

Relationship between Work-Family Balance and Occupational Stress of Administrative Officers: Empirical Study in the Public Universities in the Western Province in Sri Lanka

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Abstract

Occupational stress is a major issue that has received attention lately in the corporate world. Globalization of the corporate world and the increased competitiveness have changed the work culture and today individuals are engaging in work, disregarding their stress level, resulting in detrimental effects on the work output and the individual's well-being. Existing findings have disclosed numerous causes of occupational stress, among which Work-Family Balance has had a huge impact. However, in the local context, there is a lack of empirical sources that relate work-family balance and occupational stress. Hence, the authors tend to fill up this vacuum by examining the

relationship between work-family balance and occupational stress of administrative officers in public universities in the Western Province, Sri Lanka. For this purpose, 132 administrative officers from the State Universities in the Western Province were selected based on convenience sampling and data were collected through online-administered questionnaires. The data were analyzed using the Statistical package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22. The correlation statistics were used to identify the correlation among each dimension of Work-Family balance and occupational stress. The findings reveal that a significant negative relationship exists between work-family balance and occupational stress of the administrative officers at public universities in the western province, Sri Lanka.

Key Words: Behaviour Balance, Occupational Stress, Strain Balance, Time Balance, Work-Family Balance

Introduction

Occupational stress has reached an alarming level in many organizations. High levels of work stress could have various consequences for individuals and the workplace. According to Erkutlu and Chafraas (2006, cited in Beheshtifar and Nazarian, 2013), the workplace causes stress among life situations. Similarly, Ahsan, Abdullah, Fie and Alam (2009) identified work life as an integral part of a person's everyday life, which causes a significant amount of stress. Further, Ahsan et al (2009) recognized that due to the competitive job environment, most of the employees are engaging in job-related work, disregarding the stresses which adversely affect their work and family.

As such, occupational stress has become a common issue which constantly takes place in each organization and employees cannot perform their work without facing occupational stress. Ahmad and Ahmad (1992, cited in Malik, 2011) emphasized that occupational stress is increasingly globalized and influences every country, all professions, every unit of family and society in general. This emphasizes the work life of an individual has the potential to create stress. Broadbridge (1999) recognized that all occupations have the propensity to make employees stressed. However, some occupations and organizations are potentially more stressful than others. Cranwell-Ward (1987, cited in Broadbridge, 1999) identified that the organizations with high technology, within the service industry as well as those experiencing structural job changes are potentially more stressful than the other organizations.

Malik (2011) suggested that occupational stress provides adverse consequences, which can be classified as consequences related to employees and consequences related to the organization. Similarly, Ahamad (2022) emphasized that job stress creates negative consequences which are harmful to both individuals and organizations. Accordingly, Malik

(2011) identified that when occupational stress takes place, employees may experience ever more distressed and bad-tempered, incapable to focus or relax, have complexity in their logical thinking and decision making, derive less pleasure from their work, experience tired, experience serious physical discomfiture; headaches, hypertension, difficulty to sleep, depressed and anxious and even heart diseases. In contrast, occupational stress generates consequences for organization such as increasing absenteeism, negligence in the workplace, rising employee turnover, more grievances from stakeholders, increasing informal work practices, unfavorably influence on employee recruitment and defaming the organization among its employees and stakeholders.

There are several factors that cause occupational stress. According to Cooper et al (1988, cited in Manshor, Fontaine and Choy, 2003), scholars have identified five key work stresses, such as factors inherent to the occupation, role in the organization, video terminal display stress, association at work and career development. Further, Brun (2006, cited in Razak, Yusof, Azidin, Latif, and Ismail, 2014) has identified several sources of occupational stress such as ambiguity in job-responsibilities, poor employment relationships, insufficient accessories and resources, job uncertainty, inadequate career development opportunities, difficulty in engaging simultaneously on both work and family requirements, lack of self-determination, and extreme commitments. Accordingly, difficulty in engaging simultaneously on both work and family requirements is one of the major factors that leads to occupational stress.

Greenhaus, Collins, and Shaw (2003) stated that personal and work lives are the key domains of many people among the different life domains. Accordingly, this study focused on individuals' work and family domains. In the Sri Lankan context, it is difficult to find empirical research in the extant literature that integrates the concepts of work-family balance and occupational stress, therefore, this study fills that vacuum in empirical knowledge with regard to the work-family balance and occupational stress in the Sri Lankan context.

Problem Statement

Lu et al (2003, cited in Beheshtifar and Nazarian, 2013) emphasized that job stress has turned into significant health problems in the contemporary world. Studies have revealed that the employees in the university system are experiencing pressure from organizations and insufficient support and hence, they suffer from occupational stress (Biron, Brun, and Ivers, 2008). Similarly, Gillespie, Walsh, Winefield, Dua, and Stough (2001) have identified that occupational stress impacts on academic and general staff (general staff refers to all non-academic staff, including administrative staff) in the university sector, both personally and professionally. Professionally refers to the existing levels of job stress that adversely affect employees' work outcomes, interpersonal job associations, extra-role performance, staff obligations and absenteeism. In contrast, personal consequences refer to physical and psychological health problems. Thus, the above findings reveal that the university staff are suffering from occupational stress. Palagolla and Wickramasinghe (2009, cited in Aroosiya and Ali, 2016) have identified the leading factors which contribute to changes in the higher education system in Sri Lanka such as revising of programs and syllabus, increase of student

intakes, new educational frameworks, quality enhancement methods, temporary contracts, reduction of allocations, change in employee mindset, enhancements in ICT education. Consequently, all employees employed in the higher education system face excessive work demands.

