

AN EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION ON THE IMPACT OF DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES ON WORK-LIFE BALANCE PROGRAMMES IN DIFFERENT SECTORS OF BANKING INDUSTRY IN CHENNAI

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ABSTRACT

Work-life balance is about living a fulfilled life inside and outside paid work, having control over your time so you can achieve that. It has become important to demonstrate the benefits that employers can derive from such employment policies and practices supporting work-life balance and how they can be used for mitigating the negative effects on the business management. This study was designed to know if there is any difference in perception about presence or absence of work life balance programs due to the demographic variables (age, gender, and marital status) and if the perception about availability or non-availability of work-life balance programs leads to any difference on perception of the employees related to scheduling control, job satisfaction, and mental health level. The study provides help to the banking industry in understanding the demographic variables that lead to difference in the perception of employees about the work-life balance programmes and also the impact that such perception creates in the scheduling control, and mental health of the employees. The organizations should have communication strategies to make sure that all the employees are made aware about the availability of work-life balance programs and when and how can they be availed.

Keywords: *Work-life balance, scheduling control, job satisfaction, mental health.*

Introduction

Work-life balance refers to the flexible working arrangements that allow both parents and non-parents to avail of working arrangements that provide a balance between work responsibilities and personal responsibilities. The term 'work-life balance' is preferred due the fact that it encompasses the experiences and needs of parents and non-parents alike, and is a more progressive theoretical framework in which to think about new ways of living and working that are satisfactory to all. In practice, it involves "adjusting work patterns so that everyone, regardless of age, race or gender can find a rhythm that enables them more easily to combine work and their other responsibilities and aspirations."

Work-Life balance concept refers to 'the extent to which individuals are equally involved in- and equally satisfied with — their work role and family roles. It suggests that giving equal priority to work as well as family roles could help in resolving the work-family conflicts. Any practice in the workplace that, intentionally or otherwise, increase the flexibility and autonomy of the workers in adjusting their attention (time) and presence in the workplace can be termed as a work-life balance practice. On the other hand work-life balance policies exist where such practices are intentionally designed and implemented.

Work-life balance policies are often referred to in practice as 'flexible working', and include the following different ways of working like part-time working, job sharing, flexi-time, shift working, compressed week, tele-working / e-working, career breaks, study leave, zero hours contracts, etc.

Review of literature

Jang et al. (2011) examined the association between availability of work-life balance programmes in the organizations, the authority that employees have in scheduling their work hours, job satisfaction, and mental health. The study added to the evidence that there is a positive relationship between availability of scheduling control and work life balance policies on one hand and between job satisfaction and mental well-being on the other. The various control variables at individual level were used including occupation, job status, gender, marital status, wages, and union membership. At the company level company size and industry were taken as control variables.

Babazono et al. (2005) conducted a study related to influences of Work place stress on Mental Health. They used "work requirement degree control model" which is one of the well regarded workplace stress theories and found that significant items leading to problematic mental health for factory workers were "too much competition" (high degree of work requirement), "cannot keep up with new technology" (lack of control) and for R&D or office workers "too much trouble at work" (high degree of work

requirement) and “feel pressed for time” (loss of control).

Madsen et al. (2005) in a study “Work-Family Conflict and Health: A Study of Workplace, psychological, and Behavioral Correlates” suggest that high work-family conflict is related to lower levels of desirable work and non-work factors (e.g., organizational commitment, health); however, they did not study the direction of these relationships. These results also support the spillover theory that states that negative spillover from one role to another is demonstrated when the problems, conflicts, or energy in one role has strained and preoccupied an individual, making it difficult to effectively and positively participate in another, and positive spillover is just the opposite. The overall results indicated when employees feel good; they are more loyal, involved, and committed to their organizations. Thus, improving employees’ health may be one of the methods that can help increase the overall organizational commitment.

Abbott and Cieri (2008) depicted the perspectives of work-life balance held by employee and management. Their research indicated a high level of congruence between the managements’ and employees’ perspectives. The findings show that the influences on WLB are inter-related and, depending on specific organizational circumstances, some factors will have more influence on stakeholder support for WLB than do others.

