

Factors Affecting Work-life Conflict of the Employees of Private Sector in Bangladesh: An Empirical Study

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Abstract

Work-life conflict is an unavoidable phenomenon in the workplace. The study examines the factors affecting on private sectors employees' work-life conflict in Bangladesh. The results of this exploratory research suggest that employees in Bangladesh had experiences of time-based conflicts, strain-based conflicts, and behavior-based conflicts in their workplaces, which impacted negatively on their work, family, and health. It was predicted that perceived work-life balance fosters job satisfaction which leads to the organizational commitment among employees in the long run. The literature shows that work-life balance is a central issue affecting everyone's life. Quantitative research methods were used for the study by forming a questionnaire, and a sample population was chosen amongst participants who were single and married, female and male, with and without children, by using a convenient sampling method. Aim of this questionnaire is to study determinants and their effects on work and personal life of employees. Results showed that, frontline private employees perceived on a general basis that their work and life are not balanced in with their current jobs. Respondents have moderate level of perceived work-life balance, job satisfaction and commitment. On a larger scale, the results of this research are aimed at clarifying the suggested solutions to improve and enriching the concept of work and life balance of private sector employees' in Bangladesh.

Keywords: *Work-life conflict, Work-life balance*

Introduction

In Present period work-life balance has become an increasingly pervasive concern to both the employers and employees of most organizations. Work-life balance which primarily deals with an employee's ability to properly prioritize between work and his or her lifestyle, social life, health, family etc., is greatly linked with employee productivity, performance and job satisfaction. In every workplace, the structure of quality and performance are usually developed according to the potential of each individual or team, which are ultimately translated as their association, dedication

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or passion for the work or the incorporating workplace. However, this might not be the case at all when the way each individual performs his or her activities depends primarily on how he or she creates a balance between the household and workplace, while also facilitating the factor of quality within both premises and domains. In real working environments, however, the later perception is rarely maintained, which is the reason human resources are rarely utilized effectively. This report is intended to investigate work and family issues in the private sector in the Bangladesh context in order to gain a better picture and understanding thereof; and subsequently provide invaluable suggestions in creating a comprehensive work-life balance approach to improve the position of an employee. On a larger scale, the results of this research are aimed at clarifying and enriching the concept of work and life balance in the private industry and simultaneously to providing insights into the decision-making processes, in bringing about a sustainable approach to boost productivity among private sector employees through a comprehensive strategy on work-life balance. The responsibility for personal work-life balance does not only lie on individuals themselves, but the organizations and governments play an important role in treating this issue as well.

Objectives of the study

1. To investigate the influencing factors of work-life conflict
2. To assess the conflicts between professional and personal life of employees in the private sector of Bangladesh.
3. To determine if there any significant solutions to improve the work-family conflict of private sector employees' in Bangladesh.

Literature review

The work-life, or work-family, balance is a frequently cited phenomenon. As stated by Greenhaus, Collins and Shaw (2003, p. 511), the term can be used either as a noun, or as a verb or even an adjective. Various definitions of work-life balance have been proposed by researchers in the past. Kirchmeyer (2000, p. 81) perceives a balanced life as "achieving satisfying experiences in all life domains". He further states that "energy, time, and commitment" need to be equally spread across all domains in order to achieve life satisfaction. Clark (2000) points out the importance of minimizing the role conflict between work and family life when it comes to balance in life and overall life satisfaction. Individuals are facing a work and life a misbalance and as a result, they report a lower overall quality of life (Kossek/Ozeki 1998). Negative developments in work-life balance are caused by boundaries between work and home domains, especially long working hours, working overtime and prolonged physiological activation as a result of pre-occupation with work (Fritz/Sonnetag 2005; VanHoof/Geurts/Kompier/Taris 2007; Akerstedt 2006).

