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**ORGANIZATIONAL FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO
EMPLOYEE WORK LIFE BALANCE OF SENIOR
ENGINEERS IN A SELECTED SOFTWARE
DEVELOPMENT COMPANY IN SRI LANKA**

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to examine and determine the organizational factors contributing to employee work-life balance of senior engineers in a selected software development organization in Sri Lanka. The main objectives of the study consist of determining the organizational factors contributing to employee work life, understanding the relationship and impact of those factors to overall employee work-life balance and to make recommendations and strategies to adapt by the organization. Based on the literature review,

four independent variables have been identified which includes job stress, organizational support, workload and the nature of work. The study collects the data by using the questionnaire technique and selects the sample size as 86 senior engineers. The hypothesis validation was carried out using Pearson correlation, Regression analysis from SPSS 19.0 tool. The research findings indicate that organizational support has the highest contribution to employee work-life balance. Workload and nature of work also hold a relationship to employee work-life balance, whereas job stress does not claim a relationship with employee work-life balance. This study will help organizations and managers to further enhance employee work-life balance via various HR strategies and thereby overcome the turnover rate of the employees. This study could be further continued with a larger sample and several other dimensions with some qualitative survey methods.

Keywords: Employee Work-Life Balance, Employee Turnover, Job Stress, Workload

Introduction

With the advent of globalization and technological advancement, organizations at present are seeking to achieve a sustainable competitive advantage over their competitors under dynamic market conditions. Organizations are more interested in investing in people or intellectual capital than tangible capital. This denotes organizations these days have considered the employees as one of the most valuable assets with an unmatched set of skills, abilities, and innovation (Raya and Bhuvanaiah, 2014). Shankar and Bhatnagar (2010); Chimote and Srivastava (2013) have claimed in their studies that organizations can be benefited through the right balance of work-life balance in terms of reduction in employee turnover. Work-life balance can be defined as the satisfaction and good functioning at work and at home, with a minimum of role conflict (Clark, 2000). It can be further denoted as the meaningful achievement and enjoyment in everyday life (Bird, 2006). Employee work-life balance has been considered as a vital aspect in

achieving competitive advantage among today's organizations (Opatha, 2009). Therefore, employee work-life balance has been sparked as the key determiner of employee retention.

The work of Hobson, Delunas, and Kesic (2001) acknowledges the absence of work-life balance will bring many negative consequences. This further implies the importance of work-life balance among the employees and the organization. The work-life imbalance affects family relationships (Pike, 2012, cited in Kumarasamy, Pangil and Isa, 2015). Thus, it can be further extended to the conflict between work and family (Biswas and Hassan, 2009; Doble and Supriya, 2010). The damaged family relationship consequently affects the employee's concentration of work and their performance. A significant study conducted by Kinman and Jones (2003) shows the imbalance between work and life influences employees psychological (anxiety, depression) and physical well-being negatively. In this context, employee work-life balance has become a popular subject among senior managers, marketers and business consultants. Work-life balance has been identified as an important area of Human Resource Management (HRM) which could attract increased attention from the researchers (Meyer and Allen, 2006). There are numerous research studies which have been conducted in the domain of work-life balance while examining the factors which influence the work-life balance. This study focuses on a well-established and reputed software development organization in Sri Lanka. The purpose of the study proclaims as the antecedents contribute to the work-life balance aimed at the senior engineers of the selected organization.

Problem Background and Problem of the Study

The selected organization is a well-reputed customer-focused software development organization employing more than 300 Information Technology (IT) graduates. Considering the Sri Lankan software development industry, it is positioned at a higher value-added segment in the market due to the unique expertise in software engineering sector. The rapid progress of IT industry in Sri Lanka has created a

stable environment for the growth of the IT workforce in Sri Lanka, where IT market is estimated growth is 0.7% of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). With these dynamic market conditions emerging in the external environment in the aspect of technology, political and economic, many challenges unfold in the presence of the selected organization. This organization had recently identified an issue where their employee turnover rate of senior engineers was in the uptrend for the last four years (2013-2017). This has resulted in creating issues in operational activities due to the fact of not having expert domain knowledge. Recruiting and retaining the most skilled workforce is a challenging task for any organization as it requires the strategic approach of employee attraction, selection, and retention of employees which meets workforce needs (Dunne, 2007). Murphy (2003) further reveals that losing key employees in an organization is a global problem.

