Turnover Intention and Procrastination: Causal Contribution of Work-Life (Im)Balance

Abhishek Sharma[1], Ankita Sharma[2]

[1.] Assistant Professor Department of Psychology Sardar Patel University of Police, Security and Criminal Justice Jodhpur, Rajasthan (India), ORCID iD: 0000-0003-1788-6488

Email: abhishek@policeuniversity.ac.in

[2.]Associate Professor Department of Humanities and Social Sciences Indian Institute of Technology Jodhpur Rajasthan (India) ORCID iD: 0000-0002-1171-838X

Email: ankitasharma@iitj.ac.in

Abstract: *In the changing world of work, including increasing working parents and work from home, work-life balance is receiving increased attention from HR executives looking to improve employee productivity. Talent retention and getting active and responsible contributions from existing employees are permanent concern for organizations because of their high costs and negative consequences. This research aims to investigate the relationship of work-life balance with turnover intention and procrastination. The present study was conducted with 104 office staff working in various business organizations. The results showed a significant relationship between work-life balance and turnover intention and a significant relationship between work-life balance and procrastination. Further regression analysis showed a significant prediction of turnover intention and procrastination by work-life balance. The study's results suggested that work-life balance provisions should be included in organization policy and talent retention strategies.*

Keywords: *work-life balance, turnover intention, procrastination, office staff*

1. INTRODUCTION

According to Herzberg (2003), the issue of attracting and retaining highly qualified employees is more critical in today's context than ever previously. The knowledge economy has led to augmented competition for those workers with scarce and desirable skills, knowledge, and experience. In the knowledge economy, employees' skills and knowledge (human and intellectual capital) is often the main enablers for organizations to leverage a competitive advantage (Botha, Bussin & De Swardt 2011). As employees are so vital for performance, employee turnover is a matter of grave concern.

The turnover intention (TI) construct is drawn from the beliefs-attitudes behavioural intentions model (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980), which holds that one's intention to execute a specific behaviour is the immediate determinant of the action. TI is one's behavioural intention to separate from the job. Such intentions are typically measured along a subjective-probability dimension associated with a person with a particular action within a specific time interval (e.g., within the next six months or one year). The TI has been described as the conscious and deliberate will of an employee to leave an organization and wilfulness to seek fresh job opportunities at other organizations (Arshadi & Damiri, 2013).

There is proof that employees form intentions to quit before actually deciding to resign. It is often

a process, and the employees most frequently make an informed and conscious decision to leave their job (Mor Barak, Nissly, & Levin, 2001). Turnover models have been widely studied, and scholars have provided strong support for the proposition that behavioural intentions (intention to leave) are the most immediate determinant of actual turnover (Allen, Shore & Griffeth, 2003). Such intention may appear when employees speak negatively about their positions, when they limit their participation in the organization, or when they actually leave their jobs (Karatepe, 2013).

Employee turnover has high costs and negative consequences for any organization. Employee turnover is a detrimental factor because of its high and unpredictable replacement costs (O'Brien-Pallas, Murphy & Shamian, 2006). When TI becomes actual turnover, it is extremely expensive to an organization due to the expenses associated with induction and training, developing, maintaining, and retaining employees. An employee with the intention to quit is usually disengaged with the job and has lower productivity (Heikkeri, 2010). The estimated cost of turnover can reach up to 150% of an employee's annual compensation (Contino, 2002). These consequences provide a sound rationale for the study of TI.

Although there is no single distinguishable variable that can be identified as the leading cause of turnover intention. TI has been typically correlated with an unhealthy work environment and organizational culture that weaken performance or alienate employees and, too often, drive them away. Factors that affect employee TI have become increasingly complex in recent times, which is why the explanation and prediction of individual voluntary turnover decisions remain limited (Sharma, 2021).

2. PROCRASTINATION

Procrastination is not merely a human irregularity in which people failed to pursue their interests efficiently and productively. It represents dysfunction of necessary human abilities, if not essential, for coping with the myriad tasks, major or minor, that accumulate daily on our desks, in our memo books, or our minds.

Procrastination appears as a tendency, attitude, or behavioral trait that Shah (2000) described as an indecisive state lacking in willpower and vitality to do work. Procrastination is the postponement of a task that needs to be accomplished. It is a chronic habit of illegitimately justifying to oneself that a task does not, should not, or cannot be started now (Ekundayo et al., 2010).

