

Relationship Between Work - Life Balance, Turnover Intention, and Organizational Support for Work - Life Balance : A Study in the IT Industry in Kerala

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Abstract

Work-life balance refers to the ability of individuals, regardless of age or gender, to combine work and household responsibilities successfully. It has emerged as a major theme during the last two decades. Turnover is a topic of wide interest in organizational research. Turnover intention is defined as an employee's intention to leave the current job and look forward to finding another job in the near future. Past research explained that intention to leave is one of the biggest predictors and an immediate sign of employees' turnover. A supportive work-life culture is defined as the shared assumptions, beliefs, and values regarding the extent to which organizations value and support the integration of work and family lives for women and men. The present study attempted to find out the relationship between work-life balance, turnover intention, and organizational support for work - life balance among the IT employees working in Kerala. The results revealed that there was a significant correlation between these three variables. The study also found that work-life balance was only moderate among IT professionals working in Kerala. The study established that there was a significant difference between male and female respondents with respect to work-life balance and organizational support for work-life balance. No significant difference was found between the married and unmarried employees for all the three variables. The study makes an important contribution to the body of literature on work-life balance and turnover intention. It is expected that the findings of the study would help the organizations in balancing the work and family life and thereby reduce employee turnover.

Keywords : work life balance, turnover intention, organizational support for work life balance, information technology

JEL Classification: J24, J63, M00, M12, M50

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Work life balance is a term which is getting popular among employees and organizations. Work-life balance can be described as the term used to refer to policies that strive to achieve greater balance between work and home responsibilities (Redmond, Valiulis, & Drew, 2006). Absence of the work - life balance is causing doldrums among employees and will affect the organizations in many ways like increase in attrition rate, unhappy and demoralized work force, and so forth. Employee turnover refers to the voluntary departure of employees from an organization. It results in termination of the relationship that individual members gain from an organization. A supportive work-life culture is defined as the shared assumptions, beliefs, and values regarding the extent to which organizations value and support the integration of work and family lives for women and men (Bardoel, Tharenou, & Moss, 1998 ; Thompson, Beauvais, & Lyness, 1999). The present study attempts to find out whether there is any relationship between work-life balance, turnover intention, and organizational support for work-life balance. The study also explores to find out the level of work-life balance experienced by the IT employees working in Kerala.

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Review of Literature

The review of literature has three sections. It deals with work - life balance, turnover intention, and organizational support for work - life balance.

(1) Work Life Balance : Work-life balance is getting fast popularity in organizations because of the consequences attached with its imbalance. Work-life balance refers to the ability of individuals, regardless of age or gender, to combine work and household responsibilities successfully. It is a self-defined, self-determined state reached by a person able to effectively manage multiple responsibilities at work, at home, and in the community. According to Clark (2000), work - life balance is satisfaction and good functioning at work and at home with a minimum of role conflict. In the same vein, Kirchmeyer (2000) defined work - life balance as achieving satisfying experiences in all life domains, and to do so, requires personal resources such as energy, time, and commitment to be well distributed across domains.

Greenhaus, Collins, and Shaw (2003) defined work-life balance as the extent to which an individual is engaged in and is equally satisfied with his or her work role and family role. They proposed three components of work family balance: time balance, involvement balance, and satisfaction balance. Work-life balance is also described as the term used to refer to policies that strive to achieve greater balance between work and home responsibilities (Redmond et al., 2006). The initiatives are in addition to employees' statutory entitlements under protective legislation like part-time working arrangements, job sharing, and flexi-time. Kossek, Lewis, and Hammer (2010) categorized work-life initiatives of organizations as those offering structural and cultural support. Initiatives such as job redesign, tele-working and virtual arrangements, reduced workloads or other non-traditional work arrangements and formal policies on absenteeism, leave and childcare assistance, and so forth come under structural support. Cultural support is defined as informal workplace social and relational support such as supportive supervisors and organizational climate. As per the studies, both structural and cultural support mechanisms need to be combined, but that integration is not easy. Ramana and Babu (2013) conducted a study among 75 managers of select pharmaceutical companies, and found that freedom of implementation of ideas and enrichment of job were positive drivers for work-life balance.