Turnover in the workplace has received constant consideration by many academic researchers (Richer, Blanchard and Vallerandi, 2002) due to that fact of the cost associated with it (Soon et al., 2005). Hobson et al. (2001) claim that employees who fail to balance between work and family contribute to employee turnover and absenteeism. Further studies demonstrated by Shankar and Bhatnagar (2010) showed that higher work-life balance will result in high employee performance and low absenteeism. Furthermore, Daniels and McCarraher (2000) depict that work-life balance practices help to enhance the productivity of workers while diminishing levels of employee turnover and absenteeism. Moreover, a study examined by Smith and Gardner (2007) with 153 respondents in a large New Zealand organization implies a strong relationship between employee turnover rate and work-life balance as they state "Good work-life balance is a factor that can affect the levels of commitment to the organization and turnover intentions". Many researchers have highlighted the relationship between employee work-life balance and employee turnover. In the context of Sri Lanka, a research done by Thushari (2011) based on time management and work-life balance on 106 software engineers shows 25% of the respondents do not seem to spend quality time at work

mainly due to the reasons of heavy workload and stress. Premarathne (2007) implies that working hours, the demand for family and work extensions has a significant influence towards the work-life balance of software engineers. However, these studies only focus specific job role that is software engineers. Hence gaps may occur when generalizing to the entire software development industry.

So far, the company had not conducted any survey to understand the work-life balance of employees at any managerial level. This study intends to overcome the gaps in employee work-life balance context of the organization which focuses on what organizational factors contribute to employee work-life balance of seniors in the selected organization.

Research Framework

Previous research studies identify different factors affecting employees work-life balance including organizational, personal and social. Based on those studies job stresses, workload, organizational support and the nature of work have been considered as four influential organizational factors in this study. Initially, work-life balance was defined as an inter-role conflict where role pressures from work and family domain are mutually incompatible (Kahn et al., 1964). Work-life balance can be conceptualized as "behavioral patterns of acting across multiple roles" (Marks and MacDermid, 1996). Following the theory of role balance of work-life balance can be further defined as a concept of maintaining the satisfaction and good functioning between home and office front with a minimum of role conflict (Marks and MacDermid, 1996, Greenhaus et al., 2003).

Work stress influences employee work life balance (Devi and Kangalakshimi, 2015). This study proclaims that stress has a direct impact on work-life balance which depends on two predominant factors as Psychological Pressure and Extricating Strategy of female employees in IT sector in India. The first hypothesis was proposed as:

H₁: There is a relationship between causes of job stress and employee work-life balance

H₁₀: There is no relationship between causes of job stress and employee work-life balance

It is proven that there is a positive relationship between organizational support and work-life balance, based on 1566 samples of police officers in Malaysia (Kumarasamy, Pangil, and Isa, 2015, by Straub (2007). The second hypothesis was proposed as:

H₂: There is a relationship between organizational support and employee work-life balance

H₂₀: There is no relationship between organizational support and employee work-life balance

Work overload will bring negative consequences such as fatigue, exhaustion which will lead an individual to respond negatively to the domain of work and family (Aryee, Srinivas, and Tan, 2005). The third hypothesis was proposed as:

H₃: There is a relationship between workload and employee work-life balance

H₃₀: There is no relationship between workload and employee work-life balance

Nature of work as unstructured work schedule; organization emphasis on time rather than tasks and non-desk jobs hinders the betterment of the work-life balance Murthy, Pangil and Isa (2015). The fourth hypothesis was proposed as:

H₄: There is a relationship between the nature of work and employee work-life balance

H₄₀: There is no relationship between the nature of work and employee work-life balance

The relevant conceptual model is shown in the following diagram (FIGURE 1). Employee work-life balance has been identified as the independent variable. Job stress, organizational support, workload and nature of work are considered as the dependent variables.

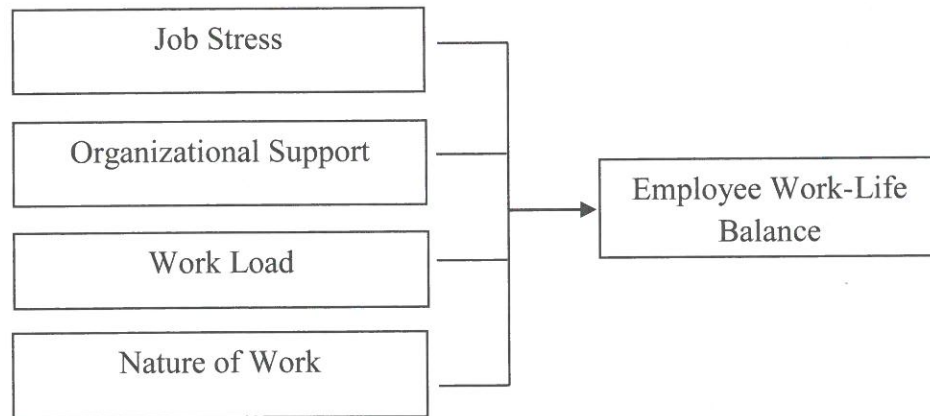


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Research Design

A study could be either exploratory, descriptive or hypothesis testing (Sekaran and Bougie, 2011). This study is a hypothesis based testing and correlational research as this it is focused organizational factors influencing on employee work-life balance and the relationships between those factors. The key methodology of collecting primary data was a survey method. The unit of analysis is referred to "the level of accumulation of the data collected during the data analysis stage". The questionnaire of this study focuses on identifying the individual work-life balance level senior engineers and factors influencing for it. Therefore, the unit of analysis is the individual. This study was conducted in a non-forced setting since the questionnaire was

