

Perception Toward Work-Life Balance Among Healthcare Professionals

Prini Varghese¹, Aleena Anna Sajan², Akhila Ramesh³

¹Assistant Professor, Department of Child Health Nursing, Amrita College of Nursing, Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham, Health Science Campus, Kochi

^{2,3}Under Graduate Student, Amrita College of Nursing, Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham, Health Sciences Campus, Kochi

Abstract

Background: Globally, work-life imbalance is a growing concern, especially among healthcare professionals like nurses and doctors. The 'Work-Life Balance' is a harmonious equilibrium between an individual's professional and personal responsibilities and being comfortable managing both work and non-work obligations.

Methods: A descriptive single-centered quantitative study was conducted among 100 healthcare professionals (50 doctors and 50 nurses) in Kochi, focusing on work-life balance. Data was collected through a Semi-structured questionnaire to assess the socio-demographic data and a questionnaire for self-assessing work-life balance was used. The data was analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. The comparison of work-life balance between nurses and doctors was computed by using an independent t-test.

Results: The majority (65%) of the healthcare professionals were less than thirty years old. Most of them were married (76%) and had children (47%). There was a statistically significant association between monthly income and work-life balance ($P=0.001$). Around 23% of the health professionals had a poor work-life balance, 57% had a borderline work-life balance and 20% of them maintained a good work-life balance. There was a statistically significant difference between the work-life balance of nurses and doctors ($P=0.001$)

Conclusion: The study findings revealed that majority of the healthcare professionals have a borderline work-life balance, indicating the need for immediate action to prevent further issues from escalating. Maintaining a balanced work-life is important for healthcare productivity, job satisfaction, positive clinical outcomes, and high-quality patient care and safety.

Keywords: Work-Life Balance, Health Care Professionals

Introduction

Maintaining a work-life balance is an important concern for both employers and employees. Every employed person has several responsibilities towards the family, society, and the organization. To maintain a healthy work-life balance, it is essential to strike a balance between the responsibilities of one's personal life, friends, and family, and the demands of the workplace [1] Creating and maintaining healthy work environments that support a balance between work and non-work components is a key component in achieving a work-life balance. Work-life balance enhances employee loyalty, productivity, job

satisfaction, and overall growth, while poor work-life balance can negatively impact physical, psychological, and behavioral patterns, affecting overall quality of life [2].

Azeem S M et al. (2015) examined the impact of perceived work-life balance and job satisfaction on commitment among hospital employees across five hospitals. The results showed moderate work-life balance, with a mean score of 5.06. However, respondents perceived work interfering with family life at 4.43 and family interfering with work-life at 3.37. Consequently, job satisfaction and commitment levels were lower [3]. Similarly, Sharma S et al. (2018) conducted a study on work-life balance among 141 doctors and 216 nurses in government hospitals of Himachal Pradesh and found that doctors and nurses use more leave arrangements, particularly cultural/religious leave (60% and 78%) and pooling of leave entitlements (67% and 62%) respectively[4].

Nowadays due to the spread of globalization, technological advancements, and a highly competitive work environment, every successful employee encounters the difficulty of striking a balance between their personal and professional lives [5]. Stress and extended work hours can be major causes of burnout in certain work environments, which can ultimately lead to increased absenteeism, workplace aggression, and workers' compensation claims [6]. A review of the literature conducted by Satinder Singh determined how work-life balance and its practices affect various quality-life factors including job satisfaction, career growth, appreciation, work stress, turnover, absenteeism, and a competitive atmosphere [7].

Healthcare organizations in both developed and developing countries face numerous challenges, including improving patient care quality, managing budgets, and addressing a shortage of skilled healthcare professionals. Women doctors and nurses, despite nearly equal gender roles, often contribute timeless jobs for organizational benefits and have additional responsibilities like household and family care, leading to work-life imbalances [3].

A study was conducted among 656 nurses in Bangladesh and found a positive correlation between work-life imbalance, employee dissatisfaction, and the impact of work on the family. The study highlights the importance of maintaining work-life balance for the efficiency of healthcare organizations, the provision of high-quality patient care, and successful therapeutic outcomes [8].

Therefore, assessing the perception of healthcare professionals toward work-life balance is of great value and helps healthcare professionals to take significant and immediate actions to achieve a desired balance before things get out of control because delaying necessary changes can worsen the situation.