Procrastination defines as avoidance of the implementation of an intention, frustrates an individual's stated purposes by merely putting it off until it is too late or nearly too late. The high level of confidence required before acting on a decision causes the task to take longer to complete and more knowledge about alternatives to be sought (Zimberoff & Hartman, 2001).

Popoola (2005) considers procrastination as a dispositional trait with cognitive, behavioral, and emotional components. Chu and Choi (2005) distinguish between two sorts of procrastination behaviors. Their indecision paralyzes passive procrastinators and fails to complete tasks on time, which is undoubtedly harmful. Active procrastinators, on the other hand, tend to work under pressure and make conscious decisions to postpone tasks; however, they typically finish their assignments on time.

Procrastination is highly neglected. We rarely try to figure out why someone is procrastinating in the first place. Research in procrastination is extensive and extremely varied. Generally, researchers study procrastination as self-regulation failure, low utilization, lack of concentration,

fear, and anxiety, personal problems, among others (Ekundayo et al., 2010). The cognitive appraisal of a job situation as more challenging and more hindering will elicit specific positive or negative emotions (Perrewé & Zellars, 1999) that entrain action tendencies (MacKey & Perrewé, 2014) to quit from the situation and thus promote procrastination. Recent literature also describes procrastination as an emotion-regulation strategy that provides short-term mood repair (Pychyl & Sirois, 2016).

Self-regulation failure to initiate and complete an action in a particular situation is thought to be the result of a person's inability to suppress hedonistic urges to turn to more immediately gratifying behaviours. As a result, procrastination can be viewed as a maladaptive emotion-focused coping mechanism in which people attempt to achieve a hedonic change in order to escape negative emotions. (Pychyl & Sirois, 2016).

Procrastination makes individuals postpone responsibilities, duties, and decisions (Dilmac, 2009). Procrastination appears to be a troubling phenomenon. People most strongly characterize it as being wrong, harmful, and foolish. Several studies have related it to individual performance, with the procrastinator performing more poorly overall and personal well-being, with the procrastinator being more miserable in the long term. At more extensive analysis levels, procrastination has been linked to several organizational and societal issues (Steel, 2003).

Procrastination affects the way we behave in the workplace. Procrastinators are often late, unprepared, disorganized, and may even have poor interpersonal relationships with co-workers and spend more time on projects likely to fail. Because procrastination has such severe repercussions for careers and business running, there has been a real interest in procrastination from a management perspective. While procrastination can have different effects on organizational and individual effectiveness, managers should identify its reasons and reduce this destructive behavior among employees.

3. WORK-LIFE BALANCE

The issue of work/life balance (WLB) has been an increasingly popular topic and has been growing in interest amongst practitioners and academics and is at the core of issues central to human resource development (Sturges & Guest 2004). Work/life balance is described as a satisfactory level of involvement or 'fit' between multiple roles in a person's life in its broadest sense. Although definitions and explanations vary, work/life balance is generally associated with equilibrium or maintaining an overall sense of harmony in life, including work, home, and other life roles (Soomro, 2018).

The study of work/life balance involves examining people's ability to manage the multi-faceted demands of life simultaneously. Greenhaus and colleagues (2003) define work-family balance as the "extent to which an individual is equally engaged in and equally satisfied with his or her job role and family role (p. 513)". Work-life balance gives a kind of empowerment to manage functionality at work and home with a minimum of role conflicts (Sharma, 2019a).

While work/life balance was once thought to include devoting equal amounts of time to paid and non-paid positions, it has recently been recognized as a more nuanced term that has been expanded to include additional components.

The problems in analyzing work-life balance begin with the issue of balance. We also need to understand work and life. Work can be initially defined as paid employment. Nevertheless, this soon breaks down when we begin to consider the time taken to travel to and from work, extra

unpaid hours, and the more intractable problems of employees who work from home and where the distinction between home and work is very porous. At the very least, defining work in the context of work-life balance is difficult. The same can be said for non-work or life. Work-life balance is a misnomer in and of itself, serving only as a convenient shorthand for work and the rest of life.