Literature highlights about the psychological constructs that compose work - life balance, most evidently, conflict and facilitation. Definition given by Frone (2003) is notable among them. According to him, work-life balance is an absence of conflict and a presence of facilitation. Low levels of inter-role conflict and high levels of inter-role facilitation represent work - family balance. In the same vein, Grzywacz and Bass (2003) commented that balance is a combined measure whereby work - family conflict was subtracted from work - family facilitation, and family - work conflict was subtracted from family - work facilitation. The work-life imbalance will lead to work life conflict.

Fu and Shaffer (2001) and Carnicer, Sánchez, Pérez, and Vela Jiménez (2003) described three different forms of work-life conflict such as time based conflict, strain based conflict, and behaviour based conflict from the literature. Time base conflict was explained in the studies conducted by Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) as the inability of an individual to spend time for non work activities. Strain based conflict was mentioned by Fu and Shaffer (2001) as the strain and stress experienced by workers who fail to balance their work and family life. Behaviour-based conflict depicts a situation where an individual's work and non-work life are likely to suffer when the demands of one start to interfere with the other, and the individual is unable to adjust their behaviour to move between the two domains effectively (Friedman & Greenhaus, 2000). Studies also highlighted that the absence of work - family balance will affect important organizational outcomes, such as job satisfaction (Netemeyer, Boles, & McMurrian, 1996), organizational commitment (Wiley, 1987), employee turnover (Netemeyer et al., 1996), absenteeism and tardiness (Thomas & Ganster, 1995), and job performance (Wayne, Musisca, & Fleeson, 2004).

(2) Work - Life Balance Initiatives : Work - life balance initiatives became popular after 1980s when companies started competing with each other for attracting and retaining talent. According to Rothbard (2001), organizations are implementing initiatives such as childcare assistance, elder care assistance; employee assistance programs; maternity and adoptive leave; compressed work weeks; job sharing; flextime; telecommuting; bundled leave plans; scholarship programs; and work-family seminars. Organizations that choose not to offer programs that benefit the work-family blend may fall way behind in attracting and retaining top talent.

(3) Turnover Intention (TI) : Employee turnover refers to the voluntary departure of employees from an organization. It results in termination of the relationship that individual members gain from an organization. Turnover intention refers to employees' thoughts, attitudes, and possible actions of leaving their present employer. Turnover intention is defined as an employee's intention to leave the current job and look forward to finding another job in the near future. Cotton and Tuttle (1986) opined that turnover intention is the feeling of an individual employee towards his/her staying or not staying in the organization. In any profession, turnover intention is the act of leaving the existing job by an employee (Chaplain, 1995; Sari, 2004). The intention to leave can be categorized into unpreventable or unavoidable turnover and undesirable turnover. Unpreventable turnover occurs due to the employees' personal issues such as family problems/adjustments, personal illness, and so forth. Undesirable turnover intention occurs mainly because of organizational issues or problems like inadequate rewards, poor support, role conflict, and lack of supervision, job stress, and work overload.

Past research has explained that intention to leave is one of the biggest predictors and an immediate sign of employees' turnover (Griffeth, Horn, & Gaertner, 2000; Rizwan, Shahid, Shafiq, Tabassum, Bari, & Umer, 2013). The turnover intention has gained popularity among top management and human resource professionals because of the negative consequences and losses to the organization. Dalessio, Silverman, and Schuck (1986) (as cited in Iverson & Roy, 1994) argued that more attention should be focused on turnover intentions (behavioral or continuance commitment) relative to actual turnover because once an employee has quit, there is not much an organization can do except incur the expense of hiring or training another employee. Employee turnover can cause loss of valuable intellectual assets, additional cost, bad reputation to the organization, delay and disruption in service delivery to the customers. The additional costs that an organization has to incur as a result of employee turnover are separation costs, temporary replacement cost, recruitment and selection cost, induction and training costs. Previous studies about turnover intentions throw light on the factors that affect employee turnover intention. They are pay, benefits, work-family conflict, achievement motivation, and development inputs. Furthermore, rigid employment mechanism, improper recruitment, inadequate training, and incentive system affects TI. It is believed that progressive HR practices and career development programs can contribute to reduce the turnover intentions among the employees (Huselid, 1995).