Methods

A descriptive survey was conducted among 100 healthcare professionals including nurses and doctors in a selected hospital in Kochi. A convenience sampling technique was used to select the study participants who met the inclusion criteria. Permission to conduct the study was obtained from the medical and nursing director and an ethical clearance certificate was obtained from the Institutional Research and Ethics Committee. An informed consent was obtained from the study participants before starting data collection. A Semi-structured questionnaire was used to collect the socio-demographic data and a structured questionnaire for self-assessing healthcare professionals' perception of work-life balance was used. The questionnaire rated collective behaviors and provided a score from 0 to 5, indicating good, borderline, or poor work-life balance. IBM SPSS Version 20 was used to analyze both descriptive and inferential statistics.

Results

Sample characteristics based on socio-demographic data

In the present study, out of 100 healthcare professionals, 50 were doctors and 50 were nurses. The majority of the healthcare professionals were female (74%). Most of the nurses were females 47(94%) and only 3(6%) were males, whereas 23(46%) doctors were male and 27(54%) were female. The majority of the healthcare professionals were less than 30 years of age (65%), 29% belonged to the age group 31-40 years, and 8% of them were >40 years old. The majority of the healthcare professionals were married (76%) and had children (47%).

Distribution of work-life balance among healthcare professionals

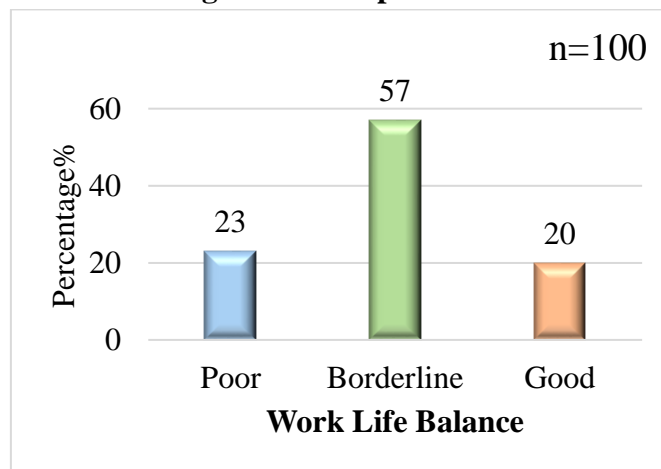


Fig 1: Percentage distribution of work-life balance among healthcare professionals

Figure 1 illustrates that around 23% of the health care professionals had a poor work-life balance of which 5% were nurses and 18% were doctors, 57% had borderline work-life balance where 29% were nurses and 28% were doctors and 20% of them maintained a good work-life balance where 16% were nurses and 4% were doctors.

Association between work-life balance and demographic variables

Table 1: Association between demographic variables with work-life balance among healthcare professionals

Variables	Category	Poor	Borderline	Good	p-value
Age	<30	18 (27.7%)	32 (49.2)	15 (23.1%)	0.183
	31-40	3 (11.1%)	19 (70.4%)	5 (18.5%)	
	>40	2 (25.0%)	6 (75.0%)	0 (0%)	
Gender	Male	7 (26.9%)	18 (69.2%)	1 (3.8%)	0.057
	Female	16 (21.6%)	39 (52.7%)	19 (25.7%)	
Marital status	Married	20 (26.3%)	42 (55.3%)	14 (18.4%)	0.210
	Not Married	2 (9.1%)	14 (63.6%)	6 (27.3%)	
Number of children	No child	13 (24.5%)	29 (54.7%)	11 (20.8%)	0.410
	One child	7 (20%)	19 (54.3%)	9 (25.7%)	

	Two or more children	3 (25%)	9 (75%)	0 (0%)	
Monthly income	<20,000	1 (16.7%)	2 (33.3%)	3 (50.0%)	0.001
	20,000-30,000	4 (8.2%)	30 (61.2%)	15 (30.6%)	
	30,000-40,000	2 (33.3%)	4 (66.7%)	0 (0%)	
	>40,000	16 (41.0%)	21 (53.8%)	2 (5.1%)	

The data depicted in Table 1 shows a significant association between monthly income and work-life balance of health care professionals at $p=0.001$

Comparison of work-life balance

Table 2: Comparison of work-life balance among doctors and nurses
n=100

WLB	N	Mean	SD	t value	p-value
Nurses	50	3.6272	0.48471	5.079	0.001
Doctors	50	3.0920	0.56599		

Table 2 shows a significant difference between the work-life balance of nurses and doctors at $p<0.05$.

Discussion

The concept of work-life balance has been acknowledged as a crucial concern in recent scenarios. In the present study, around 23% of the healthcare professionals had a poor work-life balance, 57% had a borderline work-life balance, and 20% of them maintained a good work-life balance. Similarly, the results of the study conducted by Syed Mohammad Azeem revealed a moderate work-life balance, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment among employees. [3].

