

PART I

Making the Case for Work-Life Balance

In Chapter 1, we make the case for work-life balance. We do this by discussing trends in demographics, attitudes toward gender equality, and cultural norms that have set the foundation for the work-life balance movement. We introduce definitions of work-life balance accepted by the majority of scholars working in this area.

In Chapter 2, we discuss the benefits of work-life balance. Specifically, we describe the research regarding positive work-related outcomes, positive nonwork-related outcomes, and stress-related outcomes.

In Chapter 3, we discuss how work-life balance plays a major role in employee life satisfaction. Specifically, we describe the research that links work-life balance with overall life satisfaction. In doing so we discuss the principles of satisfaction in multiple domains, positive spillover of domain satisfaction, and minimal role conflict. Next, we describe how work-life balance contributes to domain satisfaction (satisfaction with work life, family life, social life, financial life, leisure life, health and safety, etc.). We also address the association between work-life balance and stress-related outcomes (emotional exhaustion, psychological distress, and mental health).

CHAPTER I

*Introduction***1.1 Introduction**

Balance between work and family life has been a concern for employees and employers for many years, particularly over the last several decades. Many workers are attracted to “family-friendly firms.” Work-life balance used to be a matter of private negotiation between employees and their employers. No more! Most employees, now more than ever, believe that they have a right to take time off around childbirth. Work-life balance programs established by many firms reflect this growing sentiment among both women and men. In recent years, the government has played a greater role in promoting employment practices that support working parents. Why?

The trend toward adopting work-life balance policies and programs may be due to greater participation of women in the workforce, which in turn may have been influenced by:

- later marriage and childbirth;
- rapid return to work after childbirth;
- higher educational achievement that increased their workplace credentials;
- increased availability of jobs that provide flexibility in scheduling and places to work from;
- the growth of the service sector (traditionally female-dominated employment opportunities) and the decline of the manufacturing sector (traditionally male-dominated employment opportunities); and
- changing norms related to greater gender equality in the workplace.

The increased proportion of women in the workforce has created pressure for work-life balance policies and programs because women often have more domestic and caretaking responsibilities than men. As such, to attract female employees and retain them, employers frequently feel obligated

to develop policies and programs to make their workplace friendlier for women (Kodz, Harper, & Dench, 2002).

Furthermore, there has been a cultural shift among men who are becoming more involved in their children's upbringing, compounded by the fact that more men are assuming more responsibilities in domestic affairs given that their wives and partners are also working (Kodz, Harper, & Dench, 2002).

Another factor that has increased pressure on employers to develop and implement work-life policies and programs is the growing size of the senior population. People now live longer than ever. Who takes care of them in their old age? Their children who are adults participating in the workforce, particularly women. These workers are referred to as the "sandwich generation" – sandwiched between taking care of their own children as well as their parents. These employees demand policies and programs that accommodate their family responsibilities – childcare and elderly care (Kodz, Harper, & Dench, 2002).

Employers have also felt pressure to introduce work-life balance policies and programs in their workplace not only because of the demographic shift among employees but also because of changes in national policies. For example, many countries have developed laws related to maternity and paternity leave. Many European countries have also instituted laws related to the maximum number of hours employees have to work per week (e.g., thirty-five hours in France). Such laws have raised employers' awareness about the need to help their employees achieve work-life balance (Kodz, Harper, & Dench, 2002).

Collectively, these factors have produced a shift in cultural norms related to work-life balance policies and programs. Consider the 2000 Work-Life Balance Survey conducted by the Institute for Employment Studies in Great Britain (Kodz, Harper, & Dench, 2002). The survey results are shown in Table 1.1. The survey covered a sample of managers (employers) and workers (employees). The results clearly show that both employers' and employees' attitudes toward work-life balance policies and programs are very positive and seem to reflect the cultural norm in developed countries.

1.2 Definitions of Work-Life Balance

Work-life balance is defined in different ways. We categorize the definitions into five groups or concepts: (1) equal engagement and satisfaction in work and nonwork domains, (2) engagement in work and nonwork roles compatible with life goals, (3) successful accomplishment of goals in work and nonwork domains, (4) full engagement in multiple life domains, and

Table 1.1 *The 2000 Work-Life Balance Survey conducted in Great Britain*

Survey item	Employers (% who strongly agree or agree)	Employees (% who strongly agree or agree)
Everyone should be able to balance their work and home lives	62	81
It is not our [the employer's] responsibility to help people balance their work with other aspects of their lives	24	36
People work best when they can balance their work and other aspects of their lives	91	96

Source: Adapted from Kodz, Harper, and Dench (2002, p. 21)

(5) minimal role conflict between work and nonwork life domains. Let’s discuss these definitions in some detail.