Existing literature also highlights studies conducted among IT professionals, especially in Western contexts. Some studies indicate that reward system and fairness of rewards have a strong influence on turnover of IT professionals. For example, Moore (2000) found strong support for fairness of rewards to be negatively related to turnover intention among a sample of U.S. members of Association of Information Technology Professionals. The study conducted by Igarria and Siegel (1992) revealed that organizational rewards were negatively related to turnover intention among a sample of Association for Computing Machinery (ACM) members from U.S. In the same vein, Igarria and Greenhaus (1992) found that rewards like salary and career opportunities were negatively related to turnover intention among ACM members from three states in the U.S. - Delaware, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania. Igarria and Chidambaram (1997) investigated the relationship between tangible (money and promotion) and intangible rewards (motivation in terms of job challenge, autonomy, achievement, and responsibility) and turnover intention among 350 IT employees from 20 Mid-Atlantic Chapter of Data Processing Management Association (DPMA) in the U.S. They found that rewards which include both tangible and intangible components are inversely correlated to turnover intentions for both men and women. Studies of Rasch

and Harrell (1989) among IT professionals from the big eight consulting firms in the U.S. found that professionals with high achievement need, the type A personality, and influence orientation are likely to experience less work stress, greater job satisfaction, and lower rates of voluntary turnover intention than others. Gender differences across IT professionals and its impact on turnover has also been tested in the literature. Baroudi and Igbaria (1995) surveyed a sample of 348 IT professionals from the mid-Atlantic region of the U.S. and found that women have higher intentions to leave as they have lower organizational commitment and job satisfaction, are paid less, and are employed at lower levels in organizations.

(4) Organizational Support for Work - Life Balance : A supportive work-life culture is defined as the shared assumptions, beliefs, and values regarding the extent to which organizations value and support the integration of work and family lives for women and men (Bardoel et al., 1998 ; Thompson et al., 1999). Lack of organizational support for work - life balance will result in reluctance on the part of employees to avail work - life balance programmes. This was evidenced in the work of Brannen and Lewis (2000). They opined that employees are reluctant to use work - family benefits such as flexible work hours or dependent care leaves, especially when these benefits were dependent on managers' discretion and might be considered favours rather than entitlements.

Organizations having supportive work family culture will value both employees' family responsibilities and their work obligations. Their norms reflect these values. Organizations whose senior human managers viewed work- family issues to be salient were found to be more likely to offer work- family benefits than organizations where these issues were considered less salient.

According to Galinsky (1998), the vital factor in the creation of a family responsive culture is the supervisor work family support. He opined that if supervisors do not support employees using work-life balance benefits, it may not result in the retention. Few other studies were also found in literature, which has revealed that the adoption of formal family-responsive policies may not have the desired effects if there was no supportive organizational culture (Bowen, 1988; Galinsky & Stein, 1990; Kossek & Nichol, 1992; Thompson, Thomas, & Maier, 1992). Companies considering family-responsive policies, therefore, should take steps to promote a corporate culture that values or at least accepts the necessity and potential long-term benefits of the policies.

While there are a number of studies pertaining to work - life balance, turnover intention, and organizational support for work - life balance, separately, there is a paucity of literature with respect to the relationship between and among them. The present work is an attempt to find out whether there exists any relationship between these three aspects.

Objectives of the Study

- ✦ To study the level of work - life balance among IT professionals working in Kerala.
- ✦ To find out the difference of opinion on work - life balance among the respondents with respect to demographic variables like gender, age group, and experience.
- ✦ To find out the relationship between work - life balance, organizational support for work - life balance, and turnover intention among IT professionals working in Kerala.

Methodology

The present study has been undertaken to study the relationship between work - life balance, turnover intention, and organizational support for work - life balance in the IT industry in Kerala. IT employees working in Kerala, especially in Technopark and Infopark, participated in the study as respondents. The study was conducted during

June- December 2015. The questionnaire had three sections- measuring work - life balance, turnover intention, and organizational support for work - life balance. It also had a section dealing with demographic information of the respondents.

