BALANCING ACT: UNRAVELING THE ANTECEDENTS AND CONSEQUENCES OF WORK-LIFE CONFLICT

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ABSTRACT

Work-family or work-life conflict occurs when the demands of work and family roles conflict, causing imbalances and difficulties. Heavy responsibilities, a lack of workplace flexibility, gender role expectations, and insufficient social support are precursors. Consequences include psychological distress, disrupted relationships, decreased satisfaction, career setbacks, and adverse organizational results. These factors must be addressed in order to promote well-being and achieve a healthy work-life balance. This study provides insight into the work-life conflict literature by outlining its causes and consequences. To succeed in today's diverse and competitive environment, employees must maintain the right balance between their work and life roles. The construct of WLC (work-life conflict) has gained the focus of researchers and practitioners as it yields many adverse organizational outcomes. Therefore, researchers have put great emphasis on understanding the mechanisms of work-life conflict to develop work and life balance. The primary objective of this study is to identify the antecedents and consequences of WLC based on an extensive literature review. The study concludes with significant implications for practitioners and managers.

Keywords: Work-life conflict; Antecedents; consequences; Covid-19

1. INTRODUCTION

The work-life conflict has become a burning issue with vast economic and social implications (Miller, 2019). To be successful and industrious in today's diverse global market, employees must equip themselves with the required skills and develop and sustain the right balance between work and personal life (Beauregard & Henry, 2009). Work-life conflict is "a specific type of inter-role conflict where internal and external work role pressures are incompatible with each other" (Thomas & Ganster, 1995). Work-life conflict (WLC) extends the work-family conflict

literature by suggesting that job roles may interfere with one's personal interests and roles in their personal life (Trzebiatowski & Triana, 2020). WLC means having problems of involvement in non-work related areas due to engrossment in work-related tasks (Cho & Ryu, 2016). WLC is a conflict between roles and has three approaches: based on time, strain, and behavior (Medina et al., 2021).

WLC is any state in which an employee's job responsibilities conflict and come in the way of their need to engage with their family. Employees with a family with members dependent on them, such as their children, tend to experience more work-life conflict than those with no dependents, although such employees may face conflicts if their spouse is unwell (Miller, 2019). With the emergence and growth of dual-earning families and the concept of males as caregivers and females as breadwinners (Bianchi & Milkie, 2010), it is being highlighted that both genders experience work-life conflict (Rehel & Baxter, 2015). WLC consists of the conflicts that arise due to the demands of both work and family (Carnevale & Hatak, 2020). Empirical results have shown that the demands of family generate a stressor that leads to work-life conflict (Lu et al., 2011), and these demands also worsen the negative effect of WLC (Kim & Cho, 2018). The standpoint of WLC is that employees have limited time, energy, and resources, and the requirement to simultaneously indulge in various roles inexorably leads to work-life conflict and impacts life quality (Greenhaus & Allen, 2011). Studies in the Western context highlight that skillful individuals with career aspirations and family duties are more prone to serious work-life conflict (Beigi et al., 2017).

WLC is normally seen as a negative consequence of role pressures (Greenhaus & Allen, 2011). Such pressures and subsequent conflicts may be asymmetric or directional, empirically, and conceptually (Zoonen et al., 2020). Existing literature has examined the association between work-life conflict and other employee-related consequences through psychology or organization, considering factors like self-efficacy and organizational demand/support perception (Cho & Ryu, 2016). Several terminologies like positive or negative spill-over, work-life balance, work-life conflict, and work-to-family strain are used interchangeably since they all discuss the relationship between employees' work and life (Minnotte, 2012). WLC arises in the case of employees experiencing stress when faced with the pressure to cope with family and work demands simultaneously (Trzebiatowski & Triana, 2020).

Many studies have shown that two essential outcomes of work-life conflict (WLC) are turnover (Joseph et al., 2007) and decreased productivity (Poelmans, 2009). WLC is associated with increased turnover intention and reduced job satisfaction (Allen, 2001). This holds particularly true for employees who perceive adverse career consequences when balancing family responsibilities and for organizations that do not promote and provide a family-friendly work environment (Anderson et al., 2002). WLC also has negative impacts on external outcomes, such as relationships, life satisfaction, and family satisfaction (Greenhaus et al., 1997). It can also have consequences for employees' physical health (Thomas & Ganster, 1995) and mental health (Frone & Russell, 1992). The objective of the current study is to explore the antecedents and consequences of work-life conflict.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Antecedents of Work-Life Conflict

WLC refers to the spillover of tensions and duties from one domain to another (Wayne et al., 2004). Conflict between work and life has become a widespread issue across various economic sectors and is now one of the main concerns. WLC has gained significant relevance in recent years (Karhula et al., 2007). Literature reveals that employees' job demands can create conflicts with their non-working lives, ultimately impacting well-being (Armstrong et al., 2015). WLC arises when excessive time spent on the job hinders engagement in other home activities, preventing relaxation and socialization (Lu et al., 2017).