Swanson, Power, and Simpson (1998) emphasized that the association between work and home life is a key component of job stress. Further, they mentioned that this relationship is bi-directional. Similarly, Valk and Srinivasan (2011) identified the influence of work-family balance on occupational stress, which helps to reduce occupational stress. Furthermore, recent empirical and theoretical studies confirmed that workplace stress has implications for work-family balance (Razak et al, 2014; Yadav and Yadav, 2014). As such, the above findings emphasized that the balance between work and family is one of the leading factors, which has an impact on occupational stress.

According to Hill, Hawkins, Ferris, and Weitzman (2001), the work-family balance means that, a person is competent to manage the emotional, temporal, and behavioral demands that come from both employment and personal life. Further, Greenhaus and Allen (2006, cited in Poulouse and Sudarsan, 2014) define the work-family balance as the extent to which an individual's effectiveness and satisfaction in the roles of work and family spheres are compatible with the individual's life priorities.

However, Le, Newman, Menzies, Zheng, and Fermelis (2020) emphasized that though there is a growth in longitudinal studies on work-life in the West, Asia has paid less attention to the field of work-life. Further, Shaikh and Wajidi (2021) stated that although a significant number of empirical studies have been conducted on occupational stress and work-life balance, there has been a deficiency of studies conducted on the link between occupational stress and work-life balance.

Accordingly, the researchers identified that little attention has been given in the existing literature to investigating the relationship between work-family balance and occupational stress in the Sri Lankan context. Accordingly, the study attempted to bridge the gap in the literature. Therefore, the researchers developed the problem statement as what is the relationship between work-family balance and occupational stress of administrative officers in the public universities in the western province in Sri Lanka?

Research Objective

The objective of the study is to investigate the relationship between work-family balance and occupational stress of administrative officers in public universities in the Western Province, Sri Lanka.

Theoretical Background

Occupational Stress

The term “stress” is used in psychology and biology, derived from the field of natural sciences and first applied in the context of biology in the 1930s. According to Rahim (2010), stress has been identified as a key field of research in the last two decades and a noteworthy development is being observed in scholars' focus as a concern to both the employees and the employers. According to Attar, Caglian, and Abdul-Kareem (2020), stress occurs when people feel that they cannot deal with internal and external forces placed on them. Similarly, occupational stress is a response of the employee to the physical and emotional aspects and this situation occurs as a result of the mismatch between the job requirements and the abilities of employees to fulfill those requirements (Kerdpitak and Jermstittiparsert, 2020). Lakshika and Perera (2023) define "Occupational stress is a reaction to pressure or demands resulting from a person's occupation". Further, Gim and Ramayah (2020, cited in Ahamad, 2022) identified that mental and physical illness occurs due to unfavourable circumstances, which may create a job stress condition within employees. Fernando (2007) stated that stress is a main factor in organizational behaviour due to competition, which takes a toll on managers and employees equally. In addition, Dua (1994) emphasized that occupational stress is in high priority because it has noteworthy economic implication for businesses through lowered productivity, employee frustration, and absenteeism, decrease emotional and physical fitness of employees. Kaur and Haque (2024) have found that occupational stress negatively impacts employee performance.

According to Razak et al (2014), work stress turns into a general issue that constantly occurs in each organization and employees cannot turn aside without experiencing occupational stress in their job. Further, Yildiz, Yildiz, and Ayaz Arda (2021) stressed that the level of job stress varies from person to person. Accordingly, he identified that the same person is reacting differently in the same situations, and also different people are reacting the same way in different situations. Manshor et al (2003) emphasized that there is a growing concern about job stress in developing countries. Hence, Occupational stress has become one of the key health hazards of the contemporary workplace.

According to the literature, job stress is the destructive physiological and physical reaction that occurs when work demands do not match the worker's competency, resources and requirements of workers (Weerasinghe and Batagoda, 2011; Rao and Borkar, 2012; Attar, Caglian et al., 2020; Ahamad, 2022). Ahamad (2022) stated that job stress occurs as a result of the mismatch between employees' expectations and their actual working conditions. Similarly, occupational stress is a conflict that occurs within employees when fulfilling the responsibilities and requirements of work (Kerdpitak and Jermstittiparsert, 2020). Further, Shaikh and Wajidi (2021) identified that occupational stress is a negative reaction of the employee to excessive work demands or work pressure. Wickramasinghe (2012) explained that work stress is normally recognized as a hostile response of workers to overload pressure or requirements positioned at work. All the definitions confirmed that occupational stress is a negative reaction of the employees, which occurs when they feel that they cannot fulfil the requirements of work.

According to Francis and Barling (2005, cited in Beheshtifar and Nazarian, 2013), there is a difference in three interrelated terms of stress, stressors and strain. Accordingly, stressors can be considered as outer events like complicated associations in the job environment or a serious job commitment, which contribute to job stress. Stress is an individual's internal reaction to stressors and is quantified by stimulation and irritation. Also, according to Kumar and Pragadeeswaran (2011), the strain is expressed as a continuous effect of stress and comprises psychological consequences such as anxiety and depression. In addition, Beheshtifar and Nazarian (2013) identified stress as a subjective experience of the event, stressors as objective events and strain as the weak reaction to stress.

Stanton et al (2001, cited in Bell, Rajendran and Theiler, 2012) defined job stress as an emerging issue in the job environment that is observed as threatening or demanding, or is something in the workplace which gives a person an experience of discomfort. Accordingly, they identified job threat stress and job pressure stress as two job stresses. Job threat stress means qualities of job experience which persuade feelings of being overwhelmed or nervous, and the job pressure stress is the knowledge or insight of work is demanding or time pressured.