1.2.1 *Equal Engagement and Satisfaction in Work and Nonwork Domains*

Below are selected definitions of this first concept by notable scholars who have well-established academic credentials in work-life balance research. Greenhaus, Collins, and Shaw (2003) defined work-life balance as the extent to which individuals are equally engaged and satisfied with work and nonwork roles. That is, work-life balance is viewed in terms of an individual’s perceptions of the degree of balance between time, involvement, and satisfaction pertaining to both work and nonwork roles. Clark (2000) focused on individual satisfaction and defined work-life balance as satisfaction and effective functioning at work and at home with a minimum amount of role conflict. Kirchmeyer (2000) defined work-life balance as achieving satisfying experiences in all life domains with personal resources such as energy, time, and commitment well distributed across domains. Note that all of these definitions focus on equal engagement and satisfaction across life domains. As such, individuals characterized as having work-life balance experience equal engagement and satisfaction with work and nonwork domains. They are equally involved in work and nonwork domains and obtain satisfaction from both (Clark, 2000; Greenhaus, Collins, & Shaw, 2003; Kirchmeyer, 2000).

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To bring this definition to life, let's focus on how work-life balance researchers measure work-life balance based on this definition. Example survey items include:

- “Currently, I have a good balance between time I spend at work and the time I have available for nonwork activities”;
- “I am satisfied with the balance between my work and private life”;
- “Currently, I have a good balance between time I spend at work and the time I have available for nonwork activities.”

The response scale involves a five-point Likert-type scale varying from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree” (Brough et al., 2014).

Let's apply this definition to a person, Tom, to further illustrate. There are a total of 168 hours in a week. Tom spends approximately eleven hours a day (during the work week) engaged in work-related activities (including commuting from home to his workplace and back) – fifty-five to fifty-six hours a week in total. He is fully committed to his job and experiences a high level of job satisfaction. Furthermore, he spends another roughly fifty-five to fifty-six hours resting, sleeping, and taking care of his health and personal hygiene. This leaves roughly fifty-five to fifty-six hours that are spent in other nonwork roles such as family and social life. He feels fully committed and satisfied in his family and social roles. The time allotted to personal care, work, and nonwork is roughly the same. Tom has work-life balance.

1.2.2 *Engagement in Work and Nonwork Roles
Compatible with Life Goals*

This category of definitions focuses on engagement in work and nonwork roles that are compatible with life values and priorities. Greenhaus and Allen (2006) have defined work-life balance as the extent to which an individual's effectiveness and satisfaction in work and family roles are compatible with the individual's life role priorities at a given point in time. Fereday and Oster (2010) viewed work-life balance as management of the actual and desired proportion of one's work and private-life activities. Thus, work-life balance allows people to achieve what they regard as most important. These definitions establish work-life balance as activities compatible with life values and priorities. Here the meaning of balance is *not* an equal level of engagement and satisfaction across life domains. It means engagement and satisfaction that is compatible with life priorities (Fereday & Oster, 2010; Greenhaus & Allen 2006, 2011; Greenhaus, Collins, & Shaw 2003).

Examples of survey measures work-life balance researchers have used to capture this construct include “How well do your work life and your

family life fit together” (Valcour, 2007) and “How well do your working hours fit in with your family and social commitment.” The response scale involves a five-point rating scale with the following response categories: “1 = very poorly,” “2 = poorly,” “3 = in-between,” “4 = well,” and “5 = very well” (Lunau et al., 2014).

To illustrate this definition, let’s consider Samantha. She has a family with two young children. Doing her best to raise her children and ensure their future happiness is the most important goal in her life. As such, she is working part time to allow her to spend more time taking care of her family. She feels that she is better equipped, both physically and mentally, to take care of her kids and maintain an effectively functioning household than her husband by spending less time at work and more time at home. Doing so is compatible with her life priorities and goals. As such, Samantha can be characterized as having a high degree of work-life balance.

1.2.3 Successful Accomplishment of Goals in Work and Nonwork Domains

This group of work-life balance definitions focuses on the successful accomplishment of goals in work and nonwork domains. For example, Grzywacz and Carlson (2007) asserted that work-life balance is experienced when the individual is not only fully engaged in work and nonwork roles but also successfully meeting their role-related expectations. Voydanoff (2005) defined work-life balance as a global assessment that work and family resources are sufficient to meet work and family demands such that participation is effective in both domains. Similarly, Parkes and Langford (2008) defined work-life balance as an individual’s ability to meet work and family commitments as well as other nonwork responsibilities and activities. Valcour (2007) defined work-life balance as an overall level of contentment resulting from an assessment of one’s degree of success at meeting work and family role demands. The common thread of these definitions is the successful performance of role expectations in work and nonwork domains. Individuals with work-life balance are fully engaged in work and nonwork domains and are successful in meeting role demands (Grzywacz & Carlson, 2007; Parkes & Langford, 2008; Valcour, 2007; Voydanoff, 2005).