The findings of the present study were supported by a comparative study conducted by K. Vijaya Suganthi et al. who compared the work-life balance of nurses in government and private hospitals in the Thiruvallur district and found a significant difference in work-life balance, impacting self-care, health issues, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment [9]. Similarly, a study by MAC. Fathima Aroosiya revealed a low level of work-life balance among 100 working women in Nintavur [10]. Even studies conducted among high-tech and banking industry professionals revealed that long working hours significantly impact occupational stress, job satisfaction, and work-life balance [11].

In contrast, a descriptive survey among 67 nursing faculty to assess the perception and attitude towards quality of work-life balance found that 86.57% experienced a well-balanced work-life, 47.76% had high job satisfaction, and showed a positive correlation ($r=0.77$) between work-life balance and job satisfaction [12]. These findings were consistent with the results of a study by Joey Blackburn et al. which showed, that Louisiana agriculture teachers were effective, satisfied, and able to balance their careers with family life, ensuring work did not interfere with family life [13].

This study revealed that there was no statistically significant association between work-life balance and demographic variables like age, gender, marital status, and number of children; however, there was a significant association ($p=0.001$) between work-life balance and monthly income. Around 23% of healthcare professionals under 30 years old reported a good work-life balance, whereas 26.3% of married professionals and 25% of health professionals with 2 or more children reported a poor work-life balance. A multi-group analysis by Francesco Pace et al. revealed gender differences in career opportunities, work-life balance, and well-being perception, with women having lower values for career opportunities and

work-life balance affecting well-being more [14]. Female nurses in government and private hospitals face significant challenges in balancing work and family responsibilities, with 53% struggling to achieve work-life balance [15]. Similarly, another study explores the work-life balance experiences of women doctors and nurses in Malaysia found that contextual factors like gender norms, dual professional duties, and collegiality, as well as healthcare sector staff shortages, significantly impact work-life balance [16]. Whereas, in the present study, as compared to males (3.8%) around 25.75% of females reported having a good work-life balance.

A study among 14345 Taiwanese healthcare workers from 56 hospitals found a significant relationship between work-life balance and safety culture, mediated by emotional teamwork exhaustion and a climate. The study provides a model for designing interventions to improve patient safety culture in hospitals [17]. Similarly, the study conducted by Schwartz SP, et al. found that work-life involvement behaviors among healthcare workers vary, with a positive climate associated with better teamwork, safety, and lower burnout [18]. A study conducted by R. Priyadharshini et al. also suggests that implementing work-life balance policies can boost the productivity and engagement of healthcare professionals, thereby enhancing job satisfaction [19]. This highlights the need for better safety culture norms in healthcare settings. In the present study, there was a significant difference between the work-life balance of nurses and doctors ($p=0.001$). Both doctors and nurses play significant roles in healthcare delivery, but there are disparities in their work-life balance may be due to job nature, workplace relationships, social expectations, personal preferences, work settings, and lifestyle decisions.

Conclusion

Assessing work-life balance among health professionals is crucial for promoting conscious work-family balance. Those struggling with work-life issues should take immediate action to achieve a healthy balance between work and life which prevents further deterioration of well-being. Delaying necessary changes could worsen the situation and can lead to burnout, health issues, and strained relationships. A fulfilling healthcare career necessitates a healthy work-life balance which can be achieved through setting clear boundaries, prioritizing self-care activities, employee support policies, professional development opportunities, open communication, mutual respect, flexible working hours, financial support, timely promotions, and recognition. Understanding perceptions of work-life balance among health professionals will lead to higher job satisfaction, better well-being, increased retention, enhanced healthcare productivity, positive clinical outcomes, and high-quality patient care and safety.

Limitations

As the study included only doctors and nurses the finding may not captured the perception of other health care professionals. This minimizes the generalizability of the findings.

Conflict of interest- No conflicting interest.

Source of funding- Self-finance

Acknowledgment- The authors express gratitude to the participants of this study.