Kerdpitak and Jermsittiparsert (2020) categorized occupational stress as work-related stress and as well as non-work-related stress. Work-related stress occurs as a result of difficulties faced by employees when fulfilling their duties and responsibilities at work. Accordingly, workload, bureaucracy in the organizations and role ambiguity are identified as factors related to work-related stress. On the other hand, he stated that breakdown of the relationship of family members, financial issues, personal and family illness are non-work-related stressors which affect occupational stress.

Kerdpitak and Jermsittiparsert (2020) identified that occupational stress occurs not only because of the work but also from the environment of the workplace. However, Attar et al (2020) stated that the causes of occupational stress can be broadly categorized into individual, organizational and environmental factors. Accordingly, role conflict, goal ambiguity, excessive workload, poor job design, poor superior-employee relationship, lack of employees' involvement in decision making and poor organizational structure are identified as organizational factors (Attar et al, 2020). Further, Brun (2006, cited in Duong, Hussain and Subramaniam, 2020) identified job insecurity, poor working relationships, limited career advancement opportunities, excessive work demands and difficulty in balancing work and home demands as few sources of occupational stress.

Scholars have identified that occupational stress generates adverse consequences on both employees and organization. Negative physical and psychological health outcome, reduce self-esteem and motivation are the adverse consequences on employees and increased absenteeism, decline productivity, low job performance, diminish level of customer service and increase turnover are the adverse consequences relates to organizations (Beheshtifar and Nazarian, 2013; Akinmayowa and Kadiri, 2014; Chang, Zhou, Wang and Heredero 2017; Attar et al, 2020). Similarly, Silva et al (2021, cited in Shaikh and Wajidi, 2021) confirmed that

less organizational commitment, less job satisfaction and higher burnout may occur in a pressure work environment. Further, Shaikh and Wajidi (2021) revealed that occupational stress affects the personal and professional life of certain employees.

Work-Family Balance

As indicated by Kakar et al. (2023) work-life balance is defined as “the degree to which an employee is consistently satisfied with their family, job, and personal roles”. Poulouse and Sudarsan (2014) emphasized that the life of a person involves different areas of interest, which are not restricted to work and family life. Accordingly, Warren (2004, cited in Poulouse and Sudarsan, 2014) has identified over one hundred and seventy (170) various areas of interest in a life such as employment, monetary resources, accommodation and neighbourhood, relaxation, family, personal relationships, social connection and welfare. However, Greenhaus, Collins, and Shaw (2003) stated that personal and official lives are the key domains of many people among the different life domains. Further, Pronk (2005, cited in Vithanage and Arachchige, 2015) recognized that the equilibrium between work and personal life is a sub-area of the balance between work and life. Accordingly, this study focused on individuals' work and family domains.

Clark (2000, cited in Vithanage and Arachchige, 2015) stated that the expansion of the market economy during the past thirty decades, a movement started in the society by segmenting activities connected with income generation and the wellbeing of the family. Accordingly, two domains viz: personal and official lives, have emerged, and a person is required to fulfil the demand, expectation and obligation that relate to those two domains. Therefore, work-family balance is determined by the successful performance in each domain. Further, Haddock et al (2006, cited in Vithanage and Arachchige, 2015) explored that in a family, both husband and wife involve in income generation activities interchangeably engage between work and personal life to maintain a balance.

According to the reviewed literature, work-family balance is defined by many scholars in different aspects. According to Hill et al (2001) work-family balance refers to the extent to which a person's ability to balance temporal, emotional, and behavioural requirements that stem from work and personal domains at once. Further, Clark (2000, cited in Greenhaus et al, 2003) defined work-family balance as a person's ability to achieve objectives with pleasure at both the workplace and at personal life minimizing the role conflict. Greenhaus et al (2003) defined the balance between work life and personal life as two equal components: input and output. Accordingly, to have a balance in each role, concentration, time, contribution and dedication are to be given for both work and family role equally, whereby productive balance role proposes even more awareness, time, connection or dedication, while imbalance refers to similarly less concentration, time, participation or obligation. Similarly, Chen, Chen, Lo, Chan, and Ip (2022) stated that work- life balance is a struggle to meet role demands which is regularly determined by factors related to family responsibilities and duties of employment. According to Perera and Opatha (2014) work-family balance refers the effectively managing jobs and other activities which are important to individuals.

Grzywacz and Carlson (2007) revealed that traditionally, scholars view work family-balance as the nonexistence of disagreement between work life and family life, or family matters not interfering on work life or workplace matters not interfering family life or vice versa as the equilibrium in family and work. Accordingly, Marks and MacDermid (1996, cited in Greenhaus et al, 2003) emphasized that a fair participation in both job and home functions leads to minimize struggle in the workplace and home as persons may engage with both work and family activities. In addition, Frone (2003, cited in Carlson, Grzywacz and Zivnuska, 2009) views work- family balance as a situation in which individuals experience fewer conflicts in their job and family lives while deriving pleasure from the facilitation. Similarly, Kalpna and Malhothra (2019) stated that in a proper work-family balance, employees always put their best efforts at work and enjoy their family life.

However, Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) emphasized that work-family balance has been conceptualized as implicitly or explicitly, as the nonexistence of work-family conflict or a form of inter-role conflict in which the role pressurizes the job and home domains, whereby they are mutually mismatched in some respect. Accordingly, Greenhaus and Beutell (1985, cited in Brough, Timms, O'Driscoll, Kalliath, Siu, Sit, and Lo, 2014) identified that research models have been developed by using a considerable number of theoretical perspectives to explain precise forms of some role demands like strain-based demands, behaviour-based demands and time-based demands. As such, Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) suggested that stress and strain emerging from work or family roles may increase disagreement between the job and the family responsibilities. Hence, they recognized three ways where role pressures can be mismatched, viz: time spent in fulfilment of commitments of one role may lessen the time exists to allocate to other roles; strain experience in one domain may spill over into another domain and behaviour appropriate to one role may be dysfunctional in another role. Accordingly, in accord with the model developed by Greenhaus and Beutell (1985), which included three ways of role stress, three work-family balance dimensions have been identified, such as the time balance, strain balance and the behaviour balance.

