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## **Relationship between Alternative Work Schedules and Work-Family Balance of Managerial and Non-Managerial Employees: An Investigation in Consumer Durable Sector in Colombo District, Sri Lanka**

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### **Abstract**

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#### **Area of the Study**

This study seeks to explore the relationship between alternative work schedules and work-family balance of managerial and non-managerial employees of the consumer durable sector in Colombo district, Sri Lanka.

#### **Problem of the Study**

There is an empirical knowledge gap in the relationship between alternative work schedules and work-family balance of employees in Sri Lanka. Therefore, the main objective of this research is to identify the relationship between alternative work schedules and work-family balance of employees in the consumer durable sector in the Colombo district, Sri Lanka.

#### **Method of the study**

The data were collected from a sample of 200 employees in two consumer durable companies in Colombo district. A structured questionnaire which consisted 32 items based on alternative work schedules and 21 items for work-family balance with five point Likert scales were used to collect primary data. The analyses were done by using univariate analysis and correlation analysis with the SPSS (16.0 Version).

#### **Findings of the Study**

It was found that alternative work schedules options have a positive relationship with the work-family balance of employees in the consumer durable sector in Sri Lanka.

#### **Conclusion of the Study**

It was found that there is a strong positive correlation between alternative work schedule options and work-family balance except flexplace work. The results of the correlation analysis showed flextime, part-time and shift work have a strong positive correlation and flexplace has a weak positive correlation.

**Keywords:** Work-Family Balance, Flextime, Flexplace, Shift work, Part-time employment

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### **Introduction**

Today in this competitive work environment mostly we can see both parents are engaged in work. When we consider the present work force in many countries we can identify it include more couples, both engaged in paid work have responsibility for the care of children or elderly dependents. Therefore many researchers have proved most of the employees especially dual-career parents who have children and elder care responsibilities face big trouble to balance both demands coming from workplace and home. Time factor make significant impact to work-family balance, because employees feel imbalance in their life when they are unable to meet both demands coming from work-family due to lack of time.

Imbalance in employees' work-family life can be negatively affected to employees' commitment towards the organization. Sample data of United States proved that this work-family inequality is a major problem for the employees as well as employers. Early stages this was consider as a problem related to female employees who under take more family responsibilities comparing to men. But now the findings have identified this is not a problem related to the gender of the employees (Hill, Campbell & Koblenz 1997; Levine & Pittinsky 1997; Milkie & Peltola 1999).

Organizations always try to utilise their limited resources effectively and efficiently in order to reach the success. Therefore organizations take necessary steps and decisions to utilise human and physical resources effectively. Therefore we can identify many organizations now consider the concept of employee work-life balance to take the highest employee commitment to the organization. Work-Family balance can be defined in numerous ways. It can be simply defined as the degree to which an individual is able to balance both demands comes from work and family.

To create a balance between work-family life nowadays organizations operationalize numerous concepts. Alternative work schedules are one of a concept organization follow to support the employees to overcome the imbalance of their work-family life. We can define the term alternative work schedules in numerous ways. An alternative work schedule is a working arrangement that allows a variation from the employee's core hours in starting and ending times, but does not change the total number of hours worked in a week. Or it can be define as any one of the range of work structures that changes the time and place that work gets done on an ordinary basis. Most of the large organizations pay attention to this concept comparing to small and medium scale organizations. Because they have identified the positive results in using alternative work schedules on organizations work. Some general job flexibility schedules that might be considered include flexi hours, meal time flexibility, part-time work, job sharing, compressed workweek, telecommuting and the virtual office. According to Negrey (1984) when employees have the opportunity to select an available work schedule it positively affect to work-family balance. Staines and Pleck (1986) found that the employees' capability to change their work schedules decreased and overturned the harmful effects of working abnormal shifts that can be impact to the quality of family life among married couples and single parents.

When work schedules are available it suggests the employees have the ability to manage demands of paid work and home responsibilities without a competition. The increasing popularity of alternate work schedules generates the opportunity that workers might choose a work schedule that helps to balance their paid work and individual obligations. Voluntary or involuntary nature of these schedules creates a vital impact to make balance between work and personal life. If the employees have the chance to select the work schedule and control the numbers of days and number of hour's work it may be help to avoid the imbalance of their life. But when the employees have no chance in scheduling the work or when it is involuntary and working non standard days and hours may add imbalance to the employees'

lives. This study mainly focuses to investigate the relationship between work schedules and work-family balance among managerial and non-managerial employees in the Consumer Durable sector in Colombo district, province of Western in Sri Lanka.

