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**Impact of Work and Family Life Balance on Job Engagement of Machine Operators of the Apparel Sector in Dehiowita Divisional Sector, Kegalle District in Sri Lanka**

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**Abstract**

*This study mainly focuses on discussing the impact of work and family life balance on job engagement of the female married machine operators of the apparel industry in Dehiowita Divisional Sector, Kegalle District, Sabaragamuwa province, Sri Lanka. How work and family life balance impact on job engagement of female married machine operators in the apparel industry is the main problem of the study. The data were collected from universal sample method of 215 female married machine operators in the apparel industry by using a structured questionnaire, which consisted of 28 statements with 5 point Likert scale. The data analysis using SPSS (16.0 version) computer package and it included the univariate and bivariate analyses. The findings of the study are that work and family life balance were positively and strongly correlated with the job engagement of female married machine operators of the apparel industry in Dehiowita Divisional Sector, Kegalle District, Sabaragamuwa province, Sri Lanka. It is concluded that work and family life balance should be considered to enhance the job engagement of female married machine operators in this industry.*

**Keywords:** *Job Engagement, Work and Life Balance, Married Female Machine Operators.*

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**Introduction**

In the present economy, all most all organizations are expected to do more with fewer resources due to globalization and dynamic changes in the environment. Therefore, organizations are very keen to manage its human resource efficiently and effectively. As a result, Human Resource Management has become one of the most important functions of an organization since it deals with efficient and effective utilization of human resources to achieve goals of the organization (Opatha 2010). Therefore, attracting, engaging and retaining employees are becoming a top priority among the competitive strategies available for organizations across the world (Konrad & Mangel 2000, cited in Amarakoon & Wickramasinghe 2010). In this scenario, employee engagement becomes more vital than ever before to achieve an organization's success and sustainable competitive advantage. Today less employee engagement becomes a vital issue in any industry, especially in the apparel industry due to heavy work load, more working hours, stress due to target covering, conflicts between work and family domains and repetitive tasks. According to the findings of Amarakoon & Wickramasinghe (2010) work-life balance is one of the most significant areas that employer should give attention to when creating an environment in which the employees can become engaged in order to get positive outcomes from employees. Opatha (2010) indicates if employees cannot meet the respective demands and the relatives career and family life parties are dissatisfied. It leads to work family conflict. Work and family life balance become a contemporary issue in the current society due to several demographic changes in the economy as rapid growth of women labour force participation, emergence of

dual earner families and working mothers. It is expected that female employees of the apparel sector would have a stronger relationship between work and life balance and job engagement.

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

Work-life balance is one of the most significant areas that an employer should give attention to when creating an environment in which the employees can become engaged in order to get positive outcomes from employees. The labour market in the recent decades has achieved a vast growth in the labour force participation of married women due to women's educational attainment because the dual-earner, husband-and-wife families are quickly becoming the norm. Shaw (2010) found that the garment industry workforce profile consists of women account for 87 per cent of garment factory workers, although males predominate in the management positions. Further Shaw (2010) has explained female garment workers, especially lower level women workers suffer from work life balance issue due to long working hours, heavy work load per individual and high stress due to target coverage and order fulfillment, inflexible working arrangements. As Golden (2011) mentioned, lower level married female employees in the apparel industry were less committed and not really engaged with their jobs, because of that women employees felt guilty that they were unable to fulfill the traditional maternal role and working mothers feel guilty for not spending as much time as they believe should spend with their children and family members. Hence, it tends to create negative feelings about their job and work place. This conflict leads to becoming mentally and physically exhausted because of the role demands arising from the work and family domains. The ultimate result will be health impairment, dissatisfaction and decreased commitment towards life and work roles.

However, there is a gap in the empirical knowledge available, especially in Sri Lanka with regard to the impact of work- life balance on job engagement with special reference to female married employees. As a result, there is an unclear area about the impact of work- family life balance on job engagement with special reference to female married employees. This gap exists especially in the Sri Lankan apparel sector and about its machine operators. Therefore, the problem addressed in this study is how work - family life balance impact on employee job engagement of married female machine operators of the apparel sector in Dehiowita Divisional Sector, Kegalle District, Sabaragamuwa province, Sri Lanka.