Data were collected from 210 respondents selected by using the simple random sampling method. Of these, 110 were male and 100 were female IT employees who participated as respondents. Among them, 140 respondents were married and 70 were unmarried ; 34.3% of the respondents belonged to the age group of 20-30 years ; 33.3 % belonged to the age group of 31-40 years, 19.4 % belonged to the age group of 41-50 years, and the remaining 13% were above 50 years of age. With respect to the experience of the respondents, 38.4 % had work experience of 6-10 years, 33.3% had 0-5 years of work experience , 18.1% had 11-15 years of work experience, and 10.2% had 16-20 years of work experience.

✦ **Measures** : Three structured questionnaires were used for the present study. They sections of the questionnaire are detailed in the following sections :

(i) Turnover Intention : In the present study, turnover intention was assessed using Michigan Organizational Assessment Questionnaire developed Cammann, Fichman, Jenkins, and Klesh (1979). This three item instrument is popular and has been widely used in empirical research. The respondents were asked to rate each item by assigning a value of 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*).

(ii) Organizational Support for Work-Life Balance : Organizational support for work-life benefits was measured using a 4-item scale developed by Families and Work Institute's Business Work-Life Study (Families and Work Institute, 1998). These four items addressed whether the organization at large supported the family-friendly/work-life initiatives. The respondents were asked to rate each item by assigning a value of 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). A higher score indicates higher organizational support for work - life balance initiatives.

(iii) Work - Life Balance : A six-item scale for measuring overall work - life balance created by Carlson, Grzywacz, and Zivnuska (2009) was used for this study. The six items were designed to represent the definition developed by Grzywacz and Carlson (2007) of work - family balance that refers to the extent to which an individual is meeting negotiated role-related expectations in both the work and family domains. The scale was anchored by 1(*strongly disagree*) and 5 (*strongly agree*). Higher the score, higher is the level of work - life balance.

Analysis and Results

The frequency distribution (mean and standard deviation) pertaining to the variables of work - life balance are presented in the Table 1. From the analysis, it is found that all the variables are having mean score greater than 3 but less than 4. We can ,therefore, conclude that work life balance is only moderate among IT professionals working in Kerala.

The main objective of the study was to find out the relationship between work - life balance, turnover intention, and organizational support for work - life balance among the IT professionals working in Kerala. Correlation analysis was done to find out the relation between the three variables. The results of the analysis are presented in the Table 2.

From the analysis, it is found that a significant correlation exists between work-life balance, turnover intention, and organizational support for work - life balance at the 0.01 level. There is a perfect positive correlation between work - life balance and organizational support for work - life balance (0.757) which indicates that if an

Table 1. Mean and Standard Deviation of Work - Life Balance Variables

| Work life balance variables | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|---|------|----------------|
| Negotiate & accomplish expectations from work and family. | 3.70 | .78898 |
| Meeting role expectations of critical people in work & family life. | 3.50 | .87632 |
| Close people's opinion of my balancing work and family. | 3.70 | .75805 |
| Ability to accomplish the expectations of supervisor and family. | 3.53 | .87038 |
| Co-worker's & family's opinion about me meeting their expectations. | 3.73 | .72239 |
| I am fulfilling both my work and family responsibilities with satisfaction. | 3.44 | .92207 |

Table 2. Relationship Between Work - Life Balance, Turnover Intention, and Organizational Support for Work - Life Balance

| | | Work - Life Balance | Turnover Intention | Organizational Support for Work - Life Balance |
|--|---------------------|---------------------|--------------------|--|
| Work - life balance | Pearson Correlation | 1 | -.458** | .757** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | | .000 | .000 |
| | N | 210 | 210 | 210 |
| Turnover intention | Pearson Correlation | -.458** | 1 | -.528** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | | .000 |
| | N | 210 | 210 | 210 |
| Organizational support for work - life balance | Pearson Correlation | .757** | -.528** | 1 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | .000 | |
| | N | 210 | 210 | 210 |

