

A Gender Evaluation of the Balance Construct in B-Schools of UAE



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Abstract: *Work-life balance has become a challenge in today's fast paced workplaces, leading to work-life conflicts and adoption of unsustainable work practices by employees. Technological advancement has instilled an 'always on' attitude among employees, which has led to extended office hours as they are never disconnected from their work whether at home or on a holiday since they have access to office mails and messages all the time. This is the main cause of stress and burnout among the employees. This paper is an attempt to analyse the work life balance of the Academicians working in the business schools in UAE. It further explores the influence of gender on job satisfaction levels related to work life integration among employees. For the data analysis a pilot survey was conducted on respondents based on simple random sampling to get the estimate of work life balance of employees. The analysis revealed that both male and female employees find it difficult to maintain a balance between personal and professional life. Female employees had greater challenges as they had additional household responsibilities and family commitments, which makes it difficult for them to work overtime in the organization, or on weekends and holidays. These facts can be used as an input for the government departments in UAE which continuously strive to bring around policies to enhance the work life balance of employees across all the sectors in UAE.*

Keywords: *Academic institutions, Employee motivation, Job satisfaction Work life balance, Work hours.*

I. INTRODUCTION

U.A.E. aims to be one of the top five happiest countries of the world by 2021. But with its fastest growing economy, organizations are facing cut-throat competition in the market, disturbing the balance between personal and professional life of the employees. According to various researches the overall wellness have decreased among UAE residents owing to disturbed work-life balance. Residents complained about not having time for physical exercises leading to sleep disturbances and insomnia. This adversely affects employee motivation and can cause stress, burnout, depression, frustration, conflicts and suicidal tendencies among employees. Moreover advancements in technology has also instilled an 'always on' attitude among employees. They are never disconnected from their work whether at home, or on a holiday, as they have access to office mails and messages all the time.

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This can be an emotional drain for the people. Academicians in the UAE also face the challenge of Work-life integration as their teaching and institutional responsibilities demand their time not only in the institution but also at home; they have to prepare for their lectures, Deal with student issues, update themselves with the latest trends related to their subjects and also spare time for their research interests. This leaves them with hardly any time for their children and household activities.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW:

Work Life balance is considered as a state of equilibrium between job and personal life of employees [1]. The concept of work life balance is also defined as the fulfillment of expectations related to family and work roles of an individual [2]. A holistically balanced life which is compatible with the life priorities of an employee fosters a sense of achievement [3]. The proper work-life balance in employees leads to improved productivity for the organisation. A good work life balance helps in motivation and retention of talented employees and helps organisation to attain a better ROI for the HR department [4]. Families where both the parents are working pose an additional challenge for the organisations [5]. Work conflicts are also associated with disturbed work-life balance [6]. The relationship between family and work will determine the job satisfaction and job involvement level of an individual. Researchers have also identified the negative impact of work family conflict on the work performance and life quality of an employee. Role overload coupled with work to family interference (vice versa) led to stress and burnout among individuals resulting in poor mental and physical health among employees [7].

Work-life imbalance specially affects married employees with children as it is difficult for them to effectively execute their parental responsibilities. Researches related to job satisfaction and gender have revealed inconsistent results [8]. Studies that claim that women have more job satisfaction than men are based on the theory that women have less expectations from the job market as compared to men [9]. Contradictory to this other researches have proved that men are more satisfied with their jobs as compared to women [10] and feel greater job responsibility [11].

After a comprehensive review of existing literature on work life balance it was found that there are very few studies that have discussed this issue in UAE context. Furthermore only few studies have highlighted gender differences in maintaining work life equilibrium and there is hardly any research comparing job satisfaction levels based on gender in higher education institutions in UAE. Hence this study aims to address all these issues in detail.

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III. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES:

The primary aim and objective of this study is to analyse the impact of work life balance and satisfaction level of employees on male and female professionals in higher academic institutions in UAE.

1. To identify and analyse the factors challenging the work life balance of male and female employees in Academic Institutions in UAE.
2. To identify and analyse the impact of work life balance on the satisfaction level of male and female employees in higher academic institutions of the UAE.

IV. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The data analysis intends to examine analytical view of work life balance and satisfaction level of employees. A pilot survey was conducted on 116 respondents based on simple random sampling to get the estimate of work life balance of employees.

The step by step process starts with:

- Defining the two mutually exclusive hypotheses i.e. the null and the alternative hypothesis denoted by H_0 and H_1 .
- The test of hypothesis about contingency table called independent and homogeneity test is used.
- Chi-square test of independence of attributes is used to determine the significant relationship between the attributes of population understudy.
- The degree of freedom for the test of independence are given by

$$\text{Degree of freedom (df)} = (r-1) (c-1)$$

Where r = number of rows

c = number of columns in the given contingency table.