Example survey items commonly used to capture work-life balance based on this definition include “It is difficult for me to balance my work and my private life” (reverse coded) and “I am meeting the requirements of both my work and my private life.” The response scale involves a five-point Likert-type scale varying from “1 = strongly disagree” to “5 = strongly agree” (Syrek et al., 2011).

To bring this definition to life, let's consider the example of Pamela: she is a business executive, senior vice president of marketing, in a hospital system that spans an entire state in the United States. She is also married with three children, ages 10 through 18. Her job is taxing in that she has high-level marketing goals to meet on a quarterly basis. An example of one job-related objective is to achieve an average of 90 percent in patient satisfaction ratings across all hospitals affiliated with her healthcare company. This means that she has to implement policies and programs to ensure patient satisfaction (as captured by a patient survey). The good news is that over the last three quarters, the survey results indicate an average of 93 percent patient satisfaction. That is, Pamela has been meeting her work-related objectives. The company chief executive officer has recognized her accomplishment through not only a significant end-of-year bonus, but also a job-merit award that is widely publicized within the overall healthcare system. In addition to success at work, she is equally successful in her home life. Her kids are excelling academically. Her oldest is graduating from high school and has been accepted at a prestigious university. All three kids have a happy disposition with no problems to speak of. Her husband is very loving and is equally successful in his job. The family has taken a recent cruise in the Mediterranean, and everyone seems to have thoroughly enjoyed the trip. In other words, Pamela seems to have been equally successful in her role as a mother and wife. Pamela has work-life balance.

1.2.4 *Full Engagement in Multiple Life Domains*

The focus here is on full engagement in each of the roles that the person has assumed. That is, work-life balance is achieved when people are fully committed in their various social roles in work and nonwork life. In other words, work-life balance is characterized as the tendency to become fully engaged in the performance of every role in one's total role system and to approach each role with an attitude of attentiveness and care (Marks, 1977; Marks & MacDermid, 1996; Sieber, 1974). Kirchmeyer (2000) defined work-life balance as engagement in multiple roles with an approximately equal level of attention, time, involvement, and commitment. This approach to the conceptualization of work-life balance focuses on balanced engagement across the totality of roles as embedded in work and nonwork domains. That is, engagement levels are positively balanced. They are actively and fully involved in social roles in multiple life domains and have an equally high level of positive balance (Kirchmeyer, 2000; Marks, 1977; Marks & MacDermid, 1996; Sieber, 1974).

Here is an example of survey items designed to capture work-life balance from this perspective: “Due to all pressure at work, when I come home, I am often too stressed to do the things I enjoy,” measured using five-point Likert scale (reverse coded); and “How often do you feel too tired after work to enjoy the things you would like to do at home” – the response scale involves a four-point rating scale with the following response categories: “1 = never,” “2 = hardly ever,” “3 = sometimes,” and “4 = often/always” (Matthews, Bulger, & Barnes-Farrell, 2010; Sieber, 1974).

Consider the example of Anna. She juggles many roles. She is a nurse, a mother of a 7-year-old son, the wife of a physician, a caretaker of an ailing father, and primarily in charge of all household responsibilities (shopping, cooking, household bills, etc.). She fully engages in and handles these multiple roles effectively. In other words, no one is complaining that she falls short while handling her responsibilities and carrying out these many roles. The doctor she works for is happy with her work. Her son has a happy disposition and seems to be doing well at school based on his grades and the last teacher conference. Her marriage is happy and her husband often compliments her on being a “superwoman” who does a great job juggling everything. Her ailing father is equally appreciative of how she’s been taking care of him. As such, Anna has a balanced life because she fully engages in multiple roles and has effectively managed all of her social roles in work and nonwork domains. Anna rates highly on work-life balance.

