

Examining the Relationship of Work-Life Conflict and Employee Performance (A Case from NADRA Pakistan)

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Received: December 5, 2010 Accepted: April 23, 2011 Published: October 1, 2011

doi:10.5539/ijbm.v6n10p170 URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5539/ijbm.v6n10p170>

Abstract

With the ever increasing requirements of the work, employees are likely to develop conflict between their work and non-work activities. This paper investigates the relationship of employees' work-life conflict with their performance. A convenient sample of 103 respondents came from National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) for the study. The Pearson's product moment correlation showed no association for the said relationship. An inverse relationship was found working between age of the employees and work-life conflict they experience. Moreover differences of work-life conflict and performance for some demographic variables were measured by applying independent sample t test. The results of the study are compared to the available relevant studies.

Keywords: Work-Life conflict, Employee performance, Gender, Age, Marital status

1. Introduction

Negative stress in the form of work life conflict (WLC) is injurious to the performance of any organization (Beauregard & Henry, 2009). Giga and Hoel (2003) found stress related negatively to worker and organizational performance. Work life conflict (WLC) is one of the stresses faced by the employees of over-worked organizations. Thus, lack of work-life balance that is work life conflict influences working individual's performance at workplace as well as in personal life (Naithani, 2010). WLC has become a priority for organizations, since it has been seen to have significant negative effects on workers' health, general psychological well-being, and productivity (Felstead, Jewson, Phizacklea, & Walters 2002). Work-life conflict can be defined as "...a form of inter-role conflict in which work and family demands are mutually incompatible, meeting demands of both the domains is difficult" (Higgins, Duxbury, & Lyons, 2007). Whereas the employee performance can be seen as the level of productivity of an individual employee, relative to their colleagues on numerous job related behaviors and outcomes (Babin & Boles, 1998).

The current case is developed from National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) which was established as National Database Organization (NDO), an attached department under the Ministry of Interior, Government of Pakistan in 1998. On 10 March, 2000, NDO & Directorate General of Registration merged to form NADRA, an independent corporate body with requisite autonomy to operate independently and facilitate good governance. NADRA proudly employs a highly skilled workforce of more than 11,000 technical and management personnel, who contribute to register more than 96 million citizens and print more than 70 million Computerized National Identity Cards (NADRA, 2010).

The affect of work-life conflict on performance are crucial to study to enhance employee performance and to ultimately achieve organizational success. Across the globe, many researchers have carried out research on the topic of work life conflict (Hill, Hawkins, Ferris, & Weitzman, 2001; Wayne & Cordeiro, 2003; Batt & Valcour, 2003; Eaton, 2003; Baines & Gelder, 2003; Konrad & Mangel, 2000; Perry-Smith & Blum, 2000) and performance (Bashir & Ramay, 2010; Anderson, 2003; Rose, 2003; Beehr, Jex, Stacy & Murray, 2000) but still there is a need to explore the same in a developing country like Pakistan. So, the study at hand examines the affect of work-life conflict on the performance of employees working in NADRA, Pakistan. Moreover it also examines the differences in work-life conflict and performance with respect to gender and marital status of the employees.

2. Literature review

Achieving high employee performance is gaining importance with every coming day as it is stronger signal of organizational success whereas work-life conflict which is one of the outcomes of stress is responsible for reducing the performance level of employees. There is a negative correlation found between job stress and job performance. The employees having high level of job stress generally tend to have low performance. In a study, males were found to be more affected by stress than females that increased the chances of reducing job performance greatly (Kazmi, Amjad, & Khan, 2007).

Work-life conflict has been defined as the inter-role conflict where the demands created by the job hinder employees to perform family related responsibilities (Netemeyer, Brashear-Alejandro, & Boles 2004). Work-life conflict (WLC) and work-family conflict are used interchangeably in the literature but former is wider in its perspective. The two important factors that increase WLC are time based conflict and strain based conflict. The former refers to the conflict that arises when 'the time devoted to work' makes it difficult to fulfill the obligations and requirements of the family role; and the later, on the other hand, arises when 'the pressure of the work roles' spills over and affects interactions within the family domain (Quick et al., 2004). Employee performance is affected by the conflicts faced at work and at home and employee performance is said to be the level of productivity of an individual employee, relative to his or her colleagues on numerous jobs related behaviors and outcomes (Babin & Boles, 1998).