Typically, many individuals assume balance is a gendered concept (Aburdene & Naisbitt, 1992; English, 2003; Goode, 1960; Stephens, 1994) that applies only to women. Recently, several studies have revealed that the construct applies to professionals of both genders and at various levels of their professional careers (Armour, 2003; Blair-Loy, 2003; Byalick & Saslow, 1993). Nevertheless, work life balance is not simply essential for the health and well-being of individuals, but is also cost-efficient and stability enhancing for institutions and work-environments (Perrons, 2003).

The role of control is very important when it comes to daily life. Having a personal control over one's life plays a significant role when it comes to satisfaction and well-being (Langer/Rodin 1976,

Pulkkinen et al. 1998, Marmot et al. 1991, Marmot 2004). The reasons for the importance of control over time are purely instrumental. Eriksson, Rice and Goodin (2007, p. 513) believe that "the more control you have, the more you get what you want". Peterson (1999) states that if an individual believes in his or her ability to have an impact on what happens, it is more likely that this person is able to solve a problem which again leads to a higher number of problems being solved and thus a higher level of life satisfaction and sense of well-being. Marks and MacDermid (1996) propose three components of work-life balance:

- **Time balance:** the same amount of time spent with work activities and free time or family roles.
- **Involvement balance:** the same intensity of psychological devotement in work and free time or family.
- **Satisfaction balance:** the same level of satisfaction with both.

As indicated and reported in The Human Solutions Report (Lowe, 2007), a sizeable number of employees are suffering from an imbalanced and sunken work-life quality. The same report has documented that dual-earner families have escalated over the course of time while the job performance expectations have also increased. Thus, work-life balance has become both a dream and a mission to achieve. In this vein, both parties – the employers and employees – have to meet midway and together and explore ways under which work and life quality can be addressed.

Work life balance has always been a concern of those interested in the quality of working life and its relation to broader quality of life (Guest, 2002). Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) and Greenhaus, Parasuraman, Granrose, Rabinowitz, and Beutell (1989) examined the antecedents of conflict between family and work, Goodstein (1994) and Ingram and Simons (1995) presented an institutional perspective on organizations responses to work-family issues. In addition, Campbell and Kennard (1994) have studied the effects of family responsibilities on the work commitment and job performance of women.

The study of Greenhaus, Collins & Shaw in 2003 (as cited in "The Case for Work/Life Balance", 2005) explored and measured three aspects of work-life balance namely: (1) Time balance, which concerns the amount of time given to work and non-work roles; (2) Involvement balance, meaning the level of psychological involvement in, or commitment to, work and non-work roles; and (3) satisfaction balance, or the level of satisfaction with work and non-work roles. The ability to balance between workplace's needs and personal life's needs is perceived as an important issue among workers globally and academics in higher education institutions were not excluded (Mohd Noor, Stanton, & Young, 2009). Work life balance has been studied within the context of business, for-profit organizations (Blair-Loy, 2003; English, 2003; Stephens, 1994). It has also been explored within higher education organizations (Johnsrud & Rosser, 2000). Past research has consistently demonstrated that work-family interface is prevalent and, being an important source of stress, has negative impact on employees' well-being and family relationships (Geogins, 1991; Voydanoff, 1987; Williams & Alliger, 1994).

Different authors have attempted to explain and emphasized the interconnection of work and personal life in the organization setting, namely: (1) “the compensation effect implies that employees tend to compensate for low work or personal life satisfaction by seeking contentment in

the other domain”; and (2) “the spill-over view that indicates that job satisfaction spills over into one’s work life and vice versa.” (Bruck Allen & Spector, 2002; Gibson, Ivancevich, Donnelly & Konopaske, 2006).Gibson et al. (2006: 197-198).

The concept of work life has been abstracted from the job satisfaction level of an employee, which is an extrinsic factor of job satisfaction. It aimed to provide quality of life for an employee at the same time retaining the productivity levels of an employee at the work place.

