



Enhancing Employee Performance In Public Universities Through Work-Life Balance: A Review

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ABSTRACT

Striking a balance between work and life is important for an employee, especially among academics. Balancing work and life have become a challenge these days. When demand for work or personal affairs prevail, it directly creates an unbalanced situation and further forms a conflict between work and family. The conflict that ensues from balancing work and life will have a negative impact on the other party, whether it is an organization or the family itself. Failure to manage this balance will result in negative effects including absenteeism, lack of work commitment, low work quality, low productivity, lack of creativity and innovation, stress, family conflict, divorce etc. Hence, this study analysed the findings of previous studies related to the definition of work-life balance and the elements of work-life balance in public universities. Findings from previous studies will be able to help organize more systematic and significant ideas for future studies.

Introduction

In a present fast-paced world, the pursuit of equilibrium between professional and personal life has become increasingly crucial. This equilibrium, often referred to as "Work-Life Balance" (WLB), has emerged as a topic of paramount significance in the contemporary workforce. Maintaining a harmonious WLB not only provides individual well-being but also plays an important role in enhancing employees' performance in academic institutions, particularly in the context of public universities. This study embarks on a journey through research analyses and delving into an array of studies conducted by various researchers, with the primary objective of elucidating the intricate relationship between WLB and the performance of academicians in public universities. The allure of academic life lies in its noble pursuit of knowledge and its contribution to society through education, research, and innovation. However, this pursuit often comes at a cost that academics grapple with, such as the perpetual demand for research excellence, teaching commitments, and administrative responsibilities, all while striving to nurture their personal lives. The contrast between the professional and personal side of their existence can result in significant challenges, ultimately impacting their well-being and, consequently, their performance as educators and researchers. This study aims to bridge the gap between theory and practice by presenting a synthesis of existing research on WLB in the context of public universities. Hence, by consolidating the findings of numerous previous studies conducted by diverse researchers, this inclusive review seeks to offer a comprehensive overview of the relationship between WLB and the performance of academicians. Public universities are at the epicentre of knowledge dissemination and the cultivation of future leaders. Therefore, understanding and optimizing the WLB of academicians is not merely a matter of personal satisfaction but imperative for the institutions themselves. Recognizing this, the primary purpose of this study is to distil the essence of previous studies and present a cogent narrative that can inform policy-making and institutional strategies aimed at fostering a conducive WLB environment for academicians. This article aspires to contribute to the ongoing discourse surrounding WLB in academician by exploring the multifaceted relationship between WLB and employee performance in public universities. This research had deciphered the keys for unlocking the potential of academicians and, in turn, the future of knowledge and education in public universities.

Methodology

This qualitative study employed the document analysis method for collecting data, which is basically the analysis of several journal findings related to work-life balance to increase the performance of academics or lecturers in public universities. This study had discussed, summarized and made some conclusions on the research findings from several journals related to the research topic. Based on the collection of research highlights from several journals, it allowed researchers to highlight the definition of work-life balance and the important elements of work-life balance proposed by previous studies.

Work- Life Balance Elements

Aruldoss *et. al.* (2020) had highlighted the complex interplay between quality of work life (QWL) and work-life balance (WLB), with job stress, job satisfaction, and job commitment serving as mediating factors. Understanding the relationship between these elements is essential for organizations and policymakers seeking to improve the well-being of employees and promote a healthier work-life balance. Addressing the mediating role of job stress, job satisfaction, and job commitment will enable organizations to develop strategies for enhancing QWL, reduce work-related stressors, and ultimately contribute to the overall well-being and satisfaction of their employees. The primary objective of Aruldoss *et. al.* (2020) was to uncover and comprehend the underlying mechanisms that link QWL and WLB. The study aimed to determine how job stress, job satisfaction, and job commitment mediate the relationship between these two critical aspects of employees' experience in the workplace. Aruldoss *et. al.* (2020) presented several noteworthy findings. First, they identified a positive and significant relationship between QWL and WLB, affirming the notion that an enhanced QWL contributes to better WLB. The study also revealed that this relationship is partially mediated by job stress, job satisfaction, and job commitment. Job stress is found to negatively impact WLB, while job satisfaction and job commitment act as positive mediators, thus, reinforcing the connection between QWL and WLB. These findings underscore the intricate interplay between these variables in shaping employees' overall well-being and work-life experiences. The researcher also suggested that this can be focused on different industries, as the findings might vary across contexts. Longitudinal studies assess the causal relationships and changes over time. In addition, interventions and strategies to improve QWL and WLB, considering the mediating roles identified, should be explored and tested in organizational settings. One of the central arguments stemming from this study is the importance of acknowledging the symbiotic relationship between QWL and WLB. Organizations that prioritize their employees QWL tend to nurture an environment conducive to achieving a better WLB. This is not just a moral or ethical imperative but it makes practical sense for employers. A satisfied, balanced workforce is more likely to be productive, engaged, and loyal to the company. Thus, improving QWL directly contributes to organizational success and longevity.