In addition to job demands, family demands play a crucial role in WLC studies and should be considered a strong determinant of conflict between work and life (Kim & Cho, 2020). Family demands refer to the responsibilities, time, and commitment devoted to family obligations, such as taking care of family members and household tasks (Choi, 2008). Many studies highlight that family demands act as stressors that exacerbate the negative effect of family demands on WLC. Existing literature also underscores the positive association between family responsibility discrimination (FRD) and WLC and turnover (Anderson et al., 2002).

WLC is intertwined with changes in family structures, posing challenges within work domains. In a 4-2-1 structure, having an only child presents both advantages and challenges (Xian et al., 2021). Males and females from the one-child generation face considerable pressures in the work-family interface (Xian et al., 2021). The use of technology creates a link between

WLC and organizational identification. For example, using technology after working hours may lead to communication with supervisors regarding family responsibilities and, similarly, with family members regarding job responsibilities (Zoonen et al., 2020). Moreover, it has become common for firms to promote the use of devices such as mobile phones and laptops. Employees strive to find balance while using these devices at home or work (Dorenkamp & Ruhle, 2019). Using mobile phones at home after working hours gives the impression to employees' family members that they are busy with job tasks and not involved in household responsibilities, thus giving rise to work-life conflict (Zoonen et al., 2020).

With the spreading concept of remote working (Contreras et al., 2020), individuals and firms encounter a challenge in drawing boundaries between home and work tasks (Elahi et al., 2022; Zoonen et al., 2021). Evidence shows that working remotely during Covid-19 aggravates WLC (Elahi et al., 2022). Carnevale & Hatak (2020) state that the possibility of work-life conflict will increase with the spread of Covid-19. Conflicts based on stress, energy, and time like devoting "traditional work hours" to homeschooling kids, and fatigue and exhaustion resulting from covid-19 may cause increased WLC during and post-pandemic (Rudolph et al., 2021). Studies have focused on WLC and teleworking, bringing in the view that working hours can be increased when the individual works from home (Medina et al., 2021). As the pandemic has confined people to their houses and resultantly increased family responsibilities, teleworking overload is assumed to influence WLC (Medina et al., 2021).

As far as working hours are concerned, working in shifts is very common today. However, research reveals a negative association with shift working (Karhula et al., 2017). Researchers also reveal that part-time jobs enable employees to manage better their work and family roles than full-time employees (Kim & Cho, 2020). Still, the literature on the relationship between WLC and shift working is limited (Karhula et al., 2017). Perceived control is individuals' feeling of control regarding managing their WLC (Wynn & Rao, 2020). Moreover, studies argue that conflict is more seen in those environments where employees have experience managing people's aggression and hostility (Dierdorff & Ellington, 2008). Stereotype threat is such a phenomenon where an employee is mindful and considerate about being judged based on the negative stereotypes prevalent regarding his social group (Spencer et al., 2016). If an employee joins an organization keeping in mind that employees having family responsibilities are

dishonored, there lies a possibility of stereotype threat (Miller, 2019). Employees with family responsibilities dread being mistreated and considered incompetent due to family distractions (Miller, 2019). WLC also relates to racial and class differences (Williams et al., 2016). Supervisors and company policies about the well-being of employees tend to maintain borders in areas of work and hence are critical players in managing work-life conflict (Sarker et al., 2018). Support from supervisors decreases this conflict (Allen, 2001).

Moreover, Richman et al. (2008) talk about how flexibility enables one to meet the demands of each role in employees' life. Flexibility enactment theory states that flexibility is the only best predictor of consequences of lower WLC (Richman et al., 2008). Many scholars define flexibility as the capability to choose about their engagement in work-related responsibilities (Jeffrey et al., 2008). Socioeconomic status also impacts employees' preferences regarding family and job roles (Duncan et al., 2003), consequently influencing their work-life conflict (Carlson & Kacmar, 2000). Work stressors are categorized as challenge stressors (promoting growth) and hindrance stressors (barrier in growth) and have been studied previously concerning WLC, with findings highlighting that work stressors increase conflict between work and life (Zoonen et al., 2021).