administered in normal organizational environments where the work proceeds. The population is considered as senior engineers in the selected organization. The total population of the study was 110. 86 senior engineers were selected as the sample using Simple Random Sampling (SRS).

Measures

A questionnaire with 80 statements on a 1-5 Likert scale was developed and distributed among the sample. The research questionnaire contains 6 sections. The first section consists of the demographics, marital status, and educational qualification. The second part contains questions regarding understanding employee perceptions towards job stress. The third section relates to questions regarding understanding employee perceptions towards organizational support. Accordingly, fourth, fifth and sixth sections contain questions understanding employee perception towards workload, nature of work and employee work-life balance.

For each independent variable and the dependent variable 3-4 dimensions have been extracted based on the study of the literature review. The questionnaire was designed to cover three questions per dimension. Job stress was based on the scale developed by Anderson et al. (2002). The Organizational support was measured by an effective scale based on Meyer and Allen (1991). Workload and nature of work measures were adapted from Musura et al. (2013) and Delina and Raya (2013), Musura, Korican and Krajnovic (2013). The questions based on the scale items used by Netemeyer, Boles, and MacMurrian (1996), Musura, Korican and Krajnovic (2013), Delina and Raya (2013) used to measure the independent variable.

Validity and Reliability

Reliability of the variables was measured with the Cronbach's alpha value. The results indicate that the reliability of both independent and dependent variables is acceptable. Hence the reliability level of the

questionnaire feedbacks was proved. The content validity of the questionnaire has been ensured by the correct conceptualization.

Techniques of Data Analysis

The data gathered from the questionnaire was fed into SPSS (version 19) statistical tool. This output was then analyzed through Pearson correlation, regression values, and multiple regression values.

Results

The questionnaire was distributed among 86 respondents. The survey claims 65% response rate having 57% of married employees. 64% are female and 34% are male out of the respondents. The respondents were profile based on age limits. The majority of the respondents represent the age less than 30 years. In defining the level of relationship between independent variable and dependent variable the significance value was considered. The alternative hypothesis was accepted if the value of significance level is below the standard value of (p) 0.05. The null hypothesis was accepted if the value of the significance level is above the standard value of (p) 0.05. The results of the Pearson Correlation coefficients between an independent variable and dependent variables are illustrated in TABLE 2 below.

Table 2: Pearson Correlation between independent variable and dependent variables

	Job Stress	Organizational Support	Workload	Nature of Work
Pearson Correlation	0.51	0.546	-.268	0.439
Sig.(2-tailed)	0.707	0.000	0.046	0.001
Mean	1.8293	3.5452	1.7359	3.2964
Std. Deviation	0.53761	0.51826	0.40831	0.47710

The significance value of job stress variable is 0.707 which is greater than (p) 0.05, therefore null hypothesis was accepted and it is considered that job stress and employee work-life balance does not have a relationship. The Pearson correlation value (0.439) of the nature of work determines that there is a weak positive relationship between the nature of work and employee work-life balance. It further denotes that there is a weak positive relationship between the nature of work and employee work-life balance. The following TABLE 3 indicates regression analysis, which shows the relationship between independent variable and dependent variables.

Table 3: Result of regression analysis

	Job Stress	Organizational Support	Workload	Nature of Work
Sig.(2-tailed)	0.707	0.000	0.046	0.001
R	0.51 ^a	0.546 ^a	-.268 ^a	0.439 ^a
R Square	0.003	0.298	0.072	0.193
Adjusted R Square	-.016	0.285	0.055	0.178

As per TABLE 3, regression analysis indicates that adjusted R² value of Job stress is only 1.6% and therefore the impact of causes of job stress and variable on employee work-life balance is negligible. The impact of organizational support variable on employee work-life balance is 28% which is higher. Regression analysis further showcases that adjusted R² value is 5% and therefore the impact of workload variable on employee work-life balance is only 5% which is low. The impact of workload variable on employee work-life balance is only 17% which is moderate. Multiple regression analysis was also conducted to evaluate the overall impact of dependent variables on the independent variable. The result of the multiple regression analysis is presented in table 4.

