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## A Study on Work Life Balance During the Economic Crisis in Sri Lanka

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### ABSTRACT

Sri Lanka has approved a four-day work week to prepare better the public sector workers for the biggest financial crisis of the nation has seen in decades. The idea tries to encourage employees to engage in farming as the nation struggles to pay for essential imports like fuel, food, and medication. Most employees are still working even in declared national holiday Friday. This is because of four working days are not enough to finish their tasks. People waited longer in gas lines, which made it difficult for the country's workforce to arrive for duty on time and in a productive manner. There are few public and private transportation options, which lengthens travel times for employees. Additionally, workers must pay high travel expenses, which raises their cost of living. Moreover, the employees stuck in traffic and unable to manage the crowded public and private transport facilities led them stress at work. As a result, people must balance job and personal obligations. This study was aimed to measuring the level of work-life balance among employees who were working in government schools, divisional secretariat, and hospital. A total of 120 employees were selected using random sampling method from government schools (40), divisional secretariat (40) and hospital (40) in Nintavur. The measuring tool was modified questionnaire of Hayman (2005) which consisted of 15 questions. Data were subjected to descriptive statistics. The results of the study revealed that the level of work life balance of employees attached to government schools, divisional secretariat, and hospital in Nintavur was moderate level.

### INTRODUCTION

Work-life balance became a crucial research topic when workplace relations started to change because of economic unpredictability, which resulted in a struggle for survival in the firm. A person's sense of control over the amount of time spent at work in relation to the amount of time spent outside of work is referred to as work-life balance (Sen & Hooja, 2015).

For individuals to successfully juggle their professional and personal commitments, supportive and healthy work environments must be created and maintained. This will boost productivity and staff loyalty. The competing responsibilities that today's workers must juggle include work, kids, household duties, volunteering, caring for a spouse and aging parents, to name just a few. Work-life balance is a crucial issue that affects people, their businesses, and communities. Ageing populations, historically low unemployment, and globalization have only made things worse (Dhas & Karthikeyan, 2015).

Because people are the foundation of a functioning society, the government and policy makers place a high importance on work-life balance. As a result of an increasing reliance on information technology over time, the working population increasingly has to deal with a larger information burden. It is expected that workers will put in longer hours and be available on weekends. Additionally, it is expected that staff members will be reachable at all times and will immediately answer calls and emails sent outside of regular business hours. The pressure at work has intensified as a result of this (Sen & Hooja, 2015).

Long work hours and stressful employment not only make it difficult for people to balance work and family obligations, but they are also linked to health hazards such increased drinking and smoking, weight gain, and depression. Work-life conflict has been linked to a variety of physical and mental health consequences (Dhas & Karthikeyan, 2015).

Work-life balance strategies are deliberate changes made to corporate culture or policy with the goal of reducing work-life conflict and enhancing employees' effectiveness in both their paid and volunteer work. The shift from viewing work-life balance solutions as a way to accommodate specific employees with caregiving responsibilities to appreciating their contribution to company success and employee engagement is a crucial paradigm shift that is still very much "in process." (Lazar *et al.*, 2010)

Organizations are feeling the heat as a result of rivalry to perform better or keep promises made to clients in order to stay in business during current wave of globalization. The pressure to show up at work and the high level of stress that results from this heat is largely transferred to the workers. The employees cannot afford to ignore the many demands that are piling up from their personal lives during this process, which are equally vital. It has become difficult to balance work and personal obligations, increase productivity, and live harmoniously (Muthukumar *et al.*, 2014).

Work is just one aspect of life, and it shouldn't interfere with our personal time. The opposite is also true because

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labor is a method of support. The idea is becoming more popular because it supports leading a balanced life at home and at work. Keeping a healthy balance promotes optimal working hours, which eventually improves overall effectiveness. It is a well-known fact that quality tends to decline as quantity rises. The employee will be more motivated to take on duties if he is not overworked. He is not worn out and is prepared to work every day. His work ethic is unaffected by his workload, and he is eager to work. When someone works willingly, he attains satisfaction and a contented person is bound to succeed not only at work but also in life (Muthukumar *et al.*, 2014).

### Statement of Problem

Sri Lanka has approved a four-day work week recently, in order to better prepare public sector workers for the biggest financial crisis the nation has seen in decades. As the nation struggles to pay for essential imports like fuel, food, and medication, the idea tries to encourage employees to engage in farming. To combat the food crisis, Sri Lanka previously had shortened working weeks by designating Friday as a holiday and advising public servants to “engage in home gardening or cultivating short-term crops during these days on which the offices are closed.”