Gender role theory assumes that societal norms direct which roles are appropriate for males and females: the appropriate place for females is the house, whereas for males, it is the workplace (Eagly, 1987). With increasing family demands, traditional women and men experience decreased WLC (Koutris et al., 2019). Many studies have assumed that men suffer from work-life conflict less than women since they have fewer home duties (Gutek et al., 1991), but recent research does not support this notion (Kim & Cho, 2017). Literature tells us that having children is also positively related to WLC (Graham et al., 2021).

Gender role theory assumes that societal norms dictate which roles are appropriate for males and females, with females traditionally associated with the household and males with the workplace (Eagly, 1987). With increasing family demands.

Table 1: The antecedents of Work-life conflict

Factors	Sources
Job demands	(Lu et al., 2017),(Kinman et al., 2017)
Family demands	(Kim & Cho, 2017), (Kim & Cho, 2018)
Perceived family responsibility discrimination	(Trzebiatowski & Triana, 2020)

Family structure	(Xian et al., 2021)
Smartphone use for work after hours	(Zoonen et al., 2020)
Work at home during covid-19	(Graham et al., 2021)
Teleworking overload	(Medina et al., 2021)
Working hour characteristics	(Karhula et al., 2017), (Lu et al., 2017)
Perceived control	(Wynn & Rao, 2020)
Experiences of aggression	(Kinman et al., 2017)
Stereotype threat	(Miller, 2019)
Flexible work schedules, supportive supervisors	(Kao et al., 2020)
Socio economic status	(Kim & Cho, 2020)
Social support	(Zoonen et al., 2021)
Work stressors (Challenge stressors, hindrance stressors)	(Zoonen et al., 2021)
Gender diversity	(Lu et al., 2020),(Graham et al., 2021)

2.2 Consequences of Work-Life Conflict

Occupational groups often struggle to balance work and life responsibilities (Bretzke et al., 2020). Numerous studies have shown the negative consequences of occupational stress on work-life conflict, which contributes to an imbalance between work and personal life (Blum et al., 2008). Work-life conflict resulting from factors such as overtime, workload, and work pressure has a detrimental impact on employee well-being (Hagqvist et al., 2017). Work-life conflict has been found to have a stronger association with general well-being compared to work-related well-being (Geurts & Demerouti, 2003). Role conflict theory suggests that individuals must navigate work and family demands with limited resources and time, and work-life conflict is negatively related to job satisfaction (Buonocore & Russo, 2013). This can lead to frustration and negative organizational outcomes (McCarraher & Daniels, 2000). Existing literature highlights that employees experiencing high levels of work-life conflict often exhibit job dissatisfaction due to conflicting job and family roles (Dorenkamp & Ruhle, 2019).

Empirical evidence indicates that work-life conflict is a significant antecedent of turnover (Hom & Kinicki, 2001). Employees may choose to leave their current job in order to protect themselves from work-life conflict and seek alternative options that can help reduce such conflict (Hom & Kinicki, 2001). When employees have a negative assessment of their workplace, particularly in situations involving work-life conflict, it can lead to withdrawal behaviors, such as intentions to quit (Zimmerman et al., 2016). Using a grounded theory approach to explore turnover and career change intentions, work-life conflict emerged as a prominent factor influencing career change intentions (McGinley et al., 2014) and changes in career aspirations

(Xian et al., 2021). The conflict between work and life resulting from family demands is associated with poor mental health in both genders, even when controlling for physical and psychological job factors (Kim & Cho, 2020). Furthermore, an increase in work-life conflict is associated with higher psychological strain (Zoonen et al., 2021).

Table 2: The consequences of Work-life conflict

Factors	Sources
Psychosocial Occupational Stress	(Bretzke et al., 2020)
Well-being	(Hagqvist et al., 2017)
Job satisfaction	(Lu et al., 2017), (Xian & Meng, 2021)
Turnover intention	(McGinley & Martinez, 2018), (Lu et al., 2017)
Job mobility (Career change intention)	(McGinley & Martinez, 2018)
Career aspiration	(Xian et al., 2021)
Poor mental health	(Kim & Cho, 2020)
Psychological strain	(Zoonen et al., 2021)
Burnout	(Medina et al., 2021)
Emotional exhaustion	(Kinman et al., 2017)
Cynicism	(Geraldes et al., 2018)
Work stress	(Lu et al., 2017)
Exhaustion	(Geraldes et al., 2018)

