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WORK-LIFE BALANCE AMONG HEALTH CARE SECTOR EMPLOYEES DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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ABSTRACT

The main focus of this research is to analyse the work-life balance of personnel belonging to the healthcare sector. This work-life balance concerns the situation during the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, it is essential to understand the factors that have affected the work-life balance of doctors, administrators, nurses, PG students, and other staff members, including lab assistants. The objective of this study is to conduct an empirical investigation using variables such as age, occupation, number of children, and marital status, as they serve as parameters for the survey and the research. The research also aims to explore the challenges employees in the health care sector face in maintaining WLB and to offer suggestions for addressing them. Lastly, the research also includes factors such as stress management, productivity, and job satisfaction, among others, as they too affect an individual's WLB.

KEYWORDS: Work-Life Balance, Covid-19 Pandemic, Health care sector, Mental Health, Job productivity.

1. INTRODUCTION

Work-life balance, or WLB, is the ability of an employee to be satisfied with their work and manage work and home without conflict. (Parasuraman, 2002). An individual generally cannot function properly without being physically and mentally fit. The present study aims to analyse the work-life balance of healthcare professionals. In contrast to other professions, the work of a healthcare professional is fundamentally different, as it involves tending to the well-being of another human being. A healthcare worker is responsible for caring for another individual and thus cannot afford to work at a reduced level of productivity. During the pandemic, when everyone was working from home, healthcare professionals were battling the deadly virus on the front lines every day, making it very difficult for them to maintain a proper work-life balance.

The present study emphasises the significance of work-life balance among healthcare professionals during the pandemic by investigating its relationship with determinants such as work overload, sleepless nights due to duty, mental health, productivity, and its impact on employee job satisfaction. The findings show that work-life balance dimensions have a strong mediating effect on organisational parameters such as job satisfaction, work overload, and mental health, notably among employees in the healthcare sector. Organisations must arrange and engage in practices and activities that make employees feel involved and foster a sense of belonging in the organisation. (Shivakumar & Pujar, 2016). This paper aims to demonstrate that a proper work-life balance not only benefits an individual by enhancing their overall happiness and job satisfaction, but also benefits their employer and the organisation as a whole, as employee morale and performance increase.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Work-Life Balance

It is important to understand the concept of work-life balance in order to study it, follow it, and inculcate it in one's life. This concept as a whole has been explored in *Perspectives on the study of work-life Balance* and its importance in the modern world, focusing on its correlation with an employee's performance and productivity. Although this research did not specifically analyse the work-life balance of employees in a particular field, it provided a general outline of the factors that affect it. (Guest, 2002) Additionally, it is important to

understand the effects of the absence of WLB in an employee's life and its impact on an organisation, as highlighted in *Work-life balance*. Even though this research did not collect primary data and focused on a partial sector of workers, it highlighted certain determinants that affect an employee's WLB. (Delectra, 2011)

It is also important for employers in organisations to implement effective work-life balance initiatives, as this effectively increases employees' productivity, as discussed in *Work/Life Balance- Challenges and Solutions* (Lockwood, 2003). This literature studied and highlighted the importance of employing WLB. This research limited itself to analysing the significance of WLB and highlighting its advantages by reviewing the existing literature. Similarly, the objective of studying the effects of excessive workload and overtime on an employee's productivity and overall work-life balance was discussed in *Workhours and work-life balance* (Albertsen, Rafnsdóttir, Grimsmo, Tómasson, & Kauppinen, 2008). This research limited itself to a review of the available literature and concluded that there was a negative correlation between excessive workload and an employee's WLB.

2.2. Health Care Sector WLB

Malik, Haider, & Hussain (2019) examined the relationships among an employee's emotional intelligence, job satisfaction, and WLB. Although this study was limited to healthcare professionals in Pakistan, it found a positive correlation among emotional intelligence, job satisfaction, and WLB. As mentioned earlier, it is important to examine the consequences of heavy work overload and overtime on work-life balance and how they affect nurses' job satisfaction in the healthcare sector. Although the study in "*Assessing the influence of work-life balance dimensions among nurses in the healthcare sector*" (Poulose & Sudarsan, 2017) was limited to the WLB and job satisfaction of nurses working in healthcare institutions in South India, it employed regression analysis as a statistical tool of analysis to highlight the negative relationship between overtime work and job satisfaction.