Despite the fact that Friday has been declared a holiday in order to contribute to the nation’s economic development, the majority of employees are working in their duties of workplace as work from home because four working days are not enough time to finish their tasks. As a result, people must balance job and personal obligations (engaging in nations economic development) Many people around the country have waited for hours in gas station lines. The lack of cooking gas has become so terrible. People waited longer in gas lines, which made it difficult for the country’s workforce to arrive for duty on time and in a productive manner. Many people around the country have waited for hours in gas station lines. The lack of cooking gas has become so terrible. Longer gas line wait times made it harder for the nation’s workforce to complete family obligations, make it to work on time, and work productively.

Additionally, there are few public and private transportation options, which lengthens travel times for employees. Additionally, the workers must pay high travel expenses, which raises their cost of living. Also, the employees stuck in traffic and unable to manage the crowded public private transport facilities which cause them stress at work as well as family life.

### Research Question

According to the problem statement, the researcher is encouraged to pursue this study and investigates whether employees at government schools, divisional secretariat, and hospital have a significant work-life balance. The objective of this study is to answer the following research question.

Do employees in government schools, divisional

secretariat, and hospital exhibit a significant work-life balance?

## OBJECTIVES

### General Objective

The primary objective of the study is to measuring the level of work-life balance among employees working in government schools, divisional secretariat, and hospital.

### Specific Objectives

- To study the work-life balance using the demographic variable of “working station”.
- To study the work-life balance using the demographic variable of “type of position”
- To study the work-life balance using the demographic variable of “number of children”.
- To study the work -life balance using the demographic variable of “spouse’s job”
- To study the work-life balance using the demographic variable of “gender”

### Hypothesis of The Study

This research is based on the following two hypothesis that identifies the significant level of work-life balance employees working in government schools, divisional secretariat, and hospital in Nintavur.

### Hypothesis-01

H10: The employees working in government schools, divisional secretariat, and hospital do not have work - life balance

H1a: The employees working in government schools, divisional secretariat, and hospital do have work - life balance

### Hypothesis-02

H20: There is no significant difference between the work- life balances of employees working in government schools, divisional secretariat, and hospital based on demographic variables

H2a: There is significant difference between the work- life balances of employees working in government schools, divisional secretariat, and hospital based on demographic variables

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The term “work-life balance” is ambiguous and has many meanings. A balance is a term that refers to a set of scales, a weighing device, as well as the mechanism that controls clocks. If we utilize the scales, balance happens when the weight or quantity are distributed equally. Balance can refer to “stability of body or mind” in both physical and psychological contexts. We know that in some situations, some people have greater balance than others and may even believe they have superior balance. We can also see when someone has lost their equilibrium. Due of this, it is important to understand that balance can have both objective and subjective meanings and measurements,

that it will fluctuate depending on the situation, and that it can be measured in a variety of ways (Dhas & Karthikeyan, 2015). Work life balance can be defined as the perfect integration between work and life both not interfering with each other (Muthukumar *et al.*, 2014).

The study of Hayman (2005) sought to to analyze the value of a tool created for determining employee work-life balance in an administrative work environment. The instrument's acceptable validity and reliability were discovered, which suggests it has the potential to give managers a valuable tool for learning how people perceive work-life balance. In order to better grasp a more inclusive measure of the interface between work and non-work, this research contributes to the existing literature. The HRM field will directly benefit from a greater grasp of best practice attainment measures. With increased concern by employees for the boundary between their work and non-work lives, the provision of effective work life initiatives is fast becoming a priority for organizations and HRM practitioners throughout the modern world.

According to Hayman (2005) , work life balance was measured with a 15 item scale such as Personal life suffers because of work, Job makes personal life difficult, Neglect personal needs because of work, Put personal life on hold for work, Miss personal activities because of work, Struggle to juggle work and non-work, Happy with the amount of time for non-work activities (reversed), Personal life drains me of energy for work, Too tired to be effective at work, My work suffers because of my personal life, Hard to work because of personal matters, Personal life gives me energy for my job, Job gives me energy to pursue personal activities, Better mood at work because of personal life, and Better mood because of my job which were designed to assess three dimensions of work life balance: work interference with personal life (WIPL), personal life interference with work (PLIW), work/personal life enhancement (WPLE).