### **Research Framework**

Work and Family Life Balance: according to Amarakoon & Wickramasinghe (2010), Buddhapriya (2009), Frone & Rice (2007), Ganster & Thomas (1995), Lockwood (2003) and Shankar and Bhatnagar (2010) have explained that there is a positive correlation between the level of work life balance and level of job engagement. Hence, the first hypothesis of this study was as follows;

*H<sub>1</sub>: There is a positive impact of work-family life balance on individual's job engagement of married female machine operators of the apparel sector in Dehiowita Divisional Sector, Kegalle District, Sri Lanka.*

Work Demand: As mentioned by Bloom et al (2006), Edwards and Rothbard (2005) cited in Gamage (2013), Guest (2002) cited in Amarakoon & Wickramasinghe (2010), Wafula (2010) and Yang et al (2000) cited in Boyar et al (2008) there is a positive relationship between work demand and job engagement. Thus, the second hypothesis of this study was as follows;

H<sub>2</sub>: *There is an impact of work demand on job engagement of married female machine operators of the apparel sector in Dehiowita Divisional Sector, Kegalle District, Sri Lanka.*

Organizational Work-Family Life Support: According to Bloom et al (2006), Buddhapriya (2009), Ganster and Thomas (1995) and Guest (2002) cited in Amarakoon & Wickramasinghe (2010) mention that organizational work-life support directly impacts job engagement. Based on the arguments and empirical evidence, the third hypothesis of this study was as follows:

H<sub>3</sub>: *Organizational work-life support directly impacts job engagement of married female machine operators of apparel sector in Dehiowita Divisional Sector, Kegalle District, Sri Lanka.*

Family Demand: There are theoretical arguments and empirical evidence Ajiboye (2008) cited in Akintayo (2010), Amarakoon & Wickramasinghe (2010), Bloom et al (2006) and Ganster & Thomas (1995) linking family demand with job engagement. A positive relationship exists between family demand and job engagement. Hence the fourth hypothesis of this study was formulated as:

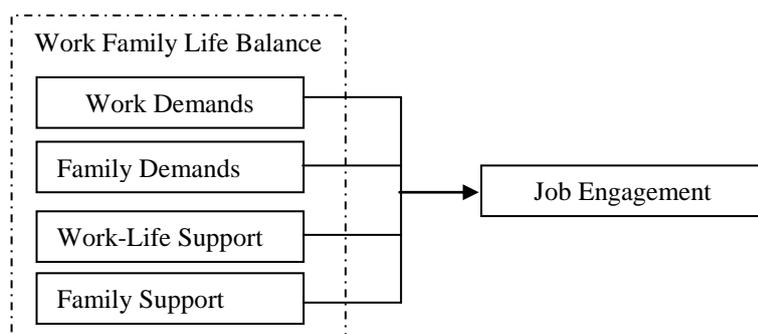
H<sub>4</sub>: *There is an impact of family demand on job engagement of married female machine operators of apparel sector in Dehiowita Divisional Sector, Kegalle District, Sri Lanka.*

As cited in Apperson et al (2002), Gamage (2013) and Thavakumar & Victor (2010) there is an impact of family demand on job engagement. Thus hypothesis five was developed as follow;

H<sub>5</sub>: *There is an impact of family support on job engagement of married female machine operators of apparel sector in Dehiowita Divisional Sector, Kegalle District, Sri Lanka.*

This conceptual framework mainly highlights the relationship of two variables (work and family life balance and job engagement of employee). Work and family life balance can be divided into four variables (dimensions) as work demands, family demands, work-life support and family support. In this conceptual model, the independent variable is work and family life balance whereas; the dependent variable is the job engagement. Job engagement can be divided into three variables (dimensions) as cognitive engagement, emotional engagement and physical engagement. Figure 1 depicts the conceptual framework of the study.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework



## **Method**

### ***Study Design***

The objective is to establish the relationships between this independent variable (work-family life balance) and the dependent variable (job engagement). This was a field study because it has examined the impact of work-family life balance on job engagement of machine operators in the natural working environment of the apparel industry. None of the variables were controlled or manipulated. As the study was conducted in the natural environment where events normally occur, it is a non-contrived setting. No artificial or contrived setting was created for the study. The survey method has been characterized by a structured questionnaire that was selected as the method of data collection in this study. This study is purely based on primary data. The non-contrived field-setting environment is used to collect the primary data. The type of investigation is descriptive and it is a cross-sectional study. The unit of analysis is individual where the machine operators are served as respondents.