### **Problem Background and Problem of the Study**

Having considered above literature if the alternative work schedules are beneficial for employees, then why most of the organizations are less considered to provide this opportunities for their employees. According to Friedman, Christensen and DeGroot (1998) management of most organizations believed work-family balance programs are not a key concept as employees pay more attention to their personal life matters. When different types of work schedules are operationalized within the organization it can create an impact to the employees' performance evaluation. Because due to flexible work schedules employees are not present in the work place all the time. Therefore it can create a difficulty to the immediate supervisor to measure his/her subordinate performance. Friedman et al. (1998) mentioned in order to follow up alternative work schedules organizations must change their culture from "face-time" business culture to "results-oriented" business culture. Organizations also must need technical advancements to provide some work schedules such as telecommunication.

Size of the company also can be an issue to provide work schedules. Large organizations comparing to medium and small scale organizations have necessary resources to provide flexible schedules. Current position the employee hold can be also an important point the company should consider to provide work schedules to the workers. Especially for managerial level employees or upper level employees who undertake greater responsibilities need to present in the work place comparing to lower grade employees. It is difficult to mention directly providing alternative work schedules makes a balance between workers work-family life. Because some employees may feel fear to use flexibility as it can negatively affect to their future job promotions. Eaton (2000) and Solomon (1994) mentioned employees feel fright to utilize family friendly policies and organizational flexibility as it can be harmfully impact to career development of the employees.

Therefore, the research problem addressed under this study is to investigate the relationship between alternative work schedules and work-family balance of managerial and non managerial employees in the consumer durable sector in Sri Lanka. Considering to the literature following subsequent questions can be derived for the purpose of making straightforward the problem.

1. What extent alternative work schedules are practices within the organization?
2. Do managerial and non-managerial employees preferred to have alternative work schedules?
3. If workers preferred to have work schedules what type of schedule do they mostly like?
4. Are alternative work schedules able to make an impact on employees' work-family life balance?

## Research Framework

According to many researchers a direct relationship can be observed between alternative work schedules and work-family balance. In this research study four main alternative work schedules are considered as working options. Flextime, Flexplace, Part-time employment and Shift work are the main schedules used as independent variables. Based on the management literature it proved the positive relationship between these work schedules and work-family balance. As stated by Fast and Frederick (1996) workers ability to change his/her starting and the ending time of the work reduced his/her time stress. Galinsky and Johnson (1998) revealed that employees who work under flextime were more happy with their jobs, want to continue their job in the same organization and showed more creative ideas than workers with no right of entry to these policies.

H1: Flextime is positively related to work-family balance

Working men and women have the opportunity to balance their personal and family related matters by working at home. Kompast and Wagner (1998), Sullivan and Lewis (2001) revealed women working at home tend to spend their more time to family related activities and men tend to use flexibility for additional paid work. According to Hill et al (1998) greater productivity, improve morale and better work-family balance are the main benefits associated with flexplace work schedule. Tele-work provide the opportunity for women to spend more time on home work than those employed at the company location (Silver & Goldscheider 1994).

H2: Flexplace is positively related to work-family balance

According to Lero and Johnson (1994) low rate of work-family conflicts are associated with part-timers as compared to full time workers. Barker (1993), Lero and Johnson (1994) found that married women who work part-time found greater satisfaction and higher balance between their work and family compared to full time workers. Finally, work by Brown and Bifulco (1990) stated that part-time employment help to reduced the stress level of women who engaged in work comparing to full-time employees.

H3: Part-time employment is positively related to work family balance

Employees who spend less amount of time for paid work and the ability to give more attention to family matters are the once who work under shift work. With the technological developments and the growth of 24 hours economy it opens the part to employees to perform their work according to shift. This schedule help employees to balance both demands coming from work and family life by be in two places at once (Presser 1988).