Null Hypothesis(H_0) : The two attributes under consideration are independent i.e the impact of work life balance and satisfaction level of employees is independent of gender.

Alternate Hypothesis(H_1) : The two attributes under consideration are dependent i.e the impact of work life balance and satisfaction level of employees depends on gender.

A commonly used method in testing hypothesis is to report the p-value of the data. A p-value does not require imposing a pre-selected level of significance. The p-value is the probability that the test statistic will take on a value that is at least as extreme as the observed value of the statistic when the null hypothesis is assumed to be true. Thus, a p-value conveys much information about the weight of evidence against H_0 and so a decision maker can draw a conclusion at any specified level of significance. If p-value is greater than 0.05, so we accept the null hypothesis and which proves that there is no significant difference between the two attributes. However, If p-value is less than specified level of significance, so we reject the null hypothesis and conclude that there is a significant difference between the two attributes.

V. RESULT AND DISCUSSION:

In response to the overall survey conducted on respondents, it was seen that in most of the cases thinking of male and female with regards to work-life balance and satisfaction level of employees in the organizations are different.

Table I: To determine the total number of years spent by male and female employees in the organisation.

	Male	Female	Total	χ^2	P-value	Remarks *NS=Non-significant *S=Significant
Less than 12 months	15	22	37	5.66 df= 3	0.1294	NS
1-3 years	17	18	35			
4-6 years	12	13	25			
More than 7 years	14	5	19			
Total	58	58	116			

From the table it is observed that P-value is 0.1294 which is greater than 0.05 therefore we accept our null hypothesis and conclude that there is equal distribution of male and female with respect to the time spent in the organization.

Table II: To determine the total number of working hours for male and female employees in the organization.

	Male	Female	Total	χ^2	P-value	Remarks
20-30 hours	5	7	12	3.5 df=2	0.1738	NS
30-40 hours	16	24	40			
41+ hours	37	27	64			
Total	58	58	116			

It is seen that Chi-square value is 3.5 with two degrees of freedom and P-value is 0.1738 which is greater than 0.05, hence we accept our null hypothesis and conclude that work duration per week for both male and female are same.

Table III: To analyse the satisfaction level of employees with respect to working hours in the company.

	Male	Female	Total	χ^2	P-value	Remarks
Extremely satisfied	7	15	22	11.03 df=2	0.004	S
Satisfied	46	29	75			
Dissatisfied	5	14	19			
Total	58	58	116			

From the above table it is analyzed that the value of P is 0.004 which is less than 0.05, therefore it is observed that there is significant difference in the satisfaction level of male and female with respect to the working hours in the company. It is seen that females are more dissatisfied as compared to males with respect to company working hours.

Table IV: To analyse whether the employees get enough time for themselves and with their families after work.

	Male	Female	Total	χ^2	P-value	Remarks
Yes	41	24	65	8.96 df=1	0.0028	S
No	17	34	51			
Total	58	58	116			

It can be examined from the table that the Chi-square value is 8.96 with one degree of freedom having P value equal to 0.0028 which is less than 0.05, hence we reject our null hypothesis. It reflects that there is a significant difference in the satisfaction level of employees with respect to the available family time. According to the data, female employees were found to be less satisfied with the personal time available after office hours.

Table V: To analyse if the employees get mails and messages related to work after office hours.

	Male	Female	Total	χ^2	P-value	Remarks
Often	18	21	39	0.65 df=2	0.7225	NS
Sometimes	34	33	67			
Never	6	4	10			
Total	58	58	116			

From the table we can infer that getting mails and messages from the workplace after official working hours is a regular phenomenon for all the employees working in the organization irrespective of the gender. Since the P value is 0.7225 which is greater than 0.05 hence we reject our null hypothesis.

Table VI: To identify the comfort level of employees working overtime.

	Male	Female	Total	χ^2	P-value	Remarks
Yes	45	16	61	27.11 df=1	<0.0001	S
No	13	42	55			
Total	58	58	116			

It is observed that Females are less comfortable working overtime as compared to males. Since the P value is < 0.0001 which is less than 0.05, therefore we reject our null hypothesis. This difference is due to the fact that females have more household responsibilities and family commitments, which makes it difficult for them to work overtime in the organization.

Table VII: To identify if the employees are expected to work on weekends and holidays.

	Male	Female	Total	χ^2	P-value	Remarks
Often	10	5	15	46.8 df=2	<0.0001	S
Sometimes	42	11	53			
Never	6	42	48			
Total	58	58	116			

The inferences from this table support the analyses of the previous table, as the Female employees are less comfortable working on weekends and holidays. The Chi-square value is 46.8 with two degrees of freedom and P value <0.0001 which is less than 0.05, hence we reject the null hypothesis.