Stoilova's study delves into WLB in Europe by examining both institutional contexts and individual factors that influence this balance (Stoilova, 2020). The objective of their research was to examine the intricate relationship between WLB and both, institutional contexts and individual factors, in the European context. The scope of their study encompassed a comprehensive analysis of the WLB situation, taking into consideration the diverse nature of European countries and their varying institutional frameworks and individual characteristics. The study recognized WLB is influenced not only by personal characteristics but also by societal and organizational structures. It suggests that variations in WLB practices across Europe can impact employee performance and well-being differently in different regions. Their research revealed a multifaceted understanding of WLB and emphasized the critical role played by institutional contexts, such as labour market regulations, social welfare policies, and cultural norms. They found that countries with a more favourable institutional support system tend to have higher levels of WLB satisfaction among their citizens. Stoilova (2020) underscored the need for organizations operating in different European regions to tailor their WLB policies to specific institutional contexts of those regions. It emphasized that a one-size-fits-all approach may not yield optimal results, as the effectiveness of WLB practices can vary greatly depending on the prevailing societal and organizational norms. One of the key arguments advocated by Stoilova (2020) was that WLB is not solely a product of individual choices or behaviours but is profoundly influenced by the broader socioeconomic and institutional contexts within which individuals operate. This assertion is particularly relevant in the European context, where there is a remarkable diversity of countries with varying institutional frameworks and cultural norms. By recognizing the impact of these institutional contexts, his study shed light on the fact that WLB practices are not universal and cannot be uniformly applied across all European countries.

Therefore, Irfan, *et. al.* (2021) investigated the impact of WLB on project performance, while considering the mediating role of organizational support and job burnout. The objective of this current research is to provide a comprehensive overview of the study conducted by Irfan, *et. al.* (2021) on the impact of WLB, organizational support, and job burnout on project performance. It focuses on project management professionals and aims to understand how these factors influence the success of projects undertaken by organizations. The study considered variables such as work-life balance practices, organizational support mechanisms, levels of job burnout, and project performance outcomes. Findings by Irfan, *et. al.* (2021) shed light on several significant aspects of work-life balance, organizational support, job burnout, and their impact

on project performance. Firstly, the research found that organizations that offer flexible work arrangements and support for employees' work-life balance tend to have higher project performance levels. Second, organizational support plays a crucial role in mitigating job burnout among project professionals. Third, job burnout has a negative impact on project performance. Lastly, project performance has a strong link between work-life balance, organizational support, and project performance. Organizations that prioritize work-life balance and provide adequate support to employees are more likely to achieve higher project performance levels. While these factors are undoubtedly crucial in project management, it is important to acknowledge that project management represents a specific subset of jobs, and these findings may not directly apply to all professions.

Johari *et al.* (2018) focused on the relationship between autonomy, workload, work-life balance, and job performance among teachers. It highlighted that autonomy, and a balanced workload can contribute to better work-life balance, and ultimately positively influencing job performance. Scope of the research was related to teachers' work-life balance and job performance, which primarily involved examining the roles of autonomy and workload. It focused on studies conducted in various educational settings, including primary, secondary, and higher education institutions, as well as research in diverse cultural and geographical contexts. The findings support existing research, and suggests that higher levels of autonomy are positively associated with better work-life balance and improved job performance. Furthermore, it found that workload had a significant negative impact on work-life balance and, subsequently, job performance. Johari *et al.* (2018) mentioned that future research in this area should focus on intervention strategies, technology integration, cultural variations, and long-term impact to improve the overall well-being and effectiveness of teachers in the educational system. However, its emphasis on autonomy may not apply universally to all professions or industries. While autonomy can be beneficial, it may not be equally feasible in all job roles. Some jobs require more structure and supervision, which makes the pursuit of high levels of autonomy potentially counterproductive.