H4: Shift work is positively related to work family balance

## Method

This study was conducted in a quantitative design by collecting data through a questionnaire and the two variables were identified and tested based on the hypotheses developed. This study focuses on hypotheses testing and identifying correlation between variables. These types of studies usually explain the nature of certain relationships and explain the variance in

the dependent variable. The target population of the study is employees in consumer durable sector in Sri Lanka. This research study focuses on the convenient sampling as there are many consumer durable companies in Sri Lanka and for the purpose of the study the researcher selected only 200 employees from two companies in the Colombo district. Sampling technique used for this study was the convenient sampling which refers to the collection of information from the members who are conveniently available to provide it.

### ***Measures***

The data related to the selected sample was collected using the questionnaire method and questions were designed to measure both alternative work schedules variable and work-family balance variable. The questionnaire consists of two main parts. Section 01 is the questions related to alternative work schedules and the researcher originally developed the questions to measure that variable in this research. Responses were taken through five points Likert Scale including strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree and strongly disagree. It contains 32 statements, which measured various aspects of the alternative work schedules followed by the organizations.

In order to measure the employee work-family balance researcher has abstracted well known questionnaires developed by Ganster and Thomas (1995) and Grandey et al. (2005). And some questions were originally developed by the researcher. Responses are taken through five points Likert Scale including strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree and strongly disagree. It contains 21 statements which measured various aspects of the work-family balance.

### ***Reliability and Validity***

The inter item consistency reliability was examined with Cronbach's Alpha test. Table 01 is given the results of Cronbach's Alpha test which suggest that internal reliability of each instrument is satisfactory.

Table 01: Cronbach's Alpha Coefficients

	Instrument	Cronbach's Alpha
1	Flextime	0.781
2	Flexplace	0.79
3	Part-time	0.8
4	Shift Work	0.849
5	Flextime WFB	0.7
6	Flexplace WFB	0.717
7	Part-time WFB	0.712
8	Shift Work WFB	0.717

The content validity of the instruments was ensured by the conceptualization and operationalisation of the variables on literature, and indirectly by the high internal consistency reliability of the instruments as denoted by Alphas.

The construct validity of the variables of the study was ensured by the fact that the correlation analysis support the hypotheses formulated linking the relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable.

### ***Techniques of Data Analysis***

Data collected from the survey were analyzed using the Computer Based Statistical Data Analysis Package, SPSS (Version 16.0) for validity, reliability and relationship testing. The data analyzed included univariate and bivariate analyses.

### **Results and Discussion**

Univariate analysis was used to investigate the responses for alternative work schedules and work-family balance with its dimensions. The results of the univariate analysis are given in Table 02.

Table 02: Descriptive Statistics of Alternative Work Schedules and Work-Family Balance with its dimensions

	Flexitime	Flexplace	Part-time	Shift-work	WFB of Flexitime	WFB of Flexplace	WFB of Part-time	WFB of Shift work
Mean	3.3300	3.1778	3.1778	3.7733	3.2080	3.5440	3.2080	3.5440
Std. Error of Mean	.05866	.05802	.05802	.06897	.03929	.04917	.03929	.04917
Median	3.2500	3.1111	3.1111	3.6667	3.2000	3.6000	3.2000	3.6000
Mode	3.25	3.11	3.11	3.67	3.20	3.70	3.20	3.70
Std. Deviation	.41478	.41025	.41025	.48767	.27781	.34768	.27781	.34768
Variance	.172	.168	.168	.238	.077	.121	.077	.121
Skewness	-.026	.301	.301	-.606	-1.278	-.490	-1.278	-.490
Std. Error of Skewness	.337	.337	.337	.337	.337	.337	.337	.337
Kurtosis	1.098	.659	.659	1.877	1.874	1.900	1.874	1.900
Std. Error of Kurtosis	.662	.662	.662	.662	.662	.662	.662	.662
Range	2.00	1.89	1.89	2.33	1.35	2.05	1.35	2.05
Minimum	2.25	2.22	2.22	2.33	2.30	2.45	2.30	2.45
Maximum	4.25	4.11	4.11	4.67	3.65	4.50	3.65	4.50
Sum	166.50	158.89	158.89	188.67	160.40	177.20	160.40	177.20

The usage of alternative work schedule options and the work-family balance of consumer durable sector employees were measure using five point Likert scales. Hence the average mean value is 3.00  $((1+2+3+4+5)/5)$ . If the mean value is greater than 3.00 then the usage of specific work schedule option and the work-family balance of employees who work under the specific work schedule option is high. Table 02 reports the results of the descriptive data analysis of the research variables. Mean value of each work schedule options are flexitime 3.3300, flexplace 3.1778, part-time 3.1778 and shift work 3.7733 which indicate the usage of alternative work schedules are high in consumer durable sector employees. And the mean value of work-family balance of employees who work under different schedule options are

flexitime WFB 3.2080, flexplace WFB 3.5440, part-time WFB 3.2080 and shift work WFB 3.5440. Therefore, it is indicated that employees have high level of work-family balance.