Furthermore, the effect of work conflict on the WLB of healthcare workers was examined in "*Enhancing healthcare quality by promoting work-life balance among nursing staff*" (Varma, Kelling, & Goswami, 2016). Although this research did not conduct primary data and analyse first-hand results from nurses, it developed an original model to analyse the work-life balance of working nurses. The study highlighted that job-related stressors and an organisation's culture heavily contributed to an

employee's work-life balance. *Work-Life Balance in the Health Care Sector* (Shivakumar & Pujar, 2016) primarily examined organisational practices used to promote work-life balance among healthcare professionals. A major part of this paper dealt with elucidating the negative effects of an imbalance in the WLB of healthcare personnel. Although this research limited itself to studying the WLB of healthcare professionals at ABC Healthcare, a private hospital in Karnataka, it provided suggestions to help maintain a proper WLB.

It is also important to examine the positive attributes of having a good work-life balance among healthcare professionals. *The Influence of Work Life Balance and Job Satisfaction on Organisational Commitment of Healthcare Employees* analyses the role of job satisfaction in an employee's commitment to their workplace/organisation. Though this research limited itself to healthcare professionals working in private institutions in the state of Uttar Pradesh, the author highlighted a significant association between 'work-life balance' and 'job-satisfaction' among these professionals. (Azeem & Akhtar, 2014)

2.3. Work-Life Balance During Pandemic

There have been several studies that have been conducted in order to determine the effect on a working individual's WLB during the COVID-19 pandemic. Most of these studies differ in the determinants considered to analyse an individual's WLB, viz., emotional needs, workload, stress, job satisfaction, and productivity (Tapaswinin et al., 2022; Duygu et al., 2021; Bhumika, 2020). There is sufficient theoretical and practical evidence suggesting that an individual's WLB is inversely affected by increases in workload and work stress (Toyin Adisa et al., 2022). This observation has been consistent in research where the participants of the study were a) employees working from home (without the consideration of the industry they are working in (Deshpande et al., 2020) & b) Healthcare employees working in hospitals and frontlines (Irawanto et al., 2021). Further evidence also showcases that frontline healthcare workers during the pandemic had a difficult time coping with the need for emotional support, their mental health, workload and work stress, which in turn negatively impacted their WLB, productivity of work and job satisfaction (Duygu et al., 2021 & Tapaswinin et al., 2022). In this study, the healthcare employees, who were the frontline warriors during the pandemic, have had their work-life balance situation analysed.

2.4. Objectives of the study

The main focus of this research is to analyse the

work-life balance of personnel belonging to the healthcare sector. This work-life balance concerns the situation during the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, it is essential to understand the factors that have affected the work-life balance of doctors, administrators, nurses, PG students, and other staff, including lab assistants. The objective of this study is to conduct an empirical investigation using variables such as age, occupation, number of children, and marital status, as they serve as parameters for the survey and the research. The research also aims to explore the challenges employees in the health care sector face in maintaining WLB and to offer suggestions for addressing them. Lastly, the research also includes factors such as stress management, productivity, and job satisfaction, among others, as they too affect an individual's WLB.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Scope of Study

The present study aims to determine the factors affecting personnel's work-life balance in the health care sector, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. This study is extended to the health care sectors comprising doctors/ Consultants, nurses, Administrators,

Post-graduates and others, including paramedics, lab assistants, technicians, etc. The respondents belong to the metropolitan cities of Hyderabad, Mumbai, and Chennai in during COVID-19 pandemic second wave, and the study employed both primary and secondary data to conduct the online survey and research.

3.2. Research Design

A conclusive research method has been adopted in this study, as it helps in decision-making and deriving conclusions. Towards the end of this study, the researcher aims to discuss the factors affecting personnel's work-life balance in the health care sector, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. Based on the survey data, the researcher has derived statistical conclusions and interpretations.

3.3. Data Collection Sources

The present study uses both primary and secondary data. Primary data are collected from the health care sector via an online questionnaire, and secondary data are sourced from articles, journals, books, and reliable online sources to conduct the research. The researcher has referred to previously conducted research papers and data collected in different states across the country, and has conducted a similar study in the cities of Hyderabad,

Mumbai & Chennai.