Previous research has explored the relationships between work-life conflict (WLC) and job stressors, and it has identified the mediating effect of WLC on the association between job stressors and psychological burnout and emotional exhaustion (Burke, 1988). The Conservation of Resources (COR) theory recognizes work-life conflict as a mechanism that contributes to the development of burnout (Medina et al., 2021). Burnout is characterized by three interrelated factors: decreased personal accomplishment, emotional exhaustion, and cynicism (Kinman et al., 2017). Consequently, work-life conflict also contributes to feelings of exhaustion and cynicism (Geraldes et al., 2018).
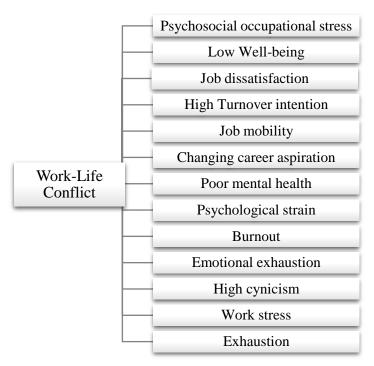
Work-Life Conflict	
	Psychosocial occupational stress
	Low Well-being
	Job dissatisfaction
	High Turnover intention
	Job mobility
	Changing career aspiration
	Poor mental health
	Psychological strain
	Burnout
	Emotional exhaustion
	High cynicism
	Work stress
	Exhaustion

Figure 1: The consequences of Work-life conflict

3. METHODOLOGY

This study utilizes existing literature to identify and emphasize the causes and consequences of work-life conflict. The researchers collected secondary data by conducting a thorough review of relevant literature on work-life conflict from the past five years. By analyzing and synthesizing the findings from previous studies, this study aims to provide valuable insights into the topic of work-life conflict and its implications.

4. DISCUSSION

Work-life conflict is a complex issue influenced by various factors and has significant implications for individuals and organizations. Job demands, family obligations, discrimination, and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic are among the causes of work-life conflict. The intensity of the conflict can be influenced by factors such as telework volume, work hours, and schedule control. Aggression, negative stereotypes, and different types of work stressors also contribute to the conflict. On the other hand, flexible work schedules, supportive managers, socioeconomic factors, and societal assistance can help mitigate work-life conflict.

The consequences of work-life conflict are wide-ranging. It leads to increased occupational stress, decreased well-being, and lower job satisfaction. Individuals experiencing

work-life conflict may consider changing jobs or careers to achieve a better balance. It can hinder career advancement and limit opportunities for growth. Work-life conflict is also associated with negative mental health outcomes, including psychological strain, burnout, emotional exhaustion, and cynicism. Chronic work-related stress and fatigue can exacerbate these negative effects. Recognizing and addressing work-life conflict is crucial for promoting employee well-being, job satisfaction, and retention. Organizations can implement initiatives and policies that support work-life balance, such as flexible work arrangements and supportive work environments. By understanding the antecedents and consequences of work-life conflict, organizations can create a healthier and more productive workforce.

5. IMPLICATIONS

Our literature review on work-family conflict indeed has important theoretical and practical implications. By consolidating and evaluating recent studies, our research contributes to the existing body of knowledge on work-family conflict. It fills gaps in understanding and enhances theoretical frameworks in this field by examining the causes, effects, and underlying mechanisms of work-family conflict. This comprehensive review can shape future research and investigations on work-family conflict. The implications of our research extend to organizations and professionals. By identifying the factors that contribute to work-family conflict, our findings offer valuable insights into potential solutions and approaches for mitigating its negative consequences. This knowledge can inform the development and implementation of policies and practices that support families, promote flexible work arrangements, and establish support mechanisms to enhance work-life balance. By highlighting the impacts of work-family conflict, your study emphasizes the importance for organizations to prioritize employee well-being and establish a positive work-family interface. Overall, our review paper contributes to bridging the gap between research and practice. It provides valuable insights that can be utilized by both professionals and scholars to address work-family conflict issues and create a supportive work environment that fosters work-life balance.

6. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, our review study on work-family conflict has contributed to a deeper understanding of the factors underlying this complex phenomenon and its consequences. By examining the various causes of work-family tension and its broad range of effects, we have

gained insights into the challenges individuals face in balancing their work and family responsibilities. These findings have important theoretical implications, enriching existing frameworks and guiding future research in this field. Furthermore, our study has practical implications for organizations and policymakers. By identifying the factors that contribute to work-family conflict, we can provide valuable insights for the development of practices and policies that promote work-life balance and employee well-being. This can lead to a healthier and more harmonious integration of work and family domains. Overall, our research highlights the significance of addressing work-family conflict and underscores the need for supportive measures in the workplace. By understanding the complexities of work-family conflict and its impact on individuals, organizations and policymakers can work together to create environments that support employees in effectively managing their work and family responsibilities. This, in turn, can contribute to the well-being and productivity of individuals and the overall success of organizations.

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