References

1. Shivakumar KN, Pujar V. Work-life balance in the health care sector. *Amity Journal of Healthcare Management*. 2018; 1(2):45–54. DOI: 10.13140/RG.2.2.19413.73440.
2. Haider M, Azmi FT. Work-life balance and job satisfaction. *Journal of General Management Research*. 2019 Jan; 6(1): 65–77.
3. Azeem SM, Altalhi H. Role of Perceived Work-life balance and job satisfaction in developing organizational commitment among hospital employees in Saudi Arabia *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*. 2015 Dec; 5(12). Available from: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARBSS/v5-i12/1943>
4. Sharma S, Parmar JS. Work-life balance of Medical Professionals in Government hospitals of Himachal Pradesh. 2016 Jan; Available from: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/311364902>
5. Suguna G, Franco C. A study on work-life balance of nursing staff working in private hospitals in Palayamkottai. *Int. J. Res. Granthaalayah [Internet]*. 2017 Aug. 31; 5(8(SE)):106-9. Available from: https://www.granthaalayahpublication.org/journals/granthaalayah/article/view/IJRG17_SE08_25
6. Tejera VA. Work-life balance issues among mental health professionals capstone. *MOJ Public Health*. 2014;1(1):14–30. DOI: 10.15406/mojph.2014.01.00005
7. S Singh. Work-life balance: A literature review. *Global Journal of Commerce & Management Perspective*. 2013; 2 (3), 84-91
8. Moustaq Karim Khan Rony, Sharkar Md. Numan, Hasnat M. Alamgir, The association between work-life imbalance, employees' unhappiness, work's impact on family, and family impacts on work among nurses: A Cross-sectional Study, *Informatics in Medicine Unlocked*, Volume 38, 2023, 101226, ISSN 2352-9148, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.imu.2023.101226>. (<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2352914823000680>)
9. K.Vijaya Suganthi, Gajenderan Vijayakumar. A comparative study on the work-life balance of the nurses in government and private hospitals in Thiruvallur District. *International Journal Of Advance Research And Innovative Ideas In Education*. 2018; 4(5) 2395-4396.
10. MAC. Fathima Aroosiyah. A Study on Work-Life Balance of Working Women with Special Reference to Government Schools and Divisional Secretariat in Nintavur. *GJMBR*. 2018 May 15;18(B6):61-8. Available from: <https://journalofbusiness.org/index.php/GJMBR/article/view/2604>
11. Hsu YY, Bai CH, Yang CM, Huang YC, Lin TT, Lin CH. Long Hours' Effects on Work-Life Balance and Satisfaction. *Biomed Res Int*. 2019 Jun 23;2019:5046934. doi: 10.1155/2019/5046934. PMID: 31341900; PMCID: PMC6612405.
12. Gururaja, Umesh Maiya, Elsa Sanatombi Devi, Anice GeorgeMaiya. Perceptions and Attitude towards Quality of Work-life Balance among Nursing Teachers. 2020; 2(3) 52-54.
13. Blackburn, Joey & Bunch, J.C. & Haynes, J. Assessing the Relationship of Teacher Self-Efficacy, Job Satisfaction, and Perception of Work-Life Balance of Louisiana Agriculture Teachers. *Journal of Agricultural Education*. 2017; 58. 14-35. 10.5032/jae.2017.01014.
14. Pace F, Sciotto G. Gender Differences in the Relationship between Work-Life Balance, Career Opportunities and General Health Perception. *Sustainability*. 2022; 14(1):357. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su14010357>
15. K. Santhana Lakshmi, T. Ramachandran, and David Boohene. Analysis of Work-Life Balance of Female Nurses in Hospitals - Comparative Study between Government and Private Hospital in

- Chennai, TN., India. International Journal of Trade, Economics and Finance. June 2012; 3(3)
16. Dousin, O., Collins, N., Kler, B.K. The experience of work-life balance for women doctors and nurses in Malaysia. *Asia Pac J Hum Resour.* 2022; 60: 362-380. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1744-7941.12282>
 17. Tran Y, Liao H-H, Yeh E-H, et al. Examining the pathways by which work-life balance influences safety culture among healthcare workers in Taiwan: path analysis of data from a cross-sectional survey on patient safety culture among hospital staff. *BMJ Open* 2021;11:e054143. doi:10.1136/bmjopen-2021-054143
 18. Schwartz SP, Adair KC, Bae J, Rehder KJ, Shanafelt TD, Profit J, Sexton JB. Work-life balance behaviours cluster in work settings and relate to burnout and safety culture: a cross-sectional survey analysis. *BMJ Qual Saf.* 2019 Feb;28(2):142-150. doi: 10.1136/bmjqs-2018-007933. Epub 2018 Oct 11. PMID: 30309912; PMCID: PMC6365921.
 19. Priyadarshini Ravichandran, D Divya. Work-Life Balance of nurses and lady doctors. *Samdarshi.* Sep 2023; 16(4). 10.5281/zenodo.8288461.