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

organization supports work - life balance policies and programs, then employees' work - life will be more balanced. A negative correlation is observed between work-life balance and turnover intention at the 0.01 level (-.458). This highlights that if the work-life balance is not there in the organizations, turnover intention of employees will be high, which results in high attrition rate in the organization. This is in resonance with an earlier study conducted by Noor (2011). Similar is the case of organizational support for work-life balance and turnover intention. There is a negative correlation between these two variables at the 0.01 level (0.528). We can also see that the correlation value is slightly higher as compared to the work- life balance which calls for more attention to be paid by the organizations in drafting policies and programs, which will help the organization in ensuring work-life balance of its employees. Such supports from the organization's side towards work-life balance have been found to create an obligation within employees and reciprocate with increased loyalty (Eisenberger, Fasolo, & Davis-LaMastro, 1990 ; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002).

An attempt was made to investigate the relationship of various demographics on the variables studied. The Table 3 presents the *t*-value of the respondents based on gender. The study thus established that there is a significant difference between male and female respondents with respect to work-life balance (-2.576) and organizational support for work-life balance (-4.533). The study by Baroudi and Igarria (1995) suggested that women have higher intentions to leave as compared to their male counterparts. However, the results of the present study did not find any evidence to this effect. No significant difference of opinion was observed in the case of turnover intention.

An attempt was also made to find out if there existed any difference in the variables under study with respect

Table 3. Data and t - value of Respondents Based on Gender

| | Gender | N | Mean | Standard Deviation | t - value |
|--|--------|-----|---------|--------------------|-----------|
| Work - life balance | Male | 110 | 20.9909 | 3.69849 | -2.576** |
| | Female | 100 | 22.2700 | 3.47532 | |
| Turnover Intention | Male | 110 | 8.3727 | 1.44539 | -0.36* |
| | Female | 100 | 8.3800 | 1.44795 | |
| Organizational Support for Work-Life Balance | Male | 110 | 14.0273 | 3.09915 | -4.533** |
| | Female | 100 | 15.7600 | 2.42512 | |

*Not significant, ** Significant

Table 4. Data and t - Value of Respondents Based on Marital Status

| | Marital status | N | Mean | Standard Deviation | t value |
|--|----------------|-----|---------|--------------------|---------|
| Work - life balance | Married | 140 | 21.4643 | 3.58937 | -.0763* |
| | Unmarried | 70 | 21.8714 | 3.75682 | |
| Turnover Intention | Married | 140 | 8.3643 | 1.44546 | -0.169* |
| | Unmarried | 70 | 8.4000 | 1.44864 | |
| Organizational support for work-life balance | Married | 140 | 14.7786 | 2.77727 | -0.516* |
| | Unmarried | 70 | 15.0000 | 3.21320 | |

*Not significant

to marital status. The Table 4 presents the *t*-value of the respondents based on marital status. No significant difference was found between the married and unmarried employees for all the three variables. The mean and standard deviations did not reveal any pattern, and the difference was only marginal.

The study also analyzed whether there is any significant difference of opinion on work - life balance among the respondents belonging to different age groups and possessing different years of experience. The results are presented in Table 5 and Table 6. No significant difference is found among the employees belonging to different age groups with respect to work- life balance (Sig>.05). However, there is a significant difference of opinion on work - life balance among employees possessing different years of experience (Sig<.05).

The study further analyzed whether there is any significant difference of opinion on organizational support for work - life balance among the respondents belonging to different age groups and possessing different years of experience. The results are presented in the Table 7 and Table 8.

No significant difference is found among the employees belonging to different age groups with respect to organizational support for work - life balance (Sig >.05). At the same time, we can see that there is a significant difference of opinion on organizational support for work - life balance among employees possessing different years of experience (Sig<.05).