Research methodology

Questionnaire

The main research instrument that has been employed in this research is the questionnaire. The author has mainly based the instrument on the qualitative studies of Lovhoiden et al (2011) and Wong &Ko (2009). The different statements included in the survey are, therefore, adapted from previous research or developed specifically for the study. The questionnaire is divided into three different parts. The first part is the demographic section that includes gender, highest educational attainment, marital status, age, total number of children under the support of the respondent, current position or job assignment, department or workstation.

The second part of the questionnaires is about Work-Family Conflicts and this section covers the (1) experience, (2) perceptions on the causes, and (3) consequences of Work-Family Conflicts. The third and final part is about experiences encountered that form part of Work-Family Enrichment. This third part of the questionnaire looks into the different Work-Family Enrichment experiences encountered by the bottom-line employees. The study of Lovhoiden et al (2011) found evidence of instrumental and affective Work-Family Enrichment. Wong & Ko (2009) discovered seven factors on employee perception on work and life balance issues and these are (1) enough time-off from work; (2) workplace support on work–life balance; (3) allegiance to work; (4) flexibility on work schedule; (5) life orientation; (6) voluntary reduction of contracted hours to cater for personal needs; and (7) upkeep the work and career—the determinants perceived by employees to attain “better” work–life balance in the dynamic organization environment.

Sample

The questionnaire will be distributed among employees from different administrative and operational departments in the private sector in Dhaka City such as private bank, IT sector, Pharmaceuticals limited. A purposive sampling approach has been employed as the author sought for a group of individuals from both genders that meet several requirements to facilitate the discussion of Work-Family Conflicts and Work-Family Enrichment. These requirements were as follows: (1) The respondents should be frontline employees and that (2) they should have childcare or family responsibilities.

Determining the Target Respondents

The required target respondents of this study are the must not be supervising or managing any other employee, and are reporting to a higher authority. They must be working on regular basis and status and have stayed for two years in their respective organization. Thus, this research did not cover part-time employees. Specifically, the targeted respondents must have family and/or childcare responsibilities, in various capacities such as married or cohabiting (such as live-in partnerships), have children and/or are living with relatives.

Discussions and Findings

Profile of the respondents

60 valid respondents were taken from the different top Organizations in the Dhaka who are in full-time employment for a minimum of more than a year. Employees are assigned in different departments such as front desk, Sales, Marketing, Accounts, Customer care, Business Development, IT Operation, Administration and others. A summary of the demographic profile of respondents is presented in tables in the following paragraphs.

Table : 1 Gender profile of respondents

	Frequency	Percentage
Male	32	53.33%
Female	28	46.67%
Total	60	100%

The above result shows that 46.67 per cent of the respondents are female while 53.33 per cent are male. Thus, majority of the respondents are male.

Education

Table : 2 Educational background of the respondents

	Frequency	Percentage
High School	0	0
College	0	0
Vocational	5	8.33%
Bachelor's Degree	38	63.33%
Masters Degree	17	28.34%
Others	0	0
Total	60	100%

The above result shows that 8.33 per cent of the respondents were Vocational degree holder; 63.33 per cent were bachelor's degree holder; and the remaining 28.34 per cent were master's degree holder. Majority of the respondents are bachelor's degree holders while minorities of the respondents are high school graduates.

Marital status

Table 3:Marital status of respondents

	Frequency	Percentage
Single	12	20%
Married	46	76.66%
Divorced	2	3.34%
Widowed	0	0
Total	60	100%

The above table, Table 3, shows that summary of the marital statuses of the respondents. The results constitute that of 76.66 per cent of respondents are married while 20 per cent are single; 3.34 per cent are divorced. Thus, majority of the respondents are married while minorities of the respondents are separated.

Age Table4 :Age of the respondents

	Frequency	Percentage
25 or Below	7	11.66%
25-30	24	40%
30-40	26	43.33%
41 or above	3	5.01%
Total	60	100%

The above table, Table 4, shows that 11.66 percent of the respondents are 25 years or below. 40 Percent are belong to the age bracket 25-30, 43.33 percent have the ages from 30-40 years and 5.01 percent are 41 years or above. Majority of the respondents are 30-40 years old while minority of the respondents are 41 or above.