Kirkwood and Tootell (2008) conducted a study to find if the entrepreneurship is the answer to achieving work-life balance. They interviewed 58 entrepreneurs in New Zealand, out of which 32 were women. They tried to explore the work-family conflict faced by the entrepreneurs, the techniques they use to achieve work-family balance and the effectiveness of these strategies. It was found that women entrepreneurs employed a number of flexible work practices such as when and where to work and even with whom to work so that they could manage well their roles within the family as well. The researchers concluded that entrepreneurship may not be a panacea for achieving work-family balance. However, it was concluded that in the pursuit of work-family balance, entrepreneurs encounter an additional type of work-family conflict to deal with – that of their own employees.

Parkes and Langford (2008) conducted a survey on 16,000 Australian employees and tested if the work-life balance is important for engaging and retaining employees in the context of other aspects of organizational climate. The analysis concluded that out of 28 organizational climate factors, work-life balance was least related to employee engagement and employees’ intention to stay in the organization. The research concluded that creating work-life alignment through congruent goals and values, fostering corporate social responsibility, looking after the health and safety of employees, improving reward and performance appraisal systems to more accurately reflect performance outcomes (rather than time in the office), developing fair and supportive supervisors, and facilitating participation and involvement in decision-making among all employees, would increase employee engagement and retention generally, reduce the impact of diversity and flow on to greater satisfaction with work-life balance.

Hayman (2009) studied the relationship between the perceived usability of flexible work schedules and work/life balance for office-based employees. A direct link was found between perceived usability of flexible work schedules and the three dimensions of work-life balance (work interference with personal life, personal life interference with work, and work/personal life enhancement). Employees working under flexible work schedules were found to have higher levels of work-life balance as compared to their counterparts who were working under fixed hours schedule. The research depicted that while individual flexible work schedules may have a marginal overall positive impact on employee work/life balance, the perceived usability and availability of these work schedules appears to be a key element in achieving work/life balance for many office-based employees.

Rationale of the Study

There is no dearth of studies on work-life balance conducted in India. But there are very few studies and probably none in India that attempt to capture the impact of availability of work-life balance programmes on job satisfaction and mental health of employees. This research was undertaken to analyze if the demographic variables lead to a difference in perception about availability of work-life balance programmes and whether this perception leads to a difference in employees’ levels of job satisfaction, and mental health.

Objectives of the Study

1. To study the impact of demographic variables (age, gender, and marital status) and perception about availability of work-life balance programmes in different sectors of banking industry in Chennai..

2. To study if there is a statistical significant difference in perception of scheduling control, job satisfaction, and mental health based on the perception about availability of work life balance programmes in different sectors of banking industry in Chennai..

Research Methodology

The sample chosen for this research included banking professionals. The sample size was restricted to 195.. The banks were selected using stratified sampling. Data was collected from 13 banks (4 public sector, 6 private sector, and 3 foreign banks). 15 respondents from each bank were chosen randomly resulting into total sample size of 195. Inter-consistency of the various scale items were assessed by computing Cronbach's Alpha. All the reliability coefficients were found to be satisfactory.

Table 1 :Reliability Statistics

Scale items	Cronbach's Alpha	Number of items
Scheduling Control	0.719	2
Job Satisfaction	0.682	5
Mental Health	0.673	5

Primary data was collected using a structured closed-ended questionnaire adapted from a study by Jang et al. (2011). For testing the hypothesis, non-parametric tests namely chi-square and Mann-Whitney have been applied.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

At individual level, the age, gender, and marital status were studied. There were 28% respondents of less than 25 years in age. 56% respondents were in category of 26-34 years & 16% were above 34 years. 62% respondents were male and 38% were female. 22% of respondents were unmarried whereas 78% were married.

To study the independence of demographic variables (age, gender, and marital status) and perception about availability of work-life balance programmes in the banks, chi-square test was applied. The results revealed that age and perception of availability of work-life balance programmes were dependent and; the marital status and perception of availability of work-life balance programmes were dependent.

Table 2 : Chi- Square Test For Association between Age and Perception About Availability Of Work-Life Balance Programmes

Type of Bank	Chi Square Value	P Value
Private Sector Banks	2.534	0.123
Public Sector banks	2.831	0.02*
ForeignBanks	3.122	0.215

Table 2 shows that age and perception about availability of work-life balance programmes are independent in case of private and foreign banks. However, in case of public sector banks the age and perception about availability of work-life balance programmes are found to be dependent. Thus, it can be concluded that there is no association between age and perception about availability of work-life balance programmes in case of private and foreign banks but there is association in case of public sector banks.