Voydanoff (2005, cited in Grzywacz and Carlson, 2007) proposed that the balance between job life and family life is a universal evaluation whereby a correlation exists between the resources of the workplace and the resources in family life and interchangeably they support each other to maintain the balancing lives. Similarly, Ahamad (2022) emphasized that work and family are the most significant aspects of individuals' lives, and these variables have a correlation, which leads to conflicts and the work-family conflict occurs when the expectations of one domain are incompatible with the expectations of the other domain. Further, Hennessy (2007) defined work-family balance as a person's understanding of the boundary which separates job and family-related functions, commitments and obligations. According to his study, the work-family conflict and work-family enrichment are related to each other, which symbolized work-family balance. Further, Greenhaus and Allen (2006, cited in Poulose and Sudarsan, 2014) described the amount of a person's effectiveness and contentment in their responsibilities of the job and the family as compatible with the personal life requirements of a person as the balance in work and life. Furthermore, Carlson et al

(2010, cited in Rahman, Uddin, Abdul, Zuraina, Ali, Khairuddin, Samuel, and Rahaman, 2017) recognized that the achievements of workplace expectations, which are shared among work, family and work-related partners as work family balance.

Recent studies have revealed that both individuals and organizations will benefit by ensuring work-life balance, such as better commitment, higher job engagement, enhanced job performance and satisfaction, organizational commitment, reduced absenteeism and low turnover (Ahamad, 2022; Chen et al, 2022).

Occupational Stress and Work-Family Balance

Steers (1981, cited in Beheshtifar and Nazarian, 2013) identified that job stress has emerged as a vital theme for studying of organizational behaviour for a few causes; stress has destructive physical and mental health effects on workers, stress is influencing for employees' absences, stressful employee may influence the wellbeing of his peers and organization can be directed more successfully by controlling dysfunctional stress. As such it is vital to identify the factors which drive the occupational stress within the organization. Accordingly, scholars have identified factors which drive occupational stress.

According to Burke (1988, cited in Subramanian and Nithyanandan, 2009), factors related to job stresses can be classified into six (06) groups viz: physical environment; relationships with others; role stresses; structure of organization and duty list; career prospect and work-family conflict while Copper et al (1988, cited in Subramanian and Nithyanandan, 2009) identified six (06) stress sources at occupation viz: factors inherent to the work; structure of organizational and environment; association with stakeholders; management role; success of career; and work/family interface. In addition, Ahamad (2022) highlighted that marital status, lack of control, financial constraints, education level, poor time management and work-life balance are a few factors which contribute to occupational stress. Accordingly, the researcher identified that work-family balance has an association with occupational stress. Shaikh and Wajidi (2021) stated that occupational stress is a physical and psychological concept which affects employees and finally leads to work-family conflict. Similarly, White, Hill, McGovern, Mills, and Smeaton (2003) stated that work-family conflict leads to occupational stress. Further, Weinberg et al (2010, cited in Aruldoss, Kowalski and Parayitam, 2021) stated that disagreement between work and home demands are possible stressor faced by employees. Since Frone (2003, cited in Zahoora, Abdullahb, and Zakariac, 2021) stated that work-life balance is considered as an absence of work-life conflict. The above findings also confirmed that work-family balance affects occupational stress.

Helmle, Botero, and Seibold (2014) identified that work-life balance and occupational stress have a negative relationship. Similarly, Kalpna and Malhotra (2019) stated that occupational stress is linked with work-life balance. Accordingly, researchers identified that work-family balance is one key factor which affects occupational stress.

According to the reviewed extended literature, the researchers identified that only a few studies have been conducted to recognize the relationship between work-family balance and occupational stress of employees. However, there is much research conducted on job stress and work-family balance separately. Further, scholars have identified that a significant number of studies have been conducted on the occupational stress of employees attached to the university system (Gillespie et al, 2001; Bell, Rajendran and Theiler, 2012; Akinmayowa and Kadiri, 2014; Aroosiya and Hussain, 2016; Mohamed and Nagy, 2017).

Kinman (2001) has carried out a study to identify the occupational stressors and strains in the UK academic staff and the findings have proved that the academics suffer with substantial amount of pressure from their job arising from a number of different sources of stress viz: extended working hours; complexity in developing and sustaining an effectual balance between the job and home lives; increase in mechanistic and bureaucratic management practices.

Bell et al (2012, cited in Poulouse and Sudarsan, 2014) explored the associations between work-related stress, health, work-life balance and work-life conflict among Australian academics. The outcome pointed out that the high level of occupational stress is positively connected with improved work-family conflict and poor welfare, happiness and composure of inner mind whereby it negatively correlated to work life balance and wellbeing.

Razak el al. (2014) has carried out research to discover the impact of work stress on work-life balance of both the employers and the employees in Malaysia. The results indicated that positive correlation exists between job commitments, role conflict, interpersonal association and work-life balance.

Jayanthi and Vanniarajan (2012, cited in Poulouse and Sudarsan, 2014) have examined the impact of work-life imbalance on the organizational and family performance of the managers working in the service industry in the southern part of India. The research recognized that the organizational role stress factors exercised considerable pressure on work-life imbalance. The researchers also noted that the level of these factors is higher in the private sector in comparison with public sector organizations and also revealed a higher level of work-life imbalance among female executives than the male executives.

