

WORK LIFE BALANCE, PERCEIVED STRESS AND QUALITY OF LIFE AMONG GOVERNMENT AND PRIVATE SECTOR EMPLOYEES DURING COVID 19

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ABSTRACT

The COVID 19 pandemic has affected people from all walks of life. The entire globe has been suffering financially, socially, physically, psychologically, mentally and emotionally. Employees working from home during pandemic has reported of inconsistent working hours and constant fear/ anxiety of losing their jobs which resulted in heightened levels of stress and poor quality of life. The idea of working from home has been misunderstood as being available at all times. With all the pressure, managing time, being useful and working effectively in groups with no expectation for employee benefits has seems to be a problematic factor for employees. The present study aims to assess the relationship between work life balance, perceived stress and quality of life of government and private sector employees during COVID 19. The objectives and hypothesis were framed to cater to aim of the study. Scientific tools were used for the comparative study on gender and government and private sector with a total of 100 employees (males, n=50 and females, n=50) aged between 25-64 years. Statistical tools were used to analyze the descriptive and inferential data. According to the result, significant gender differences were found in Work life balance, Perceived Stress, Quality of life in employees. There were significant relationships among the three variables. Linear regression analysis helped in predicting the effect of one variable on another. This study may be used in organisations to have a better understanding employees working in regards to their Work life balance, Perceived Stress, Quality of life for positive health and wellbeing and overcome the challenges of life chores during the precedent times.

Keywords: COVID- 19, Work Life Balance, Perceived Stress, Private and Government Employees.

Introduction

Coronavirus Pandemic

The Coronavirus pandemic also commonly referred to as the COVID 19 is presently the most infectious disease that has severely impacted life across the globe. The pandemic has affected people from all walks of life. The entire globe has been suffering financially, socially, physically, psychologically, mentally and emotionally. Living in the COVID era has led to more of gloomy days full of insecurity. Loss of jobs, loneliness, shutting down of schools, colleges and other areas of entertainment, food shortages, and increase in domestic violence and separation of couples are some of the few repercussions of COVID.

Impact of Covid on Working Population

The outbreak of COVID 19 posed serious threats to the working population. Research suggests that as many as 10 million people lost their jobs. The year 2020 is regarded as the worst year for jobs in India. People working in medical sector, educational sector, travel and tourism sector, and other front line workers experienced heightened levels of stress and anxiety. With no fixed working hours, job security issues, sometimes less or no income etc. were some of the major issues that posed serious threats to the Indian working population. People working in electronics sector, automobile sector and entertainment sector suffered huge loss due to the lockdown and the pandemic, while pharmaceutical industry flourished.

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Perceived Stress

Perceived Stress can be understood as feelings or thoughts that a human being has about how much stress s/he is under during a particular time. It encompasses thoughts about how uncertain and out of control life can be for one, how frequently one has to bargain with unreasonable and unlikeable life circumstances etc. It is not about the prevalence of stressful conditions that happened with a person but it is about how a person perceives life stressors and how s/he copes with stress.

Quality of Life during Covid

Quality of life can be defined as the level to which a person is fit, healthy and hearty; content and stress-free and able to engage in different life events. Quality of life can be defined by the WHO as an approach of a person towards his/her position in life in terms of the values, beliefs and culture they are living and in association with their goals and ambitions; standards and expectation. Life has come to a standstill since the COVID 19. During the initial days of lockdown, everything was dull and gloomy. People were closed in their homes and there was pin drop silence. Life changed drastically with the onset of the pandemic. The physical health of most people was not up to the mark as there was no physical activity. Although people were eating immunity boosting products and home cooked food only, but they couldn't do any outdoor exercise activity or exercise to make the digestion process easier. The mental health of people was severely affected. Almost all the people had an unknown fear of contracting to the virus. There was lot of anxiety, stress, worrisome thoughts and other pessimistic thoughts that entered the minds of people. Loss of jobs, loss of family members, fear of getting the virus etc. led many people to take drastic steps of their life by committing suicide. The poor couldn't take care of himself and his family to be safe from the virus. Many people couldn't afford to make their both ends meet and hence become malnourished or undernourished. The rich although had enough money to fill their stomach but other life challenges seemed very hard to overcome. The social life of people was disrupted. The outside environment of people was not safe. The family environment for some was excellent. Family members reconnected and started spending time with each other. On the other hand, for some families it was the toughest time. Regular arguments and inability to understand each other, made the lockdown period very difficult.