3.4. Method of Analysis

The study mainly employs variables such as age, number of children, marital status, and health care category to assess stress levels, productivity, mental health, job satisfaction, and other factors, and to understand the impact of COVID on the WLB of healthcare professionals. This data is collected using a standardised online questionnaire with a sample of 450 respondents from the health care sector. Pearson's Correlation has been used as a statistical tool for analysing data.

3.5. Data Analysis

The researcher has categorised the data collected into two sections for easier analysis and interpretation. The first section primarily covers the respondents' profiles, including age group, occupation, marital status, and number of children. Respondents' names are kept confidential upon request and have not been disclosed. The second section examines the factors that shape healthcare workers' work-life balance during the pandemic.

3.5.1. Profile of the Respondents

Age

150 responses

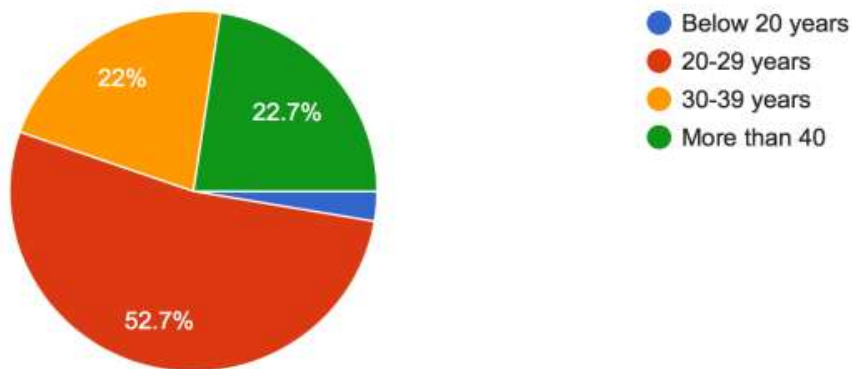


Figure 1.1: Age Group of Respondents

Figure 1.1 presents an overview of the profile of the 450 respondents from the health care sector. The respondents were from different age groups. Most respondents are aged 29 or younger. In addition,

22.7% of the respondents are above 40 years, 22% are in the 30-39 years age group, and 8% are in the 35-45 years age group.

Marital Status

150 responses

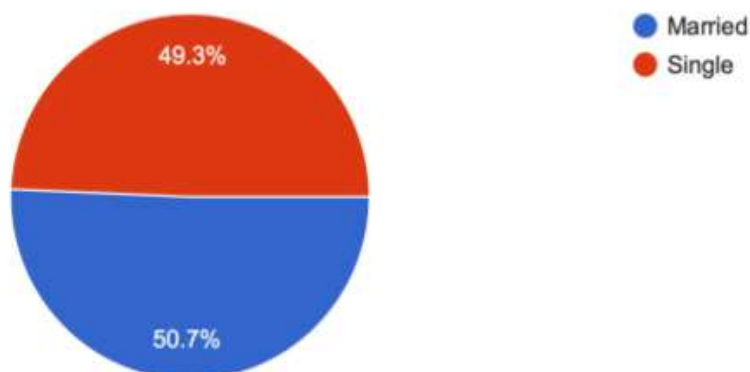


Figure 1.2: Marital Status

Figure 1.2 presents an overview of respondents' marital status and shows that 50.7% are married and 49.3% are single.

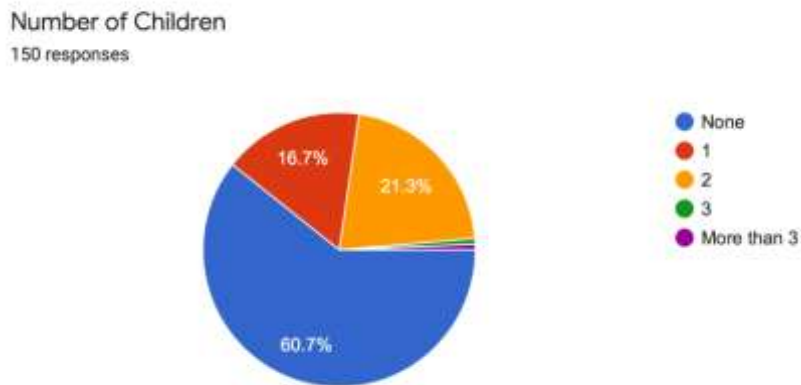


Figure 1.3: Number of Children

Figure 1.3 represents an overview of the no. of children the respondents had. The figure indicates that 60.7% of respondents have no children, 16.7% have a single child, and 21.3% have 2 children.