Table VIII: To analyse if the company's work life balance policies motivate the employees to perform better.

	Male	Female	Total	χ^2	P-value	Remarks
Yes	21	17	38	0.35 df=1	0.5541	NS
No	37	41	78			
Total	58	58	116			

It is seen that all the employees have shown their discontent in the organization's work life balance policies, as the extended working hours leave them with less time for their personal activities. The P value was calculated as 0.5541 which is greater than 0.05, hence we accept our null hypothesis and conclude that both the gender are dissatisfied with the work life balance policies of the organization.

Table IX: To identify how difficult or easy it is to maintain a balance between personal and professional life of employees.

	Male	Female	Total	χ^2	P-value	Remarks
Extremely Easy	5	6	11	9.56 df=3	0.0227	S
Easy	31	15	46			
Difficult	18	29	47			
Extremely Difficult	4	8	12			
Total	58	58	116			

From the table it is analyzed that the Chi-square value is 9.56 with three degrees of freedom and P value is 0.0227 which is less than 0.05, consequently we reject our null hypothesis and conclude that females find it more difficult to maintain a balance between professional and personal life.

Table X: To identify if workloads are distributed evenly among the employees.

	Male	Female	Total	χ^2	P-value	Remarks
Yes	26	23	49	0.14 df=1	0.7083	NS
No	32	35	67			
Total	58	58	116			

Both male and female employees believe that there is a disparity in the distribution of workload among the employees, since the chi-square value is 0.14 and P value 0.7083 which is greater than 0.05, hence we accept the null hypothesis.

Table XI: To analyse if the employees take holidays to take some rest from work or to finish their personal jobs.

	Male	Female	Total	χ^2	P-value	Remarks
Most of the times	11	19	30	7.19 df=2	0.0275	S
Sometimes	32	34	66			
Never	15	5	20			
Total	58	58	116			

It is analyzed from the table that as there is inappropriate work life balance observed in the organization under study, most of the female employees have to take holidays from the workplace to relax or finish their personal jobs, which is not possible with the regular work week. From the data it is seen that the P value is 0.0275 which is less than 0.05 therefore we reject our null hypothesis.

Table XII: To analyse if employees have the option of work from home when on vacation with family.

	Male	Female	Total	χ^2	P-value	Remarks
Yes	13	17	30	0.4 df=1	0.5271	NS
No	45	41	86			
Total	58	58	116			

As the organization under study was an Academic Institution therefore the option of work from home was not a feasible alternative for the employees, since most of the employees surveyed were academicians. Only the support staff had the option of working from home during their vacations.

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The P value observed for this analysis is 0.5271 which is greater than 0.05 therefore we fail to reject our null hypothesis.

Table XIII: To analyse if the employees were able to cope with the pressure of handling both work and home affairs.

	Male	Female	Total	χ^2	P-value	Remarks
Yes	47	16	63	31.27 df=1	<0.0001	S
No	11	42	53			
Total	58	58	116			

It is observed that female employees find it challenging to maintain a balance between work and home due to the excessive work pressure in the organization. As the P value is <0.0001 which is less than 0.05, we reject our null hypothesis.

Table XIV: To analyse if the employees feel the need to complain to their managers about their work life balance.

	Male	Female	Total	χ^2	P-value	Remarks
Yes	49	51	100	0.07 df=1	0.7913	NS
No	9	7	16			
Total	58	58	116			

According to the table the observed value of P is 0.7913 which is greater than 0.05, therefore we accept our null hypothesis and conclude that all the employees if given an opportunity would definitely complain about the work life imbalance in their organizations.

VI. CONCLUSION

This research paper focuses on the work life balance of academicians in the business schools of UAE. It further explores the influence of gender on job satisfaction levels related to work life integration among employees. Based on chi-square test the factors challenging the work life balance of male and female working in higher academic institutions of UAE were analysed. Although the work duration per week for both male and female is same, it is observed that there is a significant difference in the satisfaction level of male and female employees with respect to the working hours in the company. It is seen that females are more dissatisfied as compared to males as they get less personal time after office hours. Moreover females have more household responsibilities and family commitments, which makes it difficult for them to work overtime in the organization, or on weekends and holidays. They also find it more difficult to maintain a balance between personal and professional life because of which they are forced to take holidays from the workplace to relax or finish their personal jobs which is not possible with the regular work week. Further it is analysed that all the employees have shown their discontent in the organisation's work life balance policies, as the extended working hours leave them with less time for their personal activities. They also believe that there is disparity in the distribution of workload among the employees. Of late UAE government have framed several rules and regulations for both the employers and employees to ease their workplace pressure. These policies if implemented properly in organisations, may ease the work

life balance and improve the satisfaction level of employees in academic institutions in UAE.

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