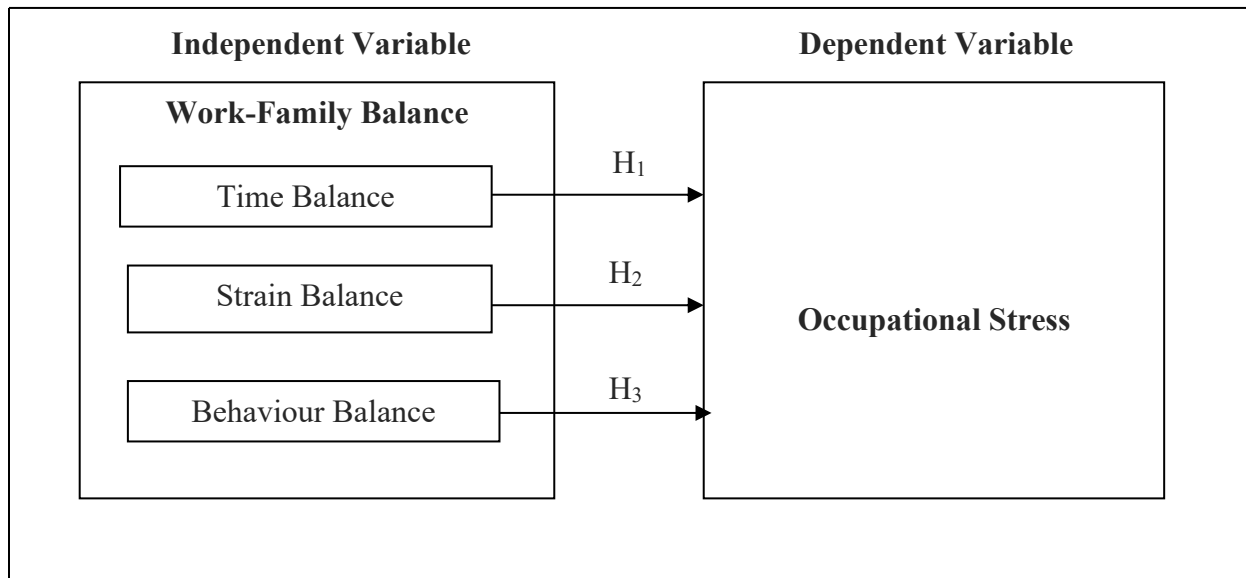
The study conducted by Shanmughavadivu and Sethuramasubbiah (2018) investigated the level of occupational stress and work-life balance among married women police personnel. The results show that women police experienced a decrease level of occupational stress which resulting an increase in the level of work life balance.

Kalpna and Malhotha (2019) conducted research to identify the relationship between work-life balance and occupational stress among female personnel of the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF), India and realized that a strong negative relationship exists between work-life balance and occupational stress.

Theoretical Framework and Hypotheses

The conceptual framework has been designed to achieve the predetermined research objective based on the theoretical background of the two concepts of work-family balance and occupational stress. The research frame consists of four variables, out of which three are independent variables and one dependent variable. The independent variables are time balance, strain balance and behavior balance, the three dimensions of work-family balance. The dependent variable is occupational stress. The variance of the above variable is explained by the independent variable, work-family balance.

Exhibit 1. Schematic Diagram of the Research Framework



Source: Adapted from Carlson, Kacmar and Williams, 2000; Srivastav and Singh, 1981

Accordingly, based on the findings of the research and preceding exploratory work conducted on the subject, researchers have developed the following hypotheses related to the current study.

Hypothesis I

H_A : Time balance is significantly related to occupational stress of administrative officers in the public universities in the Western Province in Sri Lanka.

Hypothesis II

H_B : Strain balance is significantly related to occupational stress of administrative officers in the public universities in the Western Province in Sri Lanka.

Hypothesis III

H_C : Behavior balance is significantly related to occupational stress of administrative officers in the public universities in the western province in Sri Lanka.

Research Methodology

This study prevails in the positivistic view. Quantitative research based on deductive reasoning was conducted to elucidate the causal relationship between occupational stress and work-family balance.

The population of the study was all the administrative officers in the Public Universities in the Western Province. The total population consisted of 166 administrative officers. The convenience sampling method was used as the sampling technique (Dayarathna, 2016). Accordingly, 118 administrative officers were selected as a sample of the study based on the theory of Krejcie and Morgan (1970).

Sekaran and Bougie (2010) stated that a questionnaire is one of the data collection methods in survey research. Therefore, the questionnaire was used to collect data for the study. The questionnaire included three parts. The questionnaire was formulated to measure occupational stress and work-family balance based on the Occupational Stress Index recommended by Srivastav and Singh (1981) and the work-family conflict scale developed by Carlson, Kacmar and Williams (2000). The variables in the questionnaire were measured using a five-point Likert Scale. The description for the five Likert scale is, "1"= strongly disagree, "2" = disagree, "3"= neutral, "4" = agree and "5"= strongly agree.

The Occupational Stress Index measured the extent of stress of employees under twelve (12) related components of the work life which cause stress viz: role overload; role ambiguity; role conflict; group and political pressure; responsibility for persons; powerlessness; low status; under participation; poor peer relations; intrinsic impoverishment; strenuous working conditions and unprofitability. The scale consists of forty-six (46) items, of which amounts to twenty-eight (28) in number are truly keyed and eighteen (18) numbers are false-keyed, and each item is rated on the five-point Likert scale. The reliability of the Cronbach alpha coefficient for the original scale as a whole is found to be 0.935.