Greenhaus and colleagues (2003) further suggest that three crucial and interconnected components define work-life balance: firstly, "time balance," which refers to equal time being given to both work and non-work roles; secondly, "involvement balance" which refers to comparable levels of psychological involvement in both work and family roles; and finally, "satisfaction balance" which refers to equal levels of satisfaction in both work and family roles.

WLB is rooted in an employee's need to maintain a healthy balance between the desire to involve fully in the labour market while giving the best to loved ones—in essence, between one's profession and personal responsibilities (Lavoie, 2014). Thus, WLB is defined as an acceptable level of participation in multiple roles in a person's life (Lingard et al., 2012).

Work/life balance is out of kilter when the constraints from one role make it challenging to comply with others' demands. This is known as work/life conflict. In one study, people who experienced work-life conflict were nearly 30 times more likely to suffer from psychological morbidity and substance-dependence disorder (e.g., heavy drinking). On the other hand, employees with lower work/life conflict levels report higher job satisfaction overall (Sharma, 2019b).

In recent years job insecurity, increased working hours, long commutes, and technological advances have meant we spend more time on work-related tasks, even when we are at home. Many of us are serving in multiple roles and find it challenging to juggle work commitments with our personal lives. As a matter of livelihood earning, work requires substantial attention and effort. The need to sacrifice personal time impacts major life decisions, such as choosing to delay or forgo having kids, continuing education, or finding a partner. When the pressure at work becomes unmanageable and challenges a worker's ability to cope, it leads to stress and, finally, burnout. The behavioural signs of burnout include withdrawing from responsibilities, isolating yourself from others, and procrastination. It seems reasonable to attribute work-life (im)balance as one of the hidden causes of procrastination.

Poor WLB has harmful consequences on employees' health and well-being and organizations' performance (Shaffer et al., 2016). Hence, a disproportion between work and personal life causes increased stress, leading to greater turnover intention among employees (Kumara & Fasana, 2018). The work-life imbalance has a more critical role in employees' turnover intention than management behaviour towards the workers or the amount of pay (Hughes & Bozionelos, 2007). There is no value to the amount of compensation an employee receives when he has no time out of the organization to spend the money (Surienty, Ramayah, & Tarmizi, 2014). Employees who perceive higher levels of balance in their work and life have lower intentions to quit. On the other hand, studies have confirmed that work-family conflict increases employees' intention to quit (Anderson, Coffey, & Byerly, 2002). Indirectly, this affects not only organizational performance but a nation's economy as a whole.

4. RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

Work-life balance is paramount to individuals, organizations, families, government, and society. Techno-economic changes have increased the pressures on organizations and employees alike. Part of the subject's interest arises from the view that the scope for increased work from home,

promoted by new technology, has helped to blur the partition between home and work. Moreover, the increasing number of women in the workforce, nuclear families, and dual-earner couples has made work-life balance a crucial concern for employees and organizations across industries and occupations. The need for a balance between work and personal life has become an integral element of employee expectations from employers. Today's career success is defined not only in terms of promotions and lucrative assignments but also in balancing work and non-work life.

In recent years, companies are increasingly becoming cognizant of the need to embrace the concept of WLB, which is found to be very useful to attracting and retaining talent (Suifan et al., 2016) and ensuring their active involvement in work (Agarwal & Sharma, 2011). In this regard, helping employees to have a healthy work-life balance has become a challenge for employers and human resource professionals.

On the other side, eliminating the withdrawal behavior (procrastination) among employees is also essential to increase employees' active and responsible contribution. Since employees are the effectuator, identifying the critical factors related to procrastination and turnover intention could enable organizations to reduce these undesired behavioural and attitudinal outcomes.

In the light of increasing concerns about removing procrastination and retaining valuable human capital, the present study is deemed to be timely and essential. The study outcomes are expected to be useful inputs for developing pragmatic policy and practice insights among executives. Therefore, the present study focused on investigating the relationship of work-life balance with turnover intention and procrastination (Figure 1).
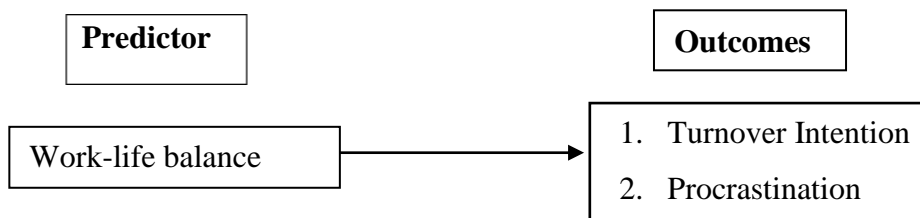
Figure 1: Proposed model for investigation

More specifically, the study aimed to answer the following research questions:

RQ 1: What is the magnitude and direction of the association between work-life balance and turnover intention?