Table 3 : Chi- Square Test For Independence of Gender and Perception About Availability Of Work-Life Balance Programmes

Type of Bank	Chi Square Value	P Value
Private Sector Banks	0.546	0.042*
Public Sector banks	0.724	0.006**
ForeignBanks	.921	0.034*

The values show that availability of work-life balance programmes and gender are independent and thus, it can be concluded that there is association between gender and perception about availability of work-life balance programmes in case of all the three types of banks sectors namely private public and foreign banks.

Table 4 : Chi- Square Test For Independence of Marital Status and Perception About Availability Of Work-Life Balance Programmes

Type of Bank	Chi Square Value	P Value
Private Sector Banks	0.546	0.022*
Public Sector banks	0.724	0.003**
ForeignBanks	.921	0.021*

Table 4 shows the results of Chi-square test for independence of marital status and respondents' perception about availability of work-life balance programmes for each type of bank. The results in the table depict that perception about availability of work-life balance programmes is dependent on marital status in private and public sector banks. So, we perception about availability of work life balance in private and public sector banks but there is no association in case of foreign banks.

Table 5 : Mann Whitney Test for significant difference in perception about scheduling control on basisof the perception about availability of work life balance programmes

	Average Scheduling Control Score
Mann-Whitney U	16201.00
Wilcoxon W	20724.02
Z	-2.584
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	0.09

Grouping Variable: Programme for work-life balance available

Table 5 shows that there is a statistical significant difference in scheduling control score on the basis of perception of employees' about availability of work-life balance programmes.

Table 6 : Mann Whitney Test for significant difference in perception about job satisfaction on basisof the perception about availability of work life balance programmes

	Average Job satisfaction Score
Mann-Whitney U	16961.00
Wilcoxon W	40832.00
Z	-1.533
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.125

Grouping Variable: Programme for work-life balance available.

Table 6 shows that there is no statistical significant difference in job satisfaction score on the basis of perception of employees' about availability of work-life balance programmes. Thus, we accept null hypothesis.

Table 7 : Mann Whitney Test for significant difference in perception about mental health on basisof the perception about availability of work life balance programmes.

	Average Mental Health Score
Mann-Whitney U	15422.00
Wilcoxon W	39293.00
Z	-2.931
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.003

Grouping Variable: Programme for work-life balance available

Table 7 shows that there is a statistical significant difference in mental health score on the basis of perception of employees' about availability of work-life balance programmes. Thus, we reject null hypothesis.

Summary of Findings and Conclusion

The following conclusions have been drawn from the research on the basis of results of the data analysed:

1. Age and the perception of employees about availability of work-life balance programmes in private sector and foreign banks were found to be independent but, in case of public sector banks, they were found to be dependent.
2. Gender and the perception of employees about availability of work-life balance programmes were found to be independent in all the three sectors of banking industry.
3. Respondents' marital status and the perception of employees about availability of work-life balance programmes in foreign banks was found to be independent but, in case of private sector and public sector banks, they were found to be dependent.
4. From the above, it can be seen that the demographic variables (age, gender and marital status) and the perception about availability of work-life balance programmes are independent in most of the cases.
5. It was found that the perception about scheduling control and mental health is statistically significantly different with the presence or absence of work life balance programmes in the banking industry. Majority of respondents who perceived that the work-life balance programmes were

available scored high on the scheduling control (52.6%) and mental health score (51.5%) as well. Thus, it is important for the banks to realize that the perception of employees about availability of programmes would help in maintaining their mental well-being.

6. The perception about presence or absence of work life balance programmes in the banks does not create a difference in job satisfaction level of the employees. Thus, the availability of work-life balance programmes does not act as a motivator for impacting the satisfaction derived from the job.

Recommendations

1. It is vital for a bank to not only make work life balance programmes available for benefit of employees but also make them aware about their availability as has been observed in the data collected that in the same bank certain employees perceive that the work-life balance programmes are available; others believe that they are not. The banks should have communication strategies to make sure that all the employees are made aware about the availability of work-life balance programmes and when and how can they be availed.
2. As observed from the results that there is no dependence between any of the demographic variables studied and the perception of employees about availability or non-availability of work-life balance programmes. Thus, the work-life balance programmes should be made available to employees' from all age categories, males as well as females and irrespective of marital status.
3. It has also been found that there is statistically significant difference in scheduling control and mental health score of employees on the basis of their perception about availability of work-life balance programmes. Thus, the banks must realize that making the work-life balance programmes available and making the employees' aware about such availability would lead to a change in their perception and would result in betterment of the employees' mental well-being. This would further help the organizations in increasing their productivity level.

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