Work Life Balance during Covid 19

The idea of having the right kind of balance between the work life of people and their personal lives is called work life balance. The time one spends at work should be at equilibrium with the time spent at home with family and friends. Work life balance specially doesn't mean that dividing equal number of hours for work and personal life. It simply means giving equal amount of attention to work and home. The perfect idea of work life balance could be working really hard in achieving your goals in professional life and also being able to share those accomplishments with loved ones and enjoying the time off from work. Pre corona people had a fixed nine to five job and once they left their workstation they didn't have to be available till the next working hours began. Once a person entered home, he would leave all the work related things outside of the home and then would start his personal life. But with COVID on our head, the fixed working hours seemed to be in vain. There is no such thing as flexible working shift and regular working hours. The regular working hours have now given room to unpredictable schedules and the idea of always being available even after the official working hours are over, all thanks to technology and everything being done in the online mode. The idea of working from home has been clearly misunderstood as being available at all times. In fact since March 2020, everyone is home and that has increased the responsibility of everyone. Being at the comfort of home doesn't mean that people are free. There has been loads of responsibilities which needs to be catered at home and while working from home.

Review of Literature

Mukherjee (2021) studied the balance between work and personal life of female school teachers teaching in Noida, Uttar Pradesh. The results revealed that maximum women reported work life imbalance. The issues reported by women were longer working hours, not much recognition at work and lack of motivation. With working from home, the responsibilities also increased.

Tomar (2020) studied the quality of living of Indians during the pandemic. A total of 2240 participants took part in the cross sectional study. The results revealed that women had a higher score of depression and reported low quality of life. The healthcare professionals reported extremely high levels of anxiety and poor quality of life.

Jain (2020) studied the balance of professional and personal life of staff members and the issues associated with it during COVID 19. The outcomes showed that because of work from home there was lack of proper coordination and communication between other members of the team, there were more distractions and working hours were not fixed. As a result, the idea of work life balance seemed impossible.

Gupta (2020) studied the quality of living of employees. Results revealed the quality of life is influenced by anxiety related to COVID. The respondents reported that the anxiety in the current times influenced the life of the employees.

Rajeev (2020) studied perceived stress among frontline Indian doctors. The results showed that a moderate to high level of perceived stress was found for doctors who were working for more than 6 hours a day with COVID patients. 63.4% of the doctors also reported of depression.

Asim (2021) examined the effect of perceived stress on life satisfaction of general population during the COVID-19 pandemic. The results revealed that participants reported of high level of perceived stress and low levels of life satisfaction. Significant gender difference on the level of perceived stress and life satisfaction was also found.

Research Methodology

The main problem discussed in this research paper was to examine the relationship between work-life balance, perceived stress and quality of life of government and private sector employees during COVID 19. Primary data was collected from employees (government and private) working in Delhi NCR, aged between 25-64 years. Secondary data was collected from various research journals and articles. The impact of COVID 19 on work life balance, perceived stress and quality of life of government and private sector employees was investigated through this research.

AIM

To study the relationship between work life balance, perceived stress and quality of life among government and private sector employees during COVID 19.

Objectives of the Study

- To study the gender difference in work life balance, perceived stress and quality of life among employees during COVID 19.
- To study the relationship between work life balance and quality of life among employees during COVID 19.
- To study the relationship between work life balance and perceived Stress among employees during COVID 19.
- To study the relationship between quality of life and perceived stress among employees during COVID 19.
- To study work life balance as a predictor of quality of life among employees during COVID 19.
- To study perceived stress as a predictor of work life balance among employees during COVID 19.
- To study perceived stress as a predictor of quality of life among employees during COVID 19.

Hypothesis

- H₁:** There will be significant gender difference in work life balance, perceived stress and quality of life among employees during COVID 19.
- H₂:** There will be significant relationship between work life balance and quality of life among employees during COVID 19.
- H₃:** There will be significant relationship between work life balance and perceived Stress among employees during COVID 19.
- H₄:** There will be significant relationship between quality of life and perceived stress among employees during COVID 19.
- H₅:** Work life balance will predict quality of life among employees during COVID 19.
- H₆:** Perceived stress will predict work life balance among employees during COVID 19.
- H₇:** Perceived stress will predict quality of life among employees during COVID 19.

Sampling Procedure

Random sampling method was implemented to collect data. A total of 100 employees (males n=50, females n=50, private sector employees n=50 and government sector employees n=50) took part in the study. Age, gender, marital status, affiliation to private/ government sector, work experience (in years) were some of the demographic information inquired from the employees. Considering the COVID 19 situation, the means of data collection was digital.