RQ 2: What is the specific and causal contribution of work-life balance in turnover intention among employees?

RQ 3: What is the magnitude and direction of the association between work-life balance and procrastination?

RQ 4: What is the specific and causal contribution of work-life balance in procrastination among employees?

5. METHODOLOGY

Participants

The present study population comprises 104 individuals working as office staff for different business organizations. Education up to graduation and a minimum of 5 years of work experience were the participants' inclusion criteria. The researcher utilized purposive sampling, and participants were selected based on convenience. The age range of participants was from 27 years to 44 years. The sample consisted of 63 males and 41female employees.

Measures

1. **Turn over Intentions:** This measure was based on a scale constructed by Mobley, Horner, and Hollingsworth (1978). The scale consisted of three items. A higher score indicates higher turnover intention. The reliability coefficient of the scale was 0.90.
2. **Procrastination:** The procrastination Scale constructed and by Lay (1986) was used in this study. It comprises 20 statements. A higher score indicates higher procrastination. The scale has high reliability of 0.85.
3. **Work-life balance:** This measure is based on the scale developed by Pareek & Joshi (2010). The original scale was modified for the study. This scale remained 14 items. A higher score indicates a higher work-life balance. The Cronbach's alpha for this scale is 0.84.

Procedure

The participants were assured and informed that the purpose of the study was purely academic. The participants' informed consent was achieved after explaining the study's idea, operation, and utility. All demographic questions were included at the starting of the questionnaire. In contrast, the questions related to interest variables were randomly distributed to avoid respondents' fatigue bias. The questionnaires were distributed anonymously. The study's nature and kind of expected participation didn't require ethical approval for conducting the study.

Data analysis

At first, to test the appropriateness of data, reliability analysis was performed for the responses collected on individual items of different scales used in the study. The original scale in English was also translated into Hindi. All the scales were shown, before administration, to three experts of the concerned research area to ensure that items should cover the operational definition of variables, confirm face and content validity.

After collecting the final data and performing necessary checks, the researcher calculated the item-to-total correlation for turnover intention, procrastination, and work-life balance scale items. Results indicated that all the items were significantly positively correlated with their respective scale's total score and having a correlation value of more than .50. Osterlind (2006) suggested that item-to-total correlation values above .50 can be regarded as evidence that the data collected on that particular item of the scale is reliable.

For the second-level verification, the researcher calculated Cronbach's alpha (α) for all the variables under study and found satisfactory values (presented below), indicating the data's reliability. Cronbach's alpha ≥ 0.8 is considered as good internal consistency (DeVellis, 2012).

Table 1: Reliability of Scales (Based on Data Collected in The Present Study)

Variable	α	Internal consistency
Turnover intention	0.88	Good
Procrastination	0.81	Good
Work-life balance	0.82	Good

Data were analyzed with Pearson's correlation and regression analysis to explore answers for the research questions related to the relationship patterns among variables under study. The statistical package used for the data analysis was SPSS version 20.

6. RESULTS

To explore the relationship among variables under study, at first, the Pearson product-moment correlation was calculated.

Table 2: Correlation Among Variables Under Study

	Turnover intention	Procrastination
Work-life balance	-.262**	-.290**

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The correlational analysis showed that work-life balance was significantly negatively correlated with turnover intention and procrastination.

Linear regression analysis was carried out to explore the causal relationship among variables under study.

Table 3: Regression Analysis of The Work-Life Balance with Turnover Intention

Predictor variable	R Square	R Square Change	F	Beta Coefficient	t ratio
Work-life balance	.069	.069	7.523**	-.262	2.743**

**$p < .01$.

Table 3 presents regression analysis results utilizing turnover intention as the criterion and work-life balance as a predictor. The analysis results were statistically significant, indicating that work-life balance is a good predictor of turnover intention (explained 6.9% of total variance), as indexed by the R^2 statistic.