1.2.5 Minimal Role Conflict between Work and Nonwork Domains

In this category of definitions, work-life balance is defined in terms of minimal role conflict. In other words, individuals with work-life balance tend to experience minimal role conflict between work and nonwork life domains. Here, the focus of work-life balance is on the management of role conflict across life domains. As such, work-life balance is treated as satisfaction and good functioning in work and family roles with minimum role conflict (Allen et al., 2000; Clark, 2000; Kossek & Ozeki, 1998). Work-life balance is also viewed as a high degree of role enrichment with a low degree of role conflict in work and nonwork life domains (Frone, 2003; Greenhaus & Powell, 2006). That is, work-life balance is achieved through the effective management of role conflict (interference) when resources to meet role demand are threatened or lost (Fisher, Bulger, & Smith, 2009; Hobfoll, 1989). These individuals do not experience work-to-family or family-to-work role conflict. That is, they manage

role conflict well (Allen et al., 2000; Clark, 2000; Fisher, Bulger, & Smith, 2009; Frone, 2003; Greenhaus & Powell, 2006; Kossek & Ozeki, 1998).

Here are examples of survey items: “I often neglect my personal needs because of the demands of my work” and “My work suffers because of everything going on in my personal life.” Responses are captured using a five-point rating scale: “1 = not at all,” “2 = rarely,” “3 = sometimes,” “4 = often,” and “5 = almost all the time” (Fisher, Bulger, & Smith, 2009).

Let’s consider the case of George. George works in the IT department of a university. The department is short-staffed. The workload at the beginning of each semester is immense, to the point that he has to leave work, get a reprieve of a couple of hours for dinner, and go back to work for another three–four hours before he conks out from fatigue. George went along with this arrangement mostly because his boss has been signing bonus checks for the extra time George has been working. However, George has a girlfriend who has been complaining about the fact that he does not “have a life.” It is obvious in this situation that George is experiencing role conflict – major conflict between his work life and love life. What to do? He needs to minimize role conflict; otherwise, he is very likely to lose his girlfriend. In other words, he needs to achieve a semblance of work-life balance by minimizing the conflict between his IT role and his boyfriend role. He starts looking for other IT jobs in organizations where work demand seems stable over time. He finds one in a neighboring hospital. Perfect! The interview went well and the hospital administration made him a job offer. The offer amounts to a parallel move – that is, there is no increase in responsibility or money. He is not enamored with the job offer, and he still likes the people he is working with at the university. He even likes his boss. Armed with that offer, he talks to his supervisor and pleads his case. He makes it clear to his boss that he cannot work after hours irrespective of the workload. Although he does not threaten to quit, he drops a hint that if push comes to shove, he will seriously consider jumping ship. His boss expresses sympathy and finally caves in; his boss reduced his workload, which allowed him to “have a life” after the official work hours. George has finally achieved work-life balance.

1.3 Conclusion

In this chapter we have discussed trends in population demographics, changing attitudes about gender equity in the workplace, and national legislation as factors increasing pressure on employers to offer work-life balance initiatives to stay competitive and abide by the law. We introduced

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the reader to five different definitions and subjective measures of work-life balance. The key characteristics of these definitions are: (1) equal engagement and satisfaction in work and nonwork domains, (2) engagement in work and nonwork roles compatible with life goals, (3) successful accomplishment of goals in work and nonwork domains, (4) full engagement in multiple life domains, and (5) minimal role conflict between work and nonwork domains (see Table 1.2 for a summary). These definitions focus on various ways of effective role engagement (equal, goal-reflected, and full engagement) as well as the results of such effective engagement (i.e., successful accomplishment of goals and minimal role conflict). As one can see, the concept of work-life balance can be viewed from different perspectives resulting in different definitions based on these perspectives. Having said this, there is a common thread running through these different definitions, namely engagement in both work and nonwork roles in ways to meet role demand and minimize role conflict. This is the ultimate definition of work-life balance that we would like to impress upon the reader. Let's keep this definition in mind as you read the subsequent chapters.

It is important for organizations to measure work-life balance both subjectively and objectively. We provided the reader with several definitions of work-life balance and examples of survey measures. These are obviously "subjective indicators" of work-life balance. Objective indicators are more elusive. One can capture this construct through several indicators that would involve a composite index. Work-life balance in organizations in specific industries or sectors can be captured through a survey targeting the human resource (HR) directors in which the directors are asked to report the following:

- *Workload* – employees' average actual hours spent at work, frequency of employees' overtime or night time work, and employees' proportion of time spent at work (Kossek, Valcour, & Lirio, 2014);
- *Flexible work schedules* – availability of a program that allows employees flexibility in terms of work times, the extent to which employees have a choice in selecting their own work schedule, the extent of actual program use, and the availability of financial support for such a program (Baltes et al., 1999);
- *Flexible workplace* – availability of a program that allows flexibility of workplaces, the extent to which employees have a choice in selecting places where they can work, the extent of actual program use, and the availability of financial support for such a program (Kossek, Lautsch, & Eaton, 2006; McCarthy, Darcy, & Grady, 2010);