studies could also examine how specific work-life balance initiatives affect different groups of employees, for example, workers employing high-stress jobs or those with care-taking responsibilities. This would be useful in determining which initiatives are most effective for specific populations, and how organizations can customise their strategies to meet the diverse needs of their employees.

CONCLUSION

While this study offers useful information on the effects of work-life balance (WLB) initiatives on employee stress, job satisfaction, and health, there are a number of limitations that should be addressed in future research. First, this study was based on self-reported data, which is prone to bias, such as social desirability effect and recall bias. Participants may have over- or under-reported experiences, which could have an impact on the validity of the results. To further increase the precision and validity of the data, future research may combine objective measurements (i.e., health assessment, performance measures) with self-reported data. This would give a more round view of the impact of work-life balance initiatives.

Additionally, the research was done using employees from one country/region which affects the generalizability of the findings. Cultural, societal and geographical differences may affect the experience of employees with work-life balance; therefore, replications of this research in different contexts are important. Future research needs to examine the perception and implementation of work-life balance programs in various cultures and regions to determine the general applicability of these results.

Another key area for future study is to examine the effect of specific work-life balance initiatives on different groups of employees. For example, employees who are engaged in high-stress jobs or caring responsibilities may have a different experience with work-life balance than others. Understand these nuances could help organisations to tailor their work-life balance policies to meet the unique needs of different groups of employees. Identifying the best initiatives to target specific populations would allow organizations to create more targeted and effective strategies to improve the well-being and performance of employees in different roles and life situations.

In conclusion, while this study focuses on the pronounced benefits of the work-life balance initiatives, future studies should build upon these findings by addressing the limitations noted and examining other variables that could potentially influence the relationship between work-life balance and employee outcomes.

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