



WORK LIFE BALANCE – AN EMPIRICAL STUDY BASED ON TRADE-OFF

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Article History: Received: 12.12.2022

Revised: 29.01.2023

Accepted: 15.03.2023

Abstract

Work and livelihood are as important for a man to survive as are the natural factors. There is no doubt or second notion on being employed or finding his own source of income to meet his needs or the needs of people dependent on him. There is a verse in Bible saying that what benefit is to a man who earns a lot running around but if he loses his life in the process? Nowadays it is not just that men have to earn, or men have to work but it is bi sexual. We see many women working before and after marriage, with kids to care of and while doing household chores and running everyday errands. The world is competitive, and anybody can run the race, this makes it plain simple about how people are in mad rush to establish themselves in a decent lifestyle and achieve a higher standard of life. There they also forget in order to enjoy the higher standard of life, one must have a life to live. Many people prioritize the job or the profession they are in to over and above their family. This may be backed by income motive or professional excellence or career advancement race. The total no. of divorce cases filed in Chennai Family Court according to Tamil Nadu District Judiciary has risen more than three times compared to pre covid. The main reason cited is the incompatible work life. National Crime Records Bureau has stated that suicides due to work pressure are increasing at alarming rate in metropolitan cities. This paper aims to study the impact of work stress on life and the work life balance strategy adopted in Chennai urban.

Keywords: Work-life balance, Employee Productivity, Stress management, Income based motivation

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DOI: 10.31838/ecb/2023.12.s2.140

1. Introduction

Working as an employee in a firm or business run by others is very demanding as we are bound to agree and abide by the rules laid down by them. Most of the times the company or the organization specifies very rigid work timings and work targets, forcing their employees to succumb in to the system. Some employees realize it and take up a different alternative. The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) released a report on May 26th 2022 which states that 40% of the employees whom they interviewed stated that their job was extremely stressful and draining. While 25% believed that job stress was the most serious of their lives. 75% of the employees are of the opinion that job related stress was comparatively less for the previous generation or few generations ago, 29% felt uncomfortable and awful at their work place due to the stress and anxiety they create in them.

The employees were also asked about what they consider as their major obstacles in achieving a balanced work-life structure. The no of employees who cited few major reasons were unanimous in their responses. Thus, following the principle **VITAL FEW TRIVIAL MANY**. This will give the organization more or less a close to accurate picture in finding out the reasons for employee attrition or stressed out poor performing workforce.

Literature Review

Global workplace Report 2021 recorded that work related stress reached a maximum score in 2020, while in 2019 it was 38%. The report says that US & Canada workers experienced the highest work-related stress of 58% in 2018-19.

Iravanto, Novianti & Roz 2021 found out that work stress can reduce job satisfaction considerably even if it is a dream job. The study carried out in Indonesia identified few factors responsible for work stress and also urged the employers to pay serious attention to the mental health of their employees.

Bell, Rajendran, Theiler 2012 Increased work pressure led to worsened work life conflict. The study found that there was a high correlation between work stress and physical well being of an employee. A study conducted among Australian academic teaching staff concluded that a high stress job would disturb the work life balance and increase work life conflict.

Razak, Yusof, Azidin, Latif & Ismail 2014 found out that work stress and work-life balance go hand in hand and their primary data study seem to reveal that there is a positive correlation between balanced workload and work life balance. There is a significant relationship between role conflict and work life balance, when there was increase in role

conflict there seemed to be a substantial increase in work life imbalance and there is also a positive relationship between interpersonal relationships and work-life balance.

Delecta 2011 concluded that if an individual is able to manage the stress around his work and his profession, he/she is already having a stress free life. The study mainly a qualitative one, observed the individuals who were able to keep the office affairs within the office and home affairs within their houses.