According to Carlson et al (2009), the majority of the studies on the work-family have conceptualized work-family balance in terms of the comparative level of work-family conflict. Accordingly, this practice supposes that the nonexistence of work-family conflict is a counterpart to having a work-family balance. Frone (2003, cited in Zahoor et al, 2021) stated that previously, work-life balance was considered as the absence of the work-life conflict. Further, Carlson et al (2009) argued that it is logical to suppose that a higher level of work-family conflict is counter-productive to work-family balance and acts as an indirect indicator of work-family balance due to the lack of prior research using direct measures of work-family balance. Carlson and Grzywacz (2008) also recognized that work-family balance could be a measure of work-family conflict. Accordingly, the work-family conflict scale recommended by Carlson, Kacmar and Williams (2000) is used to measure the work-family balance. This scale consists of six dimensions representing two directions of conflict to work to family (WIF) and family to work (FIW) as well as the three different types (time, strain and behaviour). And each direction of WIF and FIW represents nine items, in which six items represent each conflict

of time, strain and behaviour. Each item of the scale is assessed on a five-point Likert scale. The reliability Cronbach alpha coefficients for the six dimensions are TBWIF= 0.84, TBFIW= 0.76, SBWIF= 0.79, SBFIW= 0.75, BBWIF= 0.73 and BBFIW= 0.64. According to Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) time-based conflict involves the allocation of time, energy and opportunities between the work and family activities where strain-based conflict involves the strain or an emotional condition that generates in one role have impact on performance of another role. Finally, the behaviour-based conflict refers to the mismatched sets of behaviours that an individual has for work and for family roles. Accordingly, time balance, strain balance and behaviour balance were measured by applying work family conflict scale with reversed scores. The correlation analysis was conducted to identify the relationship between each dimension of work-family balance and occupational stress.

Data Analysis

The sample comprised 118 administrative officers, and ninety-four (94) officers responded to a questionnaire. Out of those 67 respondents are female and 27 are male. The results illustrate that 75 respondents are married, while 19 are single. Among married respondents, 63 respondents have children. The majority of the sample was represented by the junior level staff (Assistant Registrars).

Reliability and Validity

The internal reliability of the instrument was estimated using Cronbach's Alpha. According to George and Mallery (2003, cited in Gliem and Gliem, 2003) rule of thumb Cronbach alpha above 0.7, conveys that the reliability of the instrument is acceptable. According to the statistics, the reliability of the dependent variable, occupational stress, is acceptable as the Cronbach's Alpha value, which is 0.786. Cronbach's Alpha values of the independent variables viz: time, strain and behavior balance are 0.750, 0.867 and 0.762, respectively. The data in the below Exhibit demonstrates that the scales used for measuring the independent variable viz: work-family balance, which comprised three dimensions; time, strain and behavior balance, and the occupational stress; dependent variable are highly reliable as the Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient values for all variables are greater than the conventional minimum value of 0.70. Thus, the results of the reliability test confirm a high internal consistency level among the scales' items used in the study.

Sekaran and Bougie (2009, cited in Mas'adeh, 2016) emphasized that validity is another stipulation used to measure the goodness of a measure since the reliability is not adequate. According to Tam et al. (2015), KMO and Bartlett tests specify the appropriateness of data for structure detection. Crane, Busby and Larson (1991) stated that the KMO test generates a value between one and zero, and a value above .60 recommends that a factor analysis of the variables is appropriate. As shown in Exhibit 1, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy is statistically significant and a high data reliability is proved, since the KMO value for all variables is greater than 0.6 and the P value (.000) of the Bartlett test is less than 0.05.

Exhibit 2: Reliability and Validity of Variables

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha Value	Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy (KMO) Value	Bartlett's Test of Sphericity Significant value
Occupational Stress	0.786	0.799	0.000
Time Balance	0.750	0.705	0.000
Strain Balance	0.867	0.781	0.000
Behavior Balance	0.762	0.658	0.000

Source: Survey Data 2024

Correlation Analysis

Razak et al (2014) recognized correlation as a method for examining the association between two continuous variables. Accordingly, the strength of the correlation between the dependent and the independent variables is determined by the correlation coefficient. The Pearson's Correlation Coefficient is the most widely used type of correlation coefficient. This analysis presumes that the two variables being analyzed are measured on the least interval scales, which means that variables are measured on a range of increasing values. Bolboaca and Jantschi (2006) stated that the correlation coefficient can range from -1.00 to +1.00. The value of -1.00 symbolizes a perfect negative correlation, which refers to the fact that, when the value of one variable increases, the other declines. While a value of +1.00 embodies a perfect positive relationship, which means as one variable increases in value, so does the other. The variables are in a near-perfect linear relationship when the values of correlation are close to -1 or +1 and the value zero implies that the variables are not linearly related to each other. Further, Bolboaca and Jantschi (2006) identified that if the correlation coefficient is greater than 0.8 a strong correlation exists between variables and the correlation coefficient below 0.5 implies a weak correlation. Moreover, the p-value provides a significant level of correlation. Accordingly, the relationship is considered to be significant if the p-value is less than 0.05. Exhibit 2 presents correlations between time balance, strain balance and behavior balance with the occupational stress.

Exhibit 3: Pearson Correlation Coefficients between Dependent and Independent Variables

	Time Balance	Strain Balance	Behavior Balance
Pearson Correlation Occupational Stress	-.334 *	-.579*	-.333*
Sig.	.001	.000	.001
N	94	94	94

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level

Source: Survey Data 2024

All the dimensions of the work-family balance; time balance, behavior balance and strain balance correlate with occupational stress at statistically significant level.

Testing the Hypotheses

According to the results of correlations, the strength of the relationships ranges from moderate to weak, but in terms of significance, all the independent variables' relationship is significantly related to the dependent variable.

H_A: Time balance is significantly related to occupational stress of administrative officers in the public universities in the Western Province in Sri Lanka.

