

WORK –LIFE CONFLICT AND JOB AND FAMILY SATISFACTION OF LEGAL PRACTITIONERS IN COLOMBO DISTRICT, SRI LANKA

Mrs. Prasadini N. Gamage*

*Senior Lecturer,
Department of Human Resource Management,
Faculty of Commerce and Management Studies,
University of Kelaniya, SRI LANKA
Email id: prasadinigamage@yahoo.com

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ABSTRACT

Today a considerable number of legal practitioners or lawyers are experiencing burnout, low productivity and stress related illnesses, undoubtedly due to lack of balance between their work and professional lives. When the responsibilities attached to the personal life get neglected due to the tasks of the professional life, lawyers get pressurized. This pressure or the imbalance of working life and the professional life lead to job dissatisfaction which results in forgetfulness, less commitment towards work, client complaints, losing regular clients and deserting the job at its extreme end. In such a context this study seeks to identify the relationship between Work-Life Conflict, Job Satisfaction and Family Satisfaction using a sample of lawyers practicing in Colombo District. The sample for the research was 50 practicing lawyers out of 600 lawyers of the population who were selected randomly. Pearson Correlation Method and independent sample t test were used to measure the relationship between the variables. The finding of the research was that there exists a negative significant correlation between the work-life conflict and job satisfaction of practicing lawyers. At the same time it was found that the relationship between work-life conflict and family satisfaction of practicing lawyers is also negative. It was also found that a higher degree of job satisfaction and family satisfaction exist among males rather than among female practicing lawyers.

KEYWORDS: *Work-Life Conflict, Job satisfaction, Family satisfaction*

INTRODUCTION

In the current economic environment, work-life conflict now ranks as one of the most important workplace attributes among the employees. In a society filled with conflicting responsibilities and commitments, work-life conflict has become a predominant issue in the working environments.

If the personal life of a person cannot be balanced with the professional life, it leads to a conflict which ultimately results job dissatisfaction. Though work-life conflict of many other professional has been examined there is a lack of studies carried out in relation to the work-life conflict of lawyers.

What looks like work-life balance to one person may differ for another because individuals have different goals, values and definitions of success. (Weiss ,2006). A person plays different roles in the span of life, which include roles from work (worker, employer) and non-work (father,

spouse, friend, sibling, etc). Work Life Conflict (WLC) exists when time and energy demands to satisfy one role make it difficult to participate in other (Duxbury et al., 2001). Work life conflict also defined “as push and pull between family and work responsibilities (Nancy, 2003).

The term Work Life Conflict (WLC) used contradictory with Work Life Balance (WLB). Work life balance (WLB) is defined as a state of equilibrium in which the demands of both a person's job and personal life are equal. (Lockwood, 2003). However, when the demand of job or personal life increases it creates an unbalanced situation and resulted in work life conflict. Creating a balance with job responsibilities and family responsibilities is a dilemma for the employees and almost impossible due to turbulent work environment, and fast moving economical development across the globe which resulted in demanding jobs and long working hours .

If the balance between working life and the personal life is not maintained, it would lead to sever professional and personal problems which a person may start to dislike his or her job which may lead to job dissatisfaction at the end of the day. Today an increasing number of lawyers are experiencing burnout, low productivity and stress related illnesses, undoubtedly due to a lack of balance between their wok and personal lives and his or her job.

It has been reported that the desire for more time to meet personal and family needs is one of the major reasons lawyers consider leaving the legal profession. Therefore it has been recognized as increasingly important to maintain the work-life balance of lawyers in order to prevent them from feeling dissatisfied with their profession.

In the aforementioned situation, the proposed research seeks to analyze the relationship between work-life conflict and job dissatisfaction of lawyers practicing in Colombo District.

RESEARCH PROBLEM

In the midst of highly globalized, fast moving, 21st century world, one of the major factors that affect job dissatisfaction among employees is the issue of work-life conflict. In the highly complex social and economical environment, everybody is profit oriented. In the race of achieving wealth, the concept “work to life” has changed to “life to work”. Therefore the proposed research focuses on examining what is the relationship between work-life conflict and job satisfaction of the Attorneys-at-Law practicing in the judicial zone of Colombo. But in Sri Lankan context no empirical study has been conducted to explore the relationship between work life conflict and job satisfaction of practicing lawyers. This study attempts to bridge the gap in the knowledge. For the purpose of this study, the following problems have been addressed.

1. What is the relationship between work-life conflict and job satisfaction of practicing lawyers in Colombo District in Sri Lanka?
2. What is the relationship between work-life conflict and family satisfaction of practicing lawyers in Colombo District in Sri Lanka?
3. What is the relationship between wok-life conflict and gender of practicing lawyers in Colombo district in Sri Lanka?