Sirji & Lee 2018 study trifurcated the concepts around work-life balance. They are work-related, non-work-related and stress related outcomes. Few factors of personal and work front were identified as reasons to work-life balance. These antecedent are to be focussed in order to establish a stress free work-life balance.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

Though the study is more of a subjective nature, the respondents were approached in view of getting some quantitative data. Following were chosen as objectives and the study was spun around it and questionnaire designed according to it.

1. To Find out if there was impact of work stress level on personal life.
2. To identify the major factors of work stress
3. To bring out the barriers for a perfect work-life balance.

Limitations

The study largely was in and around Chennai, and few select major IT & Software sector, Manufacturing Industries and companies with customer or client targets were our respondents. Time constraint was one of the major factors in determining the sample size. The study also involved both male and female and were unfortunately not able to include any of the third gender.

Sample & Survey

A small sample survey collected from employees mostly from IT, 100 questionnaires were administered out of which respondents were from executive level to team member and II level management. Primary data was enumerated through a questionnaire where the respondents were asked to assign values to their level of stress as high, medium & low, and their personal life performance in the scale of 1 to 10.

For the 2nd and 3rd objective there were another 2 sets of questionnaires administered through google form and the respondent were requested to circulate it among their fellow employees and the response was overwhelming. Since the questions were so related to them and only relevant and very few in

number, the feed return came to 414, after which the responses were closed for analysis purpose.

Analysis

Pareto Chart was applied for the first objective, to mainly see what are the VITAL few factors and only they need to be addressed. The trivial many can be taken up for later was the general opinion and following were the observations.



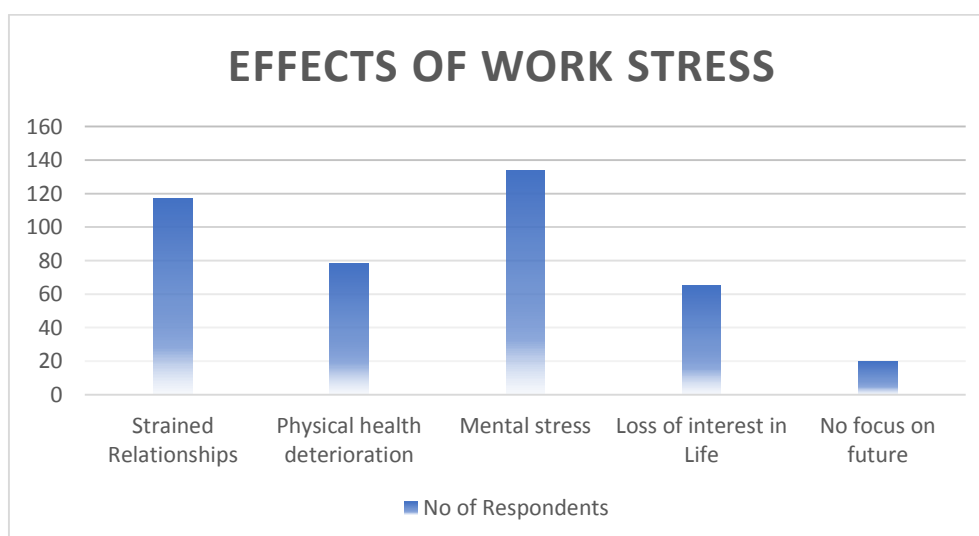
Source: Based on Primary Data Collected by author

As we can see the apathetic superiors topped the list while tough targets and nature of the job itself were ranked subsequently. Culture and style of the working place also was the reason of stress among many employees, mostly women employees who found it incompatible against their mother and wife role at home.

To eliminate or reduce the stress as whole the 4 top reasons can be investigated with utmost priority. How are these factors determined, is as you see in

the diagram a small circle around the curve's kink. Here we determine or decide the trivial issues start. So all the numbers before the kink are considered vital while beyond the kink are taken as trivial, though not totally ignored.

The second objective, we asked the respondents to list out the impact the stress had in their lives and a simple bar chart was used to present the data and the results obtained are as below:



Source: Based on Primary Data collected by author

Mental stress endured by them was cited as the foremost effect of work pressure, more than 120 employees unanimously cited it as the effect, while relationship problems came closely behind and was

alarmingly high. Many spouses had picked up confrontations for their sufferings because of the work pressure and the lack of time and interest they showed in family.