Figure 1.4: Category of the Health Care Sector

Which of the following category do you belong to?
150 responses

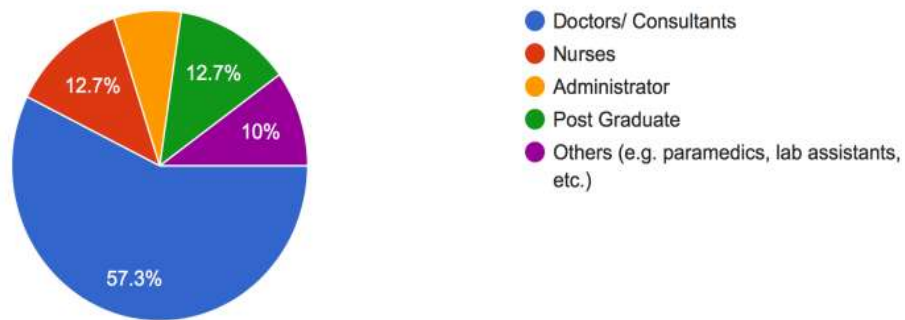


Figure 1.4: Category of the Health Care Sector

Figure 1.4 provides an overview of the work category in the health care sector in which the respondents work. The majority of respondents, i.e., 57.3%, were Doctors and Consultants. Nurses and postgraduate medical professionals accounted for 12% of the respondents, while administrators and other healthcare professionals, such as paramedics and assistants, accounted for nearly 10%.

3.5.2. Factors determining WLB

Q1. I had a good work-life balance pre- pandemic?
150 responses

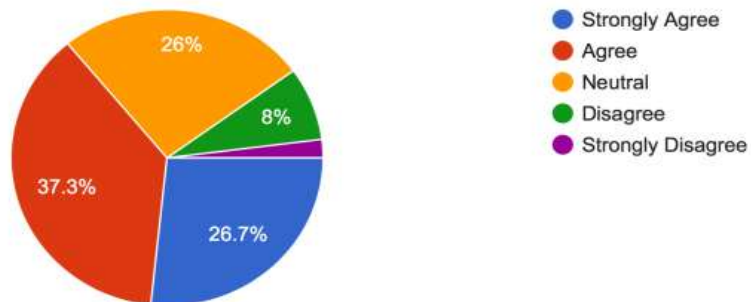


Figure 2.1: Positive work-life balance before the COVID-19 pandemic

Figure 2.1 addresses the work-life balance of the respondents' pre-pandemic WLB. 37.3% of the respondents agreed that they had a good work-life balance, while 26% strongly agreed. An additional

26% of respondents felt that their WLB was neutral. Furthermore, 8% of the respondents disagreed, and

the remaining strongly disagreed that they had a good WLB pre-pandemic.

Q2. The pandemic had a significant effect on my work-life balance
150 responses

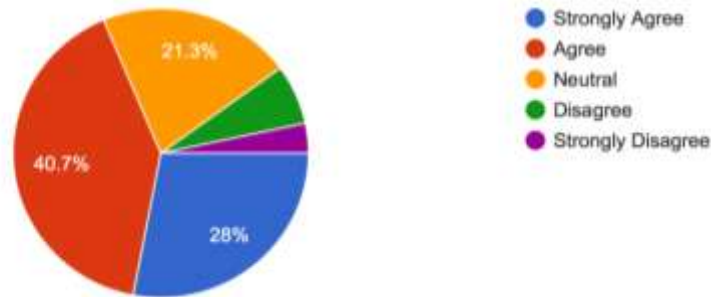


Figure 2.2: Effect of Pandemic on WLB

Figure 2.2 addresses the effect of the pandemic on the WLB of the respondents. It was observed that 40.7% of respondents agreed that their WLB was affected by the pandemic, while 28% strongly agreed. Furthermore, 28% of respondents felt the

effect was neutral. A majority of the remaining respondents disagreed, while the others strongly disagreed that their WLB was affected by the pandemic.