The study was carried out among the sample of 215 female married machine operators of the apparel sector in Dehiowita Divisional Sector, Kegalle district in Sri Lanka with two garment factories. Population of this study was 221 female married machine operators and researchers distributed the questionnaires among them. Only 215 respondents have submitted questionnaires. Therefore, the sample of this study was 215 female married machine operators. The sampling method of the survey was the universal sampling method.

### ***Measures***

The data related to the selected sample was collected using the questionnaire method and questions were designed to measure both work and family life balance variable (independent variable) and job engagement variable (dependent variable). The questionnaire consisted of a number of question items to measure these variables. The level of measurement of both variables would be interval. The questionnaire for measuring work and family life balance (Section - 1) has abstracted from known questionnaires developed by Thomas and Ganster (1995) and Grandey et al (2005). Responses were taken through a five-point Likert Scale including strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree and strongly agree.

It contained 17 statements, which measured various aspects of the work and family life balance as work demand (Time spent at work, Working hours, Work overload), family demand (Family roles, Family obligations), organizational support (Flexible work arrangements, Supervisor support) and family support (Support of Spouse, Parents & relatives support) with 09 indicators.

In order to measure the employee job engagement an internationally recognized questionnaire developed by May et al (2004) was used. Responses were taken through five-point Likert Scale including strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree and strongly agree. It contained 11 statements, which measured various aspects of the job engagement of machine operators as emotional engagement (positive attitudes, positive feelings), physical engagement (dedication toward their work role, energy toward their work role), and cognitive engagement (psychological engagement). The sample machine operators are low educated employees and their mother tongue is Sinhala. So, the respondents of the factory employees do not have an English speaking background. Therefore, first of all the researcher designed the questionnaire in English and then it was translated into Sinhala.

**Validity and Reliability**

The inter item consistency reliability was examined with Cronbach's Alpha test (Kottawatta 2014). Table 1 gives the results of Cronbach's Alpha test which suggests that internal reliability of each instrument is satisfactory.

Table 1: Cronbach's Alpha Coefficients

	Instrument	Cronbach's Alpha
1	Work and Family Life Balance	0.815
2	Job Engagement	0.784

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 (Kottawatta 2014).

**Techniques of data analysis**

Data collected from primary (questionnaire) source were analyzed using the computer based statistical data analysis package, SPSS (version 16.0) for validity, reliability and relationship testing. The data analysis included the univariate and bivariate analyses.

**Results**

To investigate the responses for independent and dependent variables of the female married machine operators of apparel sector in Dehiowita Divisional Sector, univariate analysis was used. The results of the univariate analysis are given in Table 2.

Table 2: Univariate Analysis

	Work life Balance	Job Engagement
Valid	215	215
Mean	3.5671	3.5242
Median	3.6500	3.7500
Mode	3.84	4.00
Std. Deviation	.41742	.59135
Variance	.174	.350
Skewness	-1.830	-1.461
Std. Error of Skewness	.166	.166
Kurtosis	3.139	1.032
Std. Error of Kurtosis	.330	.330
Minimum	2.12	1.75
Maximum	4.06	4.22

According to Table 2, work and family life balance and job engagement of the female married machine operators of the apparel sector in Dehiowita Divisional Sector are approximately normally distributed. As per means, work and family life balance and the job engagements of respondents of female married machine operators are "Poor".

The bivariate analysis, Pearson's correlation between work and family life balance and the job engagement of the female married machine operators' respondents are illustrated in Table 3.