Time balance is statistically significant at $p < 0.05$ (0.001) and has a weak negative correlation with occupational stress at -0.334. Accordingly, the study concludes that a significant correlation exists between time balance and occupational stress.

H_B: Strain balance is significantly related to occupational stress of administrative officers in the public universities in the Western province in Sri Lanka.

The strain balance is statistically significant at $p < 0.05$ (0.000) and has a moderate negative correlation with occupational stress at -0.579. Accordingly, the study concludes that a significant correlation exists between strain balance and occupational stress.

H_C: Behaviour balance is significantly related to occupational stress of administrative officers in the public universities in the Western Province in Sri Lanka.

The behaviour balance is significant at $p < 0.05$ (0.001) and has a weak negative correlation with occupational stress at - 0.333. Accordingly, the study concludes that a significant correlation exists between behaviour balance and occupational stress.

Findings

Swanson, Power and Simpson (1998) emphasized that stability between occupational life and home life is one of the major components and a highly influential factor on occupational stress. Similarly, Valk and Srinivasan (2011) identified that work-family balance plays a vital role in managing stress in the workplace. Further, Burke (1988, cited in Subramanian and Nithyanandan, 2009) recognized work-family conflict as one source of job stressors.

Accordingly, the study examined the relationship between work-family balance and occupational stress of administrative officers in the public universities in the western province in Sri Lanka. The results of the study indicated that all dimensions of work-family balance; time balance, strain balance and behavior balance are correlated with occupational stress at statistically significant level. Further, the study has confirmed a statistically significant negative relationship between each dimension of work-family balance, time balance, strain balance and behavior balance and occupational stress among administrative officers. The findings of the study is in line with previous studies on work-family balance and occupational stress.

According to study results, the relationship between time balance and occupational stress found a statistically significant negative relationship. The higher the time balance results to lower occupational stress and lower the time balance results higher the occupational stress. Chen et al (2022) identified that lack of time spends on personal life due to excessive working hours creates work-life imbalance. Employees may compete for multiple activities simultaneously. Activities in different roles cannot be carried out in parallel. Pleck et al (1980, cited in Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985) revealed that over lapses in time allocation is dependable with the excess working hours and schedule conflict dimensions. According to Bartolome and Evans (1979, cited in Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985) conflict related with time can be divided into two groups that is the time stress connected with one role may create impossibility physically to fulfill the demands from another position and also the stress may generate anxiety in one position while attempting to fulfill the requirements of another position. Further, Hammer (2004) found that the inability to focus on the family requirements due to the requirements of time and energy by the workplace commitments is also a stress generator and consequently, the employee feels dissatisfaction and anxiety. Accordingly, it is clear that time balance occurs when time spent on one role does not affect working on the other role. Moreover, according to Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) conflicts related to time allocation in different roles result in time spent in one role preventing time spent in other roles and consequently, stress is created through reducing energy. Spending excessive hours in the workplace reduces the number of hours spent on family matters or vice versa. Similarly, Maertz and Boyar (2011) identified that in some time-based work-family conflict incidents selection of responsibilities over another role partially fulfils the requirements of both roles. However, the responsibilities of one role are fulfilled only partially and hence, resulting in a time imbalance. Moreover, Ahamad (2022) emphasized that a lack of time for fulfilling family responsibilities and obligations increases occupational stress. Hence, as discussed in literature it emphasized that time-based conflict influence on workplace stress. As the absence of time conflict results in time balance, it can be concluded that time balance is related to occupational stress.

The relationship between strain balance and occupational stress was found to a statistically significant negative relationship. The relationship between the two variables is reciprocal, that is when strain balance decreases the occupational stress increases and vice versa. Strain balance is maintained when a psychological strain is generated in one position which has not an effect on the roles of individual's another position. According to Poppleton, Briner, and Kiefer (2008, cited in Maertz and Boyar, 2011) work family interaction relates to the psychological involvement of an individual in fulfilling demands generated from work and family domains. However, in such interaction the unpleasant feelings experienced from one domain made it difficult to concentrate on the tasks of the other domain which is called conflict. Kahn et al (1964, cited in Thomas and Ganster, 1995) identified that inter-role conflict may occur when the compliance of one role is mismatched with the compliance of another role and the performance of those two incompatible roles may produce strain. Thomas and Ganster (1995) stated that work-family conflict is a specific type of inter-role conflict in which pressures generate from work role are incompatible with the pressures generated from

family role. Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) identified that the strain-based conflict as one dimension of work-family conflict. According to him strain-based conflict occurs when demands and stress related to work negatively influence home demand. Similarly, Lambert, Hogan, Camp, and Ventura (2006) stated that strain-based conflict occurs as the demands and pressures of work negatively impact on quality of employees' home life. Scholars proved that strain-based work-family conflicts are significantly related to job stress. Where higher levels of strain-based conflict relate to higher levels of job stress (Armstrong, Atkin-Plunk and Wells, 2015; Lambert et al, 2006; Lambert and Hogan, 2009). Lambert et al (2006) emphasized that strain generates from the work life of employees may negatively impact their home life and it leads to higher levels of occupational stress. Since Poulose and Sudarsan (2014) identified work-family balance as the nonexistence of work-family conflict and also Hennessy (2007) identified work-family conflict symbolized work-family balance, the strain balance can be conceptualized as strain generated in one role has not any effect on performance in another job. Accordingly, based on the findings of the scholars on strain-based conflict and occupational stress, a conclusion can be made that there is a relationship between strain balance and occupational stress. Based on the findings of the scholars it is revealed that the lower the strain-balance creates higher occupational stress and vice versa. Accordingly, there is a negative relationship between strain-balance and occupational stress of administrative officers in the public universities in the western province in Sri Lanka.