OBJECTIVES

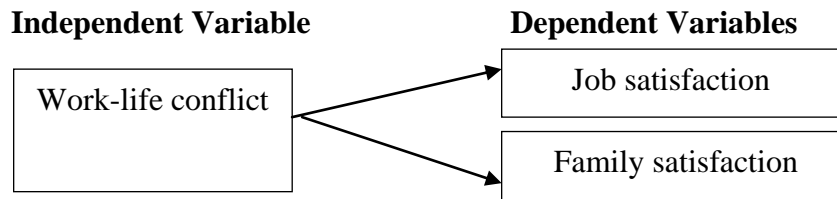
The following are the objectives of the study.

1. To identify the relationship between work-life conflict and job satisfaction. of practicing lawyers in Colombo District in Sri Lanka?

2. To examine the relationship between work-life conflict and family satisfaction. of practicing lawyers in Colombo District in Sri Lanka?
3. To identify the relationship between work-life conflict and gender. of practicing lawyers in Colombo District in Sri Lanka?

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Figure 1.1 Conceptual Framework



Work Life Conflict is the Independent variable in this study. Job Satisfaction and Family Satisfaction are the dependent variables. In this model, it is tried to find out the relationship between independent variable on the two dependent variables. The working definitions of the variables are as follows

Work-Life Conflict

A form of inter-role conflict in which work and family demands are mutually incompatible, meeting demands of both the domains is difficult” (Higgins et al. 2007).

Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction has been defined as a pleasurable emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one’s job(Locke, 1976 cited in Brief, A. P., & Weiss (2001).

Family Satisfaction

Family satisfaction has been defined as the satisfaction gained by a person by being with the family and engage in tasks attached to the family. (Bedeian, et al. 1988)

HYPOTHESES

Edwards and Rothbard (2005) argue that a mismatch between job demands and the individual’s capacity to meet these demands is at the core of work–life conflict, with the proviso that this mismatch between demands and abilities will be experienced as stressful only if it results in a failure to fulfill valued needs (e.g. needs for socializing, family time, affection).

Not surprisingly, working more hours than preferred is associated with increased work–life conflict (Thornthwaite 2004; Weston et al. 2004), and having an unsuitable work schedule has been found to predict job role quality, marital role quality, psychological distress, and burnout (Barnett, Gareis, et al. 1999; Gareis, Barnett, et al. 2003).

It is interesting to note that dissatisfaction with working hours, regardless of the number of hours worked, has been shown to be a significant predictor of work–family strain and wellbeing (Weston et al. 2004). This in turn may lead to job dissatisfaction because when there arises a work-life conflict, one may lose the satisfaction gained through his or her job. Based on the above literature it is hypothesized that higher the work-life conflict lesser the job satisfaction

H₁ Higher the work-life conflict, lesser the job satisfaction of practicing lawyers in Colombo District in Sri Lanka?

There is good evidence that long (full-time) work hours are likely to increase the risk of work-life conflict (Frone, Yardley et al. 1997; Byron 2005; Wharton and Blair-Loy 2006; Allan, Loudoun et al. 2007).

There are many dimensions to work demands, such as time pressure (tight deadlines), high speed of work, and the quantity of work (work overload). In this study we focus on work overload, as this has been identified as one of the strongest and most consistent predictors of work-life conflict (Geurts and Demerouti 2003). Work overload is likely to have a dual effect on work-life conflict (Frone, Yardley et al. 1997): high workloads are likely to increase work hours, and also to contribute to feelings of strain and exhaustion. Yardley et al. (1997) found that workload was positively associated with work hours, and both demonstrated moderate positive associations with work-life conflict.

There is also evidence that workload may be a stronger predictor of work-life conflict than work hours (Wallace 1997; Allan, Loudoun et al. 2007). To our knowledge, there has not been any previous research directly comparing workload and work hours fit with preferences as predictors of work-life conflict. Given the potential dual pathways via which work overload may influence work-life conflict, we expected that work overload would be the stronger predictor of work-life conflict. In such a context the effects of work-life conflict is likely to lead towards less family satisfaction. Based on the above literature it is hypothesized that Higher the work-life conflict lesser the family satisfaction.

H₂ Higher the work-life conflict, lesser the family satisfaction of practicing lawyers in Colombo District in Sri Lanka

METHODOLOGY

There are about 600 lawyers practicing in the Colombo District. Among those, for the purpose of this research, 50 lawyers were selected as the sample. The method of selection of the sample was random selection by using lawyer's directory.

Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was all consisted of 36 questions. First 6 questions were devoted to general information such as gender, civil status, age group, number of years of experience as an Attorney-at-Law and whether they have children or not. Second part of the questionnaire consisted of 10 questions relating to Work-Life conflict. The questions were structured in a way that highlights the degree of Work-Life conflict each person is exposed to under each heading. In the same way the third part of the questionnaire consisted of 10 questions that dealt with job satisfaction. The fourth part of the questionnaire consisted of 10 questions on family satisfaction. Finally, there was an opportunity given to the person who fills the questionnaire to express his or her own views on their work-life conflict and job satisfaction as a lawyer.

The questionnaire was disseminated among lawyers in the hard form as well as via e-mail and it was on five-point Likert type. Respondents were given options to Strongly disagree, Disagree, to be Neutral, Agree or Strongly agree with the statements in the questionnaire under each heading as discussed above. Marking was given according to their answers starting from 1 mark to strongly disagree which showed a lesser degree of work-life conflict to 5 marks where the person has strongly agreed depicting a higher work-life conflict. If the question was a reverse question marking was given vice versa.

Finally, the relationship between Work-Life conflict and job satisfaction and work-life conflict and family satisfaction was measured using the Pearson Correlation Method. The degrees of Work-Life Conflict, Job Satisfaction and Family Satisfaction was measured using T test.

DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION

Sample for this study was 50 lawyers out of 600 lawyers practicing in Colombo. 25 lawyers of the sample were males and the other 25 were females.

These 50 lawyers belonged to different age groups ranging from 25 years to 65 years+. 43 of them were employed on full time permanent basis and only 7 of them were employed on permanent part time basis. Depending on their age, 28 of them had an experience in between 1 to 5 years as an Attorney-at-Law. 12 had 6 to 10 years of experience while 7 had 11 to 15 years. 3 of them had 16 to 20 years and none of them had more than 20 years of experience. 3 persons of sample out of 50 people had no children and 6 persons had infants. 4 people had children of pre-school age and 2 had children attending primary school. Only one person had children who attend secondary school. Work-Life Conflict is the independent variable of this study and it was measured by 10 questions of the questionnaire.

RELIABILITY OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

The Cronbach’s Alpha was used to get the inter item consistency reliability of the dependent variables job satisfaction and family satisfaction and also the independent variable work-family conflict. Cronbach’s alpha values were .8251 , .7334, and .7561 for job satisfaction , family satisfaction and work-family conflict respectively. The reliability of the questionnaires for job satisfaction , family satisfaction and also work-family conflict were satisfactory.

TESTING OF HYPOTHESES

In order to test the first Hypothesis of this study, i.e Higher the Work-Life conflict, lesser the Job Satisfaction, the correlation between the average of marks scored for Work-Life Conflict and average of marks scored for Job Satisfaction was calculated using the Pearson Correlation Method.

Exhibit 01: Correlations between Work-Life Conflict and Job Satisfaction

		Work-Life Conflict	Job Satisfaction
Work-Life Conflict	Pearson Correlation	1	-0.763 (**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	50	50
Job Satisfaction	Pearson Correlation	-0.763 (**)	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	50	50

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

It scored a negative correlation of -0.76. It implies that there is a negative significant relationship between work-family conflict and job satisfaction of practicing lawyers in Colombo District in Sri Lanka. Hence the first hypothesis of the study was justified.

The second Hypothesis of the study was that Greater the Work-Life Conflict, lesser the Family Satisfaction of practicing lawyers in Colombo District of Sri Lanka. Marks scored for each was used to calculate the correlation between the two variables using the same Pearson correlation method as above.

Exhibit 02 :Correlations Between Work-Life Conflict and Family Satisfaction

		Work-Life Conflict	Family Satisfaction
Work-Life Conflict	Pearson Correlation	1	-0.595 (**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	50	50
Family Satisfaction	Pearson Correlation	-0.595 (**)	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	50	50

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

The result was a negative correlation of -0.595. That means there is a negative significant relationship between work-life conflict and family satisfaction of practicing lawyers in Colombo District in Sri Lanka. The second hypothesis of the study was also proved.

Exhibit 03. Results of Independent Sample t test of Work-life Conflict, Job Satisfaction and Family Satisfaction

	Results		
	Work-Life conflict	Job Satisfaction	Family Satisfaction
Mean Difference	3.2314	.7794	.8336
SE	.6312	.2103	.1332
Df	48	48	48
T Value	7.8969	3.1777	5.9932
Lower limit (95% level)	2.4061	.4803	.5324
Upper Limit (95%level)	4.2237	1.1241	1.2433

Source: Survey Data

With reference to the statistical results in exhibit 1.1 the mean difference of perceived work – family conflict between males and females was 3.2314 and t value was calculated as 7.8969 at 48 degrees of freedom. It was 95% confidence that the mean difference falls between the upper limit of 2.4061 and lower limit of 4.2237. Therefore the mean difference always gives a positive value. Results indicate that work-family conflict is more among males than females.