The study of Dolai (2015) indicated the measure's psychometric properties, which are used to assess work-life balance. The scale's dimensionality was thoroughly confirmed using factor analysis and reliability analysis,

indicating that it was a valid and reliable scale for assessing work-life balance. Three factors emerged from the analysis. The first component was the Work Interference with Personal Life (WIPL) dimension. The Work Personal Life Enhancement (WPLE) dimension was represented by the second component. The dimension of Personal Life Interference with Work (PLIW) was represented by the third factor. With Cronbach alphas above 0.700, all three subscales were judged to have high dependability.

The study of Weerasinghe and Dilhara (2017-2018) consist of the primary objective of how work stress affects the work-life balance of custom officers working for the Sri Lanka Customs Department. Utilizing the measuring scale, the dependent variable work-life balance was evaluated (24 items). It was assessed on three aspects, including satisfaction balance, time balance, and involvement balance (input balance) (output balance). The original measurement scale's coefficient alpha was 0.88.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### Description of Sample

The study was conducted among the employees working in government schools, divisional secretariat, and hospital in Nintavur. 120 employees were selected as the sample population using random sampling method. Forty employees each from government schools, divisional secretariat and hospital in Nintavur were chosen for this study.

### Description of the Tool Used

Table -1 displays the main data collection tool used in this study, which was a modified version of the Hayman questionnaire (2005). There are 15 statements about work-life balance in it. The questionnaire from Hayman (2005) has been revised by the researcher in light of the current study's context. There were five demographic statements about the respondents: working station, type of position, number of children, spouse's job, and gender. Scores ranging from 1 to 5 were assigned to each response to the question (1-Strongly disagree, 2- disagree, 3-Neutral, 4- Agree, 5- Strongly agree).

**Table 1:** Sample Questionnaire

No.	Statement	5	4	3	2	1
01	My personal life does not suffer because of work					
02	My job does not make my personal life difficult					
03	I do not neglect personal needs because of work					
04	I do not put personal life on hold for work					
05	I do not miss personal activities because of work					
06	I do not struggle to juggle work and non-work					
07	I am happy with the amount of time for non-work activities					
08	My personal life does not drain me of energy for work					
09	I am not too tired to be effective at work					
10	My work does not suffer because of my personal life					



11	It is not hard to work because of personal matters					
12	My personal life gives me energy for my job					
13	My job gives me energy to pursue personal activities					
14	I have better mood at work because of personal life					
15	I have better mood because of my job					

### Data Collection

The questionnaires were distributed to the employees working in government schools, divisional secretariat, and hospital in Nintavur. A total of 120 questionnaires were distributed and 120 completely filled questionnaires were collected giving an overall response rate of 100 percent.

### Scope

The scope of the study was limited to employees working in government schools, divisional secretariat,

and hospital in Nintavur.

### ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Following the completion of the questionnaire survey which used collect the data, each completed questionnaire was carefully examined to ensure that all of the returned questionnaires had been filled out correctly. All completed questions had their scores assigned before being uploaded to worksheets. The Likert Scale response categories provided in the survey were arranged in the following ways for the purpose of data coding:

**Table 2:** Scores for Response Categories (Variables Measured on Interval Scales)

Response Category	Very High Extent	High Extent	Moderate extent	Low extent	Very Low Extent
Scores	5	4	3	2	1

These number values were added to worksheets after being assigned to each question. The Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 21 was used to do statistical analysis after they had been reviewed for accuracy.

### Reliability Analysis

The interim consistency reliability was utilized to evaluate the questionnaire's reliability. The Cronbach's coefficient alpha in this study was .853, indicating that the reliability was ensured.

### Personal Information

#### Distribution of respondents based on working station of respondents

This study's 120 respondents are listed in table -3 below. According to an analysis of 120 respondents, 33.3% of respondents are employed by Divisional Secretariats, 33.3% by Government Schools, and 33.3% by Hospitals.

**Table 3:** Distribution of employees working in government schools, divisional secretariat, and hospital in Nintavur based on working station of respondents

Working Station	Frequency	Percentage
Divisional Secretariat	40	33.3
Government School	40	33.3
Hospital	40	33.3
Total	120	100.0

#### Distribution of respondents based on type of position of respondents

This study's 120 respondents are listed in table -4 below. According to an analysis of 120 respondents, 36.7% of

respondents are Clerical Staff, 33.3% are Nursing Officer, and 30.0% are Teachers.