Children

Table 5:Number of Children of the respondents

	Frequency	Percentage
0-1	25	41.67%
2-3	28	46.67%
More than 3	7	11.66%
Total	60	100%

The above result shows that 46.67 per cent of the respondents have 2 to 3 children and 41.67 per cent have 0 to 1 children. Majority of the respondents have 2 to 3 children and minority of the respondents have more than 3 children.

Table 6: Mean and Standard Deviation Statistic of Factors making Work Life Balance harder:

Sr.	Factors	Mean*	Standard Deviation**
1	Deadlines and schedules	3.13 ^a	0.98
2	Type of work you do	2.81	0.87
3	No. of hours you need to work	2.68	0.93
4	Expectations/attitude of supervisor or mgr	2.7	0.93
5	Expectations/attitude of coworker	2.52	0.79
6	How easy/ difficult it is to take leave	2.98	0.79
7	Amount. of notice you get about the hours/overtime you need to work	2.27	0.73
8	Having to take additional work home	1.80	0.99
9	Amount of travel required	1.63 ^b	0.90
10	Times meeting/training are scheduled	2.43	0.79
11	Starting and finishing time	2.65	0.68

The study used a 4-point Likert scale to measure level of perceptions among targeted respondents ranging from 4 to 1, where 4 = "Lot Harder" to 1 = "Doesn't apply to my job". N = 60. ** Standard Deviation
 a Highest mean among all work-life balance issues and/or conflicts.
 b Lowest mean among all work-life balance issues and/or conflicts

As presented in Table 6, the statement, "Deadlines and schedule make work-life balance harder," scored the highest with a mean rating of 3.13. The statement, "amount of travel make work-life balance harder," scored the lowest with mean score of 1.63. The results strongly suggest that the private organization management must strive to address this concern of long and uncontrolled working hours and stressful schedule to promote work-life balance.

Table 7: Mean and Standard Deviation Statistic of current job parameter:

Sr.	Factors	Mean*	Standard Deviation**
1	Salary / Wages	2.78	0.93
2	Location of workplace	1.87	0.87
3	Holidays	3.04	0.86
4	Interest in job	2.93	1.02
5	Career development prospect	3.14 ^a	0.84
6	Flexible working Hours	2.87	0.97
7	Leave Arrangement (Casual, Academic, Sick, Maternity/Parental etc.)	2.98	0.85
8	Training opportunities	2.41	0.92
9	Job security	1.84	0.88
10	Friendly People	1.73 ^b	0.89

The study used a 5-point Likert scale to measure level of perceptions among targeted respondents ranging from 5 to 1, where 5 = "Poor" to 1 = "Not Applicable". N = 60. ** Standard Deviation
 a Highest mean among all work-life balance issues and/or conflicts.
 b Lowest mean among all work-life balance issues and/or conflicts.

As presented in Table 7, the statement, “Career development prospect,” scored the highest with a mean rating of 3.14 among the current job parameters. The statement, “friendly people,” scored the lowest with mean score of 1.73. This result highlighted that frontline employees as their major perception that they are not given the necessary explorations for their further career development prospect.

Table 8: Mean and Standard Deviation Statistic of Factors making family life and family responsibilities interfere with employee’s performance on the job:

Sr.	Factors	Mean*	Standard Deviation**
1	Family matters reduce the time you can devote to your job	3.08 ^a	1.16
2	Family worries or problems distract you from your work	2.91	1.09
3	Family activities stop you getting the amount of sleep you need to do your job well	2.73	0.94
4	Family obligations reduce the time you need to relax or be by yourself	2.26 ^b	0.99

*The study used a 5-point Likert scale to measure level of perceptions among targeted respondents ranging from 5 to 1, where 5 = “Strongly agree to 1 = “Strongly disagree”. N = 60. ** Standard Deviation*
a Highest mean among all work-life balance issues and/or conflicts.
b Lowest mean among all work-life balance issues and/or conflicts.