Q3. For how long have you been working in your organization
150 responses

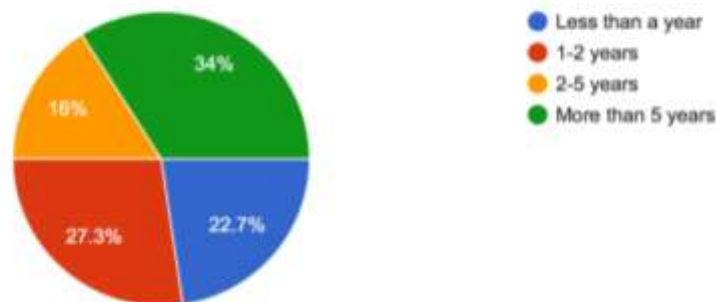


Figure 2.3: Period of employment in current organisation

Figure 2.3 addresses respondents' employment periods. Most respondents have been working in their organisation for than 5 years. It was observed that 27.3% of the respondents have completed their first year and are in their 2nd year of employment at their organisation. Further, 22.7% of the

respondents have yet to complete their 1st year of employment, while the remaining 16% have worked for more than 2 but less than 5 years.

Q4. How satisfied are you with your current job?
150 responses

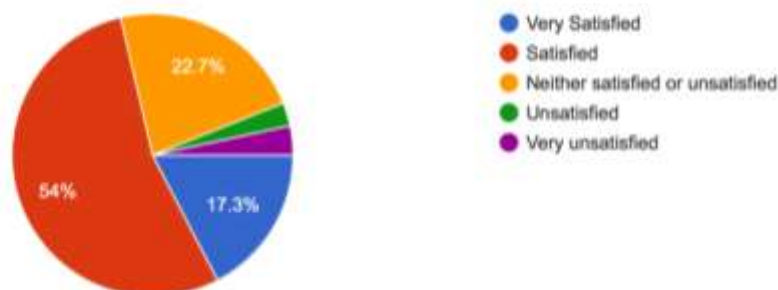


Figure 2.4: Job Satisfaction with current job

Figure 2.4 presents the respondents' satisfaction levels with their current jobs. A majority of the respondents are satisfied with their job, and 17.3%

are very satisfied. Further, 22.7% of respondents reported being neither satisfied nor unsatisfied, while 6% were unsatisfied with their current job.

Q5. In an average week, how many hours of overtime or unpaid job-related work do you perform?
150 responses

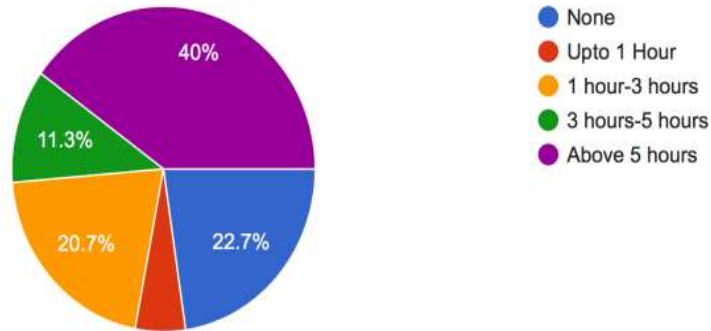


Figure 2.5: Average, weekly, overtime work performed

Figure 2.5 addresses the number of unpaid/overtime hours the respondents had to work. A majority of respondents (40%) worked an average of more than 5 hours of overtime per week. 20.7% of respondents reported performing 1-3

hours of overtime per week, while 11.3% reported performing 3 -5 hours of overtime per week. The remaining respondents reported working an average of 1 hour of overtime per week.

Q6. I had to sacrifice my sleep for my work during the pandemic
150 responses

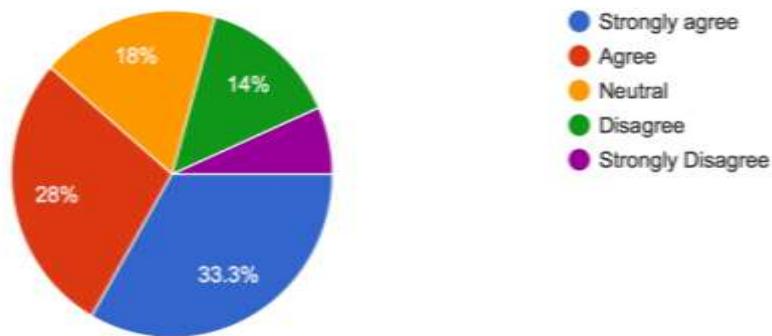


Figure 2.6: Sacrifice of sleep due to work during the pandemic

Figure 2.6 addresses whether the respondents had to sacrifice their sleep due to work during the pandemic. It was observed that 33.3% of the respondents strongly agreed, while 28% agreed that

they had to sacrifice sleep. Whereas, 18% reported neutral. Furthermore, 28% of respondents disagreed, and the remaining 72% strongly disagreed that they had to sacrifice sleep.