Physical health deteriorated for around 80 of the respondents, increased screen time leading them to wear glasses, BP and back pain were cited as major health implications. Few respondents even divulged that they lost interest in their lives as they were leading a kind of inanimate life with a regular and monotonous schedule and working under high pressure even stopped few respondents to focus on future.

Kruskal -Wallis H Test was applied to see if the level of stress had an impact on the personal or home front. Kruskal – Wallis is a rank based non-parametric test used to determine if there is statically significant difference between 2 or more group of an independent variable on an ordinal dependent variable.

To understand whether life front/home front performance, measured on a continuous scale from 0-10, (0 being the least score and 10 being the maximum or best score) differed based on work stress/anxiety levels (i.e., dependent variable would be “home/personal life performance” and independent variable would be “work stress/anxiety level”, which has three independent groups: employees with "low", "medium" and "high" work stress/anxiety levels).

H₀ = There is no relationship between level of stress and work-life balance

H_A = The role of stress is significant in work-life balance

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Personal_life_performance	90	5.6889	2.81107	1.00	10.00
Worksress_level	90	1.0000	.82107	.00	2.00

Kruskal-Wallis Test

Ranks			
	Worksress_level	N	Mean Rank
Personal_life_performance	Low	30	72.80
	Medium	30	44.80
	High	30	18.90
	Total	90	

Test Statistics ^{a,b}	
	Personal_life_performance
Kruskal-Wallis H	79.878
df	2
Asymp. Sig.	.010
a. Kruskal Wallis Test	
b. Grouping Variable: Worksress_level	

Source: Based on Primary Data Collected by author

The mean rank column for each stress group can be used to compare the effect of the same on work-life performance. The balance personal life is seen as how it is affected by various stress levels. The group with low stress level seem to have a better work-life balance, and the group with highest stress appear to have a disoriented or stressful personal life-work balance.

The results show (Asymp sig.) that p value being less than .05, there is a statistically significant difference between the groups when associated with the independent variable, here in our case the stress factor. In fact, our value is 0, where we understand that the immaterial of the group all of

them had significant impact of stress on themselves. The value of 0.10 basically means the null hypothesis stating that there is no relationship between stress and work balance can be rejected. The exact p-value is 0.0101 whereas it was approximated to 0.010. The descriptive statistics for the grouping variable should be ignored, as they are quite meaningless.

Findings

The study has established that 79.878% of the work life balance can be attributed to the stress factor. The individual mean ranking shows that the group with the least stress is shown to have a balanced work-life proportion, whereas the highest level of

stress victims is seen to suffer from disoriented work-life balance or even imbalanced management of their professional and home front. Every Individual human being is different in an experiment and seems to act completely under control. If he is aware that he is observed then there is difficulty in knowing his real reactions. The study used a questionnaire and we still are not sure how many of them expressed their real or actual response. Following are the Findings put forward by the authors:

- a. The stress level has a direct bearing on the work-life balance, there is a positive correlation.
- b. The respondents were able to more or less unanimously identify few serious reasons as barrier for work-life balance
- c. The better they handled the stress better was their work-life balance

2. Conclusion:

The word stress seems to be very young when we trace its origin. The etymological meaning of the term once upon a time was to emphasise but now the real meaning of the word is completely overshadowed by the new acquired meaning. Every age group is undergoing stress and stress related issues. The most vulnerable and contagious group being the working class people as they tend to disseminate the stress they acquired from their workplace. The level of stress and emotional bottlenecks can be relaxed or loosened when there is an alternative place to vent out. The companies or workplaces if they offer a grievance redressal cell can to a large extent do some favour to the suffering employees. Moreover everything has its genesis and ending in our own minds. So if we can start feeling stressed, then definitely we can also stop feeling stressed.

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