The study also investigated whether there is any significant difference of opinion on turnover intention among

Table 5. ANOVA - Work - Life Balance and Age Group

| Work life balance | Sum of Squares | Df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|-----------------------|----------------|-----|-------------|-------|------|
| Between Groups | 95.672 | 3 | 31.891 | 2.454 | .064 |
| Balance Within Groups | 2676.728 | 206 | 12.994 | | |
| Total | 2772.400 | 209 | | | |

Table 6. ANOVA - Work - Life Balance and Experience

| Work life balance | Sum of Squares | Df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|-------------------|----------------|-----|-------------|--------|------|
| Between Groups | 505.802 | 3 | 168.601 | 15.323 | .000 |
| Within Groups | 2266.598 | 206 | 11.003 | | |
| Total | 2772.400 | 209 | | | |

Table 7. ANOVA- Organizational Support for Work - Life Balance and Age Group

| Organizational support for work - life balance | Sum of Squares | Df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|--|----------------|-----|-------------|------|------|
| Between Groups | 24.499 | 3 | 8.166 | .955 | .415 |
| Within Groups | 1761.925 | 206 | 8.553 | | |
| Total | 1786.424 | 209 | | | |

Table 8. ANOVA - Organizational Support for Work - Life Balance and Experience

| | Sum of Squares | Df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|----------------|----------------|-----|-------------|--------|------|
| Between Groups | 321.161 | 3 | 107.054 | 15.051 | .000 |
| Within Groups | 1465.263 | 206 | 7.113 | | |
| Total | 1786.424 | 209 | | | |

Table 9. ANOVA - Turnover Intention and Age Group

| Turnover Intention | Sum of Squares | Df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|--------------------|----------------|-----|-------------|------|------|
| Between Groups | 4.329 | 3 | 1.443 | .690 | .559 |
| Within Groups | 430.952 | 206 | 2.092 | | |
| Total | 435.281 | 209 | | | |

Table 10. ANOVA - Turnover Intention and Experience

| Turnover Intention | Sum of Squares | Df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|--------------------|----------------|-----|-------------|-------|------|
| Between Groups | 38.532 | 3 | 12.844 | 6.669 | .000 |
| Within Groups | 396.749 | 206 | 1.926 | | |
| Total | 435.281 | 209 | | | |

the respondents belonging to different age groups and possessing different years of experience. The results are presented in the Table 9 and Table 10. No significant difference is found among the employees belonging to different age groups with respect to turnover intention (Sig >.05). At the same time, we can see that there is a significant difference of opinion on turnover intention among employees possessing different years of experience (Sig<.05).

Managerial Implications

One of the major challenges faced by the organization is the attrition of employees. High attrition rate and the

difficulty to attract qualified employees makes the job complex. Managers are looking for suitable solutions to minimize these challenges and complexities. The study provides a thorough understanding about various factors affecting work - life balance in an organization. It also throws light into the relationship between work - life balance, turnover intention, and organizational support for work - life balance. This, in turn, helps to develop a conceptual model of work - life balance, turnover intention, and organizational support for work - life balance for practical applications in organizations.

Discussion and Conclusion

Work-life balance is fast gaining top priority for organizations across the world. It is a self-defined, self-determined state reached by a person able to effectively manage multiple responsibilities at work, at home, and in the community. This study has provided a number of insights into the work - life balance and turnover intention and organizational support for work-life balance. The present study established a relationship between the three variables. There is a perfect positive correlation between work-life balance and organizational support for work-life balance, which indicates that if an organization supports work-life balance policies and programs, then employees' work - life will be more balanced. A negative correlation is observed between work-life balance and turnover intention, which highlights that if work-life balance is not there in the organizations, turnover intention of employees will be high, which results in high attrition rate in the organization. Similar is the case of organizational support for work-life balance and turnover intention. The study also reveals that work-life balance is only moderate in the IT industry in Kerala. This calls for more work - life friendly practices and policies on the part of the organization to sincerely promote work-life balance. Apart from this, there should be wholehearted support from the organization towards such policies. If work - life is properly balanced, employees will be more satisfied and productive. The present study provides a framework for promotion of work-life balance in an organization.

Limitations of the Study and Scope for Further Research

The major limitation of the study was the reluctance on the part of some respondents to share information. The busy schedule of IT employees, limited time, and sample size can also be called as other limitations of the study. The present study is confined to Kerala only. Future research studies can be done to extend the concept to other industries to generalize the results of the study in a more precise way. Furthermore, the research studies can explore the strength of the relationship quantitatively using tools like structural equation modeling.

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