Table 4: Result of multiple regression analysis

Multiple R	0.651 ^a
R Square	0.424
Adjusted R Square	0.378

According to TABLE 4, the SPSS outcome of multiple regression analysis indicates that the adjusted R² value is 37% and therefore, the overall impact of all the independent variables (Job stress, organizational support, workload and the nature of work and) on employee work-life balance is 37% which is moderately high.

Discussion and Conclusion

The key objectives of the research study included identifying the different organizational factors influencing employee work-life balance of senior engineers; examine the relationship between organizational factors contributing to employee work-life balance and the overall impact of the factors on employee work-life balance. The final objective was to determine and suggest the recommendations and strategies be adopted by a selected organization to enhance and improve the work-life balance of senior engineers. Generally, the findings of the study support previous research results except for the factor job stress. The research has a response rate of 65%, which indicates that obtaining 100% response level will be a challenging task due to the unavailability of some employees. Also, there had been similar scenarios reported from previous authors' work as well. The study conducted on Individual, organizational and environmental factors affecting work-life balance by Kumarasamy, Pangil and Isa (2015) had only 79% respondents rate received from the 12 police headquarters Peninsular Malaysia.

Even though previous research work shows that work stress has an effect on employee work-life balance (Devi and Kangalakshimi, 2015). This may not be applicable in the selected organizational context. Hence there could be different other organizational factors and results may differ based on demographics, educational background of the

respondents as well. This could be further supported by the Border Theory Clark (2000) which explains that work and family spheres may consist of different types of attributes such as languages, customs, and manners. Therefore, the results may differ depending on above-described factors also. Similar results had been reported by the previous work of Kumarasamy, Pangil and Isa (2015) with the two factors, organizational support, and workload where there is a significant positive relationship between work-life balance and a significant negative relationship between workload and employee work-life balance.

Based on the findings of the research, there are several conclusions made. The strongest relationship exists between organizational support and employee work-life balance with a relationship of (R) 54%. The second most important relationship reported from nature of work and employee work-life balance with (R) 43%. Workload and employee work-life balance had a relationship level of (R) 26% with a low impact value from regression which is only 5%. Importantly the analysis reported that workload factor is detrimental to work-life balance. The job stress does not seem to have a correlation with employee work-life balance of senior engineers in the selected organization as the findings showcased a significance level of 0.707 which is greater than the standard value of 0.000. Therefore, in conclusion, organizational support and the nature of work are the major organizational factors appending to employee work-life balance of senior engineers in the selected organization whereas workload has a moderate relationship level. Job stress could be categorized an organizational factor which is not appending and influencing the employee work-life balance of senior engineers in the organization. The research problem identified as the turnover rate of senior engineers being an uptrend in the selected organization. If the organization is able to maintain a better work-life balance level, there is a strong possibility to overcome employee turnover rate being uptrend as the previous research work also emphasizes a positive relationship between employee work-life balance and employee retention.

Recommendations and Future work

With the increasing competitiveness of the IT market segment in Sri Lanka retaining the required competent labor force and managing an existing customer base plays a vital role in the selected organization. As the data analysis proclaims the highest impact and relationship of organizational support towards employee work-life balance of senior engineers, the management and the HR team should value the contribution of the senior engineers by providing a more supportive environment for them and further enhance the support of the organization. One way of achieving this would be re-defining the work-life balance policies which would assist them to balance between dual roles in office and the home front. The HR department may initiate projects to discuss and listen out issues faced by the senior engineers. The issues discussed can be taken as the inputs for designing training programs aimed at career advancement and job satisfaction and other employee-oriented policies such flexible time, work schedules and leave policies and so on. Supervisor relationship could be further strengthened through an open-door culture which also creates a positive working environment for subordinates. Another recommendation would be to promote training programs on effective workload management and life management training courses. In this process, these training programs will provide guidelines to employees on the effects and causes of work-life imbalance while upgrading the quality of employees. These sorts of training programs will enable the employees to understand the issues and challenges in life. The flex time concept also can be promoted within the organization where employees can schedule the working hours depending on the work schedule and patterns. It will also help them to plan their work within the day. Since job stress is not related to employee work-life balance of senior engineers in this organization, the management should find out other real factors affecting the work-life balance level apart from organizational support, workload and the nature of work.

Since this study is predominately based on four organizational factors influencing to employee work-life balance of senior engineers in the

selected organization, this study could be further conducted to understand the employee work-life balance with different other organizational factors since job stress appeared not to have a correlation towards employee work-life balance in this context. In addition to that, this study could be further continued with a larger sample including qualitative surveys or focus group meetings to find out what other real organizational factors influencing employee work-life balance. Moreover, adding more dimensions to existing factors and more conceptualization could be another path of continuing this research study further.

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