Table 4: Regression Analysis of The Work-Life Balance with Procrastination

Predictor variables	R Square	R Square Change	F	Beta Coefficient	t ratio
Work-life balance	.084	.084	9.336**	-.290	3.056**

**$p < .01$.

Table 4 presents the results of stepwise regression analysis performed utilizing procrastination as the criterion and work-life balance as a predictor. The analysis results were statistically significant, indicating that work-life balance is a good predictor of procrastination (explained 8.4% of total variance), as indexed by the R^2 statistic.

7. DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to *explore and understand the nature and extent of the relationship between work-life balance, turnover intention, and procrastination among office employees. These relationships are essential* as reducing turnover is vital for ensuring organizational sustainability and success (Shuck & Herd, 2012). Procrastination is a troubling phenomenon linked to several organizational and societal issues (Steel, 2003).

The present study investigated the relationship and specific contribution of work-life balance in turnover intention (RQ1 & RQ2). Results of correlation analysis and subsequent stepwise regression analysis indicated a significant causal relationship between work-life balance and turnover intention. Present findings are as per the theoretical assumptions and similar to the results of some previous researches.

WLB practices and turnover's negative relationship could be because WLB practices offer alternative work arrangements replacing the traditional fixed hours and fixed-place arrangements, granting current and prospective employees greater flexibility. A lack of WLB practices will impede employee motivation causing them to disclose withdrawal symptoms such as absenteeism

and turnover. The more conflict between work and personal life, the more employees will struggle to maintain a balance and, therefore, eventually decide to quit their jobs (Hughes and Bozionelos, 2005).

The present study also investigated the relationship and specific contribution of work-life balance in procrastination (RQ3 & RQ4). Results of correlation analysis and subsequent stepwise regression analysis indicated a significant causal relationship between work-life balance and procrastination. The present finding is of great value as it puts another side of procrastination research. Most researchers study procrastination as a causal factor of work-life imbalance and rarely consider it an indirect or direct outcome. It is seldom considered that emotions elicited in cognitive appraisal processes may entrain action tendencies to withdraw from the situation and promote procrastination (Pychyl and Sirois, 2016).

Based on these findings, we postulate that the delay behavior found in procrastination is connected with the subjective experience of a less balanced life. Kuhnle, Hofer, and Kilian (2011) also found a negative association between diminished experience of life balance and procrastination.

A person experiencing more negative emotions (or less positive emotions) due to higher hindrance appraisal (or lower challenge appraisal) might tend to withdraw from the situation that may be perceived as an inner resistance toward the work tasks. Employees must suppress their action patterns and change their coping actions by effortful self-regulation to overcome their internal resistances. (Muraven and Baumeister, 2000). However, with the increased effort required to overcome inner resistance, it will become more likely that self-regulation fails. As a result, when self-regulation effort is higher, occupational procrastination is more likely.

8. CONCLUSION

Organizational leaders are ever more looking for ways to retain human capital and promote active work involvement (Sharma, 2016). Our study shows that it is essential to investigate the role of work-life (im)balance in turnover intention and procrastination among employees. The present study results suggest that investments in the provision and possibilities for work-life balance are likely to offer the desired return. Since work-life (im)balance can increase turnover intention and procrastination, organizations should wish to influence employees' perception about the organization's concern about work-life balance among employees.

Because turnover intention and workplace procrastination generate enormous costs for individuals and organizations, we encourage other researchers to further advance scholarly knowledge by investigating large and varied samples in their future studies.

Implications of the study

Retaining a competent employee is always beneficial for the organization and critical for the sustenance and overall organizational performance. On the other hand, employee's active and responsive contribution is not something that executives are reminded to look at once a year. Organizations recognize that the enthusiastic but extra/proactive contribution of employees is of the utmost in today's competitive business world (Sharma, 2019c). HR executives in most organizations are also seeking to introduce broad-based organizational interventions to encounter these issues.

This study contributes to practice by giving empirical support for how organizations might sustain human capital and foster active contribution. The study results indicated that organizations must affect one factor: possibilities for maximizing work-life balance. Organizations can influence work-life balance among employees by restricting working hours, permitting working remotely,

flexible policies for working parents, encouraging vacation, bringing the family to work, etc.
The present study's findings emphasize that management should integrate policies and job characteristics by **offering more flexibility so that employees may have various options and possibilities to contribute rather than developing withdrawal from the job.**

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