Table 3: The Pearson's Correlation between Work and Family Life Balance and the Job Engagement

	Work - family life balance	Job engagement
Work - Family Life Balance	Pearson Correlation	1
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.696**
	N	.000
		215
		215

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

According to Table 3, the Pearson Correlation Coefficient is 0.696 which is positive. This indicates that there is a strong positive correlation between work and family life balance and the job engagement. The found relationship is statistically significant as correlation significant at 0.01 level (1- tailed). Therefore, there is statistical evidence to claim that there is a relationship between work and family life balance and the job engagement.

The results of simple regression analysis of the work and family life balance against the job engagement are given in Table 4.

Table 4: Results of Regression Analysis

Variables	Work and family life balance
Method	Linear
R Square	0.485
Adjusted R Square	0.483
F	200.601
Significance	0.000
B- constant	0.005
b- Value	0.696

According to table 4, work and family life balance (independent variable) is positively related with the job engagement (dependent variable) of the female married machine operators of the apparel sector in Dehiowita pradhesiya sabhawa (b-vale: 0.696, R Sruare: 0.485, Sig: 0.000).

### Discussion and Conclusion

According to the results of the Pearson's correlation there is a positive significance between work and family life balance and the job engagement of the female married machine operators of the apparel sector in Dehiowita Divisional Sector. According to the results, the hypothesis is accepted that there is an impact of work and family life balance on job engagement of the female married machine operators in the apparel industry in Dehiowita Divisional Sector. Hence there are statistical evidences to support to accept all five hypotheses formulated for the study.

The first hypothesis was: there is a positive impact of work-family life balance on job engagement of the female married machine operators in the apparel industry in Dehiowita Divisional Sector, Kegalle district, province of Sabaragamuwa in Sri Lanka. It was confirmed that there is a positive and significant impact of work-family life balance on job engagement of the female married machine operators in the apparel industry in Dehiowita Divisional Sector

The second hypothesis was: there is an impact of work demand on job engagement of the female married machine operators in the apparel industry in Dehiowita Divisional Sector, Kegalle district, Sabaragamuwa province in Sri Lanka. According to the results, the

hypothesis is accepted that there is an impact of work demand on job engagement of the female married machine operators in the apparel industry in Dehiowita Divisional Sector.

The third hypothesis was: organizational work-life support is directly impacts job engagement of the female married machine operators in the apparel industry in Dehiowita Divisional Sector, Kegalle district, Sabaragamuwa province in Sri Lanka. The data supported the hypothesis that organizational work-life support directly impacts job engagement of the female married machine operators in the apparel industry in Dehiowita Divisional Sector.

The fourth hypothesis was: there is an impact of family demand on job engagement of the female married machine operators in the apparel industry in Dehiowita Divisional Sector, Kegalle district, province of Sabaragamuwa in Sri Lanka. The statistical testing supported to accept the hypothesis that there is an impact of family demand on job engagement of the female married machine operators in the apparel industry in Dehiowita Divisional Sector.

The fifth hypothesis was: there is an impact of family support on job engagement of the female married machine operators in the apparel industry in Dehiowita Divisional Sector, Kegalle district, Sabaragamuwa province in Sri Lanka. According to the results, the hypothesis is accepted that there is an impact of family support on job engagement of the female married machine operators in the apparel industry in Dehiowita Divisional Sector.

The Pearson correlation between work and family life balance and the job engagement was 0.696 and positive. Standardized coefficient of organizational work-life support (0.618) was higher than standardized coefficient of other dimensions of work and family life balance leads to generating a higher influence on employee job engagement.

The findings of this research study is important theoretically as well as practically and according to the findings of this study work-life balance is one significant area an employer should give attention to when creating an environment in which the employees can become engaged. Therefore, more successful programs of work and family life balance for improving job engagement should be implemented.

This study focuses only on the apparel industry in Dehiowita Divisional Sector, Kegalle district, Sabaragamuwa province in Sri Lanka. Therefore, future research should extend these preliminary efforts to identify the relationship between work-life balance and job engagement in other industries and in other districts as well.

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