To identify the relationship between gender and job satisfaction, the independent sample t test was used since t test calculated the differences between the means of two samples. According to the results of the t test mean differences between job satisfaction and gender was .7794 and the calculated t value (mean difference /Standard error) was 3.706 It was at 95% confidence level that the mean difference between job satisfaction for males and females lies between upper limit of 1.1241 and lower limit of .4803. Therefore always the mean difference gives a positive value.

Therefore it is 95% confident that the mean differences between job satisfaction of males and females is significant. Jobsatisfaction of males is greater than females.

In the same manner, impact of gender on Family Satisfaction was measured and the result was at test value of 5.99. Accordingly, the level of family satisfaction was lower among females than males in the work-life conflict context.

FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

According to the findings of the research, it is clear that there exist a negative correlation between Work-Life Conflict and Job Satisfaction. It means that when there is a higher degree of Work-Life Conflict, it creates lesser the Job Satisfaction. Therefore the first hypothesis can be accepted.

This result is compatible with the finding of the research conducted by several researches. Bacharach, Bamberger, and Conley (1991) found that Work Life Conflict had a negative relationship with relationships job satisfaction. Several studies found that Work Life Conflict created lower job satisfaction (Bedeian et al., 1988; Bruck, Allen, & Spector, 2002, both global and composite job satisfaction; Burke & Greenglass, 1999; Parasurman & Simmers, 2001; Perrewe et al., 1999; Rice et al., 1992; Wiley, 1987).

Eight studies done in USA found that Work Life Conflict was having a negative relationship with job satisfaction. (Carlson, 1999; Carlson & Perrewe, 1999; Fox & Dwyer, 1999; Greenhaus, Bedeian, & Mossholder, 1987; Greenhaus et al., 1987; Grzywacz & Marks, 2000; Shamir, 1983; Wallace, 1997).

The data found in the research revealed that there is a negative correlation between Work-Life Conflict and Family Satisfaction which means to say that greater the Work-Life Conflict, lesser the Family Satisfaction. Accordingly, the Second hypothesis can be accepted.

This result is compatible with the findings of the research conducted by Kopelman et al. (1983) where it stated that work-life conflict had a negative relationship with family satisfaction. Specifically, conflict in both work and family domains led to higher levels of Work Life Conflict and this Work Life Conflict related to lower life satisfaction. Cooke and Rousseau (1984) also found that Work Life Conflict was an important mediator variable. Their research demonstrated that workers with greater work expectations and those who held a greater number of family roles (spouse and/or parent) reported more Work Life Conflict and less family satisfaction.

It was also found that the work-life conflict level of females was much higher than the work-life conflict level of males. The same result was found in several researches conducted in other countries as well. In a Swiss study conducted by Grönlund (2007) found that the overall prevalence rate of (very) high Work Life Conflict is higher in women than in men, and also that associations between degrees of Work Life Conflict and most health outcomes are stronger in women than in men.

It was also found that a higher degree of job dissatisfaction exists among females rather than males. This is compatible with the findings of the researches conducted by Martins et al., 2002. It stated that specifically, work-to-family spillover related negatively to career satisfaction among women especially young (under 33) and middle aged (33–39) women but less relationship was found for men in these age groups. The reason may be for a woman at the same time she has to play dual roles as a house wife at home and responsible employee at the work place. Too much of responsibilities and work load resulted in both job dissatisfaction and family dissatisfaction among the females.

Finally, it was also found that a lesser degree of family satisfaction exists among females in comparison to males. Several studies suggest that Work Life Conflict related to lower family satisfaction finds this effect for women than men (Bedeian et al., 1988), whereas other studies suggest that only women are affected (Parasuraman et al., 1992). Also in a study using AWALI data (Wallace 2005; Gronlund 2007), it was found that female employees with high or very high Work Life Conflict showed a comparatively high relative risk of self-reported poor health, anxiety and depression, lack of energy and optimism, serious backache, headaches, sleep disorders and fatigue which led to lesser family satisfaction than men.

Based on the results of this research, following recommendations can be made; Female lawyers should be encouraged to stop leaving their employment and should assist them to balance their work-life conflict through proper time management.

Employees should conduct programmes on proper time management and work-life balance to assist female employees who are unable to balance their work life and family commitments. Arrangements such as in-house day care centers can be arranged to assist employees with infants. Flexible work schedules should be introduced to reduce work-life conflict. Family members of the employees should encouraged to give their maximum support to balance the commitments attached to family and office.

This study can be expanded and used for Attorneys-at-Law practicing island wide as this research was conducted only among the Attorneys-at-Law practicing in Colombo District. It would assist to gain an idea about the overall picture of work-life conflict that exists among practicing lawyers in the entire country.

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