Noor and Maad (2008) examined the relationship between work-life conflict, stress and turnover intentions among 300 marketing executives in Pakistan. The researchers found that work-life conflict and stress have positive relationship with turnover intentions. It is a clear indication that the employees intended to leave the organization may not feel comfortable working at the same organization. Different policies, practices and strategies are needed to reduce the conflict between work and life activities (Higgins, Duxbury, & Lyons, 2007). The researchers suggested that the organizations should develop and adopt such strategies that help in reducing symptoms of work-life conflict and the causes of stress.

Research studies have found the results of experienced work-family conflict such as increased levels of stress, decreased performance at home and work, and decreased life and work satisfaction (Allen et al., 2000; Rotondo, Carlson, & Kincaid, 2003). Eaton (2001) noted that work-life balance results in improved productivity which means good employee performance at work due to minimum or no conflict between work and non-work responsibilities. One of the researchers suggested that work-life balance policies could be helpful in increasing organizational commitment. Because higher levels of organizational commitment was found related with reducing the turnover intentions and increasing the job performance (Eaton, 2001). Anne (2007) highlighted that women in jobs with high demands and high control did not experienced more work-family conflict than men, even working equal number of hours. Women are more prone to work-life conflict as compared to men (Grzywacz et al., 2007) which led to health problems.

White, Hill, McGovern, Mills and Smeaton (2003) hypothesized that high commitment or high performance management practices could have a negative impact on the private lives of workers, as they elicit discretionary effort, which often takes the form of additional working hours. Work-life balance policies could be used to offset those adverse effects. White et al. (2003) found that high commitment management practices had a negative

effect on employees' lives, even after controlling for the hours worked. They also found that flexibility reduced negative spill-over for women but had little effect for men. The authors concluded that it is not necessary that employees always be benefited from high commitment management practices. Lo (2003) concluded that in Hong Kong, married female professionals faced more work-life conflict due to long working hours which affected their performance at work (Lo, 2003). WLC had generally been linked with lower productivity and poorer self rated and supervisor rated performance (Dorio, Bryant, & Allen, 2008).

The researchers have found mixed results while exploring the impact of gender on work-life conflict. Malik, Saleem and Ahmad (2010) noted no significant difference between male and female employees in balancing their work and life activities meaning that male and female experience work-life conflict with same intensity and manner. Some researchers found that gender has no significant effect on WLC while others have categorically argued that gender does play an important role, with female employees experiencing greater WLC than male employees (Lyness & Kropf 2005; Biggs & Brough, 2005). In the context of IT sector, Quesenberry et al. (2006) argued that women experience higher WLC since they need to balance domestic responsibilities while trying to keep pace with a rapidly changing field. Lo (2003) found that female professionals faced more work-life conflict due to long working hours. Few researchers have also suggested that male employees experience higher WLC than their female counterparts (Gambles et al., 2006). However, research conducted by Dyne, Jehn and Cummings (2002) suggested that gender was not correlated with work strain and home strain faced by these service providers.

Some researchers have found men, performing well at work as compared to women (Nkereuwem, 1996). On the other hand, research has shown that, across gender there is no significant difference of performance in some service industries (Castilla, 2005; Dyne, Jehn, & Cummings, 2002).

3. Hypotheses

In the light of available literature, the following hypotheses were developed for the current study.

H1: There is a negative relationship between employees' performance and their work life conflict

H2: There is an association between employees' age and their work life conflict

H3: There is a difference in performance of male and female employees

H4: There is a difference in work life conflict faced by male and female employees

H5: There is a difference between married and unmarried employees with respect to work life conflict

4. Methodology

4.1 Population and Sample

Population of the study was comprised of all the employees working at some responsible positions in National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA), Pakistan. A total of 130 questionnaires were distributed among the employees of NADRA keeping in mind the commitment and job requirements of the employees. Despite their busy work schedule 103 respondents responded to the questionnaire resulting in 79.2% response rate. Non probability convenience sampling technique was employed to collect the data.