The relationship between behaviour balance and occupational stress was found to a statistically significant negative relationship. The relationship between the two variables is reciprocal, that is when behavior balance decreases, occupational stress increases and vice versa. As the researchers conceptualised behaviour balance as the individual behavior in one role is compatible with behavioral expectation in another role, the absence of behavior balance may generate behavior-based conflict which is identified by Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) in their studies. Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) defined work-family conflict as a form of inter-role conflict and the behavioral properties of the role played in the workplace and in family life is mismatched. At first, it seems to be a one-way construct. However, Gutek, Searle, and Klepa (1991) described the conflicts between work and family as directional, which is Family Interference into Work (FIW) and Work Interference into Family (WIF). There is a mutual relationship, in which the workplace issues arise as unfulfilled job requirements due to family interferences. Consequently, workplace issues influence family problems, causing obstruction to work of family life. Further, Cooper et al (2001, cited in Charkhabi, Sartori and Ceschi, 2016) stated that the standards, ethics and behaviours required in one position may disagree with another role. Typical characteristics such as materialism and aggression required in the workplace may mismatch the expectations of family members. Armstrong, Atkin-Plunk, and Wells (2015) stated that behavior-based conflict occurs when there is an incompatible between work and family roles. Previous studies revealed that behavior-based conflict positively related with occupational stress (Armstrong et al, 2015; Triplett, Mullings and Scarborough 1999; Lambert and Hogan, 2009). However, these findings are contrary to the finding of Lambert et al (2006) who found that behavior-based conflict has not any significant impact on job stress of the employees. According to Stephen (2014), occupational

stress has a significant influence on behavioral outcomes like fatigue. However, Stephen did not describe the reverse correlation. But this study explored that the correlation exists between the behavior and the workplace stress, and the behavior dimension is a predictor of the workplace stress. Furthermore, Stephen (2014) recommended that the management should evade employee overworking. According to this analysis, it indicates that the family roles and responsibilities affect the role played in the workplace of administrative officers. Hence, it is proven that the behavioral features of work-family balance significantly have an effect on occupational stress and hence, behavior can characterize the workplace stress. The findings of the study revealed that all the components of the work-family balance reciprocally relate with occupational stress of administrative officers in the public universities in the western province in Sri Lanka. Also, the relationships are statistically significant.

Implications of the Study

The present investigation revealed that a significant relationship exists between dimensions of work-family balance and occupational stress of administrative officers in the public universities in the western province in Sri Lanka. Accordingly, this study has implications for practitioners in the field of human resource development to identify the relationship between work-family balance and occupational stress and also to identify appropriate programmes to be developed to mitigate occupational stress and increase work-family balance of employees. Administrative authorities of the universities have to intervene and provide assistance pertaining to employees' occupational stress reduction as the work-family imbalance relates with occupational stress and occupational stress create many far-reaching consequences for the organization as well as individuals. Person-centered stress management techniques are recommended to reduce workplace stress. Techniques such as conducting relaxation/mindfulness meditation programs, encourage to participate physical fitness programs and providing related facilities such as gymnasiums, facilitate for healthy food and counseling are few suggestions. Further, stress management seminars, workshops and programs can be organized regularly for the staff members. The occupational stress occurs due to a mismatch between organizational needs and employees' ability. Hence, skills of administrative officers could be assessed and identify skills and capabilities, which need to be developed within themselves to cope with occupational stress. In addition, the university authority required intensifying efforts to provide a more conducive, work-friendly environment, as well as ensure that all facilities needed by administrative staff to carry out their tasks in the most efficient and effective way are adequately provided. Further, well-articulated policies shall be developed by the university authority towards tackling, as well as addressing all stress-related issues and among administrative staff.

The individual employees also have their own obligation to cope with occupational stress. Accordingly, time management can be used by individuals to deal effectively with occupational stress. Administrative officers can manage time more efficiently by allocating time for planning goals, organizing urgent works, setting goals, making a list of priorities, being flexible, learning to say 'no', whether procrastinating and focusing on urgent work.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

The outcome of the research could not be extended into other industries since the sample was collected only from the public sector universities. Findings of the research may be gender biased since the administrative positions in the state university in Sri Lanka are female dominance and females are a vulnerable group to experience work-family imbalance due to dual role of being a mother and employee. The experiment cannot be repeated as a survey in the form a questionnaire was conducted to collect the data.

This study focused only on the administrative officers in the public universities and hence, the study can be extended to other organizations as well as other occupations in future research. The model constructed in this study investigated only the linear relationship among the presented variables. However, a non-linear correlation may exist among the variables and hence, a non-linear correlation analysis is recommended in future research. Also, it is worth investigating the impact of gender on work-family balance and occupational stress, which is not conducted in this study. The proposed study is important as the administrative officers in public universities are predominated female.

This study measured only the subjective work-family balance of the administrative officers; however, future research can focus on both subjective and objective balance of their time, strain and behavior to the work-family balance. Longitudinal research is particularly useful in exploring the work-family balance as individuals may interchange their focus on job and personal actions in the short term to accomplish a long-term work-family balance.

Conclusion

Occupational stress has become one of the most serious health issues in the modern world. The motive of the current study was to investigate the relationship between the work-family balance and occupational stress of administrative officers in the public universities in the western province in Sri Lanka. The results suggested that statistically significant negative relationships exist between all the dimensions of the work-family balance: time balance, strain balance and behaviour balance and occupational stress. The implication of the study is no exhibit since little research exists considering work-family balance and occupational stress in Sri Lankan context. Since all the dimensions of work-family balance have a reciprocal relationship with occupational stress, stress coping strategies are to be developed to manage and reduce the workplace stress of the administrative officers. Further, the findings may contribute to framing appropriate policies and practices within the universities.

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