Statistical Techniques

WHO quality of life brief version, Work life balance scale by Udai Pareek and Perceived Stress scale by Sheldon Cohen were the tools used for administration. Mean and standard deviation were computed for descriptive analysis of the data and for finding out gender differences among Work Life Balance, Perceived stress and Quality of Life of employees. This was followed by t- test to find the statistical difference among the three variables. Pearson correlation coefficient was calculated to find out the relationship among the three variables. Linear regression analysis was performed to find out the predictive values of one variable on another variable.

Analysis of Data

Table 1: Demographic Information

Demographic Information		%	Demographic Information		%
Gender	Male	50%	Marital Status	Married	83%
	Female	50%		Unmarried	13%
Age	25-29	12%	Sector	Separated	2%
	30-34	16%		Divorced	1%
	35-39	7%		Widowed	1%
	40-44	9%		Government	50%
	45-49	13%		Private	50%
	50-54	25%		Work Experience	1-14 years
55-59	13%	15-29years	47%		
60-64	5%	30-44 years	18%		

Table 2: Mean, SD & t- Value for Work Life Balance, Perceived Stress and WHO Quality of Life (Gender-Wise)

		N	Mean	SD	t	df	p - value
WLB	Male	50	85.62	24.13	5.80	98	.17
	Female	50	58.80	22.02			
PS	Male	50	20.66	7.39	-2.71	98	.79
	Female	50	24.68	7.42			
QOL	Male	50	82.96	17.01	7.85	98	.84
	Female	50	56.14	17.15			

Table 2 shows the t value for work life balance, perceived stress & WHO quality of life in employees. From the table it can be interpreted that there is significant differences between both the genders, male($M=86.62, 20.66, 82.96; SD=24.13, 7.39, 17.01$) and female ($M=58.80, 24.68, 56.14; SD=22.02, 7.42, 17.15$) on the level of work life balance $t(98)=5.80, p=.17$; perceived stress $t(98)=-2.71, p=.79$ & WHO quality of life $t(98)=7.85, p=.84$ as the values are found to be significant at both 0.05 and 0.01 level.

Table 3: Correlation between Work Life Balance and Quality of Life of Employees

	N	r	p-value
Work Life Balance	100	.855	Sig**
Quality of Life	100		

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

Table 3 illustrates correlation value between work life balance and quality of life of government and private sector employees. From the above table it can be interpreted that work life balance and quality of life are strongly positively correlated, $r(100) = .855, p < .001$. Moreover the r value is found to be significant at 0.01 level.

Table 4: Correlation between Work Life Balance and Perceived Stress

	N	r	p-value
Work Life Balance	100	-.301	Sig**
Perceived stress	100		

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

Table 4 illustrates correlation value between work life balance and perceived stress of government and private sector employees. From the above table it can be interpreted that work life balance and perceived stress are negatively correlated, $r(100) = -.301, p=.002$. Moreover the r value is found to be significant at 0.01 level.

Table 5: Correlation between Quality of Life and Perceived Stress

	N	r	p-value
Quality of life	100	-.328	Sig**
Perceived stress	100		

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

Table 5 illustrates correlation value between quality of life and perceived stress of government and private sector employees. From the above table it can be interpreted that quality of life and perceived stress are negatively correlated, $r(100) = -.328$, $p < .001$. Moreover the r value is found to be significant at 0.01 level.

Table 6: Linear Regression Scores of Work Life Balance and Quality of Life

Variable	R	R Square
Work life balance	.855	.731
Quality of life		

Table 6 illustrates the regression scores between work life balance and quality of life. The R value was 0.855, which represents the correlation between the two variables. The findings also show that the R square value is .731, which means that 73.1 % of the variance in quality of life can be predicted from work life balance.

Table 7: Linear Regression Scores of Perceived Stress and Work Life Balance

Variable	R	R Square
Perceived stress	.301	.090
Work life balance		

Table 7 illustrates the regression scores between perceived stress and work life balance. The R value was .301, which represents the correlation between the two variables. The findings also show that the R square value is .090, which means that 9% of the variance in work life balance can be predicted from perceived stress.

Table 8: Linear Regression Scores of Perceived Stress and Quality of Life

Variable	R	R Square
Perceived stress	.328	.107
Quality of life		

Table 8 illustrates the regression scores between perceived stress and quality of life. The R value was .328, which represents the correlation between the two variables. The findings also show that the R square value is .107, which means that 10.7% of the variance in quality of life can be predicted from perceived stress.