4.2 Measures Used

The measures used for the current study to examine the relationship among the employee performance (dependent variable) and work-life conflict (independent variable) were adopted from the previous research studies. The elements asked to measure work-life conflict were assessed on a five point Likert type scale ranging from 'Strongly Disagree' to 'Strongly Agree'. While items asked to measure employee performance were recorded on a five point scale ranging from 'Very Poor' to 'Very Good'. The reliability was reconfirmed through Cronbach's alpha scores. The details of the measures used with Cronbach alpha scores are listed in Table 1.

Place Table 1 Here

4.3 Procedure

The data from the employees of NDARA was collected by personally visiting the Provincial Headquarters (Peshawar) and Regional Office (Charsadda). The employees of different departments including Operations, Finance and HR took part in the survey. The process of data gathering took 11 days to be finalized for statistical analysis. The data was analyzed and processed through Statistical Package for Social Sciences. The independent and dependent variables were computed before applying the statistical tests. Normality of the data was also measured before applying the parametric tests. The results are discussed here based on the statistical tests (Pearson correlation and independent sample t test) applied to the data collected.

5. Results and Discussion

Results are based on the responses given by the full time male and female employees of NADRA, Pakistan. Frequency distribution and the demographic profile of the respondents are given in Table 2.

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The average age of the respondents thus calculated is 30 years ranging from 19 years to 51 years. Maximum respondents are male (86.4%), almost half of the respondents are unmarried (50.4%) and have graduation degrees (39.8%).

To check Hypothesis 1 which states that there is a negative relationship between employees' performance and their work life conflict, Pearson correlation coefficient was calculated as shown in Table 3.

Place Table 3 Here

The results of Pearson's correlation show that there is no relationship ($r = -0.111$, $p = 0.263$) between work-life conflict and performance of employee working at NADRA, Pakistan. Although the relationship is not significant however Table 3 reveals a weak and negative association between work life conflict and employee performance. It implies that the employees working at NADRA have no difficulty in managing their home and life domains and can easily perform at work without any difficulty. This may be due to the facilities they have at their workplaces and the financial/ logistical benefits they receive from NADRA to manage their family affairs. The results of the study are in line with earlier studies available (Kazmi, Amjad & Khan, 2007; Eaton, 2001) which asserted that work life conflict is a source of decreasing employee job performance.

As per Hypothesis 2, the relationship between age and work life conflict of the employees working at NADRA was checked by applying Pearson correlation analysis as shown in Table 4.

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The results clearly notify that there is a negative and significant relationship ($r = -0.243$, $p = 0.016$) between age of the employee and work life conflict they face at the organization. As the age of the employees increase they experience lesser conflicts relating to work and life domains. Because by getting older, employees learn how to perform, how to manage relations, and how to maintain a balance between work and family domains.

Hypotheses 3 and 4 which stated for a difference of employee performance and work life conflict across gender of the employee working at NADRA, were checked by applying independent sample t test, as evident through Table 5.

Place Table 5 Here

The results of t – test clearly shows that there is no significant difference between male and female employees with respect to work-life conflict ($p > 0.05$) and performance ($p > 0.05$). The results are supported by the study conducted by Malik, Saleem and Ahmad (2010) which revealed that there is no significant difference in work life conflict faced by male and female employees. And earlier research studies (Castilla, 2005; Dyne, Jehn, & Cummings, 2002) also concluded that performance of male and female employees was not significantly different.

However, the mean values show that female employees experience more conflict ($M = 2.71$) between their work and life activities as compared to male ($M = 2.57$) counterparts. On the other hand, looking at the performance of the employees it is important to note that female employees even after facing more conflict perform better ($M = 4.55$) than male employee ($M = 4.36$). This is a new finding of this study which has not been identified by any of the researchers earlier. Contrary to this finding, Nkereuwem (1996) noted that men perform well while at work and face less conflict as compared to women. While regarding work life conflict past studies found mixed results. Malik, Saleem and Ahmad (2010) noted no significant difference between male and female employees in balancing their work and life activities. Certain studies found that female employees experience more work life conflict than male employees (Lyness & Kropf, 2005; Biggs & Brough, 2005; Grzywacz et al., 2007). But there are studies available that argued that male employees experience higher WLC than their females (Gambles et al., 2006). The inconsistent findings may be due to the reason that these studies employing different measures of WLC might have been conducted in different cultures and sectors. It is very likely that men working in highly demanding jobs may face more conflict than women.