Q7. How often did you have to sacrifice your personal commitments due to working life?
150 responses

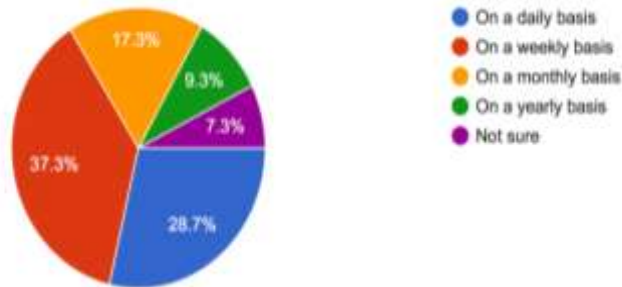


Figure 2.7: The frequency of sacrifice of personal commitments due to work

Figure 2.7 shows that 37.3% of respondents reported having to sacrifice their personal obligations weekly, and around 28% reported doing so daily. Further, 17.3% of the respondents reported having to sacrifice their personal

commitments monthly, while 9.3% reported doing so yearly for work. The remaining 7.3% were unsure how often they had to sacrifice their personal commitments.

Q8. The pandemic affected my mental health
150 responses

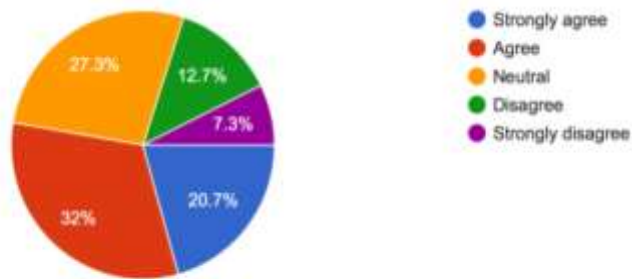


Figure 2.8: Effect of pandemic on mental health

Figure 2.8 represents the effect of the pandemic on the respondents. It was observed that 32% of the respondents agreed and 20.7% strongly agreed that the pandemic affected their mental health. Further,

27.3% of the respondents felt neutral about this. Meanwhile, 12.7% disagreed, while 7.3% strongly disagreed that the pandemic affected their health.

Q9. I was stressed out due to the workload during the pandemic
150 responses

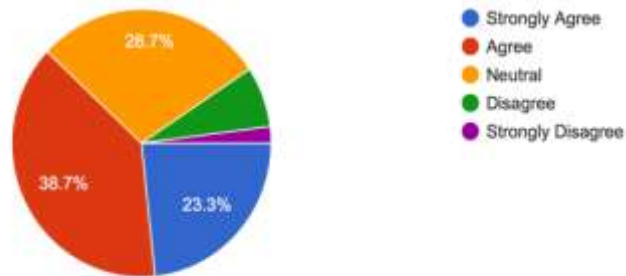


Figure 2.9: Stress levels due to workload during the pandemic

Figure 2.9 addresses the stress caused by workload during the pandemic. 28.7% of respondents strongly agreed, and 38.7% agreed that they were stressed out by their workload during the

pandemic. Meanwhile, 28.7% of the respondents were neutral. Further, 7.3% of respondents disagreed, and 2% strongly disagreed that they

were stressed by their workload during the pandemic.

Q10. Which sphere (work or personal) usually wins out when a sacrifice is required, i.e., which sphere do you prioritize more?
150 responses

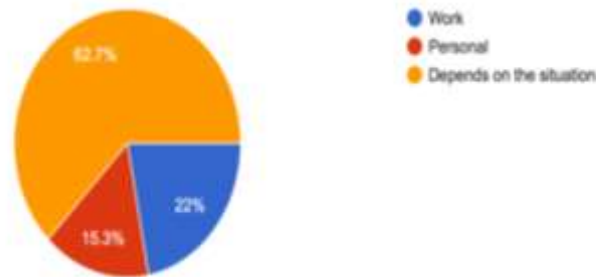


Figure 2.10: Preference between work and personal commitments

Figure 2.10 represents the respondent’s priority between work and personal commitments. A majority of the respondents reported that their sacrifice of either work or personal commitment

would depend on the situation. 22% of respondents are inclined to sacrifice their WLB, while the remaining 15.3% prioritize their personal commitments.