Meanwhile, Foy *et al.* (2019) addressed the issue of workplace stress by examining how managing job performance, social support, and work-life conflict can help reduce stress (Foy *et al.*, 2019). The scope primarily targeted working individuals across various industries, with the aim of providing insight that could be applicable to a broad range of organizations and employees. The study found that job performance plays a significant role in workplace stress. High levels of job performance were associated with lower stress levels, likely due to the sense of accomplishment and control it provides. The study suggested that organizations that provide social support and strategies for managing work-life conflict can contribute to lower stress levels and subsequently improve employee performance. They contended that high job performance leads to a sense of accomplishment and control, which ultimately contributes to lower stress levels. While this perspective may hold true for some individuals and industries, it oversimplifies the complex interplay between job performance and stress. It assumes that high performance is always achievable and ignores the possibility that excessive pressure to perform well may actually increase stress levels for some employees. Therefore, the argument by Foy *et al.* (2019), while valid to some extent, does not account for the potential downside of overemphasizing on job performance.

Conversely, Soomro *et al.* (2018) investigated the relationship between work-life balance (WLB), work-family conflict (WFC), family-work conflict (FWC), and employee performance, considering the moderating role of job satisfaction. This research utilized a comprehensive dataset and a diverse sample, which allows for a subtle analysis of the relationship between these variables across various settings. Soomro *et al.* (2018) found that job satisfaction strengthened WLB's positive influence on employee performance while mitigating the negative effects of WFC and FWC. The study suggested that job satisfaction can mitigate the negative effects of work-family conflicts on employee performance, while highlighting the interconnections of various factors. It reinforces the idea that employee satisfaction is not only a desirable outcome in itself but also a catalyst for improved performance and reduced conflicts between work and family roles.

Meanwhile, Abdirahman (2018) explored the relationship between job satisfaction, work-life balance, and organizational commitment with employee performance. It aimed to understand how job satisfaction and work-life balance contribute to organizational commitment and, subsequently, how these factors collectively influence employee performance. It involved a wide range of employees across various industries, which included a diverse sample of employees to capture a comprehensive view of the relationship between job satisfaction, work-life balance, organizational commitment, and employee performance. The study suggested that comparative research across different industries and regions could help identify contextual variations in the observed relationships. It also highlighted the universality of these factors, transcending specific job roles or industries, and underlining their significance as cornerstones of a thriving workplace.

Mulyani *et al.* (2021) investigated the crucial issue of teacher burnout in special schools and the role of emotional regulation as a potential remedy. It intended to gain an understanding as to whether a teacher's ability to regulate one's emotions can mitigate the risk of burnout and improve the work-life balance of special education teachers. It also explored how these factors might impact children's behaviour in these educational settings. This study focused on special schools, which is a critical but often challenging

educational context. Special schools cater to students with diverse and complex learning needs, and teachers in these settings frequently face elevated levels of stress and burnout due to the unique demands of their roles. The study examined the interplay between emotional regulation, teacher well-being, school climate, and its potential repercussions on the behaviour of children with special needs. Findings indicate that teachers who demonstrate better emotional regulation skills experienced lower burnout rates and a healthier work-life balance. It also highlighted the potential benefits of implementing interventions and support mechanisms to enhance emotional regulation skills among special education teachers, thereby reducing burnout and improving the experiences of the teacher and student. This study's focus on the emotional well-being of educators in special schools reinforces the idea that investing in the emotional health of teachers can yield substantial dividends in terms of a better overall educational outcome.

The study entitled, "The Impact of Minimum Wages on Well-Being: Evidence from a Quasi-experiment in Germany" by Güla (2020) had investigated this complex relationship by examining how changes in minimum wage policies affects the well-being of workers. It intended to seek answers to crucial questions regarding the potential trade-off between income improvement due to minimum wage increases and the resulting changes in work-life balance. The finding underscores the importance of work-life balance by showing that minimum wage increases lead to improved life satisfaction, which can be attributed to reduced work hours among affected individuals. The study suggested that exploring the potential mechanisms through which minimum wage increases influence work-life balance, such as changes in work hours and job satisfaction, could shed more light on this critical aspect of labour policy. While the study by Güla (2020) is informative, one needs to be cautious about drawing broad conclusions based on one study. The impact of minimum wage policies can vary significantly depending on various factors, such as the economic context, industry, and local labour market conditions. One particular study in Germany might not necessarily apply to other countries or regions. It is essential to consider a broader research and data spectrum before making policy decisions.