**Table 4:** Distribution of employees working in government schools, divisional secretariat, and hospital in Nintavur based on type of position of respondents

Type of Position	Frequency	Percentage
Clerical Staff	44	36.7
Nursing Officer	40	33.3
Teacher	36	30.0
Total	120	100.0

#### Distribution of respondents based on number of children of respondents

This study's 120 respondents are listed in table -5 below. According to an analysis of 120 respondents, 19.2 % of respondents have no children, 11.7% have one child, 41.7% have two children, 24.2% have three children, and 3.3% have more than three children .

**Table 5:** Distribution of employees working in government schools, divisional secretariat, and hospital in Nintavur based on number of children of respondents

Number of children	Frequency	Percentage
None	23	19.2
One	14	11.7
Two	50	41.7
Three	29	24.2
More than three	4	3.3
Total	120	100.0

### Distribution of respondents based on Spouse's Job of respondents

This study's 120 respondents are listed in table -6 below. According to an analysis of 120 respondents, 70.8% of respondents' spouses are occupied in Government sector, 7.5% occupied in Private sector, and 21.7% are Unemployed.

**Table 6:** Distribution of employees working in government schools, divisional secretary at, and hospital in Nintavur based on Spouse's Job of respondents

Spouse's Job	Frequency	Percentage
Government sector employee	85	70.8
Private sector employee	9	7.5
Unemployed	26	21.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100.0</b>

### Distribution of respondents based on Gender of respondents

This study's 120 respondents are listed in table -7 below. According to an analysis of 120 respondents, 49.2% of respondents female and 50.8% are male.

**Table 7:** Distribution of employees working in government schools, divisional secretariat, and hospital in Nintavur based on Gender of respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Female	59	49.2
Male	61	50.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100.0</b>

### Mean and Standard Deviation

With the assistance of descriptive statistics, the level of existence or degree of occurrence, or level of each variable in the sample was examined in this study in terms of the degree of responses provided by the respondents. The Mean and Standard deviation were used by the researcher as the analysis's measuring tools. For each statement on the checklist, the mean and standard deviation of responses (depending on respondents' agreement) are listed in the table below.

**Table 8:** Mean and Standard Deviation for each question.

Question Number	Mean	Standard Deviation
Q1	3.91	1.0
Q2	3.85	.97
Q3	3.78	1.16
Q4	3.93	.90
Q5	3.71	.91
Q6	3.82	1.08
Q7	3.90	.7
Q8	4.03	.80
Q9	4.03	.8
Q10	4.15	.80

Q11	3.85	1.01
Q12	4.01	.8
Q13	3.95	.7
Q14	3.94	.72
Q15	4.04	.71

According to the above table-8, the statement "My personal life does not suffer because of work" (Q1) is found to have the mean score of 3.91. This value falls under the moderate level of the above continuum (Table 1). The statement "My job does not make my personal life difficult" (Q2) is found to have the mean score of 3.85. This value falls under the moderate level in continuum. The statement "I do not neglect personal needs because of work" (Q3) is found to have the mean score of 3.78. This value falls under the moderate level in continuum. The statement "I do not put personal life on hold for work" (Q4) is found to have the mean score of 3.93. This value falls under the moderate level in continuum. The statement "I do not miss personal activities because of work" (Q5) is found to have the mean score of 3.71. This value falls under the moderate level in continuum. The statement "I do not struggle to juggle work and non-work" (Q6) is found to have the mean score of 3.82. This value falls under the moderate level in continuum. The statement "I am happy with the amount of time for nonwork activities" (Q7) is found to have the mean score of 3.90. This value falls under the moderate level in continuum. The statement "My personal life does not drain me of energy for work" (Q8) is found to have the mean score of 4.03. This value falls under the highest level in continuum.

The statement "I am not too tired to be effective at work" (Q9) is found to have the mean score of 4.03. This value falls under the highest level in continuum. The statement "My work does not suffer because of my personal life" (Q10) is found to have the mean score of 4.15. This value falls under the highest level in continuum. The statement "It is not hard to work because of personal matters" (Q11) is found to have the mean score of 3.85. This value falls under the moderate level in continuum. The statement "My personal life gives me energy for my job" (Q12) is found to have the mean score of 4.01.