Q11. The lack of work life balance affected my productivity
150 responses

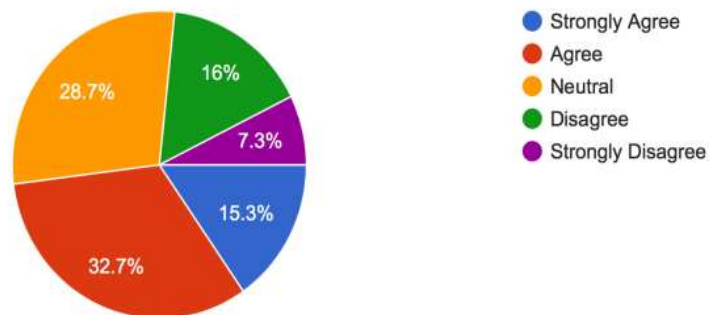


Figure 2.11: The lack of WLB on productivity

Figure 2.11 examines whether respondents' productivity was affected by their lack of WLB. It was observed that 15.3% of respondents strongly agreed and 32.7% agreed that their productivity

was affected by their lack of WLB, while 28.7% were neutral. Further, 7.3% strongly disagreed and 16% disagreed that the WLB affected their productivity.

Q12. With regards to the above questions, how satisfied were you with your job during the pandemic?
150 responses

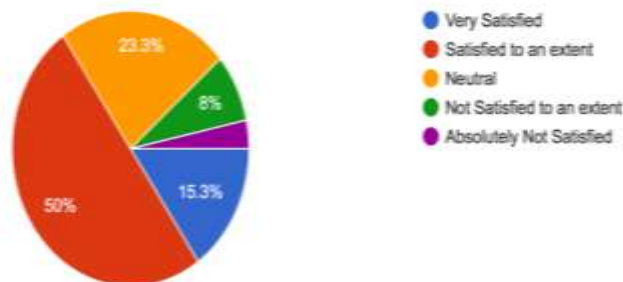


Figure 2.12: Job satisfaction during the pandemic

Figure 2.12 shows respondents' job satisfaction during the pandemic. 50% of respondents reported

being satisfied with their work, and 15.3% were very satisfied. Meanwhile, 22.3% of the

respondents were neutral. Furthermore, 8% of the respondents were only partially satisfied. The remaining respondents were not at all satisfied with their jobs.

3.6. Overall Satisfaction with the job during the pandemic

The overall satisfaction with the respondent's job during the pandemic was measured on a scale of 1-10, with 1 indicating the least satisfaction. From the figure above, it is observed that 324 respondents were satisfied to some extent with their work-life balance during COVID-19. 126 of the respondents were not happy with their WLB during the pandemic.

4. DISCUSSION

The primary objective of the present investigation is to analyse the work-life balance of individuals in the health care sector, particularly during the pandemic. To assess one's work-life balance (WLB), it is pertinent to understand its determinants, i.e., the factors that shape a good WLB. In the present study, the author has limited the determinants of WLB in the health care sector to the following: individual time, family time, work and organisation, and social and external factors (Delectra, 2011; Widayana I et al., 2025; Bressler and Tark, 2025).

The questionnaire designed for this study to collect primary data essentially comprises two sections. The first section collects demographic information from respondents, such as age, marital status, number of children, and health care category. The second portion comprises questions designed to understand the dimensions/factors that affect an individual's WLB in the health care sector. For example, work-life balance, work overload (i.e., stress levels), work productivity, and job satisfaction.

Firstly, 37.3% of respondents reported having a good WLB before the COVID-19 pandemic, and 40.7% reported that the pandemic had a significant effect on their WLB. The correlation between the pandemic's effect on work and WLB is negative (-0.245), indicating that the greater the pandemic's effect on work, the lower the life balance. Secondly, it observed that many respondents had to sacrifice their sleep for work during the pandemic. In the present study, the coefficient is -0.06, indicating that their WLB was affected by sleep loss from their profession. The calculation is negative due to the way the question is formulated; however, the outcome is positive (Bressler and Tark, 2025; Khazaee-Pool et al., 2025).