Hypothesis 5 stated for a difference of work life conflict across the marital status of the employees. This was checked by applying independent sample t as shown in Table 6.

Place Table 6 Here

There is a significant difference between married and unmarried employees with respect to work life conflict they face. It is noted that unmarried employees face more conflict as compared to married employees. The reason may be the social support which married people get from their spouse and children. Due to this reason they may face less conflict as compared to unmarried employees.

6. Conclusion

The study could not establish a relationship between work life conflict and employee performance. However correlation analysis indicated that there is a weak and inverse relationship of work-life conflict with employee performance. Here the relationship is so weak that the performance of employees working at NADRA is not much affected by their work and non-work responsibilities. Moreover, the study reveals that age of employees has an indirect relationship with the work life conflict. As the age of the employees increases they experience less conflict in their work and non-work domains.

The current study could prove no significant difference between male and female employees of NADRA regarding their WLC and performance. It shows that they face same working conditions and they perform in the same manner while at work place. However, descriptive statistics show that female employees score slightly higher than male employee on work life conflict and job performance. However, based on the mean values one of the interesting findings of the current study is that females even after experiencing more conflict perform better than men. This may be due to the fact that females are more flexible in their nature and can accommodate multiple tasks at a time. The study shows a significant difference of work life conflict between married and unmarried employees of NADRA. Married employees face less conflict in their work and family domains as compared to unmarried employees. The reason may be the social and emotional support that married people receive from their spouses and children.

This study is novel in its approach as it explores one of the leading organizations in the system integrators in the global identification sector and boasts extensive experience in designing, implementing, and operating solutions for corporate and public sector clients. The results of the study may be helpful for the management of NADRA and other organizations to find out the ways that help in reducing the conflict between work and life spheres and keeping the employees satisfied for the uninterrupted long run operations. The results related to employee gender and marital status may be used by the HR managers during the selection process and by the project managers to select the team members.

7. Limitations and Recommendations

Limitations of the current study relates to the number of organizations studied and the sample size. The larger sample size may result in more clear and different results. The cross sectional data is used for the study, the longitudinal study may also come up with different findings. The questionnaires were distributed among employees via managers. Employees having a lot of work to do at NADRA were requested to fill in the questionnaires. This is most likely that due to shortage of time they might not have understood the nature of the study and might have responded to the questions improperly. Another limitation might be the socially desirable behavior of the respondents.

Employees working at NADRA, experiencing work-life conflict leading to decreased performance should be provided with the social support, both at work and at home. Employees are more likely to get social support at home as an opportunity for positive change because relationships at home seem to be stronger than relationships at work. Studies are needed to be carried out for testing the relationship of work-life conflict and social support with employee performance for further clarification of the understanding.

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Table 1. Source, number of items and Cronbach's alpha for the measures used

Variable	Source	No. of Items	Cronbach's alpha
Employee performance	Babin & Boles, (1998)	05	0.81
Work-life conflict	Netemeyer, Boles, & McMurrian, (1996)	09	0.71

Table 2. Demographic profile of the respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	89	86.4%
	Female	14	13.5%
Marital status	Unmarried	52	50.4%
	Married	51	49.5%
Education	Under graduate	23	22.3%
	Graduate	41	39.8%
	Post graduate	39	37.9%

Table 3. Pearson's correlation test for work-life conflict and employee performance

Variables	Employee performance	Work - Life Conflict
Employee performance	1	-.111
Work - Life Conflict	-	1

Table 4. Pearson's correlation test for work-life conflict and age

Variables	Age	Work - Life Conflict
Age	1	-.243*
Work - Life Conflict	-	1

*Showing significant relationship ($p > 0.05$)

Table 5. Showing independent sample t – test for employee performance and work-life conflict across gender

Variables Value	Category	N	Mean	S.D.	t – value	P – value
EP	Male	89	4.36	0.45	-1.44	0.153
	Female	14	4.55	0.27		
WLC	Male	89	2.57	0.50	-0.92	0.358
	Female	14	2.71	0.48		

Table 6. Independent sample t – test for work-life conflict and martial status

Variables	Category	N	Mean	S.D.	t – value	P – value
WLC	Married	51	2.24	0.59	3.50	0.001
	Unmarried	52	2.64	0.55		