

Human Well-Being Research and Policy Making
Series Editor: M. Joseph Sirgy

Dong-Jin Lee
M. Joseph Sirgy

Organizational Strategies for Work-Life Balance

For Whom, Why, and Under What
Conditions

 Springer

Human Well-Being Research and Policy Making

Series Editor

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Dong-Jin Lee • M. Joseph Sirgy

Organizational Strategies for Work-Life Balance

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This book is dedicated to all professionals, organizational executives, and HR directors who care about employee wellbeing; to management consultants who are in the business of helping their clients develop and implement effective work-life balance programs; and to academics and scholars who have committed to doing research and writing on this very important topic of quality of life.

Preface

This book provides a systematic review of the research literature related to the effectiveness of organizational policies and programs on work-life balance (WLB). It discusses policies, programs, and practices related to workload management, flex-time, flexplace, alternative job arrangements, and family care. Based on the evidence, the authors make specific recommendations to organizational executives and HR directors to design and implement work-life balance policies and programs to maximize their effectiveness and help employees achieve their optimal level of work-life balance. Specifically, the authors discuss how to: (1) identify employees with greater need for WLB programs, (2) evaluate environmental circumstances for WLB programs (3) design effective WLB policies and programs, (3) facilitate effective implementation of WLB policies and programs, (4) provide management support for WLB policies and programs, and (5) evaluate performance of WLB policies and programs.

This volume provides professional executives, HR managers, and management consultants with rich material to help them develop and implement effective work-life balance policies, programs, and practices. The volume is also written for academics and scholars interested in doing research on this very important quality-of-life topic, namely work-life balance.

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Part I

Organizational Policies and Programs of Work-Life Balance

In Part I of the book, we try to accomplish the following:

- Introduce the concept of work-life balance (WLB),
- Provide the reader with established definitions of the concept,
- Describe a typology of WLB practices,
- Discuss the impact of these practices on both employees and the organization, and
- Provide the reader with information about the established theories that delineate the psychological mechanisms associated with these practices.

Chapter 1

Introduction



“I’ve learned that you can’t have everything and do everything at the same time”—Oprah Winfrey (<https://teambuilding.com/blog/work-life-balance-quotes>)

Abstract In this chapter, we first describe the evidence related to positive outcomes of work-life balance (WLB) practices and explain the purpose of this book. This book is designed to answer the following question: for whom, why, and under what conditions are WLB strategies most effective? In answering this question, we first review the literature related to conceptual definitions, theories, antecedents, and consequences of each organizational strategy of WLB. Then, we review theoretical mechanisms of each strategy's effect on employee and organizational wellbeing. Finally, and most importantly, we identify the moderating conditions (individual, program, organizational, environmental, and cultural characteristics) that facilitate the efficacy of each strategy. The end goal is to provide recommendations to further develop WLB policies and programs to increase their effectiveness.

In response to various societal factors such as a greater number of women in the workforce, an aging population, changes in family structures, longer working hours, and the growing influence of information technology, many organizations have developed and implemented family-friendly practices (e.g., Bidwell, 2013; Boudreau & Jeppesen, 2015; Johnson & Ashforth, 2008; Kalleberg, 2012). These practices are designed to help employees manage work-life conflict and enhance their wellbeing.

Work-life balance (WLB) has also long been recognized as a key factor in creating and maintaining a sustainable, productive, and energized labor force—positively affecting individuals both at work and at home. WLB contributes significantly to organizational performance and personal wellbeing (Greenhaus et al., 2003; Sirgy & Lee, 2023). See Box 1.1 for signs of poor work-life balance. See Box 1.2

concerning the increasing importance of WLB practices post-pandemic. In Box 1.3 we discuss WLB for Millennials and Generation Z.

Box 1.1 Signs of Poor Work-Life Balance

Work-life balance impacts all areas of an employee's life. It tends to show up differently for different people, however. Here are some "symptoms" that managers can keep in mind to "diagnose" poor work-life balance.

Employees can't stop thinking about work when they are not at work. They find it difficult to draw boundaries between work and life. Relationships with other co-workers are beginning to suffer. They may be easily irritated with coworkers. They complain about unexplained aches and pains. They may rarely have energy or find it difficult to focus when at work. When not at work, everything seems uninteresting or unimportant. They just don't feel like doing anything unless they must. They often turn down invitations, further isolating themselves from their colleagues and friends. They spend a lot of money outsourcing support for personal tasks. Household chores like laundry, dishes, and mail pile up. Their excuse is that they're waiting for the day when they "have time" to do these chores. They struggle to take time off when they are sick, mentally strained, or when they need to take care of personal matters. They don't remember their last vacation and they don't have plans to take one. They can't imagine doing what you do for the rest of their life. They always feel like no matter what they are doing, they should be doing something else.