Discussion

The aim of the research was to study the relationship between work life balance, perceived stress and quality of life of government employees and private sector employees during COVID 19. A total of 100 participants took part in the study. 50 were males and 50 were females. The participants were working in Delhi NCR. 50 employees worked in private sector and 50 worked in government sector. The participants belonged to the age range of 25 years to 64 years. The research aimed to study seven objectives. Seven hypotheses were formulated on the basis of the objectives of the study. Mean, Standard deviation, t test, correlation and regression were the statistical tools employed for analysis of the data.

Results revealed that 39% of the employees reported of good quality of life. 60% of the employees reported of high perceived stress and 68% of the employees reported of poor work life balance. Women reported of high perceived stress, poor quality of life and work life imbalance.

H₁: There will be significant gender difference in work life balance, perceived stress and quality of life among employees during COVID 19.

To study the significant gender differences t-test was conducted. From the result table 2 it can be interpreted that there is significant differences between the genders, males and females on the level of Work Life Balance, Perceived stress and Quality of Life of employees as the values are found to be significant at both 0.05 and 0.01 levels. Therefore, hypothesis 1 is accepted.

H₂: There will be significant relationship between Work life balance and Quality of life among employees during COVID 19.

To study the relationship between Work Life Balance and WHO Quality of life, Pearson correlation was conducted (Refer Table 3). Based on Pearson correlation, the results suggest that there is positive correlation which is significant at 0.01 level. This implies that with an increase in work life balance; there will be an increase in quality of life of employees. Therefore, hypothesis 2 is accepted.

H₃: There will be significant relationship between Work life balance and Perceived Stress among employees during COVID 19.

To study the relationship between Work Life Balance and Perceived stress, Pearson correlation was conducted (Refer Table 4). The results suggest that there is negative correlation which is significant at 0.01 level. This implies that with an increase in work life balance; there will be a decrease in perceived stress. Therefore, hypothesis 3 is accepted.

H₄: There will be significant relationship between Quality of life and Perceived stress among employees during COVID 19.

To study the relationship between Quality of life and Perceived stress, Pearson correlation was conducted (Refer Table 5). The results suggest that there is negative correlation which is significant at 0.01 level. This implies that with an increase in quality of life; there will be a decrease in perceived stress. Therefore, hypothesis 4 is accepted.

H₅: Work life balance will predict Quality of life among employees during COVID 19.

To analyse work life balance as a predictor of quality of life, the next step after correlation was linear regression. The findings (Table 6) show that 57.6% of the variance in quality of life of employees can be predicted from work life balance. Hence, the hypothesis 5 is accepted.

H₆: Perceived stress will predict Work life balance among employees during COVID 19.

To analyse perceived stress as a predictor of work life balance, the next step after correlation was linear regression. The findings (Table 7) show that 9% of the variance in the work life balance of employees can be predicted from perceived stress. Hence, the hypothesis 6 is accepted.

H₇: Perceived stress will predict Quality of life among employees during COVID 19.

To analyse perceived stress as a predictor of quality of life, the next step after correlation was linear regression. The findings (Table 8) show that 10.7% of the variance in the quality of life of employees can be predicted from perceived stress. Hence, the hypothesis 7 is accepted.

Recommendations

The following recommendations can be given to the employees to improve their quality of life, stress and work life balance.

- To maintain healthy interpersonal relationships by spending quality time with loved ones.
- To keep a regular check on one's emotions and mood swings and take regular break from work.
- To assess the sleep pattern and maintain a balanced diet.
- To exercise regularly and engage in physical activities like yoga, meditation etc.
- To train employees to manage time effectively.

Conclusion

The aim of the research was to study the relationship between work life balance, perceived stress and quality of life of government employees and private sector employees during COVID 19. As per the results significant gender difference in work life balance, perceived stress and quality of life among employees was found. Female employees reported of high perceived stress, poor quality of life and work life imbalance. Positive correlation was found between Work life balance and Quality of life among employees, which meant that an increase in work life balance lead to an increase in quality of life of employees. Negative correlation was found between Work life balance and Perceived Stress and between Quality of life and Perceived stress, which indicates that an increase in stress led to decrease in work life balance and decrease in quality of life. Work life balance was found as a predictor of quality of life; perceived stress was found as a predictor of work life balance and quality of life.

Future Implications

The current findings add to research on quality of life, perceived stress and work life balance of private and government sector employees during COVID 19. In particular the research illustrates gender differences in quality of life, perceived stress and work life balance of private and government sector employees. This study can be used in organisations to have a better understanding of employees' quality of life, perceived stress and work life balance. The study can be conducted on self-employed and part time employees, and employees working at different levels and departments of the organisation

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