Table 03: Relationship between alternative work schedule options and work-family balance of consumer durable sector employees

Variables	Pearson (r)	Sig. (1-tailed)
Flexitime WFB	.696**	.000
Flexplace WFB	.378**	.003
Part-time	.618**	.000
Shift work	.569**	.000

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).

According to the results of Pearson's Product Movement correlation (Table 03) analysis between flexitime and work-family balance of employees in the consumer durable sector, the correlation coefficients is 0.696, which is significant at 1% ( $p=0.000$ ). Therefore, according to the result of the test, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted. Hence the data support the hypothesis that there is a positive relationship between flexitime and work-family balance of consumer durable sector employees.

According to the results of Pearson's Product Movement correlation analysis between flexplace and work-family balance of employees in the consumer durable sector, the correlation coefficients is 0.378, which is significant at 1% ( $p=0.003$ ). Therefore, according to the result of the test, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted. Hence the data support the hypothesis that there is a positive relationship between flexplace and work-family balance of consumer durable sector employees.

According to the results of Pearson's Product Movement correlation analysis between part-time employment and work-family balance of employees in the consumer durable sector, the correlation coefficients is 0.618, which is significant at 1% ( $p=0.000$ ). Therefore, according to the result of the test, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted. Hence the data support the hypothesis that there is a positive relationship between part-time employment and work-family balance of consumer durable sector employees.

According to the results of Pearson's Product Movement correlation analysis between shift work and work-family balance of employees in the consumer durable sector, the correlation coefficients is 0.569, which is significant at 1% ( $p=0.000$ ). Therefore, according to the result of the test, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted. Hence the data support the hypothesis that there is a positive relationship between shift work and work-family balance of consumer durable sector employees.

Table 04: Summary of Hypothesis Testing

No	Hypothesis	Value	Remarks
H1	There is a positive relationship between flextime and work-family balance of consumer durable sector employees	$r = 0.696, sig = 0.000$	Accepted
H2	There is a positive relationship between flexplace and work-family balance of consumer durable sector employees	$r = 0.378, sig = 0.003$	Accepted
H3	There is a positive relationship between part-time employment and work-family balance of consumer durable sector employees	$r = 0.618, sig = 0.000$	Accepted
H4	There is a positive relationship between shift work and work-family balance of consumer durable sector employees	$r = 0.569, sig = 0.000$	Accepted

### Conclusion

According to the findings of this study it is found that flextime is positively related with work-family balance of employees. The research findings of Fast and Frederick (1996), Galinsky and Johnson (1998) supported to confirm the finding of this study. The finding of positive relationship between flexplace and work-family balance of employees is established by the study conducted by Kompast and Wagner (1998), Sullivan and Lewis (2001), Hill et al (1998) and Silver and Goldscheider (1994). The third hypothesis of the study; part-time is positively related with work-family balance of employees was validated through the study done by Lero and Johnson (1994), Barker (1993), Brown and Bifulco (1990). Finally this study found out that there is a positive correlation between shift work and work-family balance of employee was corroborated by Presser (1988).

### Recommendations

According to the results of the correlation analysis, it was proved that there is a positive relationship between alternative work schedules and work-family balance of employees. Work-family balance is one significant area an employer should give attention when creating an environment in which the employees can become emotionally, cognitively and physically engaged. Therefore management should implement more successful flexible work schedule options which help to improve employees' work-family balance. And also, before implementing work schedule options, it is important to assess the requirements and expectations of employees. Both employers and employees should exert collective efforts in identifying the ideal mix of benefits that matches employee needs, developing a supportive culture respecting individual needs/values and the continuous evaluation and improvement of organizational flexible work schedule options, to bring in fruitful gains to individual employees as well as to organizations.

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