As presented in Table 8, the statement, “Family matters reduce the time you can devote to your job,” scored the highest with a mean rating of 3.08. The statement, “Family obligations reduce the time you need to relax or be by you,” scored the lowest with mean score of 2.26. This result suggests that the combination of heavy work commitments and extensive family responsibilities has put pressure on individuals and families to cope effectively with the stresses of this demanding life-style.

Table 9: Mean and Standard Deviation Statistic of Factors making job responsibilities interfere with employee’s family life:

Sr.	Factors	Mean*	Standard Deviation **
1	Your job reduces the amount of time you can spend with the family	2.84	1.11
2	Problems at work make you irritable at home.	3.0 ^a	0.95
3	Your work involves a lot of time away from home	1.77	0.85
4	Your job takes up so much energy you don’t feel up to doing things that need attention at home	1.76 ^b	0.94

*The study used a 5-point Likert scale to measure level of perceptions among targeted respondents ranging from 5 to 1, where 5 = “Strongly agree to 1 = “Strongly disagree”. N = 60. ** Standard Deviation*
a Highest mean among all work-life balance issues and/or conflicts.
b Lowest mean among all work-life balance issues and/or conflicts.

As presented in Table 9, the statement, “Problems at work make you irritable at home making job responsibilities interfere with employee’s family life,” scored the highest with a mean rating of 3.0. The result clearly gives the view that because of stressful working condition, employees are not able to balance their family life and work.

Table 10: Mean and Standard Deviation Statistic of Factors of impact of work has on work life balance:

Sr.	Factors	Mean	Standard Deviation
1	Spending time with friends	2.23 ^b	1.02
2	Get home on time	3.26 ^a	1.12
3	Do any study or training you want to do	3.14	0.91
4	Take care of personal business	2.77	1.21
5	Keep healthy and fit, play sports other leisure activities	3.02	0.85
6	Take part in community activities or fulfill religious commitments	2.91	0.87
7	Take care of family and spend time with them	2.63	0.99

*The study used a 5-point Likert scale to measure level of perceptions among targeted respondents ranging from 5 to 1, where 5 = "Often" to 1 = "Never". N = 60. ** Standard Deviation*

a Highest mean among all work-life balance issues and/or conflicts.

b Lowest mean among all work-life balance issues and/or conflicts.

As presented in Table 10, the statement, "Get home on time," scored the highest with a mean rating of 3.26 while "Spending time with friends" scored the lowest with mean score of 2.23 among the factors of impact of work has on work life balance.

These problems can lead the employees to decrease job satisfaction; increase staff turnover and absenteeism; lower performance and increased job stress levels; and intention to leave the organization. Work-family conflict may be viewed as a stressor for individuals. Work-life conflict to be associated with a myriad of indicators of poor health and impaired wellbeing including: poorer mental and physical health; less life satisfaction; higher levels of stress; higher levels of emotional exhaustion; less physical exercise; higher likelihood to engage in problem drinking; increased anxiety and depression levels; poor appetite and; fatigue.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The results of this exploratory research suggest that employees in Bangladesh had experiences of time-based conflicts, strain-based conflicts, and behavior-based conflicts in their workplaces, which impacted negatively on their work, family, and health. Moreover, the frontline private employees have perceived on a general basis that their work and life are not balanced in with their current jobs. So, it is recommended that organization's management should take some initiatives to improve the work-life balance-

- Human resource department should conduct orientation and enculturation program (Cleveland, 2007) to open dialogue and communication between management and the frontline employees to clarify needs and issues to address work-life conflicts.
- Private organization management should introduce career development models in their organization so that every employee gets the opportunity to have their future career goal.

- Organization's management should have policies and practices such as dependent care; flexible work arrangements and changing the organization's work-family culture which can help their employees balance their work and family lives.
- To improve work-life balance, employer can introduce part-time, compensated reduced working hours, flexible working hours, flexible leave arrangements and compressed workweeks.

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