This value falls under the highest level in continuum. The statement "My job gives me energy to pursue personal activities" (Q13) is found to have the mean score of 3.95. This value falls under the moderate level in continuum. The statement "I have better mood at work because of personal life" (Q14) is found to have the mean score of 3.94. This value falls under the moderate level in continuum. The statement "I have better mood because of my job" (Q15) is found to have the mean score of 4.04.

This value falls under the highest level in continuum. To gauge work life balance, fifteen questions were used. Based on the responses of 120 respondents, the question numbers such as Q8, Q9, Q10, Q12, and Q15 recorded mean score under the highest level and others have fallen under moderate level. According to, Table -9 , the overall

mean score for work life balance is 3.93. It's meant that respondents have moderate level work life balance. Therefore, it can be concluded that the employees attached to government school, divisional secretariat, and hospital in Ninatvur have moderate level of work life balance. By considering the standard deviation of .516, it can be concluded that the mean score may be increased

or may be decreased in future.

From the table- 10, it can be concluded that employees

**Table 9:** Overall Mean and Standard Deviation for Work life balance

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation
Work life balance	3.93	.516

**Table 10:** Comparison of Means Scores

Demographic Variable	Sub categories of Demographic Variable	Mean Score
Working Station	Divisional Secretariat	4.11
	Government School	3.66
	Hospital	4.02
Type of Position	Clerical Staff	4.03
	Nursing Officer	4.02
	Teacher	3.71
Number of Children	None	4.14
	One	3.82
	Two	3.87
	Three	3.89
	More than three	3.80
Spouse's Job	Government sector employee	3.98
	Private sector employee	4.26
	Unemployed	3.65
Gender	Female	3.98
	Male	3.88

attached to Divisional Secretariat and Hospital have the highest mean score by comparing the demographic variable "Working Station". Further, Clerical Staff and Nursing Officer have the highest mean score by comparing the demographic variable "Type of Position". Moreover, the respondents who have no children have the highest mean score by comparing the demographic variable "Number of children". Further, respondents' spouse who are working in Private sector have the highest mean score by comparing the demographic variable "Spouse's Job". Finally, both female and male respondents have moderate level mean score.

## CONCLUSION

On the labor market, the economic crisis in Sri Lanka had a never-before-seen effect. It impacted on work routines and cultures and limited the ability to execute tasks in the typical working environment. Work from home (WFH), flexible scheduling, and roster systems were consequently widely used. Therefore, the employees are facing different face in the work environment which may be new experience to the employees. Hence new strategies should be developed to achieve success in work environment. Personal circumstances, such as the partner's working hours and the presence of young children or elderly dependents in the home, have a significant impact on a person's demand for work-life balance. Furthermore, these circumstances change over the course of a lifetime.

Achieving a balance between work and long-term care for family members in the future is especially crucial given the current delay in the retirement age and the rise in life expectancy around the world.

Since the work environment is widely affected by the family life, the employees should achieve the good balance between them which will lead to greater success. The researcher suggested the following ideas to develop the work life balance between during the crisis situation. Based on this study, better understanding should be developed between the employer and the employee.

Employers should pay attention on employees in terms of their suffering on personal life, if any, whether they are neglecting their personal life, whether they are struggling to complete the non work activities, and whether they have better mood at work. Further, flexible work schedules, business leave policies, training and career development opportunities, a condensed work week, and work load management are some of the factors that contribute to work-life balance. This employer needs to focus on enhancing work-life balance.

In addition, employer should focus on expanding training and professional development options as well as impellent the workload management training programs that are effective. Further, develop educational initiatives on the impact of work-life balance on employees' personal and professional lives. It can be accomplished by adopting life management training programs, which are crucial

for identifying concerns and challenges in a certain way of living. Such programs encourage substantial changes in lifestyle. Moreover, employee worry over using technology, on the other hand, will cause friction at work and in the home. Thus, Technostress had a serious detrimental effect on WLB.

Despite having solid knowledge and skills in technology, those who suffer challenges with network connections, focus, or their health will stress their WLB. Therefore, the steps to take to decrease the detrimental effects of techno-stressors. Precautions should be taken to educate the workforce on how to balance work and family obligations while working from home.

There is evidence that better work-life balance is a result of better people management techniques, particularly the ability to choose one's own schedule and place of employment. Programs that promote work-life balance have been shown to have an effect on employees' rates of recruitment, turnover, commitment, and satisfaction as well as absenteeism, productivity, and accidents. Self-management is crucial. Individuals must be in charge of their own actions and expectations for a work-life balance.

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