Source: Adapted from <https://www.betterup.com/blog/how-to-have-good-work-life-balance>

Box 1.2 Work-Life Balance Policies and Programs Are Now More Important Than Ever

We now know, based on evidence, that corporate policies that support work-life balance promote productivity, reduce turnover, and improve employees' mental and physical health. Recently, Covid-19 demonstrated that firms could remain efficient while allowing employees more flexibility as to where and when they do their work: That is, employee productivity did not decline even though many companies have switched to flexible and remote work arrangements during the pandemic. But apparently many of the same companies did not learn much from this field experiment. As the pandemic faded, those companies reverted to their old policies related to office work. In contrast, two-thirds of Covid-era remote workers have reported that they don't want to return to the office. When forced to return, many opted to resign rather than go back to office work. Others who appreciate the pandemic-induced flexibility have negotiated to keep their newfound flexibility. Interestingly, in a recent survey 64% of employees at top companies hinted that they would forgo a \$30,000 raise if it meant they didn't have to return to the office.

Source: Adapted from Kalev and Dobbin (2022).

Box 1.3 Work-Life Balance for Millennials and Generation Z

Millennials and Generation Z regard WLB as very important. They demand a good work environment, specifically work flexibility. The new generations have a different set of priorities. They expect a high level of autonomy and do not just work for the money. They value a flexible work environment. They expect to learn new skills. They demand opportunity to grow in the company.

Source: Adapted from Manpower Group (2016) and Sánchez-Hernández et al. (2019).

1.1 Work-Related Outcomes

Much research provides concrete evidence on the effects of WLB practices on organizational performance. In other words, WLB produces many positive work-related outcomes (see Table 1.1). Research has found that WLB increases job performance, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, career development and success. Research has also demonstrated that WLB reduces job malfunction, job burnout and alienation, absenteeism, and turnover intention (Allen et al., 2000; Anaton, 2013; Blazovich et al., 2014; Carlson et al., 2006, 2010; De Simone et al., 2014; Fisher et al., 2009; Frone et al., 1997; Konrad & Yang, 2012; Kossek & Ozeki, 1998; McNall et al., 2010; Sirgy & Lee, 2018; Wayne et al., 2004; Whiston & Cinamon, 2015).

Table 1.1 Impact of work-life balance policies and programs

Type of outcome	Specific outcomes
Work-related outcomes	Increased job performance
	Increased job satisfaction
	Increased organizational commitment
	Increased career development and success
	Reduced job malfunction
	Reduced job burnout and alienation
	Reduced absenteeism
	Reduced turnover intention
Nonwork-related outcomes	Increased life satisfaction
	Increased marital satisfaction
	Increased family performance and satisfaction
	Increased parental satisfaction
	Increased leisure satisfaction
	Reduced health risks
	Reduced cognitive problems
	Reduced conflict with family members
	Reduced psychological distress
	Reduced work-life conflict
Reduced family-related stress	
Reduced detrimental physiological symptoms	

1.2 Nonwork-Related Outcomes

WLB has positive non-work outcomes as well (see Table 1.1). Research has shown that work-life balance of employees increases employees' life satisfaction, marital satisfaction, family performance and satisfaction, parental satisfaction, and leisure satisfaction. Research also found that WLB reduces health risks, cognitive problems, and conflicts with family members (Allen et al., 2000; Anaton, 2013; Carlson et al., 2006; 2010; De Simone et al., 2014; Fisher et al., 2009; Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Kossek & Ozeki, 1998; Schaufeli et al., 2002; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Sirgy & Lee, 2018; Westman & Etzion, 2005; Whiston & Cinamon, 2015).

WLB reduces psychological distress. Research has shown that work-life conflict increases psychological distress (i.e., emotional exhaustion, emotional ill-being, anxiety, irritability and hostility, hypertension, and depression) and family-related stress (i.e., affective parental and marital stress), as well as detrimental physiological symptoms (i.e., somatic complaints, high blood pressure and cholesterol, alcohol abuse, and cigarette consumption) (Allen et al., 2000; Anaton, 2013; Blazovich et al., 2014; Carlson et al., 2006; Carlson et al., 2010; De Simone et al., 2014; Fisher et al., 2009; Frone et al., 1992; Frone et al., 1997; Konrad & Yang, 2012; Kossek & Ozeki, 1998; McNall et al., 2010; Sirgy & Lee, 2018; Wayne et al., 2004; Whiston & Cinamon, 2015).

While programs to improve WLB are well-advised in theory, the study findings also indicate that limited attention has been given to understanding the conditions for effective implementation of these programs and policies (Sirgy & Lee, 2018). We need to further understand which programs or policies are effective for whom, why, and under what conditions. That is, there is a scarcity of research based on systematic policy evaluation data to address the question of whether work-life practices are achieving their intended aims of WLB and personal wellbeing (McDonald et al., 2005; Sirgy & Lee, 2018).

As such, this book focuses on the effects of WLB programs on both organizational performance and personal outcomes. We use available research to highlight employee outcomes resulting from organizational strategies of work-life balance, summarize available evidence, and provide answers to three fundamental questions essential to WLB research:

- For whom, are organizational WLB strategies most effective? To whom do organizational WLB strategies need to be directed?
- How do the outcomes of WLB programs manifest? What psychological mechanisms underlie the wellbeing effects of WLB practices?
- When do those consequences occur? Under what individual, organizational, and environmental conditions do WLB practices register their strongest effects?

In answering these questions, we hope to provide the reader with the required building blocks that can help organizational leaders and policy makers better understand the working dynamics of WLB programs and policies.

In sum, the purpose of this book is to answer the following questions: for whom, why, and under what conditions are WLB strategies most effective. In answering