Karim *et al.* (2021) investigated whether minimum wage reduces income inequality by accumulating evidence across various countries. The objective was to assess whether minimum wage policies, implemented across various countries, have an influence on reducing income inequality. It encompassed a broad cross-country perspective, allowing for a comprehensive examination of the impact of minimum wage on income distribution. Findings indicated that the amount of minimum wage rate actually matters. It suggested that higher minimum wage rates can reduce a country's inequality gap. This indicates that the minimum wage policy successfully increases the income level of the poor, thus reducing the inequality gap between the poor and high income earners. It also suggested that future research should explore this relationship, its long-term implications, and the contextual factors at play. This research is essential for policymakers seeking to create more equitable societies and improve the work-life balance of low-income individuals. One needs to be cautious when interpreting the findings by Karim *et al.* (2021) as a one-size-fits-all solution to income inequality. The impact of minimum wage policies can vary widely from country to country and even within different regions of the same country. Factors such as cost of living, labour market dynamics, and overall economic conditions should not be overlooked. Raising minimum wages too quickly or without considering local factors could have adverse consequences, including job losses and increased inflation.

Based on literature studies that have been discussed previously, a summary of the WLB elements are shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Summary of WLB elements based on selected studies

No	Author	Work-Life Balance Elements	Findings
1.	Aruldoss, A. <i>et al.</i> (2020)	Career	Job stress, commitment and job satisfaction are significant in WLB
2.	Stoilova, R. (2020)	Work-Life Balance	Countries with more favourable institutional support systems tend to have higher levels of work-life balance satisfaction in their citizens.
3.	Irfan, M. Khalid <i>et al.</i> (2021)	Interpersonal Relationships	Project performance has a strong link between work-life balance, organizational support, and project performance. Hence, organizations that prioritize work-life balance and provide adequate support to their employees are more likely to achieve higher project performance levels.
4.	Johari <i>et al.</i> (2018)	Career, Health	Workload has a significant negative impact on work-life balance and, subsequently, job performance.
5.	Foy <i>et al.</i> (2019)	Career, Health, and Interpersonal Relationships	Social support systems and effective conflict management reduces stress and enhances performance.
6.	Soomro, A. A. <i>et al.</i> (2018)	Family, and Interpersonal Relationships	Job satisfaction strengthens WLB's positive influence on employee performance while mitigating the negative effects of WFC and FWC
7.	Abdirahman, Hassan I. H. (2018)	Family, and Health	Effective employee performance can be enhanced by improving the level of motivation. This would determine whether the private or public sectors' organizational goals are sustainable .
8.	Gulal (2020)	Financial	The importance of work-life balance by showing that minimum wage increases lead to improved life satisfaction, which can be attributed

			to reduced work hours among affected individuals.
9.	Mulyani <i>et. al.</i> (2021)	Career, and Health	Implementing interventions and support mechanisms to enhance emotional regulation skills in special education teachers, thereby reducing burnout and improving both the teacher and student's experiences.
10.	Karim <i>et. al.</i> (2021)	Financial	Increase in the minimum wage is associated with a decrease in income inequality.

Some studies, as depicted in Table 1 above, were selected to substantiate the WLB elements discussed earlier. The selected research elements examined in this study will help identify the relationship between various factors and their impact on work-life balance. As noted by Bourlakis (2023), a better work-life balance is essential for preventing increased stress, which can otherwise negatively affect employee performance, productivity, job satisfaction, and overall well-being. Hence, public universities serve as a platform for research and instituting initiatives aimed at improving the work-life balance of their academic staff that ultimately led to enhanced performance and well-being. Undoubtedly, public universities play a crucial role in enhancing the work-life balance of their academic staff.

Conclusion

A review of the literature on work-life balance underscores the critical importance of considering five key elements related to work-life balance, which are financial well-being, health, interpersonal relationships, career, and family. This study is related to previous studies that have highlighted crucial aspects related to work-life balance that increase the performance of academic staff in public universities. This literature review underscored the intricate interplay of these five elements and the necessity for harmonising them in the pursuit of a balanced and fulfilling life. Therefore, the findings of this study can be used by future studies to determine the appropriate indicators of WLB that affect the employee performance of academics in Public University.

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