It is observed that Mental health has a positive correlation to WLB. In the present study, the coefficient is -0.289, indicating that their mental health affects their WLB. However, since the question was framed negatively, the negative correlation should be interpreted positively; therefore, mental health is directly proportional to WLB, and the respondent's mental health in the present study was affected. Furthermore, it is observed that stress stemming from overload or work due to their profession shows a positive correlation with WLB (Muniappa, H.B. et al., 2025). In the present study, the coefficient is -0.219, which proves that their Stress due to workload had an effect on their WLB. The negative correlation should be interpreted positively; therefore, stress arising from workload due to their profession is directly proportional to WLB, and the respondents were stressed in the present study.

It is found that the respondents' productivity levels are also positively correlated with their WLB. However, a health care professional's productivity is never affected as they tend to be of other beings. In the present study, the coefficient is -0.415, which proves that their Productivity had an effect on their WLB. Since the question is framed negatively, the negative correlation should be interpreted as a positive one; therefore, productivity is directly proportional to WLB (Beauregard & Henry, 2009; Bressler & Tark, 2025). The study has also observed a positive correlation coefficient of 0.562 between job satisfaction and maintaining one's WLB. It is seen that job satisfaction can help maintain a good WLB, which proves that job satisfaction has an effect on one's WLB. Dissatisfaction could have been caused by a variety of factors, such as pressure from management to clear patient loads in a short period of time, leading them to feel they cannot give patients adequate time to fully understand the ailment (M., 2016). (M., 2016; Boskma A et al., 2025). It is generally observed that maintaining one's WLB is one such aspect that enhances work satisfaction (Grandey, Cordeiro, & Crouter, 2005; Widayana et Al, 2025). Several studies have highlighted the conceptual and empirical distinctions between the WLB aspects. The findings also substantiate on the study's proposition, i.e., job satisfaction has a significant negative association with excess of workload and a positive relationship with work support (i.e. benefits from the employer to support the WLB of the employer), implying that increased work overload and inadequate work assistance may reduce work satisfaction levels (Netemeyer, Boles, & McMurrian, 1996; Boskma A et al. 2025)

The findings indicate that job overload and irregular working hours have a negative impact on employee work satisfaction, emphasizing the significance of assistance within the work setting for improved work satisfaction. (Yildirim & Aycan, 2008). The statistical analysis shows a significant, positive correlation between work-life balance and employee performance, with a coefficient of 0.22 and a t-value of 2.81 (which exceeds the critical threshold of 1.96 at the usual significance level). In other words, a better balance between job demands and personal life tends to directly boost individual job performance. (Khazae-Pool et al. 2025). The results of this study strengthen Aryee's research, which shows that control over work and family roles can improve performance and lead to job satisfaction (Aryee, Tan, & Srinivas, 2005).

5. CONCLUSION

An employee's mindset at work is directly proportional to their WLB. While the positive effects of a proper WLB on an organisation's performance are well established, it cannot be denied that an imbalance is detrimental to both the organisation and the employee. A key point that every employer should remember is that the performance of their organisation is directly dependent on the performance of their employee, which further is dependent on their WLB, and thus every employer must put in the extra efforts to ensure that their employees who have family commitments are satisfied with their job and are committed to the goals of the organisation (Boskma A et al. 2025; Muniappa, H.B. et al. 2025). This can

be done by providing better working conditions, paid vacations, coffee breaks, etc. Organisations must work to build a culture that makes employees feel they are a crucial part of the organisation. Achieving a balance between professional responsibilities and personal life is key to creating a calmer, more energised workplace where people can tap into their abilities and contribute effectively (Bressler and Tark, 2025). That said, finding this equilibrium remains tough for many people—especially those juggling family care duties—and the pressures were even greater amid the disruptions of the COVID-19 crisis (Woler et al., 2020; Khazae-Pool et al., 2025). The report on this research and the conclusions gained would be incomplete unless the major constraints of the current research work were highlighted. WLB studies among health sector professionals in India have been infrequent, and the current study was chosen to serve as a model for future research in the field. The inquiry was limited to a few hospitals in southern India, and the study's sample size might not yield clear results, suggesting the need for future research with a larger sample. Furthermore, the authors encountered practical challenges in data collection, owing to respondents' disorganised work schedules and management's lack of understanding of the study's value. Because the current study is limited to organisational-level elements, it can serve as a foundation for future research into the influence of individual- and societal-level factors, such as emotional intelligence, personality, well-being, and household responsibilities, on work-life balance.

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