

# **Work Life Balance Among Employed Undergraduate Students of the University of Colombo**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Balancing individuals work life, personal life and social life is known as Work – Life balance. Today Work – Life balance become a challenge for all most all the individual. Meanwhile some universities conduct educational programmes for working students. Bachelor of Labour Education Degree of the Colombo University in Sri Lanka is one such programmes. The aim of this study is to investigate the Work –Life balance issues of this students. A Questionnaire survey conducted among the students and 187 responded the survey. Data analysis using SPSS version 21. According to the findings of the study, the majority of the students believe that their work preserve or life demand are not a barrier for their university education. Father, flexible working hours, counselling services, health facilities, family support programmes would help improve the Work – Life balance among working university students.

**Key words:** Work – Life balance, work pressure, working students, university education.

## 1. Introduction

Work life and personal life are two main sides of a life of an employee.

Creating and maintaining a balance between the work and personal life is known as work life balance. Technological changes, globalization and cultural changes have made work – life balance is an issue for all professionals across all individuals and all levels around the world (Sharma and Dayal 2015). Manfredi and Holliday (2004) argued that, the concept of work – life should be seen as complementary elements of a full life, rather than competing variables each other.

Meanwhile there is a trend that many universities in the world are being offering high educational programs for working or employed students. Thus these employees face challenge to finding balance among their education, work life and personal life. (Ang 2008). Therefore increasing number of researchers focus their research on work – Life balance of working students of different educational programs of universities. (Kishokumar and Lakshika 2016).

The Bachelor of Labour Education Programs offered by the University of Colombo is the only undergraduate degree program for the working students in Sri Lanka. The lectures of the three year program conducted after working hours of the working students who are adults and also most of them are married and having children. So when people are struggling to balance their work and life, these students have to balance not only work and life, they have to balance their work, life and education. These students must aware how to balance their work, life and education while the university also have a responsibility to offer the Bachelor of Labour Education Program in a way that students could balance it with their work and life.

Since there is no previous study addressing this issue, a study is need to fill this knowledge gap which this study aims to fulfill that, knowledge gap.

## 2. Literature Review

Work – Life balance is the effectively managing work and all the other activities that are very important to individual such as community activities, family, social, personal development leisure and recreation. Managing time among work, self and family and social activities of a life can be regarded as a working definition of work – life balance (Padmasiri&Mahalekamage, 2016)

According to Kishokumar&Lakshika (2016) the balance of an individuals in the three dimensional aspects of life such as individual's personal life, social life and organizational life regarded as work – life balance.

Tetteh&Attigbe (2019) found that less time available for the working students for their university education. It's difficulty in finding time for studies. Therefore the universities must find practical solutions to assist working students to combine work, family and study.

## 3. Research Objectives

- I. To determine the existing level of work – life balance among the students of the bachelor of Labour Education Degree offered by the University of Colombo.
- II. To determine the working students requirements to have a work – life balance.

#### **4. Research Design**

This is a descriptive study and attempts to inquire in to the Work life balance among the employed students of the Bachelor of Labor Education degree of University of Colombo. Research design was single cross sectional and a self-administrative questionnaire was used to collect the primary data. Out of total population 188 Questionnaire were received but there were only 187 usable Questionnaires. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21 used to analyze the data.

#### **5. Demographic Profile of the Respondents**

There are 187 students who have responded with usable status in the study. There are 93 (49.7%) male students and 90 (48.1%) female students responded out of the total of 187. The majority of students (59.9%) are in between 18 – 30 years of age. Position wise, 121(64.7%) students holding the post of management assistants while there are 53 (28.3%) supportive staff. The sample consists of 13 (7.0%) managerial level working students. In the sample 111 (59.4%) students are having 1 – 5 years of experience in the present post. There are 39 (20.9%) students members who have 6 -10 years of experience. Table 1 summaries these information.

The marital status of the respondents were also analyzed. According it revealed that the majority, 105 (56.5%) students have married However 135 (72-2) students reported that they don't have kids, while others having 1, 2, or 3 kids. Which may affect their work life balance.

The majority, 111 (59.4) students reside their own homes while others stay in outside places to go for work.

The travel time also important factor on work life balance. Out of 187 students, 86 (46.0%) spend 1-2 hours to travel for work per one side journey. But 80 (42.8) students spend less than one hour for the travel per one side. Others spend more than 3 hours.

**Table 1. Demographic Profile of the Respondents**

Demographic Variable		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	93	49.7
	Female	90	48.1
	Total	187	100.0
Age	18 – 30 years	112	59.9
	31 – 45 years	70	37.4
	46 – 60 years	5	2.7
	Total	187	100
Position	Managerial	13	7.0
	Management Assistant	121	64.7
	Work Assistant	53	28.3
Experience	Up to one year	2	1.1
	1 – 5 years	111	59.4
	6 – 10 years	39	20.9
	11 – 20 years	28	15.0
	21 or more years	07	3.7
	Total	187	100.0
Marital Status	Married	82	43.5
	Unmarried	105	56.5
	Total		100
Number of kids	0	135	72.2
	1	25	13.4
	2	22	11.8
	3	4	2.1
	More than 3	1	0.5
Residence	Home	111	59.4
	Boarding Place	71	38.0
	Relatives Home	5	2.7
Travel time From Residence To workplace	Less than one hour	80	42.8
	1-2 hours	86	40.0
	3-5 hours	20	10.7
	more than 5 hours	1	0.5

## 6. Work – Life Balance Experience

To understand the work life balance experience of the working undergraduates, the questionnaire consists of five questions. The summary of findings given in table 2.

The table two reveals that 29 (15.5%) of students always do not have time to spend with family. Another 24 (12.8%) students of the view that they often don't have time to spend with their family

Out of 187 students 36 (23.5) agree that they have always or often miss university education time because of work pressures or family issues. Another 61 (32.6%) studies have always or very often have work for more than six days per work.

There are 28 (15%) studies who believe that they are not able to balance their work life, while 16 (8.4) students believe that they are not happy with their work life.

However the table two show that the majors of the studies do not have a clear idea about their work life balance experience, therefore majority of the students rank sometimes section.

**Table 2: Work Life Balance Experience Among Employed Undergraduates**

Question No of the Questionnaire	Response									
	Always		Often		Sometimes		Rarely		Never	
	Frequency	Percent								
Question 9	29	15.5	24	12.8	105	56.1	20	10.7	9	4.8
Question 10	12	6.4	32	17.1	116	62.0	17	9.1	10	5.3
Question 11	44	23.5	17	9.1	68	36.4	27	14.4	31	16.6
Question 12	13	7.0	15	8.0	108	57.8	29	15.5	22	11.8
Question 13	10	5.3	6	3.2	108	57.8	29	15.5	34	18.2

Question 09: Do you find yourself unable to spend enough time with your family?

Question 10: Do you ever miss out any quality time with your university education because of pressure of work or family issues?

Question 11: Do you normally work more than 6 days in a week?

Question 12: Do you feel you are not able to balance your work life?

Question 13: How often do you think or worry about work (when you are not actually at work)?

Question 14: Does your company have a separate policy for work – life balance?

## 7. Work Life Balance Policy

The students were asked about the work – life balance policy of their organization. Thus it was found that only 18 (9.6%) studies confirmed that their organization having work life balance policy, Others, 169 (90.4%) have confirmed that there is no such policy or they are not aware of it.

## 8. Further Requirement for Balance Work Life

It was inquired from the students about further requirements for balance work life. The results. Summarized in a table 3. Students have strongly recommended to develop or implement certain policy decisions to improve their work – life balance. Out of 187 students, 155 (82.9%) students strongly agree or agree to have flexible working hours for better work – life balance. Further 154 (84.2%) students agree to have counselling facilities for employees while 175 (93.6%) students show the need of health programmes in their organization. Another recommendation by the students is family

support programs which 161 (86.0%) students supported that idea. Finally, 138 (84.5%) students needed exercise facilities.

**Table 3: Requirements for Balanced Work - Life**

Requirement	Response									
	Strongly Agree		Agree		Indifferent		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
Flexible working hours	72	38.5	83	44.4	11	5.9	16	8.6	5	2.7
Counselling services	48	27.5	106	56.7	17	9.1	13	7	3	1.6
Health programs	82	43.9	93	49.7	10	5.3	2	1.1	0	0
Family support programs	56	29.9	105	56.1	17	9.1	7	3.1	2	1.1
Exercise facilities	76	40.6	82	43.9	21	11.2	3	1.6	5	2.7

## 9. Conclusions and Recommendations

The study conducted based on the study of the Bachelor of Labor Education degree of the University of Colombo, in Sri Lanka. This is the only undergraduate degree programme conducted for working employed students in Sri Lanka. The students are adults employed and some are married and also having children. Therefore the finding of the study would contribute to improve the programme management of the degree. Future the finding would be helpful to improve the work – life balance among the adult university students. Only 20% students confirmed that their work pressure and family issues affect their university education. One of the main findings of the study is that only 9.6% of students confirmed that there is a work – life balance policy in their organization. Therefore, it is highly recommended other organizations to have such a policy which would contribute to improve the work – life balance among employees.

It was revealed that the majority of this working students haven't disclosed their clear idea about the adequacy of time they spend with families, whether they really balance the work life, whether the work affects the personal life. It seems that they are neither agree nor disagree with this section.

However, in the recommendation majority of students have proposed to have flexible working hours, counselling services, health facilities, family support programmes and exercise facilities. The improvement in these areas would positively contribute to improve the work – life balance among employed or working undergraduate students.

## 10. Directions for Future Research

The present study limited only to the working undergraduate students of Colombo university of Sri Lanka, there are fifteen state universities in Sri Lanka. Almost all of these universities conduct postgraduate study programmes. The majority of these students are employed students. University education might affect their work – life balance. Therefore